

# Story

Story of how we were guided to the stranded cars in the Watagans, show pictures of the rescue.



## **SLIDE 9**

### **Why Can't Everybody Be Right Like Me?**

And now may God, the source of all patient endurance and encouragement, give you a spirit of harmony among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus. -- Rom. 15:5, NT.

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## **SLIDE 10**

When I was younger I was a very impatient person, and I also used to think that I was also always right, if you speak to Zorana, she'll probably tell you that nothing has changed!

As I look back at my early school years, I realise that I'm a product of that environment...that's my excuse!

I spent the first few years of primary school in a highly competitive school in the highly competitive society of Singapore.

Teamwork was not encouraged but personal achievement was. This left quite an impression on me.

Throughout high school I preferred to work by myself if given a choice, mainly because I always thought I knew the right answer and found the suggestions of my fellow students annoying and distracting.

My decision to do computer science was based in part on the hope that I could just work with the computer rather than another person!

Of course, many years later, I've learnt the valuable lesson of patience and teamwork that Paul is trying to teach the Roman church.

A lesson that is just as important in church life as it is in school and work life.

## **SLIDE 11**

Let's read Romans 15:1-5 (New Living Translation):

<sup>1</sup>We may know that these things make no difference, but we cannot just go ahead and do them to please ourselves. We must be considerate of the doubts and fears of those who think these things are wrong.

<sup>2</sup>We should please others. If we do what helps them, we will build them up in the Lord.

<sup>3</sup>For even Christ didn't please himself. As the Scriptures say, "Those who insult you are also insulting me."

<sup>4</sup>Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. They give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises.

<sup>5</sup>May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other--each with the attitude of Christ Jesus toward the other.

Paul's argument in Romans 15 is an interesting one.

## **SLIDE 12**

First, in verses 1 and 2 he exhorts the Romans to build up each other.

Second, in verse 3 he quotes a Scripture text to prove his point.

Then, after an explanation in verse 4 as to why he cited the text, verse 5 finds him praying for his readers.

Note the pattern: (1) exhortation, (2) Scripture support, (3) prayer.

Here is a model that we should try and remember in our own dealing with other people.

The apostle Paul was a man of prayer, a fact that shows up throughout his writings.

In his prayer in today's verse he asks God, the source of all patience and encouragement, to bless the Romans with a spirit of harmony as they follow Christ.

I suppose that he added the part about God being the source of patience and encouragement because those qualities are just what the Romans needed in their life together.

### **SLIDE 13**

I don't know about you, but I am easily discouraged when it comes to working with "blockheads", be it at work, study or at church.

(Please note, it is always others who are the blockheads.)

How can they move so slowly? How can they be so dense? Why can't they see the "truth" of what I have told them?

In short, I need all the patience and endurance I can get in living and working with such people.

Of course, in my quiet and reflective moments I recognize that they also need patience and endurance from God in working with me BUT these moments are brief and rare.

Paul's hope for the church is that it might have "harmony."

Some versions render the word translated "harmony" as "unity." But the idea Paul is expressing in the context of Romans 14 and 15 is closer to harmony than to unity in all things.

### **SLIDE 14**

As Donald Grey Barnhouse put it: "Although God wants us to be brethren, he does not mean that we are to be identical twins."

Throughout his writings Paul focuses on variety in the church.

Thus even though Christians are of one body they represent various strengths.

Likewise, in Romans 14 and 15 Paul is trying not to plow under the opinions of either the weak or the strong, but to get them to respect each other so that they can live in harmony.

That is still God's ideal for His church.

I'm happy to say that my kids are getting a much better education on the importance of teamwork.

Cassandra has just returned from a grade 6 leadership camp, where they've been learning the valuable lesson of teamwork and the importance of listening to other people's opinions as well as patience and encouragement.

I think this is fantastic, as she has now some insight on the importance of teamwork at the age of 11 that many adults still lack today.

## **SLIDE 15**

I once saw a book entitled "Everything I needed to learn about life I learnt on the Golf course".

I'm not sure if that is entirely true but golf does provide a few lessons which you can use in day to day living.

One is patience, I remember I was standing on the Tee with a friend of mine waiting to hit off, I had been hitting the ball poorly all day and was sure that I would not be able to hit it far enough to reach them.

I got impatient and decided to hit the ball before the group in front had moved on and ended up hitting the bag of the old lady of the group in front of me, I was very embarrassed, and very relieved that I didn't hurt anyone.

I've since learnt to wait patiently until the group in front is well clear.

Another lesson is teamwork. Ben and I were in a team playing in the Macquarie Uni Golf Competition.

They put us in a team with two lecturers from the Uni, A lady by the name of Sue and a man by the name of ??STEVE??.

Sue was a keen golfer but she didn't hit the ball very far. However she did save us a few times because she always hit it straight, so when Ben and I smashed the ball into the water or the trees, Sue would come to the rescue by hitting one straight down the middle.

STEVE on the other hand didn't even play golf, we're not sure what he was doing at the golf competition...but that's University academics for you!

Now, he couldn't really hit the ball at all, but strangely enough he was very good at putting,

## **SLIDE 16**

In fact he was so good at putting the he managed to putt the ball into the hole from more than 20 feet away on several occasions.

Our team of misfits ended up winning the golf competition and we all received prizes including a golf bag for our trouble. A great lesson in teamwork.

Assuming we all now have the right level of patience, and we encourage each other at Church does this mean we encourage each other until they have the same opinion as us?

Even with patience and a spirit of encouragement, there will come a point in time in any team where there are differences in viewpoints, the church is no different.

## **SLIDE 17**

Again, looking at the lessons from the Roman church, we find in Chapters 14 and 15 that various members obviously have differences that they believe to be quite serious.

In times past those viewpoints have led to divisions in the church, with each perspective judging and condemning the others.

They have genuine disputes on several issues that some of them believed were important to their Christian faith.

Paul didn't agree that everything some of them desired to have unity on were as vital as they thought.

On the other hand, he didn't want them to change unless they felt genuinely convicted to do so. Rather he counselled mutual tolerance.

Why? So that they might with one mind and one voice glorify God.

The point is—and it is an important one—that they didn't need to agree on every detail of belief or on every one of the lifestyle issues that had been dividing them.

They could, by demonstrating Christian love and tolerance for each other, still exist in harmony.

If they continued to beat each other up over their differences, they could hardly glorify God in their community.

But if they could gracefully allow for individual perspectives on those points not central to the Christian faith, they could be a genuine witness for God to others.

The real purpose of the harmony among believers that Paul has been calling for is that "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" might be glorified and honoured.

Unfortunately, constant bickering among church members glorifies no one except the devil himself.

Paul here makes a heartfelt call for Christians to put away those differences that aren't central to their faith and to begin to live as Christians should.

God wanted them to have the character of Christ, expressed in such fruit as love, joy, and peace.

Yet they, in their desire to do everything "right" on the one hand and to live in Christian freedom on the other, presented a picture to non-Christians of anything but love, joy, and peace.

Let them who have ears listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. Put your differences to one side so that your life and your congregation might truly be a glory to God rather than a wart in the kingdom.