

Ice Breaker (10min):

Help people to loosen up and share. Take time to go around the room and have people share what their plans are for Thanksgiving.

Opening Prayer (5min):

- **Introduce time of prayer-** After the group welcomes one another, open in prayer. Let your group know what to expect during prayer time, something like: As we start our group time I will open with a word of prayer, there will be a minute or so of silent reflection and then I will read the scripture from Sunday and then close in prayer and we will enter into our discussion time.
 - **Open with a brief word of prayer-** God we thank you for this time together, we open our hearts to how you might want to meet with us, allow us to hear your voice and experience your spirit at work. Come Holy Spirit.
 - **Sit before the Lord in silent prayerful reflection for 1-2 minutes**
 - **Read the scripture listed below aloud for the group to reflect on.**
 - **Close in a word of prayer:** God thank you for your word, come holy spirit and allow us to understand what it means for our lives, lead us in our time of discussion together. In Christ's name, amen.

Main Scriptures from Sunday:

Romans 14-15:7 (NIV)

“Accept the one whose faith is weak (Welcome the weak in faith), without quarreling over disputable matters. 2 One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. 4 Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.”

5 One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. 6 Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. 8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

10 You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister^[a]? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat. 11 It is written: “As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.”^[b]

12 So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. 13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. 14 I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. 15 If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are

no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. **16** Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. **17** For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, **but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.**

19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (upbuilding). **20** Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. **21** It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.

22 So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. **23** But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and **everything that does not come from faith is sin.**

Romans 15:1-7 (NLT) “We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. **2** We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. **3** For even Christ didn’t live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, “The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me.”^[a] **4** Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God’s promises to be fulfilled.

5 May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. **6** Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **7** Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.”

Read this message overview to the group: (5min)

Paul who wrote Romans, has unpacked so much in chapters 1-11 about the theological realities of the Gospel of Christ, for all people. It is a message beautifully summarized by this statement from Tim Keller- “In chapters 1 – 11, Paul has explained the gospel: **that we are justified and made right in God’s sight by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone.** Therefore we are simultaneously sinful yet completely righteous and perfect in his sight.”

Pauls writing in chapters 12-16 are the practicum of these theological realities. In view of God’s mercy to offer our entire being as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God. How does one do this individually and in community? Paul gives the church some helpful and practical ideas.

This portion of scripture from Rom 14 & 15 addresses some divisions happening in the Roman church. In previous chapters Paul addresses the Gentile Christian and Jewish Christian divisions, which he seeks to reconcile all throughout this letter. But here in ch 14-15 Paul addresses the divisions between the “strong” and “weak” in the community. This differentiation of weak and strong, blurs the lines of ethnic and cultural identity and goes into religious practice, preference and personal proclivities.

A Plea for Love & Unity in the Church:

1. Welcome the weak
2. Pursue what makes peace and mutual upbuilding
3. Live in harmony with one another

Work through these discussion questions together (30min):

- Is there one of these three points that stuck out to you the most? If so, share which one.
- What are the differences and disagreements Paul is addressing here in the Roman Church?
- What might be some examples of how these differences show up today in the Church?
- What would it mean for you to “welcome the weak”?
- What are some ways you have sought to be a peacemaker in this past season of life together? What might be some ways you could grow in this?
- How could you help with “mutual upbuilding”? What does that mean and look like?
- How does “living in harmony” look today with all the differences, divisions and polarizations around us in our families, relationships, workplace and church?
- What role might both mercy (the active withholding of judgement) and forgiveness play in “living in harmony”?

Group Prayer (10min):

- Share personal prayer requests and spend some time praying for one another as a group. Ask someone to write down prayer requests and send them out to the group to pray for one another during the week. The hope is to get your group comfortable with sharing personal prayer needs and praying for one another regularly.