

Youth Group Devo: Paul Needed Peeps and So Do You
Barry Shafer

The Backdrop

Maybe you've heard these phrases:

It takes a village to raise a child.
-African proverb

No man is an island.
-John Donne, English poet

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
-Ecclesiastes 4:12

These quotes are from different eras and literary genres but still say the same thing. It is pretty much a universal concept: We're in this together; and the load is easier to carry, whatever that load might be, when we help each other carry it.

Funny though...sometimes it looks easier to go it alone. Maybe we think we can do it better by ourselves, we don't want to take the time to involve others, or we think we can work more efficiently when we go it alone. With regard to the Christian life, this is dangerous thinking. We need peeps.

You've probably heard of the apostle Paul. He was one of the most famous leaders of the church in the New Testament. After achieving acclaim as a chief persecutor of the church, he was dramatically converted on the road to Damascus and soon become the church's chief missionary. Many of his letters to believers and churches now make up most of the New Testament, and his missionary journeys make up most of the maps in the back of your Bible.

The What

Paul accomplished great things for God, but he didn't do it alone. We shouldn't either. A chunk of Scripture in Romans 16 gives us a look under the hood at the engine that helped drive Paul's ministry. You'll see the engine is made up of people. The Scripture passage is a roll call of helpers in Paul's life. Read Romans 16:1-16 from your Bible and do these things:

1. On a separate sheet of paper, write down each name that you see.
2. With each name, write Paul's description of how the person helped him or contributed to the work of the gospel in general.

Note: You may want to make a chart similar to this one, including a column labeled "My Roll Call." We'll get to that column in a moment.

Name	Description/Contribution	My Roll Call

The So What

Take a minute to write down your initial impressions of this passage. What strikes you about the amount of people Paul named? What strikes you about how Paul described these people? Of all these people, do any especially stand out to you?

If you were to write a chapter similar to this chapter in Romans, naming and thanking people for the spiritual impact they've made in your life, what kind of chapter would it be? Would it be short or long? Boring or invigorating?

Use these steps below to apply Romans 16 to your life and to write your own chapter.

1. Reread the names of Paul's helpers on your list along with their descriptions. Then, using the column labeled "My Roll Call," write the name of anyone in your life who fits any of Paul's descriptions.

2. Think of all the people involved in your life spiritually. Some of these may be people you just now listed in your roll call column. Make a list similar to Paul's: Write a name, and then write a sentence or two describing how that person has impacted your faith journey. Then take it one step further: write each person a note sharing how he or she has impacted you; express your gratitude for their roles in your life.

3. Maybe you're like a lot of people: you don't really have a roll call list similar to Paul's, but because we're not to do this thing alone, you might want to think about doing some things that will put you in a position eventually to have a list such as this. Admittedly, as a teen, you haven't had a lot of years to collect people who've helped you in your faith walk. What's sad, though, is that many people who've walked with God for a long time still don't have a long list or any list at all. By starting now, you can be sure not to be one of those people.

Seal the Deal

Let's turn the table just slightly. What can you do to be on someone else's roll call of spiritual impact? If your friends were to make similar lists, would your name be on any of them? Close your time by asking God to show you how to come alongside others in their faith walks. Remember: It takes a village; No man is an island; and a cord of three strands is not quickly broken.