

## Empowered Servants

Robyn let out her breath on the fourth ring and smiled when Sandra answered the phone. She hadn't seen her friend at church for more than four months. She knew Sandra was having some car problems but felt like there was something more.

"I've been missing you at church," said Robyn.

"I just have so much going on," said Sandra.

The two women talked for a while about their families and jobs, then Robyn circled the conversation back to church.

"I don't think I've healed from all of my 'church hurt,'" said Sandra. "I had some painful experiences at previous churches. Then when I experienced 'the incident' at our church, it didn't take much for me to be felled again."

"I'm so sorry that happened to you," Robyn said. "I understand, really. God is working on all of us. He is helping me with forgiveness, and He is helping me with my flesh. I know that I have been hurt, and I have also hurt others because of my selfishness, my pride, my sin."

"Yeah, you're right, Sister Robyn," Sandra said slowly. "I've got hang-ups, and there are areas I can grow in. I admire you for saying that."

"We all can grow in the area of love."

"Amen," said Sandra.

"I can pick you up for church this Sunday," continued Robyn. "Please come—the group needs you there."

"Okay," surrendered Sandra. "Thanks, I will."

**1.** *Who is someone in the church body whom you admire and why?*

**2.** *What sometimes holds you back from fully accepting others?*

**3.** *How is God glorified when we live in community and harmony?*

## Be Considerate of One Another

*Romans 15:1-6, KJV*

1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Romans 15:1-6, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup>Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. <sup>3</sup>For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." <sup>4</sup>For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

<sup>5</sup>May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, <sup>6</sup>so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Romans 14 and 15, Paul stressed the importance of Christians treating one another with sensitivity and love. There is some uncertainty about who were the "weak" (14:1) and the "strong" (15:1) in the church at Rome. The "strong" were perhaps Gentile Christians who had little exposure to the law of Moses and exercised their freedom in the Son more than did their saved Jewish peers. In contrast, when the "weak" observed holy days, they abstained

from consuming animal flesh. These could have been Jewish believers who were observing various religious festivals.

Paul considered himself to be a strong Christian. He urged those in the church at Rome who were likeminded to accept the misgivings of the Lord's followers who were "weak" in the faith (Rom. 15:1). In all their actions, believers were to first consider what was best for others in the church, to help others grow stronger in their faith (vs. 2).

Jesus perfectly demonstrated this humble attitude. Rather than try to vindicate Himself, He allowed others to slander and revile Him so that the lost might be saved. This truth is based on Psalm 69:9, which Paul quoted in Romans 15:3. His citation served as an example of how God's Word, though "written in the past" (vs. 4), had contemporary relevance, including the provision of needed and timely instruction for believers.

As Jesus' followers studied and applied Scripture to their lives, the Spirit gave them "hope." In turn, this enabled them to endure trials and encouraged them to remain loyal to the Son. The apostle prayed that the Father, the ultimate source of the believers' patience and consolation, would help His children at Rome to be united in their thinking and at peace with one another as they obeyed and served the Messiah (vs. 5).

Paul knew there would continue to be differences of opinion among his readers over matters not clarified in Scripture, but he wanted the strong and weak to accept their differences in Christian love and join together in glorifying the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vs. 6).

**4.** *What is the goal of putting our "neighbors" (vs. 2) first?*

**5.** *Who is the prime example of being focused on the needs of others? Why?*

**6.** *How can believers be considerate of one another?*

## Accept One Another

*Romans 15:7-13, KJV*

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

*Romans 15:7-13, NIV*

<sup>7</sup>Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

<sup>8</sup>For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed <sup>9</sup>and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written:

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name."

<sup>10</sup>Again, it says,

"Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people."

<sup>11</sup>And again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him."

<sup>12</sup>And again, Isaiah says,

"The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope."

<sup>13</sup>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul contended that the example of Jesus is incentive to “accept one another” just as Jesus welcomed Jews and Gentiles (vs. 7). Christians, in turn, are to glorify God by accepting one another.

The Roman Christians are to welcome one another, just as Jesus welcomed them “to the glory of God” (vs. 7, KJV). The Son, though reigning in heaven with the Father and the Spirit, became a servant of the Jews (vs. 8). This demonstrates the truth of God’s “promises,” those made long ago. The Father showed unwavering commitment to keep ancient pledges to the children of Abraham.

And from eternity past, it was God’s redemptive plan to include Gentiles in the Body of Christ (vs. 9). Jews and Gentiles would “glorify God for His mercy” (vs. 9).

Paul supported this claim with a string of scriptural quotations from the Law, the Prophets, and Psalms (vss. 9-12). Psalm 18:49 (vs. 9b) speaks of confessing and praising the Lord among the Gentiles. Paul’s second quote is from Deuteronomy 32:43 (vs. 10), where Gentiles, alongside the descendants of Israel, were directed to express thanksgiving to God. The third quote, from Psalm 117:1 (vs. 11), says that all people—including Gentiles—are invited to praise God. Finally, the fourth quote is from Isaiah 11:10 (vs. 12). One from King David’s royal line, called “the Root of Jesse” would come to bring hope to Gentiles.

The Creator God was the ultimate source of believers’ “hope.” Paul prayed that the Father would bless those in Rome with unmeasured “joy and peace” as they continued to put their trust in Him (vs. 13). He desired that the power of the Spirit would fill them with this hope.

**7.** *What two reasons did Paul give for believers accepting one another?*

**8.** *How is the advancement of the Gospel affected by believers accepting one another?*

**9.** *What sorts of feelings would emerge when believers accept one another?*

## Uplift Defined

Paul told the new believers in the church in Rome to set aside their legitimate desires and remain sensitive to the apprehensions of others. This instruction included believers endeavoring to do things that would uplift or edify all their fellow Christians. As he told the Corinthians, “No one should seek their own good, but the good of others” (1 Cor. 10:24).

Merriam-Webster defines “uplift” as “to lift up” or “to improve the spiritual, social, or intellectual condition of.” The first part is a more literal meaning of the word, but the second half is in line with what Paul was saying in today’s text.

The definition gives three objectives that the mature Christian can seek to accomplish by offering encouragement. Newer believers are weaker, but not in a physical sense. They don’t have as much knowledge and experience in the faith as a more mature believer. Therefore, it falls on the shoulders of mature believers to uplift others when they are struggling, slipping back into old habits, or doubting their faith.

New believers may feel completely overwhelmed by everything they do not know. They may think they are not good enough to participate in a Bible study or small group with those who have followed Christ for much longer. They may be tempted to go back to what was familiar and comfortable. This is where the strong believers need to step in to say, “You can do this! Jesus loves you, and I’m here to help.”

**10.** *How can you improve the spiritual life of a fellow believer today, tomorrow, this week?*

**11.** *How can you improve the social life of a fellow believer today, tomorrow, this week?*

**12.** *How can you improve the intellectual condition of a fellow believer today, tomorrow, this week?*

## God of This City

Believers are designed to rely on one another, but too often we take this action for granted or don't realize just how important it is. The will of God in this world can't be accomplished by one individual; it takes the entire Body of Christ to spread His message and love.

► *Where do you see a need for God in your town or city? How can you plug in to that situation and be a light? For example, is there another organization or charity involved already that you could partner with?*

### KEY VERSES

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. —Romans 15:5-6, KJV

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. —Romans 15:5-6, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of June 17 through June 23

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 42—Hope in God Our Help.
- Tues.** 1 John 5:1-13—Whoever Has the Son Has Life.
- Wed.** 1 John 5:14-21—Boldness in Christ.
- Thurs.** Psalm 23—The Lord Is My Shepherd.
- Fri.** Isaiah 12—Trust in God Our Salvation.
- Sat.** Hebrews 6:1-8—Maturing in Christ.
- Sun.** Hebrews 6:9-20—Trust God's Promises.