

The same advice was given in Phil 2:1–4: they are each to look to the interests of others rather than just to their own. The idea, of course, is to create an atmosphere of reciprocity and mutuality, which enables everyone to be gifted by otherness and thus to grow. But the heaviest obligation falls on those who are strong enough to let go of their rights and privileges in order to gift others.

Paul has been speaking again about the potential divisions caused by peoples' diets!

In light of Romans 14, who are the strong and weak Paul mentions in Romans 15:1?

What personal attitudes might hinder or help us to bear with the failings of the weak (vv.1-2)? Explain why.

When is self-concern appropriate and when does it turn into selfishness?

How was Christ (v.3) the supreme example of what Paul commands in Romans 15:1-2?

If we follow Christ's example in this and other areas of our lives, why will we need endurance, encouragement and hope?

Why are Bible study and prayer (vv. 4-5) essential if we are to maintain these attitudes?

In contrast to the discord and possible verbal abuse hinted at in Rom. 14, what does God desire of us (vv. 5-6)?

How can the fact that Christ has accepted us promote both unity and praise? Can it help us to accept others?

In verses 9-12 Paul quotes from four different OT passages. What words and phrases express the dominant mood of these verses?

Paul appears to be claiming that we are meant to build each other up so that we can more effectively praise God?

Do you agree? To what extent does our church life help that process? If not what should we be doing?



Growing Together II

There is a Peanuts cartoon which shows Peppermint Patty talking to Charlie Brown.



She says: “Guess what, Chuck. The first day of school and I got sent to the principal’s office. It was your fault, Chuck.”

He replies, “My fault? How could it be my fault? Why do you say everything is my fault?”

She says: “You’re my friend, aren’t you, Chuck?

You should have been a better influence on me.”

What do you make of that observation? Is it fair?

To what extent are we our brother’s keeper?

There are various pictures and metaphors used in the NT to describe the Church. The main ones include: *body*, *marriage*, *family*, and *building*. Most of them revolve around something living and/or in relationship.

In 1Corinthians, Paul addressed the schisms that had come about in this church because of “party” affiliations; there were divisions because of the ways certain “individuals” were seen as having authority and considered as the key leader. Paul wanted to show that no one person was supreme and that the recognition of every one’s strengths and abilities was needed to build up the church.



READ 1CORINTHIANS 3

Paul begins this particular critique by pointing out that as newly converted believers, the Corinthians had not been given the “meat” of the Gospel but fed / taught with what was easily digestible and taken in – just like a newly born baby can not eat solids but relies on his mother’s milk.

What aspects of the Christian faith would you characterise as “milk”?

What are some of the more “meaty” subjects that would require a certain maturity of faith?

Paul then turns to an agricultural metaphor and imagines church development as similar to various stages in the growth of a crop..



How and to what extent has what you believe and do as a Christian, changed and developed over the years?

What would you define as needing to happen for an individual or a church to grow?

What stages of growth do you think Christians should go through?

READ ROMANS 12: 1-8

What do you think Paul means by “offering your bodies as living sacrifices”? What does “spiritual worship” mean?

Why does Paul call our self-offering a "spiritual" (or, "reasonable") act of worship

NB J B Phillips paraphrases v.2 as

‘Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould.’

In what ways are we influenced and pressured to conform to the ways of this world? How aware of it are we?

What do you think Paul means by ‘renew our minds’?

How might we practically do that?

Sometimes we view God’s will as something to be avoided rather than desired. How can the end of v.2 correct this distortion?

Having laid down this general principle of life under God's mercy, Paul focuses upon more specific behaviour. The first area of our lives in which our thinking needs to be renewed and transformed is how we view our place in the Body of Christ (cf.12:3-8).

What do you think Paul means by the “the measure of faith God has given” (12:3)?



How can this help us self-assess ourselves accurately?
What truths should keep us from feeling superior or inferior to other Christians (12:3-6)?

Paul lists examples of gifts that may be found among Christians in any given church. The list is not exhaustive, for it is meant to teach principles about how we should use any gift.

What principle(s) can you deduce?

What gifts would you add or include as from God?

Consider the gifts Paul names in 12:6-8.

Which ones are intended for the betterment of the person who has them, and which are given for the good of the others? (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7, 17-21.)

How should this observation affect our attitude toward our own gifts? (cf. Ephes. 4:11-16.)

Paul describes these as Gifts and not as Talents.

Is there a difference?

Which gifts do you believe you have been entrusted with and to what extent are you utilising them?

READ ROMANS 15: 1-13

These verses really represent the climax of Paul's theological argument in what was meant to be a summary of what he believed.



He begins with the process of building the community. It can happen only if those who are strong accept those who are weak and help them to grow stronger, not by insisting on the rightness of their own position but by gladly bearing the weight of that weakness

themselves. Paul had said in 13:8 that they should “owe no one anything except to love one another.” Now he spells that out: “we who are strong are obliged to bear the weaknesses of those who are not strong, and not to please ourselves.” And, he continues, “let each one of us please the neighbour unto the good, toward building up.”