

8.

Romans 15:4-7

Be Harmonious

How relevant is the Old Testament to the Christian? Many believers are put off by the Old Testament due to its strange ceremonies, weird animal sacrifices, and various wars and battles. Added to this are the strange customs, funny names, and ancient empires long confined to the dust-bins of history.

1. But according to Romans 15:4, *why* was the Old Testament written for New Testament believers?
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While the Old Testament was not written *to* us, it was written *for* us. Christians should not be reluctant to read it - but it should be read with care. For example, you will find that the Old Testament contains the divinely inspired accounts of many things God did *not* approve of. Nearly half of the language in the New Testament is grounded by the Old Testament. This is why it has been said that - *the New is concealed in the Old and the Old is revealed in the New.*

2. What are the two sources of *hope* for the believer according to Romans 15:4?
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Hope is a positive expectation about our future. To live without hope is to *despair*. The Scriptures both give and reveal why the believer now has *hope*. Often times the believer's vision of their source of hope is obscured because they find themselves in conflict with another believer. For those of us who have come through such times, we realise that our intimacy with God is directly affected by relationships with others — especially our brothers and sisters in Christ.

3. With this in mind, who is/are the intended beneficiary/ies of Paul's prayer in Romans 15:5? Discuss.
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How important is *singing* to Christian worship? Apart from some forms of Judaism, Christianity is one of the few religions where singing is considered an act of worship.

4. Tick which of the principles in Romans 15:6 are true -
- We should only sing songs that come directly from the Bible
 - Singing together in worship of God is an act of unity
 - Singing in worship together is an act of spiritual warfare
 - When Christians sing together they are engaging their hearts and minds
 - Singing together can involve times of 'free worship'
 - Singing worship to God can involve using musical instruments

The church is comprised of believers from *different* backgrounds and nationalities.

5. Read Ephesians 2:13-14. According to this passage, what is remarkable about who comprises the members of a local church?

In Ephesians 3:10, the apostle Paul states the church comprised of people who formerly hated each other, is a testament to the manifold wisdom of God. Who knows, this Sunday, God may bring into the church the most unlikely people!

6. Based on Romans 15:7, (i) How are we to respond to newcomers? (ii) In what way should we do this? (iii) Why should we do this?

Amen.