

## ALTARED STATE

### "THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY" ROMANS 16:1-23

We are *all in process* as Christians. Paul reveals God's intention for all of his children in Romans 8:29: "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brothers and sisters." Put differently, God predestined us to go through the process of becoming like Jesus. If this process is viewed in terms of training, we call it *discipleship*. If it's viewed in terms of holiness, we call it *sanctification*. If it's viewed in terms of growth and development, we call it *spiritual formation*. No matter what it's called, it's one and the same process. And while the ultimate outcome is the work of the Holy Spirit, we are *all agents in the process* we go through. God uses us—people whom he has gifted—to build one another up in the Lord. What's more, he has gifted every one of us without exception. Paul puts it this way in Ephesians 4:11-16:

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back

***We have created many problems for ourselves by confining 'ministry' to what certain full-time Christian workers do.***

— Douglas J. Moo

and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, *grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work*" (italics added).

### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Biblical Community** – I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

"The fire of God kindles higher as the brands are heaped together and each is warmed by the other's flame. The members of the body must be in contact if they are to sustain and be sustained by each other. Christian redemption is not devised to be a solitary thing, though each individual of course has a unique and direct relationship with God, and God alone is his or her Lord and Judge. But The Life is one that requires some regular and profound conjunction with others who share it. It is greatly diminished when that is lacking" (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 186-87). Transformation, *intentional* and *incidental*, takes place in community.

In other words God transforms us through our relationships with other Christians—not just professional ministers. Therefore every one of us needs frequent, meaningful contact with other members of the body of Christ in order to mature. Otherwise we run the risk of growing cold, apathetic, and stagnant spiritually.

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This goes for men too, but men don't seem to accept it as readily as women do. In fact, men seem slow to recognize when they are isolated and lonely. One researcher asked a number of men if they had any close friends, and most of them seemed surprised by the question and usually responded, "No, why? Should I?" There are two reasons for this. First, men are more prone to be loners than women are. Women tend to be more relationally oriented than most men. They communicate more freely and build relationships by talking openly about themselves and their feelings. Men don't talk as much, and when they do have something to say they keep it short. Two women came up to the closed-mouth President Calvin Coolidge. "Mr. Coolidge, I just bet my friend that I could get you to say three words," the one said. The President looked at her and replied, "You lose." Men get together for business, sports, and to do things. They build relationships by working together.

Second, men have to oppose a number of cultural forces that keep them from making and keeping friends. In North America "real" men are independent, self-sufficient, and competitive. Expressing feelings is a sign of weakness and taboo for males. Add to that the fact that how much money a man has determines his success and status rather than how many close friends he has, and it's easy to understand why men are more reluctant to get connected to biblical community than women are. Nevertheless, explaining the problem does nothing to solve it. Men, it's time for us to recognize that we need Christian friends and biblical community to grow spiritually and get connected.

## day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Romans 16:1-23

*1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. 2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.*

*3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. 4 They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.*

*5 Greet also the church that meets at their house.*

*Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.*

*6 Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.*

*7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.*

*8 Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.*

*9 Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.*

*10 Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test.*

*Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.*

*11 Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew.*

*Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.*

*12 Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.*

*Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has*

*worked very hard in the Lord.*

*13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.*

*14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them.*

*15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them.*

*16 Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

*All the churches of Christ send greetings.*

*17 I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.*

*18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. 19 Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*

*20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*

*The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

*21 Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.*

*22 I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.*

*23 Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.*

*Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.*

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## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Circle "commend" in v. 1.
- \* Circle "deacon" in v. 1.
- \* Circle "benefactor" in v. 2.
- \* Number the occurrences of "Greet" in vv. 3-23.
- \* Bracket "Priscilla and Aquila," "Andronicus and Junia," and "Philologus, Julia" in vv. 3, 7, 15 respectively.
- \* Bracket "among the apostles" in v. 7.
- \* Underline "Priscilla," "Mary," "Junia," "Tryphaena," "Tryphosa," "Persis," "his mother," "sisters," "Julia," "his sister" in vv. 3, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15
- \* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 18, 19.
- \* Underline "Erastus" in v. 23.

## day **2** EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What's up with Phoebe?
2. Paul calls her "a deacon" and tells the church to "give her any help she may need from you." What do you infer from that?
3. Aquila and Priscilla were real lifesavers (cf., Ac 18). How so?
4. What do you infer from the number of women mentioned in verses 1-16?
5. Andronicus and Junia were "outstanding *among the apostles*." Do you think that means they were apostles? Explain.
6. Is Paul's warning (vv. 17-18) still relevant? If so, how so?
7. Put what "wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil" (v. 19) means in your own words.
8. Do you believe God will soon crush Satan? If so, explain exactly what you believe.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about how the Epistle to the Romans could be inspired if Tertius wrote it?

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## day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Generally speaking, Paul's letters followed the conventions of first-century letter writing. His letter to the Romans is no exception. It contains an *opening*, a *body*, and a *closing*, like all Greek letters, and the closing contains greetings, like all Greek letters, to which Paul adds a doxology and a benediction. Regarding Paul's closing greetings to a host of people, one expert writes: The convention found in Rom. 16:3 f. (compare Col. 4:10 ff.) is well documented from the papyri, although the list in Romans 16 is strikingly extended" (William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 43). Put differently, Paul appears to greet practically everyone he knows in the church, which prompts the question: "How could he possibly know so many people in the imperial city, seeing that he has never been there? According to one commentator, the answer is quite simple: "Many early Christians were very mobile, and in fact we know that at least some of these Christians had had contact with Paul in the east, for example Priscilla and Aquila, Andronicus and Junia, Rufus' mother, and probably the ones Paul mentions as his relatives. But more can be said. If we take seriously the edict of Claudius and the fact that for a time many Roman Christians were exiled from Rome [cf., Ac 18:2-3] and likely headed east, Paul could in fact have met all of these persons in Corinth and elsewhere in his missionary travels in the east" (Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 376). From this lengthy list of names, we can infer much about ministry in the early church.

Romans 16:1-23 can be divided into four more easily digested parts. First, Paul introduces and recommends Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae, to the church in Rome (vv. 1-2). Then, he asks a predominantly Gentile Roman church to greet a long list of his coworkers and friends in ministry, some of whom were Jewish Christians (vv. 3-16). Next, he warns his Christian brothers and sisters against false teachers and assures them of their ultimate victory over Satan (vv. 17-20). And finally, he sends his readers greetings from those who are with him in Corinth (vv. 21-23).

First, Paul introduces Phoebe, who no doubt delivered his letter to Rome, and commends her for her service to the church in Cenchreae, a port city only eight miles from Corinth. His commendation followed by the words, "give her any help

she may need from you" suggests that he expects her to continue her work as a "benefactor" there.

Then, he asks his readers to greet an unusually long list of coworkers and friends. One commentator observes: "Paul does not directly greet his friends and coworkers and relatives in Rome. He has the dominantly Gentile audience do it for him as part of his rhetorical strategy to help effect some sort of reconciliation or unity among the Christians in Rome before he arrives there. In particular, he wants the marginalized Jewish Christians, many of them newly back in Rome from exile, to be embraced" (Witherington, 379). The list speaks for itself. Paul names twenty-six people in Rome. Some are close personal friends; others he calls "relatives" ("fellow Jew/s" NIV), namely, Andronicus, Junia, and Herodion. "At a minimum this means they are Jews, and more specifically Jewish Christians, but it may also mean that they are some sort of close kin of Paul's" (380). He also refers to various individuals who have worked hard for the Lord, namely, Mary, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, and Persis, all of whom are women. At least sixteen of the twenty-six named persons are singled out in some special way, leading to the conclusion, "This is no ordinary greeting card. It is more like an honor roll" (380). Priscilla and Aquila risk their lives for Paul. Andronicus and Junia were imprisoned like Paul. The mother of Rufus, the son of Simon of Cyrene, who carried the cross of Christ part of the way to Golgotha, was a mother to Paul, as well. In a nutshell, Paul lists seventeen men and nine women, including three married couples. Seven of the women he praises by name, which is more than the number of men he praises. One commentator draws the following inferences from the list: "First, Paul's reference to coworkers (vv. 3, 9; cf., v. 7) reminds us that Paul was not a 'lone ranger' kind of missionary. At every point in his ministry, Paul depended on a significant number of others who were working along with him . . . Second, Paul's mention of nine women in this list reminds us (if we needed the reminder) that women played an important role in the early church. Moreover, five of these women—Prisca (v. 3) Junia (v. 7), Tryphaena and Tryphosa (v. 12) and Persis (v. 12)—are commended for their labor 'in the Lord.' Ministry in the early church was never confined to men; there greeting and other similar

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passages show that women engaged in ministries that were just as important as those of men" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 927).

Next, although he makes no mention of false teachers in his letter, Paul warns the church against "those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way," referring to their errant teaching. They are in the ministry for their own selfish benefit and regularly use deception to persuade naïve people. Paul warns his readers "to watch out" for them. What's more, he wants his readers to be wise rather than gullible, which implies he wants them to do good and not evil.

To encourage them to that end, he assures them that they will be victorious over Satan when the Lord returns.

Finally, he greets his readers on behalf of those who are with him in Corinth: Timothy, his closest colleague, Lucius, whom some wrongly identify as Luke the evangelist, Jason mentioned in Acts 17:5-9, Sosipater, or Sopater, from Berea, who accompanied Paul when he left Greece on his way to Jerusalem in Acts 20:4, Tertius, Paul's secretary, Gaius, identified with Titius Justus, the God-fearer in whose house Paul stayed while in Corinth (Ac 18:7), Erastus, a city official, and Quartus, whose name means "fourth" son.

## day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

### *The Message of the Passage*

*The mission and ministry of the church is the mission and the ministry of every gifted member of the body of Christ, not just full-time Christian ministers.*

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

To what extent do you see the mission and ministry of the church as your own?

Identify areas of ministry in which you have a special interest.

Describe how you see yourself ministering in those areas?

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# notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **commend** "Paul has referred to his hope of coming to the believers at Rome (15:32) but he has also mentioned a circumstance that prevented his immediate departure (15:25). Another person, however, is about to leave for the imperial city, so Paul takes this opportunity to commend her to the church. It was customary for believers who traveled from place to place to carry with them letters of commendation (2 Cor 3:1)" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:160). There were handbooks that taught how various types of letters were to be written. About letters of introduction, Demetrius's handbook reads: "The introductory type, which we write to someone on behalf of another, including praise while making acquainted those who were unacquainted. An example: XX, who is conveying this letter to you, is a man we have proven and whom we love because of his faithfulness. Please be hospitable to him both for my sake and his, and indeed for your own sake also! You will not be at all sorry if your trust him with either words or deeds of a confidential sort in whatever you wish" (cited by Doty, 10).

v. 1 **deacon** Or "servant" (NET); cf., "servant" or "deaconess" (ESV). "Phoebe is called a 'servant' of this church. The same word can be rendered 'deaconess' (RSV, JB). Men were serving as deacons about this time (Phil 1:1), and before long women were being referred to in a way that suggest they held such an office in the church (1 Tim 3:11), though the word 'deaconess' is not used in that passage. In any event, Paul is not stressing office but service, as we gather from v.2" (Harrison, 161). "The qualification of diakonos by 'of the church' suggests, that Phoebe held at Cenchreae the 'office' of 'deacon' as Paul describes it in 1 Tim. 3:8-12 (cf. Phil. 1:1). We put 'office' in quotation marks because it is very likely that regular offices in local Christian churches were still in the process of being established, as people who regularly ministered in a certain way were gradually recognized officially by the congregation and given a regular title" (Moo, 914).

v. 2 **benefactor** Cf., "helpful to many" (NLT); "a patron of many" (ESV). "The best alternative, then, is to give to prostatis the meaning that it often has in secular Greek: 'patron,' 'benefactor.' A 'patron' was one who came to the aid of others, especially foreigners, by providing housing and financial aid and by representing their interest before local authorities. Cenchreae's status as a busy seaport would make it imperative that a Christian in its church take up this ministry on behalf of visiting Christians. Phoebe, then, was probably a woman of high social standing and some wealth, who put her status, resources, and time at the services of traveling Christians, like Paul, who needed help and support" (Moo, 916). "B. Brootten has shown that there is evidence of Jewish women fulfilling the role of patroness and benefactor of a synagogue. Phoebe apparently fulfilled a similar role in the church, in this case for Paul and others . . . Indeed, he is depicting her as one who steps down the social ladder and uses her social advantages in the service of others, in this case especially the church, even taking on menial tasks" (Witherington, 384).

v. 3 **Greet** "This verb does not merely mean 'greet' in some perfunctory way. It literally means to wrap one's arms around and embrace someone, and when coupled with the command to offer the holy kiss as well (v. 16), it amounts to a command to treat those named as family, to welcome them into one's own home and circle" (Witherington, 380).

v. 7 **among the apostles** Commentators debate whether the term "apostles" is used in a general or technical sense. According to one, "Paul twice uses 'apostle' of someone who is simply an agent or emissary of a particular church sent on a particular mission (Phil. 2.25; 2 Cor. 8.23), but by far the most common way he uses the term is to refer to apostles of Jesus Christ, those who have seen the risen Lord and have been commissioned by the Lord to share the Good News. This is surely how Paul uses the word here. Andronicus and Junia may be among those mentioned in 1 Cor. 15.7 as apostles to whom Jesus appeared. They are not merely celebrated or appreciated or commissioned by some local church" (Witherington, 390; cf., James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38b, *Romans 9-16*, 894-95). According to another, "Moreover, they were 'of note among the apostles', which probably means that they were not merely well known to the apostles but were apostles themselves (*in a wider sense of the word*), and eminent ones at that; and they had been Christians from a very early date, since before Paul's own conversion" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, TNTC, 273, italics added; cf., Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Romans," 2017 ed., 216, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/romans.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/romans.pdf)).

v. 23 **Erastus** "This Erastus has been identified with the civic official of that name mentioned in a Latin inscription on a marble paving-block discovered at Corinth in 1929 by members of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens: 'ERASTVS PRO: AED: S: P: STRAVIT' ('Erastus, commissioner for public works, laid this pavement at his own expense')" (Bruce, 280). "This may refer to the Erastus mentioned here. If it does, it is the earliest reference to a Christian by name outside of the NT. He may also be the same person referred to in Ac 19:22 and 2Ti 4:20 (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ro 16:23).

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### Family Talk

#### Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Navigating friendships is hard enough as an adult. Watching your child go through challenging years of loneliness tears at your heart. My children had the blessing of growing up on a street with 30 kids in a one block radius. Everyone had multiple friends to choose from except my middle son. Thankfully, his best friend and partner-in-crime, Henry, lived directly across the street from us. Henry moved out of the country right before kindergarten, leaving a hole in the friend dynamic. For many years we prayed for a person for my child, a good, godly friend to move into the neighborhood. Over and over we were disappointed until about fifth grade. Suddenly, his friend group began to explode. Today he has the most solid and awesome collection of friends of any person I know. His friends cover all races, socioeconomic groups, and gender. The common denominator? Christ and His Church. So much stands out as we look at Paul personal greeting in Romans 16. Paul's love for his friends and the strong bond through Christ is evident. He had a personal relationship with a diverse group of people. He takes care to compliment and encourage them. Do you surround yourself with like-minded believers? Take a moment to encourage them today. Are your children connected at church? Pray for your children to find their biblical community and watch God grow them in ways you would never have imagined. I'm praying you and your child's bonds of friendship glorify God this week!

#### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Ro 16:1-23

1. Underline the names of the people Paul greets.
2. Circle the words Paul uses to describe the people.
3. What does Paul warn his friends about and why?

#### What Do You Think

If your name was added to this list, what would you want Paul to say about you?

#### What R U Going To Do

Write a letter to three friends this week. Compliment them and encourage them with a Bible verse.

#### Core Comp

Biblical Community – I spend time with other Christians to help with God's work.

#### Memory Verse

Romans 12:12 – Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

### KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

*6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).