

Seven Key Traits of Disciple-making Disciples and the Disciples They Make Romans 1:1-7

We've finally arrived! Today is the day. Anticipation gives way to fulfillment. Romans, at last!

We are calling this study *Romans: A Letter to Disciples Who Make Disciples*. The Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to pen a letter to a gathering of Christians in the ancient city of Rome. His purpose was to invite these disciples, these followers of Jesus, to join him in his apostolic mission by assisting him to reach the unreached peoples in Spain with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans can be generally outlined in five (5) points.

1. Paul introduces the gospel and his relationship to the gospel.
2. Paul outlines the gospel and the universal need all people have for this good news.
3. Paul calls for personal, spiritual, moral, and ethical adoption of the gospel.
4. Paul invites personal and congregational investment in the mission of the gospel.
5. Paul greets with gratitude his gospel partners in Rome.

This letter, this missionary support letter to the disciple-making Christian disciples in Rome comes with an action step for us: **Get the gospel right and get the gospel out.** The Christians in Rome in Paul's day needed this message and so do the Christians at Cornerstone in our day need this message. The gospel of Jesus Christ is central to the letter, it was central to the apostle Paul and his ministry, and so the gospel must be central, of the utmost importance to disciples today. **It is essential in our day and time, in our lives and ministries, that we get the gospel right and get the gospel out!**

In the old days, forty years ago, my homiletics professor gave us this summary of good sermon preparation. He said, "Tell them what you are going to tell them, then tell them what you are going to tell them, then tell them what you told them." In the verses we are looking at this morning, Paul does just this. He tells what he is going to tell us. These verses introduce us to everything the Holy Spirit, through Paul, intends to tell us in the entire book of Romans.

The focus of this letter is Jesus. In the seven verses that make up the introduction to this letter, Paul refers to Jesus no less than six times. Jesus fills the mind of Paul. Jesus fills the heart of Paul. Jesus fills the focus of Paul. Jesus fills the mission of Paul. Jesus fills the theology of Paul. Jesus fills this letter of Paul's.

The gospel of Jesus is no less important than the person of Jesus. The gospel tells us who Jesus is. The gospel tells us what Jesus has done. The gospel shows us what response we should make to Jesus, based on Who He is and what He has done.

Paul brings these two to the forefront of our expectation. In this letter we expect to find Jesus and we expect to find the gospel of Jesus. We are also introduced to the two responses we should make to Jesus and his gospel: faith and obedience.

You are not looking for the apostle Paul in this letter. You are looking for Jesus. You are looking

for what God has done in Christ for you and for people like you. You are looking for faith in Christ. You are looking for obedience to Christ. You will find in this letter that Romans is not just a letter written to you, certain content communicated in writing from God to you. It is a letter written for you, communicated content meant to be embraced and implemented in your life.

You see, what we discover from these opening words is that every true disciple, **every disciple-making disciple of Jesus has an identity in Christ!** Like Paul, disciple, you are who you are because of Jesus. As a disciple, you belong to Christ, and, at this very moment, Jesus Christ the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Creator of the universe, the Savior who died on the cross and rose again on the third day, this Jesus the God-man, fully God, fully man, works in you and works through you the glory of God by His Spirit through faith according to His word.

You are no outside, no neutral observer. You are an insider, an active participant in the glorious grace and redemptive mission of God. You do not live on the sidelines but on the line of scrimmage. You are not merely watching the game, you are in the game.

Your identity in Christ, an identity by Christ, of Christ, through Christ, and for Christ can be described by seven key traits Paul includes in these introductory verses. What Paul says of himself and the Christians in Rome is true of you as well. It is true of all those who put their faith in Jesus and live in obedience to Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. What Paul says of himself as a disciple-making disciple seeking to make disciples is true of all those who genuinely belong to Christ. Over the next few weeks we're going to prayerfully consider these **seven key traits of disciple-making disciples and the disciples they make.**

1. A disciple-making disciple is a servant of Jesus Christ. (1:1)
2. A disciple-making disciple is called to ministry. (1:1)
3. A disciple-making disciple is set apart for the gospel. (1:1)
4. A disciple-making disciple embraces the gospel. (1:1-6)
5. A disciple-making disciple obeys in faith. (1:5)
6. A disciple-making disciple loves the nations. (1:5)
7. A disciple-making disciple belongs uniquely to Jesus. (1:6)

Given the way Paul opens this letter and what he includes in the introduction, what might we expect to gain from Romans? I can think of at least four spiritual assets you should watch for:

1. A deeper understanding of God's eternal, life-changing plan for you and how He worked in Christ to accomplish His salvation plan for your life.
2. A greater appreciation for grace and the valid obligation to personal holiness grace requires.
3. A more fervent passion to share Christ and the opportunity to for grace while there is still time.
4. A more clear view of the path ahead for disciple-making disciples and the disciples they make.
 - a. **Habakkuk 2:14 (ESV) *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.***

- b. God progresses in His mission to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory.
 - i. He includes you as a faith-filled, active participant in that mission.
 - ii. **You will find everything you need to accomplish your part in God's mission in Romans!**
 - (1) You will find both what you need to be and what you need to do
 - (2) You will find, as well, how you can get your part done.

Jesus Christ and the gospel are the keys to all spiritual success that honors God and fits His mission to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory. And that's the book of Romans that Paul introduces. Make the most of this opportunity. Read the letter. Study with us. Be here to invest together in understanding this letter to disciples who make disciples. Take what you come to understand and put it into practice. Gain faith and let faith lead you into obedience.