

LifeGroup

resource guide

 for the week of May 28

*I do not trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory; but you give us victory over our enemies, you put our adversaries to shame. In God we make our boast all day… But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.*

*(Psalms 44:6-8; 2 Corinthians 1:9)*

God desires everyone to have a robust trust and relevant relationship with Him which is founded upon and fashioned by Jesus Christ. As our Creator and Father, He understands the drives, ambitions, and strength that He has placed within each of us. He also laments at how we are easily dissuaded by the seductive lure to trust in ourselves rather than in Him. Therefore, every now and then God takes away our props and we painfully discover our patent weakness when we experience the lifelessness which arises from growing a life which is only superficially rooted in Him. The Scriptures make it clear that God sometimes allows challenges, trials, and temptations to teach us to depend wholly on Himself.

*Where do we really place our trust?* As followers of Jesus Christ, we know the right answer in theory: “We trust in God!” But in practice, do we?! When facing troubles, do we look to God for His way through or do we manipulate things a little using our own wisdom and skill? When wanting guidance, do we reflect upon His written Word or do we wait until the Lord makes His will clear or do we ask Him to bless our own decisions? When deciding on direction do we only consult those who are likely to agree with us? When tested do we confidently look to God, or do we become fearful, negative, defeatist, and/or preoccupied with our own weaknesses and limitations?

A. W. Tozer writes: *“Many of us Christians have become extremely skillful in arranging our lives so as to admit the truth of Christianity without being embarrassed by its implications... We boast in the Lord yet carefully watch out that we never get caught depending solely upon Him.”* Challenges and trials possess a clarity which easier, more predictable times do not. Turbulent times and trying circumstances remind us that there are ultimately two options for the follower of Jesus Christ: true faith or total collapse. Either He is Lord of all or He is not Lord at all.

Dear ones, no close friendship or marriage can prosper when trust is partial or tentative. The same is true concerning our relationship with God. We will quickly discover, when we place our full trust in the Lord, a well-spring of life that will not disappoint us or leave us weak, defenseless, or ashamed (see John 7.38 ; Romans 5.1-5).

Summer is an opportunity for us to recalibrate our trust so that our trust and our hope lies in our Savior. Let me suggest that you use this season to focus on relationships and circumstances that you have not wholly placed in God’s hands. Let’s agree to make this a summer for renewed trust in the Lord.

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

Getting to know one another better…
What is one of the best thank you notes you have ever received? Why was it meaningful to you?

John 16.1-27: Final words… *really!*

*16.1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is also a minister of the church at Cenchreae, 2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the holy ones, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a benefactor to many and to me as well. 3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I am grateful but also all the churches of the Gentiles; 5 greet also the church at their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the firstfruits in Asia for Christ. 6 Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and my fellow prisoners; they are prominent among the apostles and they were in Christ before me. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. 10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. 11 Greet my relative Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. 12 Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. 15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the holy ones who are with them. 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. 17 I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles, in opposition to the teaching that you learned; avoid them. 18 For such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent. 19 For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you to be wise as to what is good, and simple as to what is evil; 20 then the God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. 21 Timothy, my co-worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives. 22 I, Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord. 23 Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus greet you. 24*

*Rom. 16.25 Now to him who can strengthen you, according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages 26 but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

**NOTES:** Paul sends his personal greetings to more than 25 people — more than the rest of Paul’s letters put together! This list of Jews and non-Jews is an exercise and expression of the very unity he has been striving to address throughout the letter.

Let’s focus on Phoebe, our sister.She probably bore the letter from Corinth to Rome, since Paul is commending them to receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the holy ones. Her home is in Cenchreae, the eastern port of Corinth. In the days before the Corinthian canal, the city had two ports, with arrangements to drag ships across the isthmus. The implication is that Phoebe is a businesswoman who is able to travel independently, and for Paul to trust her with a letter like this speaks volumes for the respect in which she was held. She was in a position of leadership (minister of the church), and Paul clearly expected the Roman church to receive and respect as well. He requests that the Romans give her any assistance she may need on the grounds that she has herself been a benefactor to many, himself included. The word “benefactor” means much more, in Paul’s world, than simply “she has been a great help”. Benefaction and patronage were a vital part of the culture, and this makes Phoebe someone to be reckoned with socially and financially as well as simply a sister in the Lord and a leader—of whatever sort—in her local church.

Other names include: Priscilla and Aquila, Jewish woman and her Jewish husband who had worked with Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1-2). Adronicas and Junia, the latter most likely a feminine name who were outstanding among the apostles. The two were Jewish (my relatives) and had become Christians before Paul ("they were in Christ before me”). Tryphena and Tryphosa... Persis were all

women. The first two are probably twin sisters. Tertius was Paul's secretary. In the ancient world, it was common to have someone else write from one's dictation. Gaius was probably Paul's host in Corinth (Acts 18:7; 1 Cor. 1:14). Erastus was Corinth’s treasurer who functioned more like a "director of public works" and would be a very important man, an aristocrat. Despite numerous scholarly efforts to deduce the proportion of highborn versus lowborn people in the early Church, all we can say for certain is that there were plenty of slaves and freedmen (16:14-15), tradespeople and artisans (16:3), wealthy businesspeople (Gaius, 16:23), and perhaps a few local aristocrats like Erastus. This distribution (a large number of slaves, freedmen, and tradespeople, along with a smaller number of rich people and even fewer aristocrats) roughly mirrored the proportions of each class in the non-Christian world.

Reflecting together on Romans 16.1-27…

What observations do you make from the list of greetings in 16.1-16? Why does he appreciate them?

Use your imagination. From what we know about Paul and the Romans, how might the people in [Romans 16:1-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+16%3A1-16) have "risked their lives," “worked hard for you" and "been a co-worker“ to Paul and others?

The “holy kiss” (v. 16) became a key feature of Christian liturgy very early on, but it was not meant to replace normal expressions of affection; in many parts of the Middle East and elsewhere a kiss on both cheeks is a normal greeting between men as well as women. How does even this simple gesture reinforce the main themes Paul has written about throughout Romans regarding the church?

Paul sends greetings in verses 21–23 from friends of his to the Roman believers. How might these greetings have affected the Roman church?

Who are some of the people who have had the most influence on your spiritual journey? Have you ever thanked them? If so, how? If not, why not?

What have you learned as a result of your study of Romans? What main themes from the whole letter, reviewed in verses 25–27, have stayed in your mind and heart the most?

What has changed in your life since studying the letter to the Romans? Has God spoken to those changes through your study of Romans? Please explain.

My prayer requests (write in advance what you want your group to pray for…)

Praying for my group…