

Journey INTO THE Bible

Leader's Guide

The Letter to the Romans: Lesson Six

Romans 16

Introduction

Suggestion: While people are gathering, ask them to take a seat at any table and introduce themselves to those they might not know. When you are ready to begin the Bible study, start with an opening prayer. Use either the one below or a prayer of your own choosing.

Opening Prayer:

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation, for you have summoned men and women of every race and tongue, of every people and nation to follow in the footsteps of your Son. You made them in your image and likeness, and you redeemed them through the saving death and resurrection of your Son. Open our minds and hearts that we may see all the peoples of the world as you see them—as your beloved sons and daughters, as our brothers and sisters. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

Suggestion: Welcome everyone and make any important announcements, such as location of the restrooms. Remind participants to set cell phones to vibrate or turn them off. Then read “Setting the Stage.” You can introduce it as a brief word from the author of this Bible study to set the context for this lesson.

Setting the Stage

The names of people that have survived from the ancient world are typically those of the ruling class—kings, senators, and mighty generals. For instance, we know

the names of many of the members of the Roman Senate. Their names are preserved in dedicatory inscriptions (memorials, oftentimes carved in stone, commemorating some victory in battle or act of generosity) and in histories written by their contemporaries.

We are not that different today. Our cultural obsessions tend to focus on the rich and famous. So mass-market magazines feature photographs of starlets and regale us with the life stories of rock-and-rollers; they do not feature moms checking their children’s homework or neighbors having friends over for barbeque or ministers making hospital calls.

What makes Romans 16 so remarkable—and so valuable a document from the first century—is that it preserves a list of names of ordinary folk, people who were anything but members of the ruling class. Some, like Prisca and Aquila, might have been prosperous merchants; others, like Phoebe and Erastus, might have held minor civic offices in their respective towns. The rest of the people in Romans 16 to whom Paul sends greetings were, as far as anyone can tell, nobodies. Perhaps some of them were even slaves.

And yet Paul singles them out for special greetings. This says something very important about the churches of the Pauline mission. No matter who you are—no matter your occupation or your social status—because you have been made in the image and likeness of God, and because you have been redeemed by Jesus, you are a person of dignity, worth, and value. You have a name.

Leader's Guide

The Letter to the Romans: Lesson Six

Romans 16

Text: Romans 16:1–5

Suggestion: Read Romans 16:1–5 aloud to the group or have someone who feels comfortable reading in public do the first reading. Invite people to read along in their own Bibles. Then invite the group to begin discussing this passage. Allow fifteen to twenty minutes for discussion. If the group finishes the discussion early, you might suggest one or more of the questions below for further discussion.

Think and Talk Questions

1. Paul asks the Romans to help Phoebe “in whatever she may require from you.” What do you think the Roman Christians could have done for Phoebe?
2. How do you think Prisca and Aquila risked their lives for Paul?

Break

Text: Romans 16:21–23

Suggestion: Read Romans 16:21–23 aloud to the group or have someone in the group do the reading. Invite people to read along in their own Bibles. Then invite the group to begin discussing this passage. Start with the questions that are posed in “Think about it/Talk about it” in Lesson Six. Allow fifteen to twenty minutes for discussion. If you see that a group has finished its discussion early, you might suggest one or more of the questions below for their further discussion.

Think and Talk Questions

1. Paul is surrounded by companions and co-workers in this passage. What impression would that have made on the Roman Christians who received their greetings?
2. What impression of Paul do you gain from this extensive list of greetings in Romans 16?

Wrapping Up

Suggestion: With about twenty minutes remaining, bring to a close the discussion on the second text. Let the participants know they have fifteen minutes left in this session and ask if anyone wants to share with the whole group something he or she learned in the course of doing this Bible study. Instruct the participants to be brief, and bring the sharing to a close when time is up.

Closing Prayer

We give you thanks, our God and Father, for having transformed strangers into brothers and sisters in the Lord. Unite us ever more closely in love and friendship. May we never forget our obligations to one another. Grant that one day all of us will sit around your table, rejoicing in your presence for all eternity. We ask this through Christ our lord.

Suggestion: This concludes our study of the Letter to the Romans. Thank the attendees for having participated in the Bible study. If another Bible study session is scheduled, this would be an appropriate time to announce the time and place.