



COVENANT

I WILL PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY CHURCH

SCRIPTURE: Romans 15:1–7 (NLT)

SERIES SPOTLIGHT:

Church membership is a response to Christ's saving grace and our Church Covenant is the agreement among members to live together in that grace, helping one another follow Jesus.

INTRODUCTION:

The church is a family of believers brought together by the grace of Jesus Christ. We come from different backgrounds, possess different personalities, hold different preferences, and sometimes see things very differently. Yet, we belong to one another because we belong to Christ. In Romans 14&15, Paul addresses differences among believers and calls the church to something greater than simply getting along. He calls us to a joy-filled, Christ-centered unity. We are called by Christ to relate to one another with humility and to pursue harmony. Our Membership Covenant expresses this biblical responsibility: **I Will Protect the Unity of My Church.** We are compelled by Christ to actively pursue and protect our unity in the church.

SERMON SPOTLIGHT: We protect the unity of Christ's church when we extend to one another the same grace Christ has extended to us.

I. ALWAYS CONSIDER THE OTHER (ROMANS 15:1–4)

Unity requires putting the spiritual well-being of others ahead of our personal preferences.

ROMANS 15:1-4 NLT

15 We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves.

2 We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. **3** For even Christ didn't live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, "The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me." **4** Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and

encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.

Consider: The OTHER person is my brother or sister in Christ, part of my church family, and someone I have covenanted to love.

Our Covenant Commitment: Acting in love toward other members and refusing to gossip.

II. ACTIVELY PURSUE HARMONY (ROMANS 15:5–6)

Unity is a gift from God that we are called to intentionally cultivate.

ROMANS 15:5-6 NLT

May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. ⁶ Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider: Harmony requires humility, patience, forgiveness, prayer, and a willingness to pursue the OTHER's good.

Our Covenant Commitment: Supporting godly leadership, participating faithfully in church life, and pursuing relationships that strengthen the body of Christ.

III. TAKE THE OTHER TOWARD YOURSELF! (ROMANS 15:7 ESV)

Unity means extending the gracious welcome we have received from Christ.

ROMANS 15:7 ESV

Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Consider: We are called to move toward the OTHER in the grace of Christ. We are to treat fellow believers as those whom Christ has received.

Our Covenant Commitment: Protecting the unity of our church by welcoming, loving, encouraging, and helping one another follow Jesus.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

The OTHER is my brother or sister in Christ. We share one Savior, belong to one church family, and have committed ourselves to live together in His grace. We will not always agree, but we can always choose to act in love, pursue harmony, and extend the gracious welcome we have received from Jesus.

REMEMBER: As a member of the body of Christ known as FBCG, I have covenanted with God, my fellow church family members, and the leaders to

II. Protect the Unity of My Church

By acting in love toward other members

By refusing to gossip

By following the leaders

By participating whenever and wherever possible

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Always Consider the OTHER (Romans 15:1 - 4)

Paul instructs stronger believers to bear with the weaknesses of others rather than please themselves. How does this challenge our natural tendency to defend our opinions, protect our preferences, or insist on our own way? How does Christ's example in verse 3 help us distinguish between graciously yielding personal preferences and compromising biblical convictions? Identify a situation in which considering the OTHER first would require genuine personal sacrifice.

2. Building Up Rather Than Tearing Down (Romans 15:1 - 4)

Paul says our interactions should contribute to another believer's spiritual good. How might criticism, gossip, assumptions, or even seemingly harmless conversations undermine that responsibility? What is the difference between discussing a legitimate concern in a Christ-honoring manner and participating in divisive conversation? How should our Church Covenant influence the way we speak about fellow members, especially when they are not present?

3. One Mind and One Voice (Romans 15:5 - 6)

Paul connects harmony among believers with the shared purpose of glorifying God. How can a church maintain biblical unity while allowing legitimate differences in personalities, convictions, preferences, and ministry approaches? How should we distinguish essential biblical truths from matters on which Christians may reasonably disagree? What happens to the church's worship, witness, and mission when personal preferences become more important than our shared commitment to Christ?

4. Welcoming as Christ Welcomed Us (Romans 15:7)

Paul commands us to welcome one another according to the example of Christ's welcome of us. How does remembering the undeserved grace we have received change the way we view someone who has disappointed, offended, or disagreed with us? What is the difference between merely tolerating another believer and genuinely receiving that person into fellowship? In light of our Membership Covenant, identify one specific step you can take this week to move toward the OTHER rather than away from them - and explain how that action could bring glory to God.