

ADULT GUIDE

WHICH WAY, LORD?

Exploring Your Life's Purpose in the Journeys of Paul

A photograph of a wooden boat, possibly a rowing boat, on a body of water. The boat is dark brown and has two oars visible. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter blue with some clouds. The boat is in the foreground, and the background is a vast expanse of water and sky.

Brandon Baxter

ADULT GROUP GUIDE

WHICH WAY, LORD?

Exploring Your Life's Purpose in
the Journeys of Paul

BRANDON BAXTER

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NASHVILLE

WHICH WAY, LORD? EXPLORING YOUR LIFE'S PURPOSE IN THE JOURNEYS OF PAUL

Adult Group Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Which Way, Lord? Exploring Your Life's Purpose in the Journeys of Paul*, a group study resource designed by pastor and author Rob Fuquay. This six-part series focuses on the faith life and missionary ministry of the apostle Paul. Participants will learn about the amazing story of Paul's conversion to faith in Christ and his subsequent devotion to spreading the gospel throughout the Mediterranean region. Reflecting on Paul's call to ministry will encourage participants to consider God's purposes for their lives.

This adult study guide is designed for use alongside the study book *Which Way, Lord?* and its companion DVD. In the video, Pastor Rob takes viewers on a virtual tour of Paul's hometown of Tarsus, the places he lived, and the various sites he visited during his missionary journeys. The video immerses participants in the sights and sounds of the settings where Paul came to understand God's direction for his life.

OVERVIEW FOR FACILITATORS

This adult study guide includes lesson outlines for six primary sessions written to coincide with each book chapter and video segment. An optional introductory session is also included. The entire study may be completed in six or seven weekly meetings, depending on the needs and preferences of the facilitator. Groups that already meet on a regular basis may wish to forgo the optional introductory session, whereas groups gathering for the first time may benefit from the additional opportunity to get acquainted.

Rob encourages participants to use GPS, or God's Positioning System, to find God's purposes for their lives. Each session is built around this theme and includes the following GPS components:

- Finding Our Location (Gathering and opening prayer)
- Setting Our Destination (Focusing thoughts and scripture)
- Getting on the Road (DVD and discussion)
- Recalculating (Book discussion)
- Taking the Best Route (Spiritual practice)
- Reaching Our Destination (Closing prayer)
- Detour: Extended-time activity

Sessions are designed to last one hour but can be shortened or lengthened. This gives the facilitator flexibility to adjust the lessons for a variety of study settings. Each section includes suggested times for completing an activity.

- For a 45-minute session, follow the shorter suggested time (for example, if the section's time frame shows a range of 7 to 10 minutes, choose 7 minutes).
- For an hour-long session, follow the longer time (for example, if the section's time frame shows a range of 7 to 10 minutes, choose 10 minutes).
- The additional "Detour" activity found at the end of each session may be added into the schedule at any point at the discretion of the facilitator.

If you choose to conduct 45-minute sessions, you may not have time to discuss every question provided in each section. Therefore, start with the questions that you think will be most fruitful.

The discussion questions and activities are best suited to small groups of ten to fifteen people. When using the series with larger groups, the facilitator may choose to form smaller groups for optimal participation.

Be sure the meeting space has the appropriate audiovisual equipment for watching the DVD. You will find it helpful to have markers and flip chart paper (or a dry-erase board) on which to write the discussion questions for everyone to see. You may also decide to record participant responses to questions.

INTRODUCTORY SESSION

(Optional)

This session is designed to welcome participants to the study. It includes time for personal introductions, an overview of the study materials, and a review of the schedule for the coming weeks.

If participants are new to one another, you may begin with a time for socializing. This could be as simple as a short time of gathering and conversation beforehand or as elaborate as sharing a meal together. Alternatively, this could be done after the introductory session has concluded.

WELCOME AND PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS

Thank everyone for being present. Introduce yourself and tell the group why you are excited to be facilitating this series.

Begin with introductions. Have everyone say his or her name and tell about a memorable trip they have taken, including where they went and why it was so memorable.

After completing the introductions, read the following aloud:

Thank you all for introducing yourselves and telling us about some of your most memorable trips. We began by talking about trips because we are getting ready to take one together. We are going on a journey. Of course we can take this journey without getting in the car or jumping on a plane. This will be a journey of the mind and of the soul as we begin to discern God's purposes for our lives. Before we begin, let's open with prayer.

Read the opening prayer aloud:

Dear God, we give thanks for this opportunity to come together to read, pray, talk, laugh, and grow in our faith. We know that you are present as we gather here. Help us sense your Spirit as you lead us in new directions. Amen.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY SERIES

Read the following aloud:

Our tour guide on this journey will be Rob Fuquay, the pastor and author who developed this study series. It is titled *Which Way, Lord? Exploring Your Life's Purpose in the Journeys of Paul*. In this series, Rob will take us on a virtual expedition with the apostle Paul as we learn about his life and missionary ministry. In our study book you will read about key moments in Paul's life and how they shaped his understanding of God's call on his life. In each of our sessions, we will watch a video in which Rob will take us to the places we read about in the book. You will get to see the places and landscapes where Paul's ministry occurred.

Rob will explain how God used Paul to share the gospel of Christ throughout the Mediterranean region. In the book and the videos, he will pose a variety of questions designed to help us think about God's purposes for our lives. We will discuss some of these questions with one another as we explore what it means to follow Christ.

Discuss the following questions with the entire group:

- **What aspects of Paul's life do you already know about?**
- **Why do you think Pastor Rob chose to focus on Paul in a study about finding God's purposes for our lives?**

Say these words:

Because we are on a spiritual journey with one another, Rob suggests that we use GPS to discern in what direction God is leading us. For our purposes, GPS stands for God's Positioning System. The GPS metaphor will provide the structure for our weekly meetings as well.

Explain the basic GPS components for each session:

- **Finding Our Location (Gathering and opening prayer)**
- **Setting Our Destination (Focusing thoughts and scripture)**
- **Getting on the Road (DVD and discussion)**
- **Recalculating (Book discussion)**
- **Taking the Best Route (Spiritual practice)**
- **Reaching Our Destination (Closing prayer)**
- **Detour: Extended-time activity**

If you have purchased study books for the group, now is an appropriate time to hand them out. If participants have already purchased their own books, ask them to open their books to the table of contents. If

books are not yet available, the facilitator can simply pass around his or her own copy for perusal. Say the following:

We will meet for six sessions. In the study book you will find an introduction and six chapters. We will study one chapter each week. Our sessions will work best if everyone comes prepared. I highly recommend that you read before coming to each session. It will also help you and the group process to answer the reflection questions at the end of each chapter. Because some of our discussion questions will overlap with these reflection questions, answering them ahead of time will jump-start our conversations. Be sure to bring your study book with you each week, along with your Bible.

Discuss the following questions with the entire group:

- **Knowing this study is designed to help you discover your purposes, what do you hope to get out of this study?**
- **What do you think it means to live with purpose?**

Say the following:

By the conclusion of the series, we hope to have a clear idea of what it means for each of us to live with purpose. Following in the footsteps of Paul, we will find this purpose in God known through Jesus Christ. In addition to reading each week, I will invite you to participate in spiritual practices that will strengthen your relationships with God. Spiritual practice plays an important role in discerning God's call on your lives. We will talk more about that at our first session.

To prepare for next week, simply read the introduction, "Locating Your Starting Point," and session 1, "Consulting Your GPS." Come ready to contribute to a lively discussion.

Make sure everyone knows when and where the next session takes place. Ask if anyone has any questions or concerns. Address these as needed.

Thank everyone for participating. Remind participants to read the material for next week. Also remind them to bring their study books and their Bibles with them.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask if participants have any prayer concerns they would like to share with the group.

Read the closing prayer aloud:

God of new beginnings, we are excited to begin this journey. Guide our steps as we walk this road together. By your Spirit, meet us in our reading, studying, praying, and gathering together. By your grace, open our hearts and minds to your purposes for our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

SESSION ONE

Preparing for Purpose

FINDING OUR LOCATION (5 MINUTES)

Welcome everyone to the first session with these words:

Welcome to session 1 of *Which Way, Lord?*. In this series we will journey along with the apostle Paul as we learn about his incredible life of faithful devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of a life-changing encounter with Jesus, Paul found new purpose. In a few minutes we will watch a short video in which Pastor Rob Fuquay will take us to the places where Paul's incredible journey began. Rob opens the video with the following question: "What is the purpose of my life?" This question will inform all we do in the next six weeks. As we learn together about the ministry of the apostle Paul, we hope to gain insight into God's purposes for our lives as well.

If you did not use the introductory session and your group members are new to one another, invite participants to state their names and one interesting fact about themselves. Also provide a brief overview of the general session layout. Explain how sessions are built around the GPS theme (see the "Overview for Facilitators" in the introduction if you need a refresher).

If time allows, invite participants to spend a few moments in silence thinking about the question "What is the purpose of my life?" before praying.

Read the opening prayer aloud:

Dear God, we give thanks for the opportunity to gather together in your presence and in the presence of one another. Today we begin a journey of discovery. We pray your guidance to find the

paths we are to follow. As you did with the apostle Paul, we know you have equipped and called each of us for a life of faith, devotion, service, and mission. Guide us as we seek our purposes in you. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

SETTING OUR DESTINATION (7-10 MINUTES)

Say the following:

As we embark on this journey together, we need to establish our beginning location. It will benefit us to consider where we are in our lives and where we might be headed. In today's video, Rob says we are all on a road. Let's begin by determining what roads we are on.

Invite participants to get into groups of three to four, and discuss the following question:

If you were to think of your life as a road, in what direction would you be headed right now? Explain your answer.

After groups have had a few minutes to discuss, invite a few individuals to share what they discovered about their "road" with the larger group. Say the following:

We begin our journey with the apostle Paul standing in the middle of a road. Paul, then known as Saul, was a devoutly religious Pharisee who had been persecuting followers of Jesus Christ, the Way. As Saul was traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus to arrest more persons, he had a life-changing encounter with the risen Christ.

Have someone read Acts 9:1-9 aloud to the group. Say the following:

As we will see in a few moments, Paul's encounter with Jesus turned his life in an entirely new direction. It sent him down roads that he would never before have imagined traveling.

Invite participants to consider the following statement as you begin the video:

Now that you know the road on which you are currently traveling, think about what new directions you hope to take in the future.

GETTING ON THE ROAD (18–20 MINUTES)

Play “Session 1: Preparing for Purpose” on the DVD. After the video, discuss the following as a group:

- **We heard on the video that after Ananias restored Paul’s vision, Paul went to Arabia for three years where he spent time seeking God’s guidance. Do you have a place you go to listen for the Holy Spirit? If not, where might such a place be for you?**
- **Paul found a friend in Barnabas, someone who believed in and supported Paul’s newfound direction. Who are the people that walk life’s road with you? Who will support you as you seek God’s direction for your life?**

RECALCULATING (7–12 MINUTES)

Say the following:

Chapter 1 in our study book explains that Paul spent up to seventeen years between the time of his conversion to Christ and the beginning of his missionary journeys. Rob suggests that this was a time for Paul to “knit together” what he already knew about God from Hebrew scripture and what had been newly revealed to him in his encounter with Jesus Christ. During this time Paul found his purpose in God.

Invite participants to rejoin their groups of three to four, and discuss the following questions:

- **Why do you think Paul waited so long before embarking on his missions? What value is there in waiting before acting?**
- **How have you come to know God through scripture? How have you come to know God through prayer and personal experience? How do these experiences work together to reveal God’s presence in your life?**

As time allows, invite several individuals to share their observations with the entire group. Say the following:

In our study book, Rob writes, “First of all, let’s understand that when we spend time as Paul did—praying, meditating, studying, talking, listening, growing—we aren’t unlocking the mystery to our purpose. We are already living out our purpose! God made us for relationship with God and one another and to revel in the life God has given us.”

Invite the entire group to discuss the following questions:

- **What do you think about this statement? Do you agree that we are already living out our purposes when we pray, study, listen, and grow? Why or why not?**

TAKING THE BEST ROUTE (5–8 MINUTES)

Say the following:

As we close each session, we will spend time exploring ways to put our faith into practice as we grow into God’s purposes for our lives. If you have ever used GPS in your car, then you know that it always suggests the best route to reach your destination. Sometimes it will offer a new route, even in the middle of your trip, if there is traffic, a closed road, or some other obstacle ahead. We will consult God’s Positioning System each week for the best routes on our life roads.

Rob writes, “Living out a purpose of knowing God means we also desire what God desires.” This statement helps us understand why he says that we are already living out our purposes when we spend time being attentive to God. God’s purpose for Paul did not end with his seventeen years in Arabia and Tarsus. This was only the beginning of Paul’s mission. Yet Paul discovered the scope of God’s purpose for his life only through a deepening relationship with God as made known in Jesus Christ.

Rob has shown us that Paul’s preparation for his missionary journeys included three key components: time, place, and spiritual practices. These three components will help us find the best route on life’s road in the weeks ahead. In the coming week I encourage you to designate a time and a place where you can engage in practices that strengthen your relationship with God. You will return to this time and place throughout weeks ahead for additional discernment.

Invite participants to pair up and discuss the following:

- **Identify three times this week that you can set aside for showing attentiveness to God. What will help you remember to do this?**
- **Identify the place or location where you intend to spend this time.**
- **Identify some spiritual practices that will help you center yourself with God. Examples include scripture reading, silent or verbal prayer, listening to worship music, and writing in a journal.**

Say the following:

When we gather next week, we will share some of our experiences of setting aside a time, a place, and a practice for seeking God.

REACHING OUR DESTINATION (3–5 MINUTES)

Thank everyone for a wonderful first session. Remind everyone to read chapter 2 in the study book for next week and to set aside three times to spend in God’s presence.

Ask if participants have any prayer concerns they would like to share with the group.

Read the closing prayer aloud:

Gracious Lord, as we prepare to leave this place and head back out onto the road of life, we pray that your Spirit will be with us. Guide our every step as we continue our journeys of seeking your purposes for our lives. Help us remember that you are always with us, drawing us into closer

relationship with you each day. We pray that like the apostle Paul we would encounter Jesus along our way. Open our hearts and minds to what Christ is revealing about our purposes in life. By your Spirit, may we respond to your call upon our lives. Amen.

DETOUR: EXTENDED-TIME ACTIVITY

Create and share personal mission statements.

In chapter 1, Rob suggests that one way to know why we are here is to develop a personal mission statement. If participants have not already written a statement during the week, invite them to work on these statements during your session. Ask them to turn to the section of chapter 1 titled “Crafting a Personal Mission Statement” and follow Rob’s guidelines.

Invite participants to take turns sharing their mission statements with the entire group. Ask them to explain how their statements could inform their purposes.

SESSION TWO

Taking Stock

FINDING OUR LOCATION (5 MINUTES)

Welcome everyone back for session 2 with these words:

It's good to see everyone again as we resume our journey. I hope you had a chance to spend some time last week being attentive to God's presence. Perhaps you have already begun to discover some new roads down which God may be leading you. You could be at a rest stop discovering what God has to reveal. Maybe you are on the same road as you were last week. Wherever you are on your journey, be assured that God is with you. Before we begin this week's topic, is someone willing to share an experience or insight you may have had in the past week during your time spent with God?

Allow several minutes for two or three participants to share their thoughts with the group. Transition to this week's lesson by saying the following:

Thanks to those of you who were willing to share with us. Continuing to find a time and a place to welcome God's prompting Spirit is key to discovering our purposes. As our relationships with God deepen, we also begin to learn something about ourselves. We become aware of the truth that we are uniquely created children of God. Today we will consider who we are and what aspects of ourselves may contribute to God's purposes for our lives.

Pray the following prayer aloud:

Creator God, we give thanks for the gift of life. You have fearfully and wonderfully made us in your image. Reveal to us those aspects of our being that you might use to accomplish your purposes through us. Help us remember whose we are so that we may understand who we are. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

SETTING OUR DESTINATION (7–10 MINUTES)

Say the following:

In chapter 2 of our study book, Rob uses a cooking metaphor to help us think about the “ingredients” that make up who we are. He suggests that some people attempt to live life as if there were a perfect recipe for success. He writes, “The problem comes when the ingredients—the abilities and traits required—don’t necessarily line up with who they are.” He advises that a different way to live life is to begin with the ingredients we have on hand. Let’s start today by considering what ingredients we bring to the table.

Invite participants to pair up and answer the following questions:

- **What are the ingredients that go into the recipe of your life? What are some of the traits that make you who you are?**
- **Which ingredients do you like the most? Which ones are the easiest to work with?**
- **Are there any ingredients you dislike? Which ones are the hardest to work with?**

If time allows, invite persons to share any insights about their “ingredients” with the entire group. Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 4:7 aloud to the group. Say the following:

In this verse, Paul reminds us that everything about us is a gift from God. Paul spoke from experience. He knew that God had used his unique gifts for purposes well beyond his own imagining. Rob says that the ingredients Paul’s personality comprised were strange ones for an apostle. But God used “everything about Paul’s life to carry out a purpose of sharing with the world the message of hope through Jesus Christ.” Today’s video will show how Paul’s particular background, personality, and skills informed his purpose.

Invite participants to consider the following statement as you begin the video:

Having identified the ingredients that make up the person God has made you to be, consider what your life might look like if you were to dedicate your whole self to God’s purposes.

GETTING ON THE ROAD (16–18 MINUTES)

Play “Session 2: Taking Stock” on the DVD. After the video, discuss the following as a group:

- **We learned that Paul was from Tarsus, a place where he would have been exposed to a wide range of cultural, political, religious, and philosophical forces. Rob explained how living there may have influenced Paul’s worldview. How do the places we come from shape who we are? Do you still identify closely with the place from which you come? Why or why not?**
- **The video explained that Paul (then Saul) was in Jerusalem when he oversaw the stoning of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. Rob suggested that Jerusalem would have reminded Paul of his previous shortcomings. How do our mistakes contribute to our growth? What does Paul’s story have to teach us about God’s ability to use all our experiences, both good and bad?**

RECALCULATING (9–14 MINUTES)

Say the following:

By this point in our session you have had a chance to consider some of the traits and experiences that contribute to your personalities. We know from Paul’s example that God can use us just as we are if we are open to the Spirit’s leading. In our study book, Pastor Rob suggests that an inventory of our gifts and passions is the next step in finding God’s direction for our lives. Rob suggests using GPS to do this, only this time GPS stands for Gifts, Passions, and Style.

We are going to spend a few minutes in pairs working on our inventories. Take turns identifying your gifts, passions, and style. Rob defines *gifts* as “traits and abilities God places in people to benefit others.” He defines *passion* as “what stirs your soul.” He says *style* is “the way we work and accomplish tasks.” Your inventory will help you discern how you can best serve God’s purposes in your life.

Invite participants to pair up and discuss the components of their GPS inventory.

- **What are your gifts? Identify at least two.** (Direct participants to Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 for Paul’s description of spiritual gifts.)
- **What are you passionate about? What makes you come alive?**
- **What is your style? Identify three aspects of the way you work.**

If time allows, invite participants to share insights from their GPS inventories with the group.

Say the following:

Understanding ourselves is an important part of finding our purposes. Rob reminds us that the attitude in which we live is of equal importance. He says that if we don’t have a servant’s heart, our actions can become self-serving. He reminds us that we are followers of Jesus Christ who came not to be served but to serve. Jesus challenged his followers to continue his mission of bringing hope to the world.

Discuss the following questions as a group:

- **What are some characteristics of a servant's heart?**
- **How is an attitude of service crucial to living out our purposes as followers of Jesus Christ?**

TAKING THE BEST ROUTE (5–8 MINUTES)

Say the following:

Last week you were encouraged to find a time and place to seek God's presence. In the coming week you will be encouraged to continue that spiritual rhythm. Your time this week will focus on discerning how God is calling you to serve Christ's mission in the world.

In a moment I will invite you to pair up again with the person with whom you identified your gifts, passions, and style. You will work together to craft three focus thoughts to use this week during your discernment time with God. Reflect on what you have discovered about yourself today as you create your focus thoughts. You will begin each time of discernment this week by meditating on one of these thoughts. I hope this will create space for the Spirit to aid you in making connections between your unique being and God's call on your life.

Invite participants to work in pairs to complete three focus thoughts according to the following categories. Suggest that each pair write down their focus thoughts. You may provide some blank paper or invite them to record these in their study books.

- **A focus thought that affirms your identity as a child of God (for example, At my best and at my worst, God loves me the same).**
- **A focus thought that reminds you to embrace a servant's heart (for example, Lord, tune my heart to know how I may live for you).**
- **A focus thought that acknowledges God's desire to help you find your purpose (for example, God will be my guide).**

If time allows, have some participants share their focus thoughts with the entire group. Participants may want to amend their focus thoughts according to what they hear from others. Say the following:

We will begin next week's session by sharing some of our ongoing discoveries about how God wants to use our one-of-a-kind personalities, abilities, gifts, and experiences.

REACHING OUR DESTINATION (3–5 MINUTES)

Thank everyone for a good discussion. Remind participants to read chapter 3 for next week and to use their focus thoughts to guide their discernment in the coming week.

Ask if participants have any prayer concerns they would like to share with the group.

Read the closing prayer aloud:

Dear God, you know us better than we know ourselves. Help us discern the potential you see in each of us. We thank you for the example of the apostle Paul who offered his entire being to your service. Help us know where our whole being fits into your greater purposes for humankind and all of creation. We join Paul as we pray that the same mind that was in Christ may be in us. Amen.

DETOUR: EXTENDED-TIME ACTIVITY

Make a group “mosaic.”

This activity requires a different-colored marker for each participant, one large sheet of flip chart or butcher paper, and tape or another adhesive. Say the following:

In today’s video, Rob suggests that your life is like a mosaic. In a mosaic, small pieces of colored glass or tile are used to create a picture. Rob says your background, influences, skills, and abilities form the unique pattern of your life. Our group forms a mosaic of its own as each person brings these aspects of themselves to the group.

Do the following:

- Attach the large piece of paper to the wall.
- Give everyone a different-colored marker.
- Ask participants to come up front and begin to write words and/or draw pictures that represent as many different aspects of themselves as they can think of. Allow the group at least five minutes to do this.

After everyone has finished (or after the paper is filled), spend some time looking at the mosaic and pointing out some of the unique gifts and experiences represented in this group. Remind the group of the amazing potential for serving God that exists among this group.

SESSION THREE

Facing Adversity

FINDING OUR LOCATION (5 MINUTES)

Welcome the group back for session 3 with these words:

Hello, everyone. We are already nearing the halfway point of our journey together. By now some of you may be getting a better idea about God's purposes for your lives. Still others may feel unsure about their direction. Remember that Paul spent up to seventeen years with God discerning his purpose. We are only three weeks in! The important thing is to continue seeking God's guidance. This past week you were encouraged to use some focus thoughts to guide your ongoing discernment. Is someone willing to share what you discovered this past week?

Allow several minutes for two or three participants to share their thoughts with the group. Transition to this week's lesson by saying the following:

Thank you for being willing to share your experiences. Discovering more about God's purposes for us can be exciting and life-giving. However, just because we are following God's lead doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be easy. In fact, sometimes God's way is harder than we anticipated. We may face challenges or encounter resistance. Today we will learn more about some of the adversity that Paul faced in his own journeys. We will consider what it means to follow God even when the going gets tough.

Pray this prayer aloud:

Guiding God, you have already brought us so far, and yet we have much further to go. Grant us the courage to continue following the path laid before us even when we are not exactly sure where it is leading. Be with us when the road gets rocky. Strengthen us in times of adversity. Help us answer your call even when we are uncertain of our readiness and wary of the challenges. Amen.

SETTING OUR DESTINATION (7-10 MINUTES)

Say the following:

When we watch today’s video, Rob will begin by asking us if we have ever said yes to God without knowing what that yes would mean. In chapter 3 we read that after fourteen years of preparation in Tarsus, Barnabas came looking for Paul. Barnabas encouraged Paul to join him in mission. Rob wonders if even after all that time Paul still had doubts about his call. Would people accept the authenticity of his conversion? Did he have the gifts and abilities necessary for the task? Was he ready to face the potential challenges?

Rob writes, “I doubt most calls are so resounding that we know to follow them beyond any shadow of doubt. In fact, we may not respond to some calls for a reason; we interpret our hesitation as a sense of unpreparedness.” Ultimately, following Christ is not a matter of certainty or security. Rather, it is a journey that requires faith and risk. Even if he did have doubts, Paul still followed when Barnabas sought him out.

Invite participants to work in groups of three or four, and answer the following questions:

- **When have you answered yes to a call from God without knowing exactly what that yes would mean? Describe that experience.**
- **When have you sensed God’s call but hesitated to respond? What caused that hesitation?**
- **When have you felt sure of God’s call to a specific purpose, task, or mission—only to face major challenges and resistance? What happened? Where did you sense God in the midst of it all?**

If time allows, invite persons to share some of their thoughts with the entire group. Ask someone to read Romans 8:28 aloud. Say the following:

Paul speaks from experience in this verse. In his own efforts to follow Jesus and share the gospel of grace and love, Paul ran into his fair share of trouble. At times he received pushback from other followers of Christ. He was driven out of places that did not accept his message. He was even imprisoned. Yet through it all he saw the gospel take root in the churches he helped plant during his missions. Paul saw firsthand how God works through challenging circumstances when we strive to live into God’s purposes.

Invite participants to consider the following statement as you begin the video:

As you continue to ponder God’s purposes for your lives, think about the uncertainties and challenges that might deter you from following where Christ would lead. Consider how God might transform these into opportunities for service and mission.

GETTING ON THE ROAD (18–20 MINUTES)

Play “Session 3: Facing Adversity” on the DVD. After the video, discuss the following as a group:

- **We heard that the apostles sent Barnabas to Antioch to check in on a church formed by Christ followers who had fled persecution in Jerusalem. Barnabas invited Paul to come to this church made up of the very people he had once persecuted! Why do you think they embraced Paul? How do you think this affected him? What power resides in a community that doesn’t remember a person for their mistakes but affirms their potential? Have you experienced a community like this? What are the qualities of such people?**
- **Rob took us to Lystra where Paul and Barnabas faced trouble when they were mistaken for the gods Hermes and Zeus. Some religious leaders exploited this misunderstanding to turn the crowds against Paul and Barnabas. Have you ever tried to make a difference in people’s lives only to be misunderstood? How did you respond? What did you learn about the relationship between human expectations and the ways of God?**

RECALCULATING (7–12 MINUTES)

Say the following:

Everything about Paul’s ministry seems to have defied expectations. His ministry of leadership began among people he had once persecuted. He advocated for sharing the grace of Jesus Christ with all persons. But defying expectations was not an easy thing to do. In chapter 3 of our study book, Rob reminds us that when Paul reflected upon his first missionary journey, he realized that he and Barnabas had learned a lesson about relying on God and not on themselves.

It is well and good for us to discern what characteristics of ourselves might contribute to God’s purposes for our lives. Yet Paul’s experiences remind us that we need God to face the challenges that come with being followers of Christ. Rob writes that “your God-given strengths and opportunities . . . can also be sources of temptation that encourage self-reliance.” Rob says that God called Paul to assignments bigger than Paul could accomplish on his own. We too will need to rely on God if we hope to live out our purposes.

Invite participants to get back into their groups of three or four, and discuss the following questions:

- **How might Paul and Barnabas’s mission have been different had they relied only on their own gifts and initiatives?**

- **How would you describe what it means to rely on God? What are the characteristics of a person who relies on God? Do you believe reliance on God comes naturally, or does it take intentional effort?**
- **What do you make of Rob's suggestion that our God-given strengths and opportunities can actually get in the way of our reliance on God? How have you experienced this in your own faith journey?**

If time allows, invite participants to share their insights with the entire group. Say the following:

During his second mission, Paul's ministry stretched as far as the European continent when outside Philippi he baptized Lydia and her family. Despite many difficulties, his missions continued to bear fruit. They also generated hardship for Paul and his companions.

In Philippi, Paul liberated a young girl from slavery. He and Silas were charged with disturbing the peace and thrown in jail. Rather than resigning themselves to defeat, Paul and Silas sang songs of praise to God. At midnight an earthquake opened the gates of the prison cells, giving Paul the chance to flee; but instead, he used his freedom as an opportunity to witness to the jailer who kept watch over him. Thanks to Paul's faithful actions, this jailer and his family came to know the grace of Jesus Christ.

As a group, discuss the following:

- **When have you witnessed God working for the good in the midst of seemingly impossible odds? In what ways?**
- **How might your life be different if you praised God every step along your road of life?**

TAKING THE BEST ROUTE (5-8 MINUTES)

Say the following:

Rob reminds us that *adversity* does not mean "obstacle." Sometimes what appears to be a roadblock turns out to be a fresh opportunity for God to work in and through our lives. As you continue to spend time with God this week in contemplation and discernment, you are encouraged to begin by considering those challenges that appear to be obstacles to living out your purposes. These seeming obstacles may have to do with your uncertainty about your abilities or gifts. They may have to do with your tendency toward self-reliance. They may be resistance from outside forces or people. No matter their origin, spend some time this week giving them to God and asking how God can transform them into new opportunities to rely on God's purposes.

Invite participants to spend a few minutes to complete the following task:

Identify three challenges that appear to be obstacles keeping you from finding your purpose.

When the group members have identified three challenges, invite them to share these with one another in their subgroups of three or four.

If time allows, invite the subgroups to make suggestions as to how one another's challenges might actually be an opportunity for God's purposes. Say the following:

When we begin our session next week, you will be invited to share about how God offers you new perspectives on the seeming obstacles in your journeys. Together we will gain a better understanding of what it means to rely on God.

REACHING OUR DESTINATION (3-5 MINUTES)

Thank participants for their engagement with a difficult topic. Remind them to read chapter 4 for next week. Also encourage them to lift up in prayer one of their perceived obstacles during each of their discernment times in the coming week.

Ask participants if they have any prayer concerns to share with the group. Read the closing prayer aloud:

Blessed Lord, you met Paul on the road to Damascus and transformed his entire life. When he answered your call, you continued to do the unexpected through him. You also called him to do the unexpected. May we rely on you as you call us to purposes much larger than ourselves. Turn our gifts, our efforts, our shortcomings, and even our challenges into opportunities for sharing your message of love and hope with a hurting world. In the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who brings life out of death and makes all things new, we pray. Amen.

DETOUR: EXTENDED-TIME ACTIVITY

Become a Barnabas.

Say the following:

We have learned the significance of Barnabas's encouragement to Paul. He may never have set out on any missions were it not for his friend. Members of this group can offer similar encouragement to one another.

Do the following:

- Pair participants together as Barnabas partners. For an odd number of participants, create one group of three.
- Have partners exchange postal addresses, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, or any other contact information they feel comfortable sharing. One form of communication will be enough.
- Have partners discuss some of the ways they have encountered discouragement, disappointment, or uncertainty in their search for purpose.
- Partners plan to send messages and signs of encouragement to one another in the coming weeks.

An alternate process: If participants prefer not to share contact information, suggest that they plan to bring messages and signs of encouragement to future sessions.

SESSION FOUR

Dealing with Detours

FINDING OUR LOCATION (5 MINUTES)

Welcome everyone back for session 4 with these words:

Our journey together continues as we learn to rely more on God's ability to lead us toward new purposes for our lives. Last week we discovered the crucial nature of our our reliance on God. Following the way of Jesus means facing challenges. But God can turn obstacles into opportunities. Last week you were encouraged to begin your discernment times by lifting up these seeming obstacles to God in prayer. Would someone be willing to share how God has been revealing new purposes for old barriers in your own life?

Allow several minutes for two or three participants to share their thoughts with the group. Transition to this week's lesson by saying the following:

Facing adversity is not the only occasion for our reliance on God. As we follow God's directions for our lives, we sometimes feel lost. Just when we think we have figured out our purposes, God leads us to a place that seems like a dead end. We find ourselves wondering if we have made a mistake. Today we will examine the potential for detours along our journey. We will learn about some of the detours along Paul's missionary routes and discover how God's directions can lead us down surprising roads.

Pray this prayer aloud:

Dear Lord, we long to follow wherever you will lead us. We confess that we do not always understand your ways. Sometimes it feels as though we have walked down the wrong road. Help us believe that relying on you means trusting in the twists and turns along life's road. Reveal your purposes in the detours along our way. Thanks be to God. Amen.

SETTING OUR DESTINATION (7-10 MINUTES)

Say the following:

Today we are going to examine a time when God sent Paul on a detour to a place called Troas. Paul and Barnabas successfully defended their mission to include both Jews and Gentiles in the emerging Christian church. Upon hearing their testimony of the Holy Spirit's work among Gentiles, a council in Jerusalem agreed that Gentiles wishing to follow Jesus were exempt from certain Jewish customs.

Bolstered by this victory, Paul was reenergized to continue his mission among the Gentiles. He knew just the place to go for a successful mission: Bithynia. He figures this heavily populated province of the Roman Empire would gratefully receive his message. Yet the book of Acts tells us that after determining to go to Bithynia, the Spirit of Jesus did not allow it. So instead, Paul continued on to Troas.

Invite participants to pair up and discuss the following questions:

- **What do you make of the notion that the Spirit of Jesus did not allow Paul to go to Bithynia? What does this mean? How do you think Paul was able to sense that God wanted him to bypass Bithynia?**
- **Have you ever believed that God was sending you in one direction only to discover that you needed to change course? Describe that experience. How did you know you were being redirected?**
- **What might prevent us from altering our paths even if we sense God nudging us in unexpected directions?**

If time allows, invite persons to share some of their thoughts with the entire group. Ask someone to read Philippians 3:13-14 aloud to the group. Say the following:

In our study book Rob explains, "Paul [had] an uncanny ability not to dwell on the past or what might have been." Even though Jesus put up a roadblock that kept Paul from his chosen destination, he pressed on to Troas. Troas was not Paul's first choice. But as we will see, Troas became a significant stop along Paul's missionary journey. God used Paul's detour for maximum benefit.

Invite participants to consider the following statement as you begin the video:

Detours are often a part of our journey with God. Consider whether God may be leading you in a new direction.

GETTING ON THE ROAD (14-16 MINUTES)

Play “Session 4: Dealing with Detours” on the DVD. After the video, discuss the following as a group:

- **We know that Paul wanted to go to Bithynia but settled on Troas as the next-best option. Rob thinks Paul used his intellect and reason when deciding on Troas as a place that had potential for sharing the gospel. But before long God called him away to Macedonia. How do you think Paul’s intellect played a role in leading him to Troas? How did the Spirit use Paul’s reasonable decisions to further Paul’s mission? How do we work alongside God in discerning our next move when we feel lost?**
- **What is your initial reaction when you hit a roadblock and end up having to go to your own Troas? What do you think kept Paul moving ahead? What does it mean to keep taking steps forward even when you can’t go the way you wanted?**

RECALCULATING: BOOK DISCUSSION (10-16 MINUTES)

Say the following:

How can we find doors of opportunity in life’s detours? Paul did because he willingly gave up his preconceived itinerary. Rob explains, “Failing to let go of a dream can keep us from embracing new opportunities, but failing to let go of our best-laid plans can do the same. Failing to plan is planning to fail, but a rigid determination to stick to a plan can crowd out opportunities for God to use us.”

Letting go of our plans is easier said than done. The world in which we live values efficiency, predictability, and results. Detours are not part of the equation. And yet, life’s detours offer likely encounters with the Spirit of Christ.

Invite participants to pair up again, and discuss the following:

- **How does planning inform your everyday life? What is good about having a plan? When might a plan become a barrier to God’s purposes for your life?**
- **Do you feel that you have time for detours in your life? Why or why not?**
- **Do you think you have ever missed an opportunity to serve God because you failed to take a detour? If so, explain how.**
- **Rob says Paul knew that no path removes us from God’s direction. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.**

If time allows, invite participants to share their insights with the entire group. Follow up with these words:

Rob says the key to embracing detours is to believe God will do something better with us. He suggests that we all live with the fear of taking the wrong path. We wonder what could have been if we had taken a different path. Others of us fear moving forward lest we choose the wrong direction to go next. Rob says that Paul’s primary concern was “living in the truth of who God called

him to be.” Rob identifies the core of Paul’s purpose as being true to himself. By remaining true to himself, Paul knew God could use him on any path.

As a group, discuss the following:

How do you imagine being true to ourselves as being related to God’s purposes for us? Do you agree that this is an important part of being open to new opportunities for God to work in and through us? Why or why not?

TAKING THE BEST ROUTE (6-8 MINUTES)

Say the following:

For the last three weeks you have been invited to spend time with God discerning your purposes. I hope you have kept that routine and found it helpful. Perhaps it has become a comfortable part of your weekly schedule. You were probably planning to continue that routine this week. But in the spirit of today’s session, you will be encouraged to take a detour.

Rob explained how Paul’s years of preparation prior to his mission allowed him to discern when God wanted him to take a detour. Your own times of preparation over the last three weeks will inform your detour this week. Instead of retreating to your regular places and times for discernment, take a different path. As Paul did when he went to Troas, make a reasonable decision about what your detour will look like. But don’t expect God to leave you there. Let this detour open your hearts and minds to new possibilities.

Invite participants to work in pairs and brainstorm some potential detours you could take this week as informed by your previous discernment. Be creative. If you have trouble thinking of any, ask your partner for some help. Some examples include the following:

- **You have been journaling during your times of discernment and have discovered your passion for writing prayers. You may choose to spend some time this week writing prayers for use at your church.**
- **During your times of discernment, you have felt God calling you to serve the homeless. You may choose to spend some time this week researching opportunities for involvement in a related ministry.**
- **You have come to realize your love of nature; spending time outdoors helps you be the best version of who God has called you to be. You may choose to go on several nature walks this week.**

After creating a list of options, narrow the list down to one or two detours that you will follow this week. Explain your choice to your partner. Make a guess as to what will happen as you follow this detour. If time allows, invite participants to share their detours with the entire group. Say the following:

Before we start our session next week, we will talk about our detours. It will be exciting to see what doors of opportunity God opens as we allow ourselves a chance to be led from our regular paths.

REACHING OUR DESTINATION (3-5 MINUTES)

Thank everyone for another great session. Remind group participants to read chapter 5 for next week and to be sure to follow their detours.

Ask if participants have any prayer concerns they would like to share. Read the closing prayer aloud:

Dear Lord, give us the courage to take the road less traveled. Help us remember that every detour brings a new opportunity to live for you. We believe that you can use us for your purposes wherever we are. We are thankful to be on this road with you. Amen.

DETOUR: EXTENDED-TIME ACTIVITY

Map out life's detours.

Each participant will need a blank sheet of paper and a pen for this activity. Say the following:

Rob suggests that detours can open doors to new opportunities. Sometimes this can be hard to see in the midst of a detour. We most clearly see the benefit of detours in retrospect. Taking time to examine the detours we have taken in the past gives us a better appreciation for their potential.

Do the following:

- Give a blank sheet of paper to each participant.
- Invite each group member to take at least ten minutes to map out the road of his or her life. The road starts at birth and extends to the present.
- encourage participants to mark significant events and milestones.

Once group members have completed their roads, ask them to identify where the detours were. Invite participants to tell some significant detours in their lives. Ask them to explain how these detours contributed to who they are today.

SESSION FIVE

Relying on God

FINDING OUR LOCATION (5 MINUTES)

Welcome everyone back for session 5 with these words:

It's hard to believe, but we have only one session more after today. Before we get back on the road, let's take a few minutes to talk about our detours. Last week you were all encouraged to deviate from your normal patterns of discernment time and take a detour. Is there someone willing to share your detour and what you discovered from the experience?

Allow several minutes for two or three participants to share their thoughts with the group. Transition to this week's lesson by saying the following:

Our detours have opened us to the sense of possibility we discover when we rely on God's direction for our lives. That sense of possibility can be invigorating. It can also be intimidating. The potential that God reveals to us may appear beyond our capabilities. Today we will learn about a time when Paul's abilities and efforts led to disappointing results. Rob says it was a time of crisis for Paul. It was a time that challenged his confidence. There will be times when our own confidence will be challenged as we pursue God's purposes.

Pray this prayer aloud:

God of endless possibilities, you alone know the depth and breadth of our potential. Our obstacles are your opportunities; our detours are your possibilities; and our weaknesses are your strengths. Though our self-confidence may waver, our confidence in you endures. We will depend on you. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

SETTING OUR DESTINATION (7-10 MINUTES)

Say the following:

This far into our journey, some of you may be getting a clearer sense of God's purposes for you. You may be gaining confidence about following Jesus down a new road. Often at this point in our journeys we experience a crisis of confidence. Just when it seems obvious the direction to take, we begin to doubt our ability to move in that direction. We may think to ourselves, *Are you sure you want me to do this, God? Surely you have the wrong person.*

In our study book, Rob connects this feeling to a time when he was climbing up a rocky mountainside in Colorado. He quickly scampered up the incline only to discover he had gotten himself to a point of no return. He could not continue upward, but he wasn't sure he could go down either. Doubt paralyzed him, and he didn't trust himself to make a move. But staying put was not an option. Finally, he made his move and got himself back down the mountain.

Invite participants to get into groups of three or four, and discuss the following:

- **When have you experienced a time of feeling stuck on the side of the proverbial mountain? When have you felt paralyzed by insecurity, fear, and self-doubt? What did you do?**
- **Rob says that when we live with purpose we may find ourselves in situations where we're in over our heads. Have you found this to be true? If so, consider why God leads us to such places.**
- **In your discernment times over the past four weeks, have you sensed God calling you in a direction that feels overwhelming, out of reach, or beyond your abilities? Explain your answer.**

If time allows, invite persons to share some of their thoughts with the entire group. Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 aloud to the group. Say the following:

In chapter 5 we read about Paul's unsuccessful attempt to share the gospel in the city of Athens. We will learn more about that effort in today's video. Paul attempted to present an intellectually sound, well-argued rationale for faith in Jesus Christ to the council of philosophers in Athens. Despite his best efforts, however, Paul had little success. In the verses we just heard from First Corinthians, we recognize a different Paul. After leaving Athens for Corinth, he had learned a valuable lesson. No longer would he rely primarily on his own abilities to make clever arguments. In the future, he would rely on the Holy Spirit to convince people of Christ's gospel of love and grace.

Invite participants to consider the following statement as you begin the video:

Think about your inclination to place confidence in your own abilities. Imagine how your life might be different if you relied primarily on the work of the Holy Spirit.

GETTING ON THE ROAD (16–18 MINUTES)

Play “Session 5: Relying on God” on the DVD. After the video, discuss the following questions as a group:

- **Rob described how intelligently Paul made his case before the council of philosophers. If his argument was so good, why do you think it failed to make an impression?**
- **Rob said the Christian faith is not opposed to thinking but that it ultimately depends on a deeper quality. It depends on a heart open to experiencing God’s love. What does this tell us about our efforts to live out God’s purposes for our lives? How do we open our hearts to God? How do we help others open their hearts to God?**
- **When you feel like giving up, how could this feeling motivate you to rely on Christ more?**

RECALCULATING (9–14 MINUTES)

Say the following:

In our study book, Rob says Paul was a “face person.” By this he means that Paul faced challenges head-on. But Rob says the most difficult opposition we will face is our own internal opponent of self-doubt. Thankfully, we don’t need to face this challenger alone. Rob says, “No matter what our abilities, our greatest asset is our willingness to rely on God. Spiritual dependence always trumps self-reliance—a truth that is contrary to the ways of the world.”

Rob suggests that understanding those parts of our personalities that are most vulnerable to self-doubt helps us know when we will most need to rely on God for help. In chapter 5, Rob lists four categories of personality types. While you may identify with several, you probably lean toward a dominant type. We are going to spend the next few minutes identifying our personality types and discussing how they are related to our self-doubt.

Read the following characteristics of the four personality types:

Type A

- **likes to be in control of his or her environment.**
- **is driven and goal-oriented.**
- **is frustrated by having no clear aim or by wasting time.**

Type B

- **is not easily stressed.**
- **is not motivated by deadlines.**
- **has a strong need to connect with people.**

Type C

- is an introvert.
- likes detail and control.
- is drawn to figuring things out logically.
- likes working with facts and figures more than people.

Type D

- is Distressed.
- prefers sticking with the known and proven.
- experiences instability and change as huge stressors.

Invite participants to answer the following questions in their groups of three or four:

- **With which personality type do you most identify? Why?**
- **Has your personality type ever contributed to feelings of insecurity or self-doubt? If so, how?**
- **What does it mean for someone with your personality type to rely on God?**

If time allows, invite participants to share their insights with the entire group. Say the following:

Insecurity becomes particularly powerful when we compare ourselves to other people. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul advises against this. Comparisons distract us from our own work and purposes. Rob suggests that celebrating others' success is one way to avoid the comparison game.

As a group, discuss the following:

- **How does comparing ourselves to others distract us from our own purposes? How does this relate to the importance of relying on God?**
- **Why do we find it hard to celebrate the successes of others? How can we do this better?**

TAKING THE BEST ROUTE (5-8 MINUTES)

Say the following:

Last week, we took a detour from our regular pattern of discernment time with God. This week, I encourage your return to your regular times and places as you strengthen your connection to God.

The major takeaway from our last two sessions has been that we rely on God above all else. Part of living out God's purposes for our lives is a willingness to face the unknown. We don't know exactly where God will lead us. We don't know exactly how our abilities or personalities will fit a particular task. Still we follow. Rob identifies this as obedience to God. He writes, "The measure of success comes in our *seeking* God rather than in our *servicing* God." In the coming week you will spend time considering what obedience to God entails for your lives.

Invite participants to work in their groups of three or four to complete the following:

- **Identify some words or phrases that describe what it means to be obedient to God.**
- **Using some of your words and phrases, work together to write a short prayer that seeks obedience to God. You will use this prayer to begin your times of discernment in the coming week.**

If time allows, invite the groups to share their prayers with the larger group.

REACHING OUR DESTINATION (3-5 MINUTES)

Thank the group for their good work today. Remind participants to read chapter 6 for next week and to use their obedience prayers as they spend time with God this week.

Ask if participants have any prayer concerns they would like to share. Read the closing prayer aloud:

Gracious God, you are the source of possibility and imagination. Your dreams for your people are beyond our comprehension. Help us obediently pursue your love for us, for others, and for all creation. May your Spirit enable us to rely on you and your astounding purposes for each of us. Amen.

DETOUR: EXTENDED-TIME ACTIVITY

Open our hearts.

Say the following:

Rob says having hearts that are open to God is key to the Christian faith. One way we open our hearts to God is by showing Christ's love to other people. When we share the love of Christ with the world, we create space for God to work in our lives and in the lives of others.

Invite participants to brainstorm ways they could work together as a group to share God's love with others. Some examples include the following:

- Volunteer together at a local mission or an outreach ministry.
- Make and deliver care packages for homebound members of your faith community.
- Write letters to persons in prison.

Choose one idea that best suits the group. Plan to implement your group-ministry effort.

SESSION SIX

Developing Tenacity

FINDING OUR LOCATION (5 MINUTES)

Greet everyone for session 6 with these words:

Welcome back for our last session. Our journey together is quickly coming to a close. I hope you have learned a little about the apostle Paul, strengthened your relationship with God, and gained a better sense of God's purpose for your life. Even though our time together is almost complete, this is only the beginning. Your journeys with Christ continue long after our session concludes today. With that in mind, is someone willing to share something you discovered about being obedient to God during your discernment time this past week?

Allow several minutes for two or three participants to share their thoughts with the group. Transition to this week's lesson by saying the following:

We have come to see that reliance on God is the hidden source of strength for all who would live out God's purposes for their lives. God makes it possible for us to face any challenge confidently. Obedience to God helps us develop tenacity. Rob says tenacity is crucial to living our purposes. Today we will consider what the apostle Paul has to teach us about tenacity and following God despite all odds.

Pray this prayer aloud:

Dear God, we are ready to follow wherever you lead us. We know the journey will not be easy. We know that uncertainty and challenges lie ahead. We trust your guidance. Grant us the tenacity to keep moving forward. Be with us until we reach the end of life's road and beyond. Amen.

SETTING OUR DESTINATION (7-10 MINUTES)

Say the following:

In our study book, Rob says that Paul demonstrated tenacity throughout his ministry. Never was that tenacity more obvious than toward the end of Paul's third missionary journey. On his way back to Jerusalem, he stopped in Caesarea at the home of his friend Philip. A prophet named Agabus warned Paul that if he returned to Jerusalem, Paul would be captured and bound.

Ask someone to read Acts 20:22-24 aloud to the group. Say the following:

Paul delivered these words to the leaders of the church in Ephesus just before his trip to Caesarea. Paul already had an idea about what awaited him in Jerusalem. Agabus's prophecy was further confirmation that Paul would encounter trouble. Still, Paul continued on to Jerusalem.

Invite participants to get into groups of three or four, and discuss the following questions:

- **Paul knew that going to Jerusalem could cost him his freedom and possibly his life. For what would you willingly risk your freedom and your life?**
- **Rob says Paul was willing to risk so much because he found his life's worth in following Christ's call. On what do you place the most worth in your life right now? If you were to find your life's worth in following Christ's call, how would that change your current priorities?**

If time allows, invite persons to share some of their thoughts with the entire group. Ask participants to consider the following statement as you begin the video:

Finding your purpose will require perseverance. Think about where God is calling you to be more tenacious. Consider what you need to risk.

GETTING ON THE ROAD: DVD AND DISCUSSION (20-22 MINUTES)

Play "Session 6: Developing Tenacity" on the DVD. After the video, discuss the following as a group:

- **Rob took us to the theater in Ephesus where Paul's friends had to hold him back from facing an angry mob to make his case. Where does your passion lie? What cause or purpose grips you so strongly that you can't sit by without engaging it?**
- **Rob believes continuous prayer helped Paul maintain courage and endurance. How does prayer contribute to tenacity? How has prayer kept you going in your own journeys?**

- **Rob notes that Paul talks repeatedly about the friends and companions who shared in his ministry. How significant are these people to Paul's tenacity? Who helps you remain faithful?**

RECALCULATING (7-13 MINUTES)

Say the following:

Paul was always an ambitious and determined person. Rob wonders if that drove Paul's friends crazy sometimes. He says it also might have left them wondering who but Paul could have accomplished so much. Paul's tenacity was founded on a solid sense of his own identity *and* on a steadfast reliance on the Holy Spirit.

Rob identifies this unique combination of who we are and who God is as our spiritual DNA. Our spiritual DNA contributes to our tenacity. Sometimes when we face difficulties we need to recall our DNA. Rob explains, "It's not just recalling our positive traits or successful endeavors. It's claiming how God uses—and will continue to use—who we are." Let's take a few minutes to remember our spiritual DNA.

Invite participants to answer the following questions in their groups of three or four:

- **Rob says there is power in a name. Just as Saul took on a new name when he decided to take Christ to the Gentiles, Rob invites us to consider our spiritual name. He calls himself Relentless Rob. What would your spiritual name be? Why?**
- **Rob says our spiritual history informs our DNA. With what biblical figures do you identify? How do they help you remember who you are?**
- **What significant events in your faith journey remind you of who you are, where you've been, and where you are headed?**

If time allows, invite participants to share their insights with the entire group. Say the following:

As we have seen time and again, Paul couldn't have done it alone. Key to living out his purpose were the numerous friends and companions who joined him on his life journey. These were the people who reminded him of his spiritual DNA. Paul's writings clearly express his thankfulness for these persons. As we near the end of our journey together, let's take time to give thanks for one another.

Ask participants to begin by sharing one reason they are thankful for the person seated to their left. The person who receives thanks then expresses thanks for the person to his or her left. Continue around the group until everyone has received affirmation.

TAKING THE BEST ROUTE (3-5 MINUTES)

Say the following:

Let's take these last few minutes to determine where we go from here. What will keep us on the road and moving forward?

Invite participants to work in their groups of three or four to answer the following questions:

- **What is the next step in your journey of faith? Where is God calling you to go from here?**
- **How will you continue to discern God's purposes for your life? What practices will help you deepen your relationship with God?**

If time allows, invite groups of three or four to share their prayers with the larger group.

REACHING OUR DESTINATION (3-5 MINUTES)

Thank everyone for contributing to this wonderful experience. Remind participants that this is only the beginning of a much longer journey.

Ask if participants have any prayer concerns they would like to share. Read the closing prayer aloud:

Faithful God, you have seen us through to the end of this journey. We acknowledge that this is only the beginning. We know you will always be with us, leading us down new roads of possibility, potential, and purpose. Help us remember who we are and who you have called us to be. Make us passionate and tenacious followers of Jesus Christ. Send your Spirit with us until that time when we will meet again. Amen.

DETOUR: EXTENDED-TIME ACTIVITY

Extend the journey.

Say the following:

Although this particular journey is ending, the supportive relationships that have formed will be ongoing. It will be exciting to see how people live into their purposes in different ways.

As a group, brainstorm some ways to continue supporting one another in living out your purposes. How can the group celebrate God's working in and through one another's lives? Some examples include the following:

- Create an online group where members can stay in touch, share about God's work in their lives, and encourage one another.
- Reconvene for a reunion party in a few months to share God's ongoing work in your lives.
- Continue supportive relationships as Barnabas partners (see session 3, "Facing Adversity").

Choose at least one option. Make a plan for following through with this idea.