

Read: Romans 15:4-13

Let's get ready to share peace

Romans 15:4-7

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the first book of the Bible, we hear about a man named Jacob. He tricked his brother Esau and had to run away from home. Years later when they meet again, Jacob was sure Esau was going to kill him, but Esau forgave him. God can heal old grudges. In Exodus we read that the Israelites were enslaved by Egypt for 400 years. But then God sent Moses to free them. There isn't a problem too big for God to solve. In the New Testament, we see Jesus' disciples hiding in fear after he was crucified. They thought death had conquered Jesus, but then they saw their Savior and understood that Jesus defeated death.

Don't you get excited reading those stories? They remind us that God can really fix the broken things in our life, he is always ready to forgive us and will never leave us. God had prophets and apostles write down those true stories for us, so that when we read them, we find hope in Jesus.

But God gives us hope for another reason—so that we can give hope to others. He wants us to share it. In our reading he tells us two ways to do that:

- We glorify God together with one mind and voice. One way we do that is by worshiping with each other. As we gather together and hear God's Word and sing our praises, we help encourage each other in our faith. And,
- We accept one another as Christ accepted us. That doesn't mean we ignore sins—after all, Jesus didn't ignore ours! What did he do? He forgave our sins and made us God's children. So we forgive others, and we treat them as part of our family.

We have that hope because someone shared God's Word with us. Christmas is two weeks away. There are plenty of people all around us who feel guilty or hopeless. Let's invite them to hear the true story of God's love. Let's give them the peace God has given us.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What does “hope” mean?
- When do people need hope most?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How do Christians praise God “with one mind and one voice”?
- Paul tells us to accept each other. That means forgiving each other. How does forgiving someone help give them hope?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Describe a way you might give hope to someone who needs it.
- Paul says that the Bible was written to give us hope. What’s a Bible story that has taught you to have hope?

Closing Prayer:

Almighty God, thank you for the people who have shared your Word with us. Thank you for giving us hope through your promises. I’m sorry for the times I act like that hope is just for me and forget to share it with others. In these next weeks especially, help me forgive other people and invite them to church this Christmas so that you can give them hope, too. Amen.