



The Book of
ROMANS

Small Group Study 4: Romans 12–16

Week Four: Romans 15:1–13

Key Verses

- “For I say that Christ became a servant of the circumcised on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises to the fathers, and so that Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy.” - Romans 15:8–9a (CSB)

Key Principles

- Our motivation for living lives of relational harmony comes from the example Christ set for us with his life and ministry.
- Whatever differences could separate us, Christ’s example teaches us to prioritize our oneness in him above our cultural, ethnic, or demographic differences.
- We are called to invite others into our community as we praise our God for his mercy to us all and practice the unity that only the gospel can create.

Read

In Romans 15:1–13, we see a clear example of the integral relationship between theology and daily living. Paul’s purpose in writing Romans is so much more than a long, theological description of God’s redemptive plan. All along, one of Paul’s primary points in writing Romans was to make sure that the Jews and people from any other ethnicity could understand how to worship God *together*. To do this, Paul had to explain many misconceptions about salvation and righteousness along the way. But he waded through heavy theological statements to make sure we knew this: We are all objects of the *same* mercy. Both Jews and Gentiles needed mercy, and God made a single way for both groups to receive mercy—in Jesus Christ. God’s plan of salvation culminates when Christ died and rose again. In his crucifixion and resurrection, Christ achieved God’s righteousness for us and united God’s people under his sacrifice. Paul unpacks such thoughts in Romans 15:1–13.

Paul’s exhortation here continues some important themes that we saw in chapter 14 and our previous study of Romans 9–11. Romans 15:1 summarizes the previous chapter with the encouragement that the strong in the faith have to bear with the weak. Both chapters 14 and 15 demand that Christians should be welcoming to the weak because this is how God has treated everyone in Christ. Furthermore, once we are in the same faith community together, our stance toward each other should then be to encourage

one another and pursue peace in our relationships. For this reason, we should not spend our time passing judgment on one another, as Paul describes in chapter 14, but rather spend our time glorifying God with one voice (15:6).

Paul says that **our motivation for living lives of relational harmony comes from the example Christ set for us with his life and ministry.** He describes what Christ did in showing us God's mercy, as we see in Chapter 15:

- Christ did not live for his own comfort. Instead, he suffered for the sake of God's glory (15:3; cf. Psalm 69:9).
- Christ welcomed all of us (15:7).
- Christ became a servant to the Jewish people (15:8), and he also brought Gentiles into God's family (15:9–12).

Paul urges us to have the same mindset when we approach the church. **Whatever differences could separate us, Christ's example teaches us to prioritize our oneness in him above our cultural, ethnic, or demographic differences.** Paul never minimized the important differences between ethnic Jews and Gentiles. In fact, recall that Paul cherished the very qualities that make Jews unique in Romans 9. Our ethnic heritage is something that God has given to us, and it is something that we should use to glorify him. And yet, our identity in Christ is so glorious that it transcends our important cultural and ethnic heritages.

Christ's salvation gives common ground to Christians of all types because we all are recipients of the same hope and mercy. Christ's sacrifice doesn't just encourage us to tolerate others "in the name of Jesus," it actually gives us a supernatural unity in Christ as brothers and sisters in the family of God—a bond stronger than any other bond on earth. Through Christ, God has made us a part of his eternal family. Church is more than attending a weekend event together; we are members of the same family, today and every day!

This unity in Christ has been the underlying motivation for much of Paul's theology in Romans. Throughout Romans 1–11, Paul demonstrated how the Jews and Gentiles had a singular hope, glorious future, and supernatural unity through Jesus Christ. Paul now quotes some familiar Old Testament passages to show that unity in Christ has always been God's goal in salvation (Romans 15:8–12). To do this, Paul returns to the same sections of Scripture that he's relied upon to support previous statements about salvation, law, faith, and the Spirit. First, Paul returns to Deuteronomy 28–33, where Moses says that the law cannot produce righteousness. Likewise, the law can't truly bring together diverse peoples. Then, Paul returns to Isaiah 7–11, which predicts the Messiah who will bring the righteous rule that we need. Lastly, Paul returns to the Psalms where faith, forgiveness, and praise for a righteous God abound. Each of these Old Testament quotations anticipates a day when people of all nations will worship God together. Even books written to and about the Jews point to this incredible vision of the nations coming together in worshipping God.

In Romans 15:1–13, Paul summarizes the hope of the Old Testament in this way: Jesus the Messiah came to the Jews, fulfilling God's promise of a Savior—for the Jews and the nations—and uniting all peoples in praise for God's mercy. Romans 15:8 says that Christ became a servant to the Jews ("the circumcised"), which had implications for Jews, Gentiles, and even God's character! Here's what was accomplished by Christ's service to the Jews:

- Everyone would see clearly that God is truthful and fulfills his promises.
- The Jews receive the promises they were waiting for since the time of the Patriarchs.
- The Gentiles now have a path to enter into God's family.

It's a win-win-win! God shows himself to be righteous by fulfilling his promises. The Jews receive the fulfillment of all their hopes, expectations, and dreams—the coming King and kingdom. The Gentiles receive God's mercy and are added into God's family. This all leads to praise for a worthy God—praise that he deserves from all nations now unified as one people in Jesus Christ.

So, what is our role in this story? How can we apply these truths in our everyday lives? Romans 15:1–13 instructs us to love like Christ loved, welcome others the way Christ welcomed us home, show mercy to others according to what we have been shown by God, and abound in the hope that Christ's salvation gives to us all. **We are called to invite others into our community as we praise our God for his mercy to us all and practice the unity that only the gospel can create.**

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question *before* your weekly small group meeting. Then, when you gather with your small group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 15:1–13 in preparation for this week's study.

Highlight

Circle the words and phrases in Romans 15:1–13 that are repeated from chapter 14.

Highlight any Old Testament quotations in Romans 15:1–13. Where are they from? Go back and read those verses in their Old Testament context.

Highlight the verses in Romans 15:1–13 that mention Christ as an example and make a list of Christ's actions.

What actions does God accomplish in this passage? (Identify specifically what is accomplished by God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Also note what God accomplishes through his Word.)

Explain

Explain the connection between Romans 15:1–13 and Romans 14.

Why does Paul include so many Old Testament verses in Romans 15:1–13? What is he trying to teach the readers through these particular verses?

How does Romans 15:1–13 teach us to overcome differences and live in the unity that Christ brings us?

What do we learn about God's character from Romans 15:1–13?

Apply

What differences exist in your local congregation, and what steps can you take this week and this year to address those differences with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Paul regularly cites the Old Testament throughout Romans, as we see in Romans 15:1–13. What have you learned about the message of the Old Testament from our study of the book of Romans?

What are some tangible ways that you can build up others and be an encouragement to your neighbor as a response to the gospel (15:2)?

How can you reflect God's character to others in your community in the coming weeks and months?

Respond in Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home *and* together with your small group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 15:1–13

Read Romans 15:1–13.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method

- **Adoration:** Join Paul and the psalmist in praising God for the mercy that he has shown to you and your loved ones (15:9–13). Marvel at the way God has fulfilled his promises to us in his salvation story throughout the ages (15:9). Glorify God because he is worthy of praise from every tribe, tongue, and nation.
- **Confession:** Confess to God the ways that you have torn down others in the church or simply failed to build others up (15:2). Confess to God the ways that you have deserved the reproach, punishment, and suffering that he actually received for you in your place (15:3). Ask for forgiveness for the ways that you have cultivated division in your church and family instead of working for harmony (15:5).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for welcoming us into his family (15:7). Thank Christ for bearing the punishment that we deserved so that we can stand without condemnation (15:3). Thank God for uniting us as one people who would praise his name forever (15:9–12).
- **Supplication:** Ask God for unity in local churches. Pray against specific challenges that hinder joyful harmony in your congregation. Pray also for more worshipers to be added to God's family. Pray for specific opportunities to share the gospel of God's mercy with others in your community.