

Experiencing God

June 29 , 2025

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Romans 15:7

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. Has anyone ever gone out of their way to welcome you, make you feel comfortable/safe, or included? What happened, and what difference did it make to you?
3. While Romans has long been interpreted as the destiny of **individuals**, St. Paul is actually writing to **people-groups** within a church community. The believers in Rome are grappling with the

meaning of their ethnic and cultural identities as Jews and Gentiles.

Read the famous verse

Romans 3:22b-24:

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Now, as one commentator said, change the English word “all” to “both” and see what Paul is really up to. How does this subtle shift impact your understanding of Romans?

4. Paul tells Jews and Gentiles (both!) to welcome and accept one another as equally part of God’s design for a new future in Christ. This is a challenging kind of welcome that honors the cultural identity of people, and doesn’t make them be something else to be included. Jews can be Jewish and Gentiles can be Gentiles **and still** be united in Christ.
 - a. How does this translate into the identity divisions and difficulties facing the church today?
 - b. What people-groups need to be better welcomed *as they are* and not made to be something else?

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