



LETTERS TO THE CHURCH [ROMANS 16]

In Romans 16, we see Paul introducing some of his dearest friends to one another. This list of people breaks all kinds of social rules and divides. Paul lists people who are rich and poor, high and low social status, men and women, and Jews and Gentiles and refers to them as 'family.' He commends and praises some of these people for the ways in which their obedience to Jesus and their love for one another is bringing God's Kingdom to Earth. He then encourages them not to get hung up on small things or differences or divisions, but to continue loving one another in this powerful way that breaks down barriers in God's family.

- In your own life, can you think of someone, not currently in this community, whose faith, obedience, and witness has shaped your walk with Jesus? Take a moment to talk about this person, and how they've encouraged you and built you up. If you're able, can you reach out to this person this week to let them know how they've formed and shaped you?
- Is there a group within God's family (this could be a generation, a political persuasion, a denomination, or a cultural expression of Christianity) that you struggle to connect with and might think less of? Take time to confess any judgments, resentments, or hardness of heart that arise, first to Jesus, then to one another. We all have these! As a family, it can be easy to let these areas build beneath the surface and cause division. We break down walls by acknowledging them first, then helping one another through them.
- Take a moment in silence to listen for the Lord and hold this question before Him: Is there an individual outside your community that the Lord is highlighting to you? What differences would make it awkward or difficult for you to reach out to them? Maybe they worship Jesus in a different way. Maybe you don't speak one another's languages very well. Maybe they don't know Jesus at all. What would it look like for you to invite them further into your life? Getting coffee? An invitation to your house church? Take time to pray for creativity and inspiration from the Spirit and share this person's name with your house church so that we can all be praying for them together.

