

# One Another

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Romans 16 | October 1, 2017

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## I. Introduction to this Study

This week we begin a series engaging the “one anothers” found throughout the Christian Scriptures, in hopes of clarifying the contours of Christian community.

What is it we are called to in our shared life together? Look no further than the “one anothers”! This week we begin with “Greet One Another.”

## II. Connecting with One Another

How do you greet strangers, those you’re meeting for the first time?

How about your family, those you’ve known all your life?

What about someone new at church? More like a stranger? Or a family member?

## III. Study the Text

### a. Read Romans 16.1-2.

This is the only time the New Testament mentions Phoebe. What do we learn about her in just these two verses? (pay close attention to the titles Paul uses for her)

### b. Not only a believer, Paul notes that Phoebe is a “deacon” in Cenchreae, the port city of Corinth. While this could refer to general service in the church, it is most likely a reference to an official position – like our Board of Deacons, who are called and ordained by God as “officers” in our community. (see Philippians 1.1 and 1st Timothy 3.8, 11-12 for other examples of deacons, and their origins in Acts 6.1-4)

What does this teach us about the role of women in the early church?

### c. Paul instructs the Romans to “receive her” and “give her any help she may need.” Imagine travel and accommodations in the first century: What do you think Paul means in this instruction? (see similar instructions from Jesus in Luke 10.1-7)

Notice, also, *why* Paul instructs them to support her. One author explains: “the term often referred to a person of wealth who gave assistance to a group as a ‘patron.’” (see Luke 8.1-3 for similar patrons in Jesus’ ministry)

### d. Paul continues, greeting twenty-six people and at least three churches (perhaps as many as five, if “households” referred to other bodies of believers)!

Read Romans 16.3-7.

What is your initial impression of those he greets (and how he greets them) in these five verses?

- e. Priscilla and Aquilla are called “coworkers in Christ Jesus.” The term coworker may be a technical term for church leaders who deserved pay, respect, and obedience (see 1st Corinthians 9.14, 16.16, 18). Paul met this duo in Corinth after the Emperor Claudius expelled them from Rome in 49AD, during a time of unrest between Jews and Christians. In all probability they were wealthy, as they had homes in a few different cities that were used as house churches. (see Acts 18)

Not many of us have multiple houses, but what resources *do* you have that could be used for ministry and mission? What is preventing you from doing so?

- f. Paul’s reference to Priscilla and Aquilla “risking their lives” for him is probably an allusion to a riot in Ephesus (see Acts 19.23-41 and 1st Corinthians 15.32). Perhaps “the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them” because Priscilla and Aquilla saved their founding pastor’s life (Paul, himself)!

Who has “risked their life” – or given of themselves – for you? How did they do so?  
Who do you risk your life or give of yourself for?

- g. After greeting Epenetus, the first convert (literally “the firstfruits”!), Paul again greets fellow Christian workers. Mary “worked very hard for you,” while Andronicus and Junia are “outstanding among the apostles”! Paul’s use of the term *apostles* prompts questions: Were they wandering missionaries or members of the apostolic group mentioned in 1st Corinthians 15.5-7 (meaning they knew Jesus personally!)?

What would “outstanding” mean within these two possible definitions of “apostle”?

Either way, it is clear that this husband and wife team were important leaders within the early church. Note, again, the importance of women in the leadership of the early church! (see also verse 12)

- h. In verse 8, Paul shifts the focus of his greetings. Read Romans 16.8-15.

The first four names – Apliedus, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles – were names used for slaves. What’s more, each of which has been found in inscriptions in the imperial household in Rome.

The next, the Household of Aristolulus, may very well refer to the brother of Agrippa I and Herod the Great (powerful first-century rulers).

Think for a moment about these five names: four possible indentured servants and one family in power. In fellowship with each other! What would *that* be like? How do you think their backgrounds shaped their relationships with one another?

Have you ever experienced anything like that?

- i. The names “Tryphena and Tryphosa” in verse 12 mean “dainty and delicate.” Perhaps a play on words, Paul asserts they “worked hard in the Lord.”

Have you ever known anyone like that – who seems quiet and reserved, but accomplishes much for God?

- j. Paul greets “brothers” (and “sisters”). What does this imply about the closeness and connection of the Christian community?

Do you experience similar things in our church family? Why do you think you do (or don't)?

- k. Make a list of those you make an effort to greet on Sundays at church or mid-week in your Life Group:

Who's missing from this list? In other words, who else should you be greeting?

- l. In verse 16, Paul writes, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

Do you think we should be doing so? Or is this a command we don't need to obey? What influences your response?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Lift up our Sunday morning gatherings, that they would be places of warm Christian greeting, and ask God to lead you in greeting others,
- b. Pray for those who aren't yet connected in a Life Group – that they would be drawn into deep Christian community.