



It's Supposed to be Hard, That's What Makes It Great: Romans 14, 15, 16

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## Group Leader Notes

Today, we're concluding our sermon series, *Grit and Grace: Lessons from Paul's Letter to the Romans*. I've really enjoyed studying the big themes with you and highlighting the key scriptural insights from what is arguably Paul's most important letter. Today, we'll turn our attention to another difficult theme Paul wrestles with – division in the church.

**Question:** How do we handle divisions, challenges, disagreements, and differences of opinion?

**Bottom Line:** Jesus doesn't call us to be right, he calls us to love one another. It is possible for us to disagree AND still love each other, to assume the best of each other and not the worst.

**Memory Verse:** Romans 14:19

*Let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.*

### **Take Home Message:**

If we follow Jesus, we're called to practice love, even love for our enemies. We are Grace. We're meant to love our neighbor to build one another up, even when we disagree. That kind of Christian community is gritty... it's also all grace... it's supposed to be hard, that's why it's great.

### **Scripture Readings:**

Romans 14:1-3, 5, 10, 13, 14-15, 19, 20-22

Romans 15:7

Romans 16:17-18

### **Other Scripture References**

Matthew 7:1-2

## Group Discussion

Begin in prayer before reading and discussing the text.

1. Think about the last time you participated in a discussion about a sensitive topic with one or more people, and there were differences of opinion. How did it go? Looking back on that experience, what did you learn from that experience?
2. Pastor Joshua cited a Pew Research survey that nearly two-thirds of US adults (65%) say they always or often feel exhausted when thinking about politics. Does this resonate with you? If yes, why do you feel exhausted? If not, how would you describe yourself when it comes to the topic of engaging in politics?
3. Read Romans 14:10-11, 13  
*But why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you look down on your brother or sister? We all will stand in front of the judgment seat of God. So stop judging each other. Instead, this is what you should decide: never put a stumbling block or obstacle in the way of your brother or sister.*

Think of a time that you felt you were being judged. Describe the situation and who you were speaking with. How did it make you feel, and how did you respond?

4. What topics are you most passionate about? Give everyone in your small group a chance to contribute and avoid speaking about the issues themselves.
  - Now consider if you have friends, maybe even Christian friends, who disagree with your opinion. How can we avoid division and loss of relationships and live out the vision of Romans 14?

Read Romans 14:1 (MSG) together:

*Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with – even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently.*

5. Take a few minutes to think about someone you disagree. Maybe they support a candidate you loathe, do things you dislike, or represent something you can't stand. Over the next several weeks, do one thing for that person with the intention to build them up. Ask your group to think of ideas to build that person up.

**Let's Pray:** Ephesians 4:2-3

<sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.