

## **A Labor of Love**

Romans 16:6

“Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us” is translated in the NIV “Greet Mary who worked very hard for you.” The difference is subtle and not essential to an understanding of the text. Either Mary worked hard on behalf of the Apostle Paul and his missionary efforts, or Mary worked hard on behalf of the church at Rome. Either way, we learn from this verse that a woman named Mary worked hard for the cause of Christ. She is not unlike the hundreds of people who have worked hard on behalf of our church over the years. We are the church we are today because men and women “worked hard” for us.

### **I. There are times when your hard work receives little or no recognition.**

We do not know who this Mary is. There are six Mary’s mentioned in the Bible, and this one seems to be a resident of Rome, highly involved in the work of the church in Rome, and friends with Phoebe, Priscilla and Aquila, and Epaenetus. Not much else is known about her. She is mentioned by Paul for her exemplary work on behalf of the church and there are at least three others mentioned this same way in the text. But there are probably others who worked just as hard but go unnamed and unrecognized.

#### **(A). Whatever you do, do it as unto the Lord.**

(Read Colossians 3:23-24). “*Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance.*”

Nothing motivates a person to serve harder than an unmerited reward received!

#### **(B). Whatever you do, do it with excellence.**

Since it is done as unto the Lord, do it with all your heart and soul for Him.

### **II. Periodically your hard work requires the fulfillment of a responsibility.**

There are times when you don’t feel like serving, feel like giving, feel like working. when those times come, you and I must ask ourselves, “What is my responsibility?” *Every responsibility is a privilege and every privilege is a responsibility* - Blanchard. Phoebe was a deaconess at Corinth. She cared for the widows and the fatherless. She ministered to the Christians in Italy and Greece. There were times when I’m sure she wished she could quit. But my challenge to you is “never give up.” Keep on working.

### **III. Ultimately your hard work reaches others and they become your reward.**

As we go down through the list of names in Romans 16 I wonder how many Mary ministered to in personal ways. We will see a young man by the name of Hermes in a few weeks. He probably was dedicated by his parents to one of the pagan gods of Rome. Could it be that Mary taught Hermes about Christ? Maybe she arranged for him a place to stay? Mary’s investment in the church at Rome reaped dividends measured in the lives of those changed by Christ through the ministry of the church at Rome. The same could be said of your involvement and work here at Emmanuel.

*“God likes help when helping people”* **An Old Irish Proverb**

*“The church is a workshop, not a dormitory; and every Christian man and woman is bound to help in the common cause”* **Alexander MacLaren**