



**Reaching,
Restoring,
Raising Up**

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L.I.F.E. Group Questions—Romans 15-16

Our L.I.F.E. Groups that meet in homes use the following questions from the sermon for discussion and application. To find a group pick up a L.I.F.E. Group brochure in the Welcome Center.

1. Share some examples from your life in which God has used you to minister effectively. Has that continued? If so, why or why not?
2. Clarify the ministry of "presence". Why is each aspect of this important—as an example to neighbors, as encouragement, as personal enrichment—and which is most meaningful to you?
3. How do you approach the "ministry of prayer"? How would approaching prayer as "warfare" change your personal prayer life? What about the prayer life of your group?
4. Talk about some ways to cultivate the ministry of praise in your life, and in your family. What does this do for God, for you, and for those around you?
5. Rate yourselves in the ministry of proclamation—how's your "integrity" quotient, your "intent" quotient, and your "investment with people" quotient? How can you improve?
6. Talk about anything else that impressed you from the message if you have time.

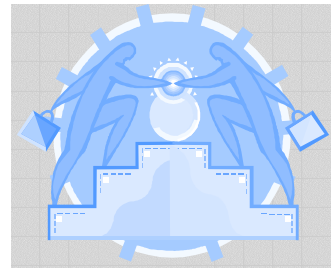
**You Can Join an ABF Anytime — Find
Yours Below and Join Us!**

Adult Bible Fellowships

Locations, Times, Descriptions

9:00

10:45



**ADULT BIBLE FELLOWSHIPS
- CONNECTING AROUND THE WORD -**

9:00	10:45
Rm104 30s-50s—Waller-Crary	Rm 104 Open—Bower-Chappell
Rm 112	Rm 112 Women—Byrum
Rm 201 30s-40s—Sims	Rm 201 How People Grow
Rm 202	Rm 202 " " "
Rm 203 Young Singles —Franklin/Reynolds	Rm 203 30s—Tripp-Tripp
Rm 204	Rm 204 Singles—Bentzel
Rm 205 40s&Up—Christensen-Hasler	Rm 205 Open—Regis-Anderson
Rm 206 Experiencing God—Graham	Rm 206 30s—Heritier-Sharp
Rm 207 Women—Knox-Anderson	Rm 207 20s—Alexy/Jones
Rm 208 40s-50s—McBrayer-Wicks	Rm 208 College—Ayres-Getchell
	Gym Engaged/Young Married —Houston/Baker

December 12, 2004

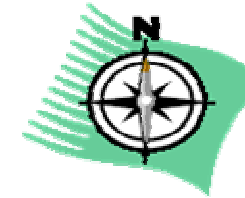
Extreme Makeover (Inside Edition)

Principles of Internal Change From the Book of Romans

Celebration Fellowship

What If God Were One of Us?

A preview of Matthew 1-2



Volume 3, Issue 15
December 12, 2004

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In the mind of 90s singer, Joan Osbourne, if "God were one of us, just a slob like one of us", He would understand how tough life is, and presumably do something about it. What she didn't realize is that God has done something about the "mess" that man has made of this world. The way, incredibly, that He has done this is by actually becoming one of us. This is what the "Christmas story" is really all about—the infinite and unlimited God humbling Himself by becoming a finite human being, who would live among us for 33

1/2 years in dependence and submission to the Father. His purpose would simply be, as the study this week in Matthew 1-2 declares, to "save His people from their sins". God, as one of us, entered into human history, to carry out His plan to undo the mess we have created. He understands what it is like to be in this mess. While He had kingly credentials, His family tree contained several undesirables. Although He was the Messiah that would lead Israel to glory, He was born in humble circumstances to a young peasant couple. Even



God wants to remake us from the inside out.

though heaven would be His throne one day, His earthly home town was Nazareth, which had a bad reputation. He was an innocent baby, but the present "king" of Israel sought to kill Him. This all shows that He understands what we endure daily, what it is like to be "one of us".

The Rent We Pay

It's been said that service is the "rent" we pay for taking up our space on the planet. As Paul concludes his letter to the Romans, he encourages them to have this "servant" mindset. He began by urging those who were spiritually strong to take responsibility for those among them who had less strength. The strong are to serve them by supporting them in the areas of their weakness, with the overall attitude of not pleasing themselves, but those who are weak. This is to be done for their good, so that they will be built up. Christ set this very example, for He did not please Himself, but endured mistreatment because of the contempt others felt towards His Father. Christ's attitude was a fulfillment of Psalm 69:9, which was written not only for its first readers, but also for believers of all generations. The Scriptures are God's words, and were written down for Christians of all ages to be instructed and encouraged by them.

Additionally, as we persevere in obedience to them, hope will become part of our character. God gives us both the ability and the encouragement to persevere, and since He is the common source of this for each of us, we should view one another as having equal value. This will allow us to be unified, and, ultimately, to glorify God with one voice. Therefore, we should accept, or receive, everyone into our fellowship, in the same way that Christ has accepted us into His family for God's glory. His acceptance of His fellow Jews took the form of service to them, by allowing God to use His life to confirm His promises to the Jews, and thus glorify God. As Jesus relived, in a sense, the life to which God had called the Jews, His promises to them were able to be fulfilled; but, additionally, Jesus' life served the Gentiles. By bringing Gentiles into God's family, Jesus allowed God's mercy to flow through Him to the Gentiles, resulting

(Romans 15-16)

in glory to God, and hope for the Gentiles. Since we, like the Romans, are Gentiles, we should abound in this same hope, as God fills our hearts with joy and peace as we believe. Having encouraged the Romans to accept one another, and having pointed them to Christ's example of service, Paul then began to recount His life of service for Christ to the Gentiles. He wanted to remind the Romans that the very words he had boldly spoken to them were because of his divine appointment to this ministry, and not because he looked down on them. To the contrary, he informed them that all reports about them had convinced him that they were full of goodness, knowledge, and were qualified to teach each other themselves. However, Paul viewed his ministry to them as an act of worship to God. They were his sacrificial offering to God, and he was willing to speak the truth to them boldly to insure that they would be acceptable to God in this way. We

(Continued on page 2)

The 5 Purposes of the Purpose Driven Life

- Worship—You were planned for God's pleasure
- Fellowship—You were formed for God's family
- Discipleship—You were created to become like Christ
- Ministry—You were shaped for serving God
- Evangelism—You were made for a mission

Romans 15-16 (continued from pg 1)

should take the same approach; we should view the people to whom we minister as our "offering" to God. Therefore, we should "dare" to speak truth to them, even though it may risk offending them at times, because it is necessary to present them acceptable to God. We must remember, like Paul, that we can only boast about the work that Christ, by His Spirit, does through us. He had even performed signs and wonders by the Spirit, but notoriety from that was unimportant; the only thing that mattered was that these miracles had resulted in obedience to Christ by those to whom he had ministered. Paul's passion was to reach Gentiles through his preaching who had never heard the Gospel, especially in areas where no one had gone before. It was this desire that, until then, had kept him from Rome; he simply had not yet made it there. However, at that time he was involved in taking a collection from the Gentiles to the poor Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, which was currently hindering him from visiting Rome. This project was important because it offered the Gentiles a way to "return the blessing" to the Jews. They had ministered to the Gentiles spiritually, and now the Gentiles could minister to them physically. As Jesus said,

"Freely we have received, freely give", which is an important life principle to follow. Paul's plan was to visit the Romans on his way to Spain, once this project was complete. In the meantime Paul urged them to strive together with him in prayers to God for him, for he was being persecuted by unbelieving Jews from the area of Judea, his current destination. He hoped this would allow him to come to them in joy by the will of God, and to be refreshed in their company. In turn, he prayed that God would be the "God of peace" to them. As Paul wrapped up his letter he greeted several at Rome, calling attention to the sacrifice, hard work, and fellowship of suffering, genuine faith, and dedication to the work of the Lord that they had exhibited. They also

were approved, loved, and chosen of God, all qualities that bonded them to Paul. However, Paul warned them about another group. They are the ones who cause dissension and hinder the truth; these must be kept away from the fellowship of believers. They are enslaved to their own desires, rather than the Lord's, and use deceptive words to entrap the naïve. The faithful must be wise towards such evil, although innocent in what is good, and when they do God promises to "crush" these "satans" under their feet, an allusion to Genesis 3:15. As this letter ends we are able to see Paul's "team" approach to ministry, as he sent greetings, not just from himself, but also from the other six with whom he ministered. He then pointed out that God was the One who was able to establish them in their faith as the good news of Christ is proclaimed, leading to the obedience of faith, not just among Jews, but now among Gentiles—a mystery foretold by the prophets which had now been revealed. This displayed God's wisdom in such a way that it showed Him to be deserving of glory forever. Thus, God Himself is a servant to both Jews and to Gentiles, leading us to pay our "rent" of service to others for our space on the planet.

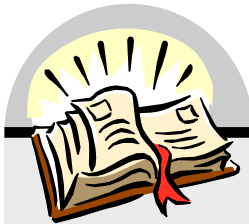


"We can only boast about the work that Christ, by His Spirit, does through us."

Study Questions for Matthew 1-2

God's commitment to His people is so strong that He became personally involved to save us from our sins.

1. Read Matthew 1:1. Matthew's primary purpose in writing his account of Christ's life was to convince Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. Who headed up Jesus' genealogy, and why was this important?
2. From Matthew 1:2-11 what 4 women surprisingly were mentioned in Jesus' genealogy (v3, 5, 6)? What did these have in common (see Gen 38, Josh 2, Ruth 1, 2 Sam 11), and what can we learn from this?
3. According to Matthew 1:12-17 to whom was Jesus born, Mary or Joseph (v16)? What is the significance of Joseph in Jesus' genealogy (see v6)? Why is it important to note to whom Jesus was born?



"We should view the people to whom we minister as our offering to God."

4. Looking at Matthew 1:18-20 what was Jesus' "divine" genealogy (v18)? How did Joseph respond to Mary's pregnancy (v19), what does this say about him (v19), and what changed his mind (v20)?

5. Using Matthew 1:21-25 in what ways was Joseph obedient to God (v21, 23-25), and why was each important? How can we apply this? What was so important about the prophecy and fulfillment of v23?

6. From Matthew 2:1-4 what was the "sign" that the King of the Jews had been born (v2), what were the 3 responses to the sign (v2, 3, 4), and how is this typical? Which was the correct response? Apply this.

7. In Matthew 2:5-6 what does the prophecy reveal about Jesus' role (v6)? Since the religious leaders knew of this prophecy, how should they have responded? Why didn't they, and what does this teach us?

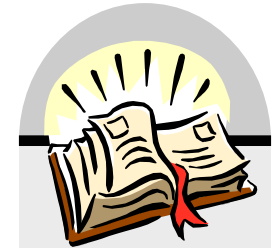
8. Read Matthew 2:7-12. How did the magi demonstrate their faith (v10, 12)? How did these great men from the east honor this little child (v11), and why is this significant? How can we do the same?

9. According to Matthew 2:13-15 what caused Jesus to live in Egypt for a while (v13), what prophecy did this fulfill, and to whom did it first refer (Hosea 11:1)? What does the fact that it was applied to Jesus say?

10. Using Matthew 2:16-18 what was Herod's reaction (v16), and what prophecy did this fulfill (v18—see Jeremiah 31:15-17)? What hope was given in this prophecy (Jer 31:16-17)?

11. From Matthew 2:19-23 how did Nazareth become Jesus' hometown (v22-23)? How did people view those from Nazareth (see John 1:46), and what does this show us about Jesus? Why do you think God did this?

12. Review Matthew 1-2. What names are given to Jesus (1:1, 21, 23, 2:2, 6, 8, 15, 23), and what is the significance of each?



Memory Verse

**"...you shall call His name, Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."
Matthew 1:21**