

Unity

BELIEVERS PROMOTE UNITY BY ACCEPTING AND
EDIFYING ONE ANOTHER.

Romans 14:5-20

5 One person judges **one day** **A** to be more important than another day. Someone else judges every day to be the same. Let each one be fully convinced **in his own mind**. **B**

6 Whoever observes the day, observes it for the honor of the Lord. **Whoever eats**, **C** eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; and whoever does not eat, it is for the Lord that he does not eat it, and he gives thanks to God. **7** For none of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself.

8 If we live, **we live for the Lord**; **D** and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. **9** Christ died and returned to life for this: that he might be Lord over **both the dead and the living**. **E** **10** But you, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or you, why do you **despise** **F** your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the **judgment seat** **G** of God. **11** For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God. **12** So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. **13** Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a **stumbling block or pitfall** **H** in the way of your brother or sister.

14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that **nothing is unclean in itself**. **I** Still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to that one it is unclean. **15** For if your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not **destroy**, **J** by what you eat, someone for whom Christ died. **16** Therefore, do not let your good be slandered, **17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness, peace, and joy** **K** in the Holy Spirit. **18** Whoever serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and receives human approval. **19** So then, let us **pursue what promotes peace** **L** and what builds up one another. **20** Do not tear down God's work because of food. Everything is clean, but it is wrong to make someone fall by what he eats.

Exploring Key Words

- A** Some Roman believers, likely Jews, viewed Sabbath and holidays as sacred. In contrast, Gentiles treated "every day . . . the same."
- B** Paul sought unity within the body, but not uniformity. Believers needed to leave room for grace in areas of conscience and conviction.
- C** Dietary restrictions (possibly related to Old Testament laws or meat offered to idols) were another potential point of tension between Jews and Gentiles. Again, grace is the response.
- D** In "disputed matters" (v. 1), believers must not judge the efforts of others to please God. Everyone is accountable to God personally.
- E** Because He lived, died, and rose, Jesus is Lord and Judge over all. His authority is unlimited.
- F** "Set at nought" (KJV); "Treat them with contempt" (NIV). More than a passing dislike, but seeing someone as nothing or without value.
- G** Not a judgment of salvation, but accountability for the quality of one's works (v. 12).
- H** Obstacles and snares that cause one to fall. Paul already had established the obligation of love (Rom. 13:8-10). Love avoids demanding one's rights at the expense of another's faith.
- I** Jesus declared all things clean (Mark 7:17-19) and reaffirmed it to Peter (Acts 10:9-16). But believers still must respect others' convictions.
- J** Abolish, ruin, or make helpless. In Luke 15, Jesus used a similar verb to describe a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son.
- K** God's kingdom isn't defined by physical rituals, but by deeper spiritual realities.
- L** The goal of Christian conduct includes building unity within the body and encouraging the faith of individuals.

**Disagreement** (Rom. 14:5-8)

- In Romans 14:1-4, Paul addressed the dispute between Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome over the issue of food regulations and the keeping of sacred days. He instructed them to refrain from judging each other.
- Their personal convictions, and corresponding faith practices, were to be based on love for the Lord.

Accountability (Rom. 14:9-12)

- Christ died and rose to be Lord and Judge of all. His authority extends over both those who are living and those who have died.
- One day, each Christian's works will be judged by God. Therefore, Christians should not judge one another. Instead, they should be prepared to stand before God's judgment seat and give an account for their own actions.

Love (Rom. 14:13-18)

- Believers should help one another grow in spiritual maturity. They do this by not hindering others' progress or being a stumbling block.
- Mature believers do not violate the conscience of the weaker believer, since the kingdom of God is about a lot more than simply "eating and drinking" (v. 17).

Edification (Rom. 14:19-20)

- Paul provided the reason for his instruction in this passage: It is wrong to use your freedom to cause another believer to stumble spiritually.
- Instead, believers were to pursue peace and strive to build up one another.

Summary Statements

Believers promote unity by accepting and edifying one another.

- Believers should allow other believers to express their love for God as God directs them.
- Every person will be held accountable for their actions and choices.
- As members of the body of Christ, we're to spur on each other to spiritual growth.
- Believers are to build up one another, pursuing peace in our relationships with other believers.

Memory Verse

Romans 14:19

Key Doctrine

The Church

Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. (See Ephesians 2:19-22; Colossians 1:18.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

When have you found yourself needing to disagree with someone in a respectful way? What made it challenging? (PSG, p. 109)

- One day a teacher invited her students to debate an issue in class. The students immediately began sharing their views, and the discussion quickly grew intense.
- When the teacher noticed that the disagreements were becoming disrespectful, she challenged the students to disagree agreeably. Paul did the same for the believers in Rome—because of Christ.

Bonus: What are some common points of contention in our culture? In our church?

EXPLORE

DISAGREEMENT (ROM. 14:5-8)

Bonus: Would you say you're a judgmental person? Why or why not?

- Paul addressed tensions in the Roman church, especially over disputable matters such as food laws and holy days.
- While not all believers hold the same convictions, every believer must honor the Lord. Unity in Christ does not mean that we must agree on every issue, but our rights do not allow us to trample the convictions of others.

What kind of spiritual practices might believers disagree over today? How can we implement Paul's instruction when we encounter disagreements like these? (PSG, p. 112)

ACCOUNTABILITY (ROM. 14:9-12)

Bonus: Who holds you accountable in life?

- The faith that united Paul's readers was greater than the secondary issues that divided them. No Christian has the right to judge another believer on secondary issues.
- Jesus is the only One qualified to judge anyone's relationship with Him. Paul reminded the Romans that one day everyone would stand at God's judgment seat—not for salvation, but to evaluate faithfulness to the Lord.

When you disagree with another believer, how does the gospel factor into your response and attitude? (PSG, p. 113)

LOVE (ROM. 14:13-18)

Who has been instrumental in helping you grow spiritually? (PSG, p. 115)

- The practical application of verses 1-12 is that we must not judge one another nor put a stumbling block or pitfall in others' way. A stumbling block is an obstacle that causes one to fall. A pitfall refers to a snare that offends people.

- Paul believed that nothing was unclean in itself, but he also knew that his liberty in some areas could offend others. He was willing to forego that liberty out of love for his fellow believers.
- God's kingdom is not focused on petty things like eating and drinking. Rather, Jesus cares about righteousness, peace, and joy. A life acceptable to God focuses on helping others grow spiritually instead of winning arguments.

What practical things can we do to spur on others and not be a stumbling block? (PSG, p. 115)

EDIFICATION (ROM. 14:19-20)

Bonus: What does peace between two people look like?

- Paul urged believers to pursue what promotes peace and builds up one another. We promote peace when we do everything possible to build up others in God's family.
- The opposite of building up is tearing down. Overlooking our responsibility to edify one another damages God's work. Instead of focusing on doing His work together, we pit ourselves against one another in petty disagreements.
- Moving forward as Christians means handling disagreements in a way that respects others. Mature believers don't want to do anything that causes a brother or sister in Christ to stumble or stunt their spiritual growth.

Why is peace so significant in the body of Christ? What might we forfeit if strife or dissension are allowed to grow? (PSG, p. 116)

CHALLENGE

As a group discuss "hot button" topics in today's church.

How can your group handle these differing convictions in a way that promotes unity and builds one another up, rather than creating frustration or division? (PSG, p. 117)

Take time to consider ways you can prioritize the spiritual growth of someone else over your own preferences.

What is one practical step you can take this week to build up another believer in their walk with Christ? (PSG, p. 117)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 116)

Use another Bible passage to understand the focal passage.

Read Acts 10:9-16. Summarize the vision Peter had about clean and unclean foods. ***How did God use the vision to help Peter understand that he should also take the gospel to Cornelius and the other Gentiles in Caesarea (see Acts 10:1-8)?*** Compare that with Galatians 2, where issues of circumcision and eating with the Jews caused division in the church. ***How did Paul respond to each of these issues?***

Direct adults to work in pairs to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 116). Assign Acts 10:9-16 to one person in each group and Galatians 2 to the other person. Encourage them to share insights with one another. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they learned from the passages. Lead a brief discussion on how these verses relate to Romans 14.

OBJECT LESSON: BUILDING BLOCKS

Stack six building blocks on top of each other and five or six more in a line in front of the stack. Explain that sometimes disagreements encourage us to build walls or draw lines in the sand. Share that Paul was concerned about walls being built in the church at Rome. Point out that the church was diverse, with Jews and Gentiles coming from different backgrounds that could have created tension points and threatened unity.

Say: *In Romans 14:13-18, Paul challenged the believers in Rome to respond to others in love, even in the midst of conflict.* Lead a brief discussion on why this could be difficult, but also why it would be beneficial to all the parties involved.

Encourage adults to suggest issues in churches today that could parallel the “days” and “food” issues in ancient Rome. Lead a brief discussion on how those issues threaten unity and how believers can respond to each potential conflict with grace and love.

UNITY IN CHRIST

Romans 14:5-20 brings the conversation about freedom, conscience, and love into sharp focus by pointing believers to the higher goal of unity. Paul was writing to a diverse church in danger of being divided along cultural and religious lines. Jews wrestled with food laws and holy days that had shaped their identity for centuries, while Gentiles felt no obligation to observe them. The tension was real, but Paul’s aim was to show that the church must unify around Christ rather than splinter over “disputed matters” (v. 1).

Paul shared that each believer is personally accountable to God (v. 5). Unity does not mean forced uniformity. Instead, it calls for mutual respect and a shared recognition that everything belongs to the Lord. Whether one observes a day or not, whether one eats or abstains, the key is to honor Christ. This perspective shifts the focus away from proving who is right to glorifying the same Lord.

Paul also warned against using freedom carelessly. When a believer’s choices injure the conscience of

another, unity suffers. Placing a stumbling block in a brother or sister’s path undermines the very community Christ died to create. True love values the spiritual good of others above personal preference.

Paul summarized this truth by pointing to the essence of God’s kingdom: “Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (v. 17). These are the marks of a united church. External debates about food and drink or special days pale in comparison to the deeper reality of God’s reign. Where peace and joy abound, unity takes root.

Romans 14 calls believers to a radical posture: laying aside pride and selfishness, showing grace in lesser disputes, and pursuing what builds others up. Unity does not require agreement on every issue, but it does commit to honor Christ by honoring one another. In a divided world, the church displays the power of the gospel when it chooses unity over division, love over personal liberty, and Christ over self.