

Week Two: *Seeing Differences Differently*
Romans 12:3-10

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Do you have a large group of acquaintances or a smaller group of close friends with whom you tend to socialize most often? Why do you prefer one over the other?
2. Do those in your circle of friends share your faith, politics and interests or are they mostly different from you? What's the upside of that arrangement? What's the downside?
3. Social media has developed algorithms that sort what stories you see and whose posts you see on the basis of your preferences as shown by the subjects you read and the things you post. How can that distort reality?
4. When it comes to news, where do you go to catch up on current events? What point of view does that represent most often?
5. Read Revelation 7:9 and Jesus' words from Matthew 5:43-47. What do those passages suggest about God's preference regarding diversity in relationships and friendships?
6. Have you ever been in a relationship with someone completely different from you that took some getting used to but eventually became a blessing to you both? Explain.
7. Finish your FIFTEEN by praying for an open heart to be more tolerant and accepting of people different from you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read Romans 12:3-10. Of the various gifts listed, which is most appealing to you? Which one is least appealing to you?
9. From verse 3, what's the difference between not thinking too highly of yourself and having low self-esteem?
10. What does grace have to do with it? In other words, if God gives faith to all believers, what does that imply when it comes to accepting differences in people?"
11. How would you define toleration? Is it the acceptance of common ground (meeting in the middle), compromise of your position to accommodate the position of another person or respectfully agreeing to disagree (or something else)?

12. Read Mark 9:38-41. Can you have unity without strict uniformity? Explain.
13. It is often said that truth matters and we should search the scriptures to discern God's intended meaning on every issue, but if other Christians teach some things contrary to our beliefs, but celebrate Christmas, Easter and teach that Jesus is the needed Savior of the world; that's ok. Do you agree? Can a church be wrong on the number and purpose of the sacraments but still be comprised of brothers and sisters in faith?
14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for greater patience for those who are immature in faith... including yourself.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Read Romans 12:4-5. Why do you think God uses the metaphor of one body but different members so often in the New Testament?
16. NFL superstars have been sidelined with turf-toe or a pulled hamstring, but if you listed the most important physical qualities of an NFL superstar, it is doubtful you would list either of these body parts in the top five. What practical lessons can we take from this example?
17. Do you know of anyone who has overcome a physical challenge to accomplish something truly remarkable? Is it possible for the Christian church to still accomplish its intended purpose despite the challenge of some who refuse to participate fully? Who is the greatest loser in that scenario, the mission or the one who avoids the mission?
18. Not everyone is called to serve the same purpose in the Body of Christ. How would you define your purpose?
19. What obligation (if any) do you have toward members of the Body of Christ whose purpose is different from your own?
20. Romans 12:4-5 describes many members but one body. What unites the different members into one defining purpose? Explain.
21. Conclude your FIFTEEN in prayer by praying to recognize and more highly value members of the Body of Christ who are different from yourself.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. Read Romans 12:6. According to the opening comment, why do gifts differ between people? What is the cause of that?

23. Why does that factor eliminate any reason for pride or possible shame in the embracing of your gift or the gifts of others?
24. Those who have gifts are expected by God to exercise them. Describe some of the excuses you've heard others (or maybe even yourself) give for not using their gifts for the good of the Body of Christ?
25. How can we adjust our thinking about our gifts to overcome our own excuses?
26. Paul talks about using your gifts in proportion to your faith. What do you think he meant by that?
27. Do some people have more faith and greater gifts? Do some people you know have greater gifts but little faith? What are the implications of that observation?
28. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, ask God for greater faith to believe that with Him all things are possible.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. Read Romans 12:9-10. To quote a famous pop song, "What's love got to do with it?" Why is love necessary in our interactions with others?
30. Explain the concept of unconditional love.
31. What does it mean to "Hate what is evil; cling to what is good" (verse 9)? Is it possible to hate the sin but love the sinner? Explain.
32. How often do you think those are the attitudes of Christians toward each other?
33. How can a Christian be devoted to another person in a spirit of brotherly love? What does that look like?
34. Read Philippians 2:5-8. Explain the example Jesus provided in giving preference to you and me over Himself? What are the implications of His actions?
35. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for greater unity in your congregation and between your congregation and Christians in other churches.