

# Personal Greetings



## Ice-Breaker

1. When was the last family or class reunion you attended? How was it?
2. What three phone numbers do you call the most?
3. Is it harder for you to "say hello" (make friends) or to "say good-bye" (release friends)?



## Scripture Passage

Romans 16:1-27

**16** I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant<sup>a</sup> of the church in Cenchrea. <sup>2</sup>I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

<sup>3</sup>Greet Priscilla<sup>b</sup> and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

<sup>4</sup>They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

<sup>5</sup>Greet also the church that meets at their house.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

<sup>6</sup>Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

<sup>7</sup>Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

<sup>8</sup>Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord.

<sup>9</sup>Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

<sup>10</sup>Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

<sup>11</sup>Greet Herodion, my relative.

Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

<sup>12</sup>Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

<sup>13</sup>Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.

<sup>14</sup>Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them.

<sup>15</sup>Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them.

<sup>16</sup>Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the churches of Christ send greetings.

<sup>17</sup>I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are

contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. <sup>18</sup>For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. <sup>19</sup>Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

<sup>20</sup>The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

<sup>21</sup>Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.

<sup>22</sup>I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

<sup>23</sup>Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.

Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, <sup>26</sup>but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him-- <sup>27</sup>to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

a [1] Or deaconess

b [3] Greek Prisca, a variant of Priscilla

c [23] Some manuscripts their greetings. [24] May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.



## Bible Study

1. Who is your best friend in the world? What makes them so special to you?
2. Who in this group would you like to thank for encouraging you? In what ways did this person help you?
3. What kinds of things does Paul commend in the persons mentioned in 16:1-16? What does this say about how we ought to judge "success"?
4. In your opinion, how close did Paul let people get to him? How close do you let people get to you?
5. How do you handle individuals who cause strife and division (vv. 17-18): Avoid them? Talk about them? Confront them?
6. What was the high point for you in this study of Romans?
7. What will you remember most about this group?



## Reference Notes

**16:1-27** Paul ends his letter with a list of greetings, giving a fascinating glimpse into the first-century church.

**16:1-2 I commend ... Phoebe.** It is likely that Phoebe carried Paul's letter from Corinth to the church at Rome. (The government postal service was used only for official purposes.) Typical in letters of his day, Paul includes a note of commendation in which he makes two requests: that they receive Phoebe as a sister in the Lord, and that they assist her because she has helped many others. Phoebe was probably a woman of wealth and influence. She is a Gentile Christian, since no Jewess would have been named, as she was, after a pagan deity.

**16:1 servant.** Literally, "deaconess." From the way Paul speaks of her in verse 2 and from the gift mentioned in Romans 12:7 (the word "service" is derived from the same root as "deacon"), her ministry was probably that of helping others, especially the poor and needy. **church.** Surprisingly, the first occurrence of this word in Romans. **Cenchrea.** One of the two seaports that served the city of Corinth, located seven miles east on the Saronic Gulf.

**16:3-16** Of the 24 individuals named in these verses, six are women. Thirteen of these names occur in manuscripts or inscriptions related to the imperial household, giving rise to speculation that Christ had penetrated even into the royal palace (see Philippians 4:22).

**16:3-5 Priscilla and Aquila.** Aquila, a Jew born in Pontus in Asia Minor, and his wife Priscilla appear regularly in the New Testament. They are first mentioned when they are living in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3) as a result of having been banished from Rome along with other Jews in A.D. 52 (because of an edict by the emperor Claudius). Paul lived with them there for 18 months. Both Paul and Aquila were tentmakers by trade. When Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila went with him (Acts 18:18). At Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila were responsible for instructing the brilliant Apollos in the Christian faith (Acts 18:24-26). From Ephesus they sent greetings from the church in their house back to Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:19). Now they are in Rome once again, Claudius' edict having elapsed. When this couple is mentioned in the New Testament, generally Priscilla's name is noted first, contrary to the custom of the day. It has been speculated that she might have been by birth an aristocratic Roman woman (due to evidence related to her name), in which case her marriage to a humble Jewish tentmaker would be living proof of how Christ destroyed barriers of race, rank and class.

**16:5 the church ... at their house.** During the first two centuries, there were no special church buildings, so Christians met in the homes of their members (see 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2).

**16:6 Mary.** Probably a Jewish woman.

**16:7 Andronicus and Junias.** Probably husband and wife. It is significant that one of the early apostles was a woman. The name is actually "Junia." The feminine form of the word is quite common, while the masculine version is nonexistent. **relatives.** "Paul almost certainly means ... fellow countrymen and not relations" (Sanday and Headlam). **apostles.** In the general sense, these were people commissioned by Christ (either in person or through the church) to establish new churches.

**16:8 Ampliatus.** A common slave name. In a Roman cemetery belonging to Damatilla, niece of the emperor Domitian, there is an elaborate tombstone with this name on it; an indication that perhaps a noble household had been influenced by the Gospel and that a slave had become a person of significance in the church.

**16:9 Urbanus.** Another common name for slaves in the imperial household. **Stachys.** A rare name, but its two occurrences are as the name of a slave in the imperial household.

**16:10 Apelles.** A common Greek name, often used by Jews. **household of Aristobulus.** This might be the Aristobulus who was a grandson of Herod the Great. Upon his death, his servants and slaves became the property of the emperor, known by their former master's name; among whom were a number of Jews.

**16:11 Herodion.** A common name in Herod's household, perhaps a member of the Aristobulus group, known personally by Paul. **household of Narcissus.** Since Narcissus is not greeted, he is

either a deceased Christian or a pagan. The name may refer to a notorious secretary to the emperor Claudius, who amassed a huge fortune as a result of bribes paid him to ensure that petitions reached the emperor. He was forced to commit suicide when Nero came to the throne, and his household became a part of the imperial household.

**16:12 *Tryphena and Tryphosa.*** Probably twin sisters. ***work hard.*** This phrase means "to labor to the point of exhaustion," in contrast to the names of these women, which mean respectively "dainty" and "delicate" – perhaps an intentional pun by Paul. Each time he uses the phrase "work hard" in this chapter, it is in connection with women: Mary in verse 6, Tryphena and Tryphosa here, and Persis in verse 12b. In most other cases when Paul uses this word (*kopiac*), it refers to his labor as a minister of the Gospel, and so it may well have that meaning here too. ***Persis.*** Literally, "Persian woman."

**16:13 *Rufus.*** Quite possibly the son of Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross. Simon is identified (in Mark 15:21) as the father of Alexander and Rufus, an unusual description unless the sons were known in the place where the letter was directed. Mark's Gospel was written for the Roman Christians.

**16:14** The five men here are probably either slaves or freed men.

**16:15** Philologus, Julia. Possibly husband and wife. ***Nereus.*** There was a Nereus who was the chamberlain of Flavius Clemens (consul of Rome) and his wife Domatilla (niece of Emperor Domitian), who were condemned for being Christians; Flavius was executed and Domatilla banished to an island.

**16:16 *a holy kiss.*** The kiss was a common greeting used by Christians as part of their worship service. It may have been the custom to exchange kisses in preparation for communion. Years later, Origen wrote about this verse: "From this injunction and several similar ones the custom has been handed down to the churches, that after the prayers, the brethren shall greet one another in turn."

**16:17-20** Paul's greetings complete, he adds a postscript in which he warns against those who would disrupt the unity of the church; warnings triggered perhaps by the idea of the shared kiss, which is not possible when there is dissension. The group is not identified (it is not either group in 14:1-15:13), except that they are servants of their appetites. Possibly they were gnostics; i.e., those who said that only the spirit mattered; the body was worthless, so it did not matter what the body indulged in. A group like this caused a major problem in Corinth (1 Corinthians 6:12-17).

**16:18 *smooth talk.*** A word used to describe a person who speaks well but acts badly.

**16:19 *innocent.*** Untainted by evil. The word is used to describe pure metal (or milk) containing no hint of a foreign substance.

**16:20 *The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*** Typically the sender of the letter wrote out this subscription in his or her own hand.

**16:21-23** It was not uncommon in Paul's day for the secretary to pen a few more greetings after that of the author.

**16:22 *Tertius.*** The only time the name of one of Paul's secretaries is revealed.

**16:23 *Gaius.*** This name is mentioned several times in the New Testament. It probably refers to the Gaius mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14, with whom Paul was staying in Corinth while he wrote

Romans.

**16:25-27** This closing doxology is a single complex sentence in which God is praised for the salvation he offers in Christ Jesus.

**16:25 *mystery*.** In the New Testament, this refers to truths about God's plan which were unknown until God disclosed them. They are insights about God that could not be achieved through reasoning or deduction (1 Corinthians 1:18-20), but are known solely because God has revealed them.

**16:26** As Paul has shown throughout the letter, the Gospel was foretold in the ancient writings (Romans 1:2; 15:4) although it could not be comprehended until the advent of Christ. ***all nations might believe and obey***. This is the goal of the Gospel, it is for all nations, not just for the Jews. All are invited to become the people of God.

## **Caring Time**

1. How would you like the group to continue praying for you?