

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

25 -- Romans 15: 1 to 13, The Strong -- with commentary

The purpose of the Letter to the Romans is to develop a Model for Living the Awakened/Transformed Life. Today's study is the 25th of 27 lessons.

According to our Study Chart we are studying the 4th section of Become The Work of The Church. Our previous sessions cover Paul presentations on God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. This new section covers the Work of the Church. This is one of seven sessions under the rubric of Ethics.

This is the sixth session in this series. Remember, the focus of the Book of Romans is to provide us The Model For Living The Awakened/Transformed Life.

BACKGROUND: Now, our work shifts to applying what we've learned in order to become the work of The Church. Observe, this is more than just doing the work of The Church. Paul wants us to embody The Church, to embrace it and morph ourselves in the shape of little Christs; you'll remember this is Luther's expression for Christians who live their lives fulfilling their intended purpose of being humane people and communities.

The way this work gets done becomes Christian Ethics; the way we treat others, and the way in which we view ourselves. It may be helpful to remember the short hand offered by Gut Trip Analysis. Christian Ethics always is WWJD.

REMEMBER! THE CONTEXT IS CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

ABOUT THIS LESSON: This is the second of two ethical lessons on how the strong are to relate to the weak. The previous lesson focused on passing judgment on those who are weak in their awakened surrendered life (in the life of faith). This session the focus is on acceptance of others on where they are in their spiritual journey. In each circumstance, the Awakened person is to bring praise to Christ/God by our actions, and each relationship uses Christ as our example of selfless service.

Define and then ground in your own human experience the following before reading the assignment:

1) Review how we experience Christ. Describe the way in which the ethic of WWJD describes our relationship to each other.

IHOP: Bob Brown.-We have a sense of responsibility for each other. Bob Barhydt- Do unto others as you would have done to you. Rex-We experience Christ in how we are treated by others & how we treat them.

2) Review our experience of the Holy Spirit. (Hint: how is the Holy Spirit like a wake-up call?)

IHOP: God's wisdom helping us with decisions. "Breath of life".

WES: This is a little head-trippy, or it could be used as a working definition. The "experience" is what we are after here. I experience the "Breath of life" when I am in touch with my intended purpose; such as, entering into a deep conversation with a friend, walking through a wheat-field at harvest time, or listening to a piano/organ duet. My intended purpose is to live in harmony with all things.

Read the assigned reading at one time.

I. Vss. 1 - 3, Paul describes the unique way in which the awakened relate to other all other people. Describe this method, and then illustrate it by examples.

IHOP: The awakened must encourage and strengthen the weak, not just tolerate them. Christ takes on our sins when we are weak. We relate not only in what we say but what we do.

WES: The word "sins" is the difficult word in this sentence. Sin always represents separation. The awakened are awake to the experience that we always live in a permanent state of separation that can never be overcome; i.e., the result of our gender, culture, race, etc. The sentence "Christ takes on our sins when we are weak" is really Good News because we can never, ever overcome our separation on our own. It is only when we have a relationship to Christ that our separation is overcome for us as a gift.

II. Vss. 5 - 6: Define the following

A. **Vs. 5A,** The spirit of unity (Hint: How does Gut Trip Analysis approach this definition?)

IHOP: "We don't always agree with each other, but the spirit of unity keeps us together." "The ability to live at-one with each other." "Don't get hung up on the little details."

B. **Vs. 5B,** How does following Christ Jesus make a difference in how we relate to others?

IHOP: "We relate to each other by WWJD." If we follow Jesus' example, we won't have any problems living at-one with others." "Makes us more accepting of different views."

C. **Vs. 6,** How does living out of this ethic demonstrate Paul's conclusions here?

IHOP: "Living out the ethic of one mind, one heart and one voice, we glorify God by bearing fruit of the Holy Spirit, i.e. love, joy, peace and patience."

WES: This is a good answer provided that "love, joy, peace and patience" are experiences and not just ideas. Each of these terms could be run through our human experience.

III. Vs. 7 - 8, How does our acceptance of each other bring praise to God

IHOP: "If we accept each other we live in unity and work to bring others to God."

WES: Nice work, guys. Now, if I was walking down the street and saw someone "accepting each other" what would I be seeing them do? If I was walking down the street and saw someone "bringing others to God" what would I be seeing? (Hint: loving accountability; tough love.)

A. **Vs. 8,** Paul gives us an illustration here, describe it and speak to the implications for us.

IHOP: (Rex)- Christ was first a servant of the Jews and he worked to show the Jews the way to salvation. By fulfilling the promises of God's word, Christ proved the word of God to be true.

WES: Well, this is a start. The tough words are "salvation," "promises of God's word," "word of God."

"Salvation" is experienced as we are awakened by live our intended purpose of living in At-One-Ment with self, neighbor and God as Perfect At-One-Ment; in this

way we fulfill the Great Commandment of Christ.

The "Promises of God" are experienced as (Christ) events that awaken us to the necessity of dying to our estrangement from each other, our-selves, and with God who is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment.

The "word of God" is experienced as the Good News that we have a choice to remain victimized or to decide to live the victorious life.

B. **Vs. 9 12**, These are proof texts. Identify and mark your Bibles with the appropriate Old Testament references. Speculate on why Paul chose these particular passages.

IHOP: Paul was showing the Jews that taking the message to the Gentiles was not just his idea.

IV. **Vs. 13B**, Paul tells us that when we trust in God then we will overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

A.. First, remind yourself of how you experience the Holy Spirit. Then, how does our experience give us an overflow of hope.

IHOP: The Holy Spirit awakens us to how to live abundantly. By living how the Spirit shows us we can live in joy and peace.

WES: Yes, the Holy spirit does awaken us to live "abundantly." The experience of the Holy Spirit always comes to us as an EPIPHANY or a Christ Event of cross/death and resurrection. Often this looks like being held accountable. The abundance of the living is the experience of being awakened to our intended purpose of total surrender to God. Living outside of our-selves is the only true abundance.

B. Recall that Paul tells us that hope only is useful when we are in an experience of hopelessness. What are the implications of this as Paul brings us to the end of his theological and ethical treatise?

IHOP: When in an experience of hopelessness, there is still hope.

WES: Can you give us an experience of hopelessness? The two seconds before a head-one crash? The diagnosis of terminal cancer? The impending death of a child with leukemia?

WHERE IS THE HOPE?

The hope is never, ever found in ourselves. Our hope always, and forever, is found in Christ's cross/death and resurrection that we experience personally. We are the ones to die to hope itself. As we do this, then we experience the hope that is beyond us!! Amen .

Alright folks, talk to me.