

# **The Discipline of Disciple-Making: Personal Discipleship Lesson-2: What Does a Normal, Healthy Believer Look Like? Romans 15**

In Romans 15, Paul who had never been to Rome was writing to the church there and commending them on their living out the truth of Christ. He describes many elements of their lives that were what he noted as good, healthy, and part of a normal life of one supernaturally saved.

Mature, normal, healthy believers **display compassion** for believers who differ with their convictions (Romans 15:1-3).

Mature, normal, healthy believers **display comfort** from God through the Scriptures (Romans 15:4).

Mature, normal, healthy believers **display a united direction** in Christ with other believers (Romans 15:5).

Mature, normal, healthy believers **display a passion** for Christ not self (Romans 15:6).

Mature, normal, healthy believers **display a connection** to God as their source of hope through the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

Sixth, Healthy believers are **filled with the Holy Spirit** who produces the fruit of goodness that fills their lives (Romans 15:14a).

Seventh, Healthy believers are **experiencing personally the truths of God**, which is experiential knowledge (Romans 15:14b).

Eighth, Healthy believers **understand the power of God's Word** and know & use God's Word to see His power through admonishing each other (Romans 15:14c).

## **HEALTHY BELIEVER FEED ON THE DOCTRINES OF GOD'S WORD, AND DISPLAY SPIRITUAL STRENGTH & GROWTH.**

Romans 15:1-4 (NKJV) We then **who are strong** ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and **not to please ourselves**. 2 Let **each of us please his neighbor** for his good, **leading to edification**. 3 For even **Christ did not please Himself**; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." 4 For whatever things were written before were **written for our learning**, that we through the **patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope**.

***First, Mature, normal, healthy believers display compassion for believers who differ with their convictions (v.1-3).***

They are vitally concerned about others more than themselves.

Jesus & Others & You, what a wonderful way to spell JOY.

***Second, Mature, normal, healthy believers display comfort from God through the Scriptures (v. 4).***

They see the Bible as the Holy Scriptures, inspired by God, and vital for daily life. The word “learning” (*didaskalia*) is the word for doctrine. Truths from God are doctrines, and they come from the Bible. God wrote His Word to teach us truths/doctrines about our God (1 Cor. 10:6, 10, 11; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21). Paul was talking about the Old Testament here as most of the New Testament was not yet finished and distributed. Paul is not saying to observe the Old Testament Law, but rather see the changeless truths about our changeless God that are contained in the first half of God's Word. As Paul would tell Timothy in his final letter, all Scripture is used by God to train, shape, encourage and strengthen believers (2 Tim. 3:15–17).

Patience (*hupomone*) is the Spirit induced perseverance and endurance. This is the great word from Heb. 12:1 run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus.

Comfort (*paraklesis*) is literally the word “encouragement”, and is the same word as described Barnabas as the Son of Encouragement in Acts 4:36. God is called by the title “God of Comfort” and He is the source of all comfort (II Cor. 1:3), and is able to comfort all who come to Him. Paul told Timothy to focus on giving attention to “exhortation” (I Tim. 4:13), which is this very same word.

Listening to God, seeking God, finding the God of Comfort in His Word are all the truths taught here. This leads to the great and rich Biblical word: hope (*elpis*).

Hope is not wishful thinking, like the uncertainties sometimes implied by the English usages of “hope”. The Biblical word for hope speaks of a strong certainty that something is sure but not yet here. It is coming, we are convinced, and we wait assuredly. That is Biblical Hope.

Hope comes from God.

Hope is fed by His Word.

Hope grows as we get to know God more experientially each day.

Hope is part of the sacred trio that Paul often reminded us of “faith, hope, and love” (I Cor. 13:13). Peter says when we were saved we were saved to a “living hope” (I Peter 1:3), that we

are so aware of that part of our ministry is to explain to others the “reason” for our hope in Christ (I Peter 3:15). Paul told Titus that he was in “hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:2), which was not wishful thinking, but settled assurance. Paul told Timothy that the Lord Jesus Christ is our hope (I Tim. 1:1).

In the Old Testament we have some vivid language about hope in Lamentations 3:21, 24.

Lam. 3:21-24 (NKJV) This I recall to my mind, Therefore **I have hope**. 22 Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because **His compassions** fail not. 23 They are new every morning; **Great is Your faithfulness**. 24 “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore **I hope in Him!**”

## HEALTHY BELIEVERS PROMOTE THE BIBLICAL UNITY THAT BRINGS GLORY TO GOD.

Romans 15:5-6 (NKJV) Now may the God of patience and comfort **grant you to be like-minded toward one another**, according to Christ Jesus, 6 that you may with **one mind and one mouth glorify** the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

***Third, Mature, normal, healthy believers display a united direction in Christ with other believers (v. 5).***

It is both believed (one mind), and displayed (one mouth).

***Fourth, Mature, normal, healthy believers display a passion (homothumadon) for Christ not self (v. 6).***

Seven times in the book of Acts the early church is described by the same word. That word is most often translated "with one accord". The Greek word that is used in Acts is an adverb (Strong's # 3661 homothumadon 12x) that means "together, unanimously, with (in) one mind, purpose, accord".

**As Christ's Body we Share a Life of Worship: Acts 1:14** these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ to share worship.

**As Christ's Body we Share a Life of Togetherness: Acts 2:1** When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ to share life together. As Hebrews 10:24-25 reminds us, we must never forsake gathering as a Body

**As Christ's Body we Share a Life of Fellowship: Acts 2:46** So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ and enjoying fellowship with one another.

**As Christ's Body we Share a Life of Prayer: Acts 4:24** So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ for a time of prayer of dependence for strength and courage to continue ministry as things became harder and harder because of persecution and threats.

**As Christ's Body we Share a Life of Unitedness: Acts 5:12** And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ and celebrating their oneness in Christ. Do you remember 9/12/01? It seemed like every house and car in America was flying a flag the day after we were attacked. We were united.

**As Christ's Body we Share a Life of Responsiveness: Acts 8:6** And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ and sharing a desire to accomplish ministry by responding to God's Word as it was taught.

**As Christ's Body we Share a Life of Investment: Acts 15:25** it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ and sharing a desire to accomplish ministry by following biblical leaders.

## FIFTH, HEALTHY BELIEVERS DISPLAY A CONNECTION TO GOD AS THEIR SOURCE OF HOPE THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Romans 15:13 (NKJV) Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that **you may abound in hope** by the power of the **Holy Spirit**.

They find their hope in God like David in I Sam 30:1-6 when all else was gone. Look at this powerful, stark "moment of truth" in David's life.

I Sam. 30:1-6 (NKJV) Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire, 2 and had taken captive the women and those who were there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried them away and went their way. 3 So David and his men came to the city, **and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive.** 4 Then David and the people who were with him **lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep.** 5 And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. 6 Now **David was greatly distressed**, for the **people spoke of stoning him**, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. **But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.**

God is our source of life and hope, and that is more than everything else combined.

This only comes by the power of the Spirit. Note with me, and mark the three key power of the Holy Spirit references, surrounding this passage in Romans 15:13, 16 & 30.

## SIXTH, HEALTHY BELIEVERS ARE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO PRODUCES THE FRUIT OF GOODNESS THAT FILLS THEIR LIVES.

Romans 15:14a (NKJV) Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are **full of goodness**, filled with **all knowledge**, able also to **admonish one another**.

Paul first shows us that mature, normal, healthy believers have fullness of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). God is the only supplier, where fullness of goodness can be found.

Are you emptied of self?

Have you invited the Spirit of God to refill your life? I often tip my head Heavenward and sing a prayer to the Lord: Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me. Have you ever done that?

Let's do that together right now. Make it your prayer with me for God to empty us of self, and fill us anew with His Holy Presence.

## SEVENTH, HEALTHY BELIEVERS ARE EXPERIENCING PERSONALLY THE TRUTHS OF GOD, WHICH IS EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE.

Romans 15:14b (NKJV) Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are **full of goodness**, filled with **all knowledge**, able also to **admonish one another**.

Paul next shows us that mature, normal, healthy believers have personal, experiential life with God. The truths of God were lived out personally, not perfectly, but personally.

Have you experienced God?

Have you felt Him touch your life with cleansing, strength, peace, joy, or insight?

Do you ask Him to help you understand the Bible?

Do you invite Him to be your Guide & Teacher as you read His Word? That is what it means to experience God.

They have tasted, eaten, fed upon, and personally known God.

Experience is the highest level of knowing. Recognition & acquaintance are lesser level.

## EIGHTH, HEALTHY BELIEVERS UNDERSTAND & USE GOD'S WORD TO ADMONISH EACH OTHER.

Romans 15:14c (NKJV) Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are **full of goodness**, filled with **all knowledge**, able also to **admonish one another**.

They have personally confronted their own lives by listening to God's Word and responding to God's Word. Then, and only then are they able to share with others how God has changed them. This is the purpose of our daily time in the Word. 2 Cor. 3:18 to look in the mirror, see what is out of place, take the step of getting it fixed, and then moving on.

Unlike the believers in James that looked in the mirror and went their way, aware but unconcerned about their unkempt manner.

Noutheteo means: It seeks to correct the mind, to put right what is wrong, to improve the spiritual attitude.<sup>1</sup>

In Acts 20:31, Paul explains the prominence of this “nouthetic” element in his ministry at Ephesus: “Night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”

This is also our responsibility, as it was for every believer in Romans 15. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:14–15).

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<sup>1</sup> Kittel, G., Bromiley, G. W., & Friedrich, G. (Eds.). (1964–). *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.