

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – September 10, 2023

Theme: The Power of God at Work in Us **Topic:** Keeping the Unity of the Spirit

Main Text: Romans 15:14-33

Key verse: Romans 15:2 “Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up”.

INTRODUCTION: For the past two Sundays, our studies have centered on the need to walk and work together: “bearing with one another” and “Christian unity.” In today’s study, Apostle Paul delves into what we might call the *ministry of inclusion*. He clearly reminds the Roman Christians of God’s calling on him – to take the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the gentiles. This was a departure from the widely held view that God was the “God of the Israelites - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” However, Christ’s coming and His atoning death and resurrection was not for the Jews alone but for all – gentiles inclusive. Unity of the Spirit lies in the inclusion of all tribe, race, colour, language, bond and free. But it is one thing to verbally and acquiesce this unity of the Spirit; it is another thing to keep that unity of the Spirit. The word ‘keep’ is a doing word. It carries the connotation of to *have or continue to have; own and manage; watch and care for something; fulfill a promise*; and in relation to time, *to measure*. Whichever way one looks at it, keeping the unity of the Spirit is not passive.

1. **Read Romans 15:14-17. (a) What are two common denominators between Jewish and Gentile believers? (b) Let participants share how these factors unify believers. (c) How can these factors be emphasized as a tool to mitigate and overcomes the divisions in the Body of Christ and in a Church congregation?**

Truly, the gospel is a great reconciler, joining Jews and Gentiles together as one body: “*For Christ himself has ... united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, He broke down the wall of hostility that separated us... Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of His death on the cross... He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us*” (Ephesians 2:14-18 NLT). No wonder Apostle Paul would suspend his much-desired visit to Rome to deliver a monetary gift to the needy brethren in Jerusalem. The two had become one big family in Christ. Hear him: “*But before I come, I must go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the believers there. For you see, the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have eagerly taken up an offering for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem... As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will come to see you on my way to Spain.*” (Romans 15:25-28). And family should look out for each other!

2. **Read Romans 15:22-32. (a) What areas of collaboration does Apostle Paul mention in verses 24, 27, and 30? In what ways could these help believers keep the unity of the Spirit? (b) What does it say about the importance of these areas of collaboration considering that Apostle Paul was looking forward to enjoying the hospitality of believers he probably had never met before, or that he would suspend an important ministry trip just to take some relief materials to Jerusalem? (c) What would you say is the key lesson from these and how can we apply them in our context?**

The gospel, when lived out, breaks down racial, class and caste prejudices! That is why the unity of the Spirit exists only in the church of Christ because only He can make all people one. Another way believers keep the unity of the Spirit is by staying united for the gospel. In Romans 15: 30, Apostle Paul begs for prayers that the gifts which the Gentile believers had given would be accepted by the Jewish believers! Incredible! Also incredible is that Apostle Paul would step down a visit to such an important city as Rome for the sake of pursuing God’s mandate to reach the unreached with the gospel. And when he finally is ready to visit Rome, he invites these believers whom he was yet to meet in person to be ready to support his mission trip to Spain! As far as Apostle Paul was concerned, God’s kingdom must be expanded, and every believer has a part to play – go, pray, give (Romans 15: 22-24, 30-32).

3. **Read Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 15:20-21; Ephesians 4:11-13. (a) Let participants identify God’s purpose for the nations regarding the Great Commission. (b) Compare Apostle Paul’s commitment to taking the gospel to the unreached peoples with the level of our own commitment. (c) What practical areas do we need to improve and how – individually and as a Church?**

Prayer: Father, You are one with Your Son and the Holy Spirit. Help us to allow the gospel of Jesus Christ to be our one uniting force, to do all we can to keep this unity among us and to the lost. In Jesus’ name, Amen.