



QUICK BACKGROUND

North Platte, Nebraska, in the 1940s was a town of 12,000 that sat along a well-used Union Pacific passenger rail line. Over the course of the World War II, over 6 million service men and women passed through the depot of this little town, on their way from one end of the country to the other, preparing for battle in the Pacific campaign or the European fronts. The town made a commitment that every troop train would receive a warm welcome and baskets of food during their quick stop while the train took on more coal and received other service needs. At its peak, the town accommodated over 30 stops a day. With the help of neighboring towns and counties, the residents of North Platte made sure that every soldier passing through their depot was greeted with smiles, a thank you, homemade food, newspapers, and many other creature comforts of home. Known as the Canteen, the stop became famous among American GIs, often serving as a common bond in the campaigns overseas (“I sure could use one of those chicken sandwiches from that Canteen right now!”). In recollections 40 years later (chronicled in Bob Greene’s book “Once Upon a Town”), the recurring theme from World War II vets was how loved and thanked they felt after spending just a few minutes at that depot in North Platte, Nebraska.

It's a living model for today's church, a model taken directly from Scripture.

DIGGING IN

Speaking of Scripture for today's church, the passages below provide a framework for how believers are to interact with people around them. As you read each passage, look for answers to the prompts and note in the space provided what you find.

Romans 15:7 (NIV)

⁷ *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*

Instruction given:	Degree to which instruction is to be obeyed:	Result:

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

³² *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Instruction given:	Degree to which instruction is to be obeyed:

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NIV)

¹ *Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children* ² *and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Instruction given:	Degree to which instruction is to be obeyed:



TAKING IT INWARD

Prayerfully consider each instruction in light of the degree to which the instruction is to be obeyed. Journal what comes to mind. And one more thing: ruminates for a minute on the “result” (from following the instruction) that you found in Romans 15:7

While it may not have been 100 percent, nearly every American soldier who spent any time at the North Platte Canteen walked away feeling comforted, loved, and thanked. The same is to be true of interaction with followers of Jesus. The three passages we just explored tell us that people should walk away from interaction with believers feeling kindness, compassion, forgiveness, love, and acceptance.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

These passages teach us that the best way for us to show God that we *get* what Jesus has done for us is to pay forward what Jesus has given to us, and to pay it forward “just as” it has been given to us: generously, sacrificially, unconditionally. People should walk away from interaction with believers just as those WW2 soldiers walked away from the Canteen: feeling loved, thanked, and maybe a bit inspired as they journey through the chaos and anxiety that is their lives.

Write down specific situations where you can apply these instructions from Romans and Ephesians. Below are some examples.

Examples:

- A long-term friendship
- Co-workers
- Your family
- Store clerks and customer service representatives
- Employees/Employer/Boss
- Fellow believers at church
- A strained friendship

My Situations:

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DIGGING DEEPER

Your heart and mind would be well-served by reading the context surrounding the 3 verses you processed in these exercises. Take a prayerful moment to read Romans 15 along with Ephesians 4 *and* 5. These instructions are applied to specific situations—this may inspire you in your own specific situations.