

Overview

Biblical Passage	Romans 15:1-7
Supporting Passages	Psalm 69:9, Galatians 6:1-13
Memory Verse	Romans 15:7
Biblical Truth	Living the gospel message by the endurance and encouragement granted to us by God brings glory to God.
Context	Often the focus of the gospel message can be placed on what it means for us. However, the work of the gospel in and through our lives ought to result in our glorifying God (which means to make Him known). Everything comes back to Him. This last lesson in Crux brings to light the fact that although it's not always easy or even what we want to do, as we continue to live together in accordance with the message of the gospel, we participate in the fruit of the message: the praise and worship of God.
Learning Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore: Your students will understand that we are given encouragement and endurance to live out the gospel in unity with other believers. • Transform: Your students will apply how to live out the gospel by learning to live in unity with other believers.
Prayer Suggestions	<p>As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for your students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray that your students will understand that the nature of the gospel accepts all people. • Pray that your students will become committed to Christian unity within the Church. • Pray that your students will follow Christ's example by accepting others as Christ accepts them.

Biblical Commentary

Investigation

Throughout Church history, from post-apostolic times to today, Christians have considered the book of Romans to have been written by the apostle Paul. In Romans 1:1, the letter itself even claims that Paul wrote it. In addition, the book includes many of the same ideas and the same terminologies that appear in Paul's other writings.

We know little about the founding of the church at Rome. According to Catholic tradition, Peter founded the Roman church. However, there is no solid proof to verify that tradition. While we know little about the church's founding, we can safely assume that when Paul wrote the Roman letter, he was writing to a church that he did not found and with which he had had no previous personal contact.

In this portion of Paul's letter to the Romans, He has pointed out that the gospel lived by Christ was never done so with the intention of pleasing Himself. Rather, it was done with the intentions and purposes of God, which surpassed His own desires. Jews had to realize that the gospel message was for the strong and the weak and for the Jew and the **Gentile**. There were no exceptions. This was the plan and purpose of God. One of Paul's purposes in writing to the Church at Rome was because of its make-up of Jews. They had to know that His purpose was to make the gospel known throughout the world to both Jew and Gentile. They also had to know that if they were to be true to the purposes of God and glorify Him, then they would make every effort to live in unity with the Gentiles as partners in the message of the gospel and heirs of the salvation offered to them through Christ.

Importance

This passage teaches the Essential Truth that **The Church is God's Plan**. The Holy Spirit immediately places all people who put their faith in Jesus Christ into one united spiritual body, the Church, of which Christ is the head. The primary expression of the Church on earth is in autonomous local congregations of baptized believers. The purpose of the Church is to glorify God by taking the gospel to the entire world and by building its members in Christ's likeness through the instruction of God's Word, fellowship, service, worship, and prayer.

This passage also teaches the Essential Truth that **Salvation is by Faith Alone**.

Interpretation

Romans 15:1 In chapter 15, Paul gives three heartfelt appeals to develop the concept that was begun in chapter 14: putting the welfare of others before ourselves. For the Christ-follower, putting others first demonstrates

genuine, sincere Christ-like love and models the example of Jesus Christ. Paul said that believers must rely upon the example of Jesus in their daily walk if they are to please their Heavenly Father. By doing so, we show that the gospel message is for everyone.

For Paul, the responsibility for pleasing others belongs to all Christ-followers. There are no exceptions to that responsibility. However, Paul also made it clear that believers who are stronger should take the initiative in resolving issues between those who are strong and those who are weak.

Paul used the word *ought* or **[debt]** or *obligation* (*opheilema* in the Greek) to describe the basic responsibility that believers have toward others. Believers owe a debt to each other. We must realize that we have a strong obligation toward others. In John's Gospel, the writer used the word *ought* three times to indicate the obligation that believers have to follow God's **example**.

Paul used the phrase "to bear" (*bastazo* in Greek) in this passage to refer to picking up and carrying a burden for someone else. The idea is literally that of carrying a bucket of water for someone else. In Paul's way of thinking, believers are to bear with the weaknesses of fellow believers, helping them in their time of need. Believers must do more than simply tolerate other believers. Rather than tearing down other believers for their beliefs or criticizing them for their views, Christians must learn to build fellow believers up in the Lord. Such action pleases God and models Jesus' example.

Paul is clear in saying that stronger believers must be willing to limit their own personal Christian liberty. That statement is especially true if it means that they can reduce problems for weaker brothers and sisters in Christ and help lead them to a stronger relationship with Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:2 While Paul addressed stronger Christians, he did not leave out weaker believers in his admonition. Here, Paul said that all Christians, not just the stronger ones, must learn how to apply this principle of love in their daily walk with God. We must learn how to do this because our goal is not to selfishly please ourselves or simply seek to please others. The true goal of our behavior should be the other person's welfare and spiritual edification.

The phrase "let each of us" carries with it the idea that no one is exempt from this action. Paul included himself in that statement. While every believer has certain liberties and freedoms in Jesus Christ, those liberties do not limit our responsibility to help others. That is true whether the other person is a believer or not.

Romans 15:3 Here, Paul illustrated the commitment to doing the will of God with the pattern of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, Paul saw the difference between a people-pleaser and a genuine people-lover. Even though Paul indicated that Jesus sacrificed His own desires for the welfare of others, Jesus' action did not make Him acceptable to everyone. Jesus loved others no matter the reaction of the crowd. Jesus' actions were not based on crowd reaction nor mass acceptance.

For Paul, pleasing men wasn't the most acceptable result to strive for. The action that Paul challenged Christ-followers to model is that of loving people. When we do so, we become acceptable to our Heavenly Father. Our attitude toward others should be the same as that of Jesus Christ Himself: longsuffering, forbearance, and fortitude.

In Psalm 69:9, David voiced much of the same idea that Paul quoted here regarding his zeal for God's house. Paul's point is simple: Christians must show as strong a commitment to building up God's spiritual house as David displayed in promoting His physical house.

Romans 15:4 When Paul used the phrase "For everything that was written in the past . . ." he indicated that all

Scripture, including those taken from the Old Testament, is useful. The Old Testament provides motivation for enduring the trials and tribulations of earth and gives us encouragement as we seek to remain faithful in our commitment to doing God's will. The Old Testament gives hope because in it we see God's approval of those who persevered faithfully in spite of opposition and frustration. After all, we must not forget that at first the Old Testament was the only source of instruction for the early Church.

Romans 15:5 Endurance and encouragement come to us through Scripture. They are gifts from God. Paul desired that all of his readers, the strong and the weak, would seek these gifts and apply them in their interpersonal relationships inside and outside the Church. The result of these actions would be unity within the Church. The result would be speaking with one voice.

Romans 15:6 Again, the purpose of having Christian unity is not to please other believers. Having Christian unity pleases God Himself. If believers are united in purpose, then we have unity that can be seen both among the strong and the weak. If we are united, our unity is evident for all to see. God's purposes are accomplished in and through us.

Paul warned that Christians who do not love God and one another have a difficult time praising God when they are together. Paul called believers to major in the Word of God and prayer. We are not called upon to always agree with one another or to compromise our beliefs for others. Our challenge is to focus on what God says and to pray. Earlier Scriptures teach that the first real danger to the unity of the Church came when the **apostles** were too busy to properly administer God's Word and pray.

Romans 15:7 In this verse, Paul summarizes the previous two verses and concluded his instructions concerning the importance of accepting one another. Here, Paul gives a charge to both the strong and the weak as well as to Jews and Gentiles.

Paul repeated his earlier exhortation (14:1) to "accept" (*proslambano*). We are to accept "one another." We are to accept fellow believers. Whether we are strong or weak or of another color or race, we are to be accepting within the Church. The reason is simple: It is inconsistent for Christians to reject someone whom God has accepted. We are to accept one another as Jesus Christ has accepted us. As believers, we are fellow members of the family of God. When we accept one another, we glorify God. When we love and accept others without reservation or without judging them, we are following the pattern of Jesus Himself.

Implications

Unity within the context of the Church is as much an issue today as it was in the early Church. Bottom line: When we love others, we please God. When we accept others, resist the temptation to judge them, and accept them as God accepts them, we are following Jesus' own pattern of revealing God, His plan, and His purpose.

Today we see unity problems cropping up within the Church over interpretations of Scripture, theological disputes, race relations, and socioeconomic differences. But if Christ has already displayed through His life, His death, and His resurrection that He invites all to participate in His salvation, why can we not accept others who look, act, and maybe believe differently than we do? This is a real challenge, but we have to look to Christ, who has already overcome and set the example for us.

What example have we set for our students? Do they not accept others because we do not accept others? What prejudices against those who are different from us have we infused into their lives through our teaching and our actions? What will you begin to do this week that will reveal Christ, which is to the glory of God?

Teaching Plan

Connect Activity

Drama: Delayed Thanks

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will watch a drama about the cause-and-effect phenomenon that is part of life.

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the drama script. Prior to the session, enlist two students to enact the drama. Give copies of the script to cast members ahead of time so that they will be ready to perform it.

Prompt students to perform the drama. Afterward, say: **It's interesting how there is a cause and effect to just about everything in life. The cycle is that everything leads to another outcome. In fact, it's so much a part of life that we don't think about it.** Ask: **What are the effects of living a Godly life?** Then say: **Paul provides the answer in this study.**

Media Option: Results

(3-5 minutes, Reverb Media Pass required)

(3-5 minutes, Reverb Media Pass required)

If your church has purchased the Reverb Media Pass or the Reverb DVD, preview and arrange to show the "End Results" PowerPoint presentation. (If your church has not purchased the Reverb Media Pass, you can purchase this single video through the "Media" tab.)

Divide your class into groups of three. Explain that you are going to show a series of pictures that show an "effect." For each picture, the teams are supposed to come up an outrageous story that explains the cause. The trick is that teams will only have 20 seconds to talk among themselves to come up with a story. Show slide 1, allow twenty seconds to pass, then order all teams to stop talking. Have teams present their "causes." Award points based on creativity. Continue in this manner through each of the slides. When you have finished, say: **Today we're going to look at a cause and an effect, but not quite in the way you might be thinking.**

Explore Activity

Master Teacher Key Study: Cause and Effect

(10-15 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will study Romans 15:1-7 to understand the value of maintaining unity within the Body of Christ.

(10-15 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the Master Teacher Key Study. Print one copy for your own use. Also download the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Print a copy for each learner. Also provide pens.

Pass out pens and copies of the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Then use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach Romans 15:1-7.

Transform Activity

Deeper Discussion

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss how unity amongst believers brings glory to God.

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Lead a discussion using the following questions:

- **When you're caught up in a fight that can't be won, what do you need to remember?**
- **Why is living in unity as believers so essential to living out the gospel?**
- **What are some mental steps that you can take to help you end an unfruitful dispute in the heat of the moment?**
- **How will your unity with other believers ultimately bring glory to God?**

Creative Prayer

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will pray to God for unity amongst their group of fellow believers

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the "Prayer for Unity" activity sheet. Print a copy for each student.

Distribute copies of the "Prayer for Unity" activity sheet to students. Ask students to spread out around the room. Begin reading the litany, then call on students to read at the appropriate times.

Reverb Student Book Option: Not OK to Not Get Along

(10 minutes, Reverb student book required)

Students will complete an activity about why it's not okay to not get along with fellow believers.

(10 minutes, Reverb student book required)

If your church has purchased the Reverb student book, preview the activity on page 235. If possible, provide a copy of the book to reference as you mention the activity to students.

As students work through pages 232-237 in the *Reverb* student book this week, challenge them to take about 10-15 minutes and read through THE "Not OK to Not Get Along" activity on page 235 and respond to the accompanying questions. Then say: **The fact is that it's probably easier to dislike people than it is to actually like them when they are difficult to get along with. But God's Word doesn't give us a way out. If we're followers of Christ, then we're in this thing called love and acceptance with both feet. We can't NOT love and like people. Instead, we should look for ways to love and get along with them.**

Crux 6, "Cause and Effect"
Drama

Delayed Thanks

Characters:

JACOB
TRISH

Props: cell phone

Costumes: Both characters should be dressed in typical school clothes. JACOB should be sporting a couple of bandages on his face.

Creative Note: Feel free to encourage your actors to improvise as much as they want to make Jacob's story completely absurd.

(JACOB is playing a game on his phone. TRISH, enters and approaches him delicately.)

TRISH: Hey, Jacob.

JACOB: Oh. Hey, Trish.

TRISH: How are you?

JACOB: I'm good. Great, even.

TRISH: I heard a little bit about what happened.

JACOB: Oh, yeah?

TRISH: Yeah. That's crazy.

JACOB: I know.

TRISH: But you're doing fine now?

JACOB: Yeah. Everybody said that I was really lucky.

TRISH: Yeah. I guess so. I mean, it's not everyday that someone gets in a car accident like that.

JACOB: I know.

TRISH: And to think that it was caused by all of that syrup on the road.

JACOB: Yeah. I mean, how does a road get covered in syrup in the first place?

TRISH: For real.

JACOB: The craziest part is that the syrup attracted a couple of bears.

TRISH: Really? I hadn't heard that.

JACOB: Oh, yeah. There I was with a totaled car and everything, covered in syrup and surrounded by bears.

TRISH: So what did you do?

JACOB: What could I do? I climbed a tree.

TRISH: What did the bears do?

JACOB: They just sat down at the bottom and waited.

TRISH: Oh, wow.

JACOB: Yeah. But that's not the worst of it. The tree that I climbed had a colony of ants living in the trunk.

TRISH: Ants!

JACOB: That's right. And they immediately came after me because of all the syrup.

TRISH: Oh my gosh. That gives me the willies.

JACOB: Tell me about it. I didn't even really notice them at first, but by the time I did, I was covered.

TRISH: What happened?

JACOB: Well, I just tried to concentrate on not panicking. So I stayed as still as humanly possible, hoping they'd just eat the syrup and not bother with me.

TRISH: Did it work?

JACOB: For a while. But then I started getting bit. So I figured that maybe I could climb out on one of the branches and jump into the creek. Maybe that way I could wash off the ants and the syrup and float downstream away from the bears.

TRISH: Oh, no. You didn't.

JACOB: Well, I tried, but the branch broke and I fell, hit a rock and sprained my ankle. I started looking around for where the bears were when I saw the alligators swimming across the creek.

TRISH: Alligators! This is unbelievable.

JACOB: Believe it. Then a lightning storm popped from the west and a tornado from the east.

TRISH: You're kidding me.

JACOB: I'm not. And then it started hailing, and there was an earthquake and a lava flow and I haven't even told you about the zombies yet.

TRISH: How in the world are you still here?

JACOB: Oh, Peyton was driving by, saw the whole thing and got me out of there.

TRISH: Peyton? Wow. That's incredible.

JACOB: I know.

TRISH: You must be so glad that he came by when he did.

JACOB: Oh, I am. For sure. I mean, without him I was a goner.

TRISH: What did Peyton say about the whole thing?

JACOB: Oh, I don't know.

TRISH: You don't know?

JACOB: Nah. I hadn't really talked to him about it.

TRISH: Why not?

JACOB: Well, I haven't really talked to him at all. I've been really busy.

TRISH: But, Jacob, he saved your life.

JACOB: I know.

TRISH: But you haven't even thanked him?

JACOB: Don't worry. I'll get around to it.

TRISH: When?

JACOB: I don't know. Sometime later, I guess.

TRISH: I don't know. If it were me, I think that I might move it up on the priority list.

JACOB: Maybe you're right.

TRISH: So you're going to talk to him?

JACOB: Yeah.

TRISH: Soon?

JACOB: Maybe.

TRISH: You're unbelievable. I'll see you later.

JACOB: Yeah. See ya.

(JACOB goes back to playing his game as TRISH exits.)

(The End)

Master Teacher Key Study CAUSE AND EFFECT

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Intro: Why is it so important to not just speak the gospel but to live it as well?

Description: Paul called on Roman Christians to bear the weaknesses of their weaker brothers and sisters in order to model the life of Christ, which is the gospel lived out.

Illustration: Who's your model? Zac Efron, Miley Cyrus, Ryan Sheckler, Taylor Lautner, Taylor Hansen, Carter Jenkins, Lauren Conrad, Taylor Swift, or Robert Pattinson? Whom do you dress like—a celebrity or a popular person at school? Whom do you act like? When others see you, whom do they sometimes think they're seeing?

1. Maturity is displayed when stronger Christians build up weaker Christians (Rom. 15:1–3).

Description: Even though He was under fire, Jesus always pleased God and endured the insults and ridicule of others.

Illustration: Clint Eastwood was a famous actor who played in western moves like *Fistful of Dollars*. These were the type of westerns in which the sheriff stood at one end of the dusty road that ran down the middle of the little township. The bad guy was at the other end. Both had their guns drawn and cocked as they took careful steps closer and closer until they were in range of each other—and then one fired first. Someone had to live, and someone had to die because "this town ain't big enough for the both of 'em."

Application: Jesus knew that His purpose wasn't about winning arguments and disputes, although He could. Rather, His purpose was to please God and build up others. So should our purpose be.

2. In the heat of the moment, Scripture is our advocate (Rom. 15:4).

Description: Jesus always fell back on the encouragement of God's Word. It has the ability to teach us and tell us what to do when we're between a rock and a hard place.

Illustration: Have you ever listened to some of the famous college fight songs like "On Wisconsin", "Notre Dame Victory March," "The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You," or "Boomer Sooner?" Why do college bands play fight songs at football games anyway? Because they get the crowd fired up, who in turn get their teams fired up in order to encourage them to win. The songs and their words are familiar to the teams, and they cause the team members to press on and work harder. God's Word acts as an encouragement to us when we're in a tight spot and need to know that He is with us all the way.

Application: If we know what it says and it is applied to our hearts, we can call on Scripture to remind us what we have to do when we need to rise above the situation and be encouraged.

3. The gospel is displayed when in unity we reveal God (Rom. 15:5–7).

Description: Unity comes from Christ. He prayed for it in Gethsemane (see John 17). Through unity with other believers, we are bound together to show the world that Christ is in us and that His love lives through us.

Illustration: The hardest decision that President Abraham Lincoln had to make was to wage war on the southern states. But Lincoln was committed to the vision of our forefathers that to be united was so much better than to be divided. Together as the United States of America, he knew that our nation could accomplish much.

Application: If we live by God's Word and receive His encouragement, perseverance, and unity, we will live out the gospel and reveal who God is to a lost world.

Conclusion: Living out the gospel so that God is honored, glorified, and praised is far more important than winning an argument.

Description: It's not unity at all cost, but unity for the sake of revealing the gospel that should be our motive. We're called to a higher calling than just being right for our own sake. Rather, we are called to reveal the righteousness of God.

Application: Sometimes living the gospel means knowing when to walk away, keep silent, show love, build up others, find encouragement in the Word, and reveal the God who lives within us.

REVERB::**CRUX**::lesson six**CAUSE AND EFFECT****biblical passage:** Romans 15:1–7**memory verse:** Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.**CAUSE AND EFFECT**

1. _____ is displayed when stronger Christians _____ weaker Christians (Rom. 15:1–3).
2. In the heat of the moment, _____ is our _____ (Rom. 15:4).
3. The gospel is _____ when in unity we _____ God (Rom. 15:5–7).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When you're caught up in a fight that can't be won, what do you need to remember?
- Why is living in unity as believers so essential to living out the gospel?
- What are some mental steps that you can take to help you end an unfruitful dispute in the heat of the moment?
- How will your unity with other believers ultimately bring glory to God?

REVERB::CRUX::Cause and Effect::lesson six

PRAYER FOR UNITY

Leader: Lord, we are about to re-enter the world.

Students: Lead us in your path.

Leader: We have the desire to model our lives after you, but sometimes that's hard.

Students: Remind us that you're with us.

Leader: When we're tempted to fight battles that are not ours, help us to remember your example.

Students: To be silent, to share love, to seek encouragement from your Word, to bear up under pressure, to bear the weaknesses of those who can't be strong.

Leader: More than anything, we want to honor you with our lives.

Students: We want to live the gospel and not just pretend as though we believe it.

Leader: We want to glorify you, Lord, by revealing your nature to others.

Students: We can't do this on our own. We'll fail every time. We need you to remind us of what to do.

Leader: We commit our thoughts and our actions to you.

Students: To preserve the unity among our fellow believers.

Leader: To live the gospel.

Students: To bring you glory.

All: To reveal to the world that you are God and that you are love and that you are salvation. Amen.