



Group Discussion Guide

Romans 15:1-13

For groups meeting July 12 evening through July 19 morning.

The strong and the weak. At first, that sounds like people judging one another and perhaps even a recipe for division. Of course this wasn't Paul's aim at all. He merely pointed out the reality that in any group of believers, there are those who are more mature in their faith and those who are less mature. Rather than one group judging another, he wrote that those who are more mature (strong) are obligated to be patient with (bear with) those who are less mature (weak) (v. 1). Paul wrote that instead of seeking to please themselves, those who are strong should seek to "please his neighbor for his good, to build him up," (v. 2). This is connected to Paul's teaching in Romans 14:19, "So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding."

Paul pointed to Christ as the example of considering others. He wrote that Jesus did not live to please himself, and he quoted Psalm 69:9 as a reference to how Jesus willingly took upon himself the insults of others. This prophecy and all other Scriptures (for Paul these would have been the entirety of the Old Testament) were written to instruct those who believe in Jesus Christ, and to give hope and encouragement and help them to endure while waiting for the return of the Savior (v. 4). Paul identified God as "the God of endurance and encouragement," and reminded his readers that God gives the ability for followers of Jesus to live in harmony with one another as they live according to the way of Jesus (v. 5). When this happens, the church together lifts one voice that glorifies God the Father (v. 6). So then, Paul wrote that believers must "welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God," (v. 7).

The final section of this passage (vs. 8-13) focuses on the unity Jesus provided through salvation offered to both Jews and Gentiles. Paul wrote that Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice to confirm the promises of God given to the Jews, and to show God's mercy to the Gentiles (vs. 8-9). Granted, mercy was shown to all and promises were fulfilled for all, but the apostle emphasized how Jesus brought together these differing people groups through his one act of sacrifice. Paul listed Scripture references from 2 Samuel, Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah (vs. 9-12) ... all pointing to how the Messiah would bring the Gentiles into a relationship with God and bring them together with His chosen nation of Israel. Paul concluded this section of the chapter with a reminder of the hope God provides. The apostle wrote that God is "the God of hope" and that He offers to fill believers with joy and peace as we trust in Him. This comes through the power of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to "abound in hope," (v. 13).

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Paul puts the responsibility of bearing with others on those who are “strong” (v. 1)?
2. Paul writes that we are not to please ourselves, but instead we are to please our neighbor “for his good, to build him up,” (v. 2). How can you see yourself carrying out teaching?
3. Who or what do you place your hope in most commonly? What happens when we find hope in God, and in the Scriptures (v. 4)?
4. Paul repeatedly uses the words endurance and encouragement in verses 4-5. How does he say we will live if we seek God’s help in building these qualities into our lives?
5. Imagine all believers throughout the world glorifying God with one voice (v. 6). What does that voice sound like? What message is that voice carrying?
6. Who can you reach out to this week to welcome them, as Christ has welcomed you (v. 7)?
7. What does it mean to you to know that Jesus has unified all believers through the Gospel?
8. How does verse 13 speak to your heart right now?