



EXPLORE **THE BIBLE**
Adults

Romans

Daily Discipleship Guide

Fall 2026



ONE ROAD

“All roads lead to Rome.” It’s a familiar phrase. We understand it to mean that no matter what problem we’re facing, there’s probably more than one way to achieve a solution. Of course, thousands of years ago, it meant something much different.

During the days of the Roman Empire, the capital city was the hub of economic and cultural power. That included transportation. Justifiably, the Romans were proud of their roads. What’s more, many of those roads originated from a single spot, the *Milliarium Aureum*, the “Golden Milestone.” This large column was set up in the Roman Forum and served as the starting point for a vast network of highways that branched across the known world. As a result, all roads quite literally led to Rome.

Midway through the first century, the apostle Paul was hoping to take one of those roads and visit the church in Rome. In preparation, he wrote them a letter, an extensive explanation of humanity’s sin and God’s salvation. In it, Paul shared the meaning of the gospel and how Christ followers should apply it to their lives each day.

While many roads led to Rome, Paul was adamant that Jesus was the only road to God. He said that Jews and Gentiles alike were helpless to save themselves. Everyone needs Jesus as Savior. Things haven’t changed. We all still need Jesus if we’re hoping for a new relationship with God. If that’s where you find yourself today, here’s what you need to do . . .

-
- ▶ **ADMIT** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
 - ▶ **BY FAITH RECEIVE** Jesus as God’s Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
 - ▶ **CONFESS** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen.”
-

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.



SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF

SEPT. 6

SEPT. 13

SEPT. 20

SEPT. 27

OCT. 4

OCT. 11

OCT. 18

OCT. 25

NOV. 1

NOV. 8

NOV. 15

NOV. 22

NOV. 29

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

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- ▶ Photos. Wedding invitations. Save the dates. Birth announcements. Our refrigerator doors often showcase important people in our lives and significant events. I put announcements on my refrigerator so I won't forget them and sometimes photos of past events are purposely left up because they bring me so much joy. Exciting milestones and photos of everyday moments are captured in one spot like a special collection to be reminded of and enjoyed over and over.



Good news and big announcements are hard to keep to ourselves. In the book of Romans, Paul wrote to believers meeting in Roman house churches telling them of the best news ever shared—the gospel. Paul expounded on who needs the gospel (we all do) and where we can find salvation (only in Christ!). Jesus, through His life, death, and resurrection, made salvation possible for us. We are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). The gospel truly is the best good news.

I hope this quarter of study brings a deeper appreciation of God's gift of grace and the new life we are offered in Christ. May this lead you to tell others this good news!

In Him,

Amber Vaden

amber.vaden@lifeway.com

BIBLE READING PLAN



SEPTEMBER

- ☐ 1. Romans 1:1-7
- ☐ 2. Romans 1:8-12
- ☐ 3. Romans 1:13-15
- ☐ 4. Romans 1:16-17
- ☐ 5. Romans 1:18-23
- ☐ 6. Romans 1:24-25
- ☐ 7. Romans 1:26-32
- ☐ 8. Romans 2:1-4
- ☐ 9. Romans 2:5-11
- ☐ 10. Romans 2:12-16
- ☐ 11. Romans 2:17-24
- ☐ 12. Romans 2:25-29
- ☐ 13. Romans 3:1-8
- ☐ 14. Romans 3:9-18
- ☐ 15. Romans 3:19-20
- ☐ 16. Romans 3:21-26
- ☐ 17. Romans 3:27-31
- ☐ 18. Romans 4:1-5
- ☐ 19. Romans 4:6-8
- ☐ 20. Romans 4:9-12
- ☐ 21. Romans 4:13-17
- ☐ 22. Romans 4:18-25
- ☐ 23. Romans 5:1-5
- ☐ 24. Romans 5:6-11
- ☐ 25. Romans 5:12-14
- ☐ 26. Romans 5:15-17
- ☐ 27. Romans 5:18-21
- ☐ 28. Romans 6:1-4
- ☐ 29. Romans 6:5-10
- ☐ 30. Romans 6:11-14

OCTOBER

- ☐ 1. Romans 6:15-18
- ☐ 2. Romans 6:19-23
- ☐ 3. Romans 7:1-3
- ☐ 4. Romans 7:4-6
- ☐ 5. Romans 7:7-12
- ☐ 6. Romans 7:13-20
- ☐ 7. Romans 7:21-25
- ☐ 8. Romans 8:1-4
- ☐ 9. Romans 8:5-11
- ☐ 10. Romans 8:12-17
- ☐ 11. Romans 8:18-25
- ☐ 12. Romans 8:26-30
- ☐ 13. Romans 8:31-39
- ☐ 14. Romans 9:1-5
- ☐ 15. Romans 9:6-9
- ☐ 16. Romans 9:10-15
- ☐ 17. Romans 9:16-21
- ☐ 18. Romans 9:22-29
- ☐ 19. Romans 9:30-33
- ☐ 20. Romans 10:1-4
- ☐ 21. Romans 10:5-13
- ☐ 22. Romans 10:14-15
- ☐ 23. Romans 10:16-21
- ☐ 24. Romans 11:1-6
- ☐ 25. Romans 11:7-10
- ☐ 26. Romans 11:11-16
- ☐ 27. Romans 11:17-24
- ☐ 28. Romans 11:25-32
- ☐ 29. Romans 11:33-36
- ☐ 30. Romans 12:1-2
- ☐ 31. Romans 12:3-8

NOVEMBER

- ☐ 1. Romans 12:9-13
- ☐ 2. Romans 12:14-21
- ☐ 3. Romans 13:1-3
- ☐ 4. Romans 13:4-7
- ☐ 5. Romans 13:8-10
- ☐ 6. Romans 13:11-14
- ☐ 7. Romans 14:1-4
- ☐ 8. Romans 14:5-9
- ☐ 9. Romans 14:10-12
- ☐ 10. Romans 14:13-15
- ☐ 11. Romans 14:16-18
- ☐ 12. Romans 14:19-21
- ☐ 13. Romans 14:22-23
- ☐ 14. Romans 15:1-4
- ☐ 15. Romans 15:5-6
- ☐ 16. Romans 15:7-12
- ☐ 17. Romans 15:13
- ☐ 18. Romans 15:14-16
- ☐ 19. Romans 15:17-19
- ☐ 20. Romans 15:20-22
- ☐ 21. Romans 15:23-25
- ☐ 22. Romans 15:26-27
- ☐ 23. Romans 15:28-29
- ☐ 24. Romans 15:30-33
- ☐ 25. Romans 16:1-2
- ☐ 26. Romans 16:3-16
- ☐ 27. Romans 16:17-19
- ☐ 28. Romans 16:20
- ☐ 29. Romans 16:21-24
- ☐ 30. Romans 16:25-27

MEMORY VERSES



SESSION 1:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.
- Romans 1:16

SESSION 2:

For there is no favoritism with God. - Romans 2:11

SESSION 3:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
- Romans 3:23-24

SESSION 4:

For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. - Romans 5:19

SESSION 5:

So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. - Romans 6:11

SESSION 6:

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ so that you may belong to another. You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. - Romans 7:4

SESSION 7:

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!"
- Romans 8:15

SESSION 8:

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. - Romans 10:9

SESSION 9:

Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways!
- Romans 11:33

SESSION 10:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. - Romans 12:1-2

SESSION 11:

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.
- Romans 13:14

SESSION 12:

So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another. - Romans 14:19

SESSION 13:

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in prayers to God on my behalf. - Romans 15:30



At the time he wrote this letter, Paul had not yet visited the church in Rome. He hoped to introduce himself because he was planning to travel there as soon as God allowed. As part of that introduction, he wanted the believers in Rome to understand what he believed about the gospel and how it shapes the lives of those who follow Christ.

It is not clear who established the church in Rome. It's possible that the Jews who had heard Peter's sermon on Pentecost carried the gospel to Rome and started the church. Whatever its beginnings, the Roman church had become a thriving, multi-ethnic congregation.

Paul likely wrote Romans from Corinth around AD 56–57. During that time, he may have learned more about the Roman church through Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1–3). They had been expelled from Rome, along with other Christians, by Emperor Claudius around AD 49 and later became ministry partners with Paul.

In chapters 1–11, Paul presented a defense of the gospel. He highlighted the pervasive nature of sin and its universal effect on humanity, but he also proclaimed that God had offered salvation through Jesus Christ. Chapters 12–16 shift to practical application. Because believers belong to Christ, their relationships—both within the church and with those outside it—should reflect Him. Above all, love should be the defining mark of the Christian life.

Major Themes in Romans

1. *The Righteousness of God.* Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because it was the power of God for salvation to all who believed. God gave righteousness as a gift to those who believed in Christ (Rom. 1:16–17).

2. *The Universality of Sin.* All people sin, and sin produces death. Sinners cannot save themselves from the consequences of their sin (1:17–3:30).

3. *Justification by Faith.* Believers are declared righteous before God, not by works but by faith (3:28; 5:1).

4. *Life in the Spirit.* Believers are called to engage their flesh in the battle against the temptation to sin (6:1–14). Even this is a work of the Holy Spirit, who lives in all believers (8:1–17).

5. *God's Sovereignty and Israel.* Even though Israel rejected God, He still desired they be saved. Paul prayed for the salvation of Israel as well as the salvation of the Gentiles (chaps. 9–11).

6. *Practical Christian Living.* Believers should offer themselves to God as living sacrifices and have their mind renewed into the image of Christ. This is a daily process of sanctification (chaps. 12–15).



Romans

- I. Introduction** (Rom. 1:1-15)
- II. The Universal Need of Righteousness** (Rom. 1:16–3:20)
- III. Justification: The Imputation of Righteousness** (Rom. 3:21–5:21)
- IV. The New Life in Christ** (Rom. 6:1–8:39)
- V. The Mystery of Israel** (Rom. 9:1–11:36)
- VI. Exhortations about the Christian Life** (Rom. 12:1–15:13)
- VII. Epilogue: Greetings and Travel Plans** (Rom. 15:14–16:27)



USING THE DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

A person's spiritual growth hinges on daily Bible engagement. *Daily* implies a discipline much like exercising, brushing teeth, or eating a certain number of calories EVERY day. Our spiritual training should be no different since we need spiritual nourishment every day. The focus is the *Bible*, God's Word. There is nothing wrong with knowing the thoughts of great philosophers, leaders, or theologians, as long as God's Word is the final word on the matter. Engagement carries the idea of participation and involvement. *Engagement* is active, requiring us to read, study, and reflect.

Your *Daily Discipleship Guide* is full of tools to help you engage with God's Word. But like any tool, you have to use it to get the benefit.

- Use this resource when studying with a group. The first four pages of each session help the group examine a Bible passage and move us toward acting on the truths discovered as a group and an individual.
- Use the **Talk It Out** page to hold yourself and others accountable by meeting in a smaller group of same-sex individuals (an accountability group). Share with the smaller group what God has been teaching you through the group time and your personal daily Bible study while working to memorize a Bible verse.
- Use the **Daily Exploration** pages to go deeper into God's Word, building on your group's study experience. Engage in daily Bible study, record your thoughts, reflect on the questions, and take action.
- Use the resource every week even when you are unable to attend the group's Bible study. Missing a group Bible study does not excuse you from being engaged daily with God through His Word.

Want this resource on your phone or tablet for when you are on the go? Purchase an eBook at goExploreTheBible.com or at Lifeway.com/digitalstudies.





Getting the most from Talk It Out

Talk It Out supports groups of three or four people who come together weekly to encourage, share, and sharpen each other. While other issues may be addressed, the Talk It Out section focuses on the weekly memory verse. The questions and comments provide a means for encouraging each other to memorize Scripture while reflecting on the main point of that week's lesson.

These groups are made up of three to four people...

- Participants should be of the same gender.
- These groups should be smaller on purpose.
- These groups can meet at almost any location.
- These groups can easily accommodate each other's schedules.

Some married couples may choose to use the Talk It Out section for a weekly family devotional activity.

...Who meet weekly...

- We were created to relate, so meeting weekly is important.
 - In some cases, your smaller group may need to meet virtually. You may find it best to meet face-to-face every other week or once a month and use virtual tools the other weeks.
-

...To hold each other accountable and encourage each other in their spiritual growth.

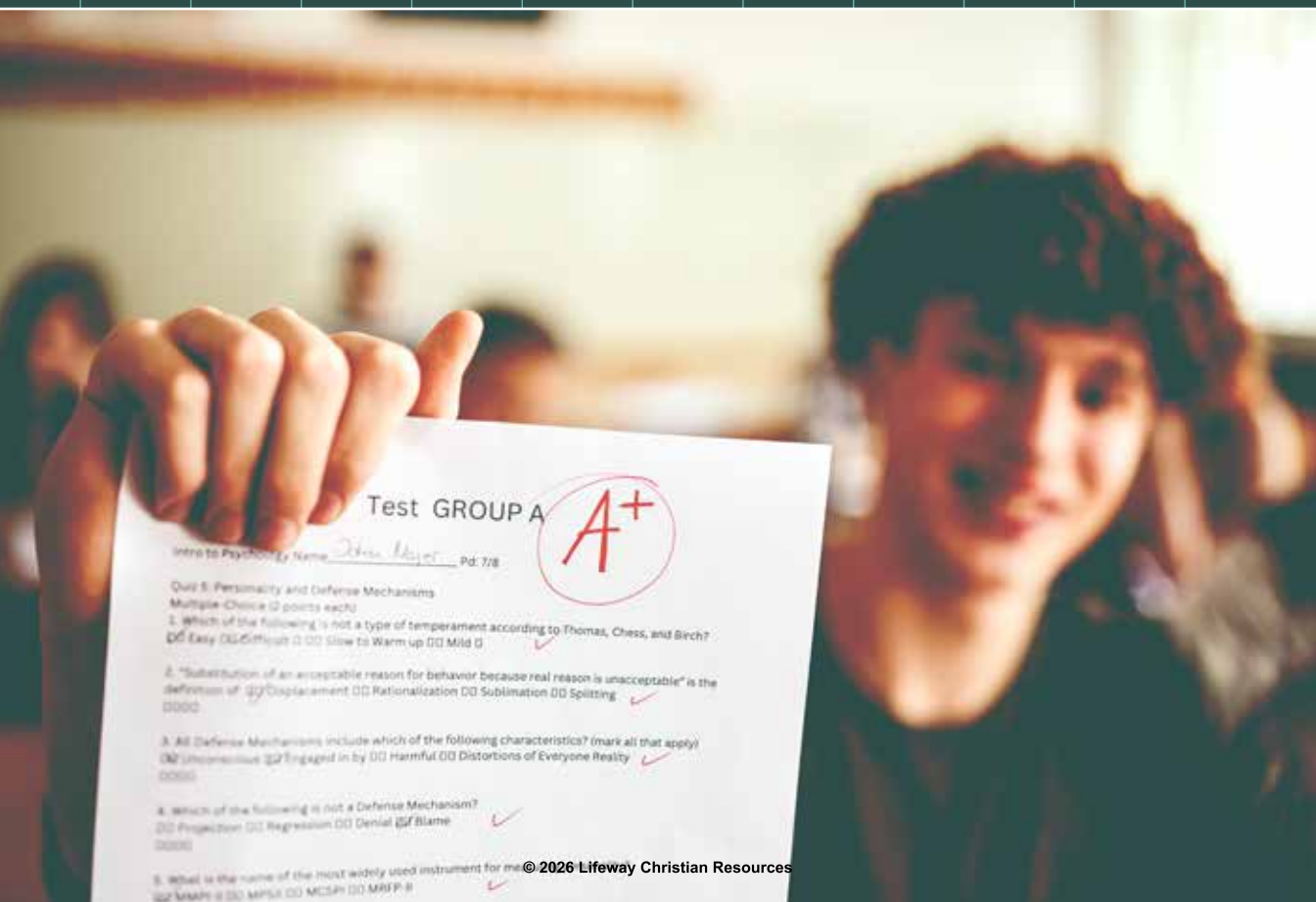
- Review the questions and comments in Talk It Out.
- Look for ways the memory verse relates to the main point of the lesson.
- Include time to pray for each other.

SESSION 1

True Power

ROMANS 1:13-25

THE GOSPEL ALONE HAS THE POWER TO REMOVE THE GUILT OF HUMANITY'S SIN.



Test GROUP A

A+

Intro to Psychology Name John Meyer Pd: 7/8

Quiz 5: Personality and Defense Mechanisms

Multiple-Choice (2 points each)

1. Which of the following is not a type of temperament according to Thomas, Chess, and Birch?
☐ Easy ☒ Difficult ☐ Slow to Warm up ☐ Mild ☐

2. "Substitution of an acceptable reason for behavior because real reason is unacceptable" is the definition of ☒ Displacement ☐ Rationalization ☐ Sublimation ☐ Splitting.
☐ ☐ ☐

3. All Defense Mechanisms include which of the following characteristics? (mark all that apply)
☒ Unconscious ☒ Engaged in by ☐ Harmful ☐ Distortions of Everyone's Reality ☒
☐ ☐ ☐

4. Which of the following is not a Defense Mechanism?
☐ Projection ☐ Regression ☐ Denial ☒ Blame
☐ ☐

5. What is the name of the most widely used instrument for measuring personality?
☒ MMPI-2 ☐ MMPI-1 ☐ MMPI-3 ☐ MMPI-4
☐ ☐

All of us have experienced the power of good news. Perhaps it was when you got the report that you passed an exam. Or when you were told that you got the job. Maybe you received the blood test results and learned that nothing's wrong. Good news has a powerful impact on us. It turns an ordinary day into an extraordinary event that we will always remember.

WHAT'S A MEMORABLE GOOD NEWS MOMENT YOU'VE HAD?
HOW DID IT AFFECT YOU?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul introduced himself to the church in Rome by way of the gospel. When anyone used the word “gospel” in those days, they meant that they had good news. For Paul, the gospel meant the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Paul served Jesus as a missionary to the Gentiles. He devoted himself to sharing the gospel with people who had never had a chance to hear it. For that reason, he told the believers in Rome that he would visit them soon. Paul's passion to share the gospel prompted him to make this visit. He wanted to encourage believers there, and he also wanted them to partner with him in proclaiming the gospel to others who had not heard it. He testified that telling others the good news of Jesus did not embarrass him. On the contrary, he shared the message with eagerness. He had an obligation to proclaim it everywhere. Paul knew that anyone who placed their faith in Christ would have their lives transformed.

A sincere burden for Gentiles compelled Paul to preach the gospel to them. Even though he didn't mention Gentiles specifically, he had them in mind as he wrote about the wrath of God. They lived in a world that God had created. By looking around them, they should have sensed His presence. But instead of turning to Him and worshipping Him, they ignored His presence and rejected His existence.

By turning a deaf ear to the truth about Jesus, they stumbled along in spiritual darkness. Sinful behavior directed their lives. Having rejected the Creator, they worshiped objects that He created. They also gave themselves to immorality and other pagan expressions of sexual degradation. Their sinful way of living had poisoned them spiritually. As a result, they sank deeper into sin and encouraged others to join them in their disgraceful conduct. Therefore, God would have the last word over their lives, and His judgment would affect them eternally. For that reason, they needed to hear the good news of Jesus.



13 Now I don't want you to be **unaware**, **A** brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles. **14** I am **obligated** **B** both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. **15** So I am eager to preach the **gospel** **C** to you also who are in Rome. **16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the **righteousness** **D** of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith. **18** For God's **wrath** **E** is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness **suppress** **F** the truth, **19** since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. **20** For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen **since the creation of the world**, **G** being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are **without excuse**. **H** **21** For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. **22** Claiming to be wise, they became fools **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles. **24** Therefore God **delivered them over** **I** in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. **25** They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.

A. The Greek wording relates to understanding more than intellect, especially in terms of spiritual matters.

B. Paul felt a strong "debt" to all people, regardless of background. This came from his own encounter with God's grace and the universal need for salvation.

C. Greek, *evangelion*. The word means "good news" and refers to the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

D. Brought back into a right relationship with God. This is not the result of human effort, but a gift granted by God based on faith in Jesus.

E. God's just and measured response to human sin. Through His judgment of sin, God maintains moral order in the world.

F. While truth does not change, sinful humans tend to ignore, reject, or restrain God's truth. This results in moral decay and collapse.

G. God reveals His existence through His creation. Theologians call this "general revelation."

H. God's revelation of Himself in nature ensures humans have no excuse for denying Him.

I. God allowed humans to follow their own path and to suffer the consequences of their choices.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Gospel Power

(Rom. 1:13-17)

Believers seek opportunities to share the gospel's power with those who need it.

- **How does remembering that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation” change your confidence in sharing it?**

2. Divine Revelation

(Rom. 1:18-20)

We can point others toward God through what He has revealed in His creation.

- **What does creation teach us about God's attributes?**
- **How are God's invisible attributes displayed through creation? How should that influence the way we live each day?**

3. Worthless Thinking

(Rom. 1:21-25)

Rejecting God ultimately leads to devastating consequences.

- **How do people exchange truth for lies today—and how might you be tempted to do the same?**

Apply the Text

Focus on people in your life who do not know Jesus. Agree with your Bible study group to pray together for these people and to ask God for opportunities to share the gospel with them.

KEY DOCTRINE: Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. (See Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible dictionary to better understand a theological concept.

Paul emphasized that God reveals Himself through nature (“natural” or “general” revelation) as well as through His Word and through Jesus (“special” revelation). Read a Bible dictionary article on “Revelation” to learn more about these two forms of divine revelation. Record your thoughts about their similarities or differences.



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter's Bible passages.



TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 1:16. What is something you were once unsure about but now you are confident in?

Paul affirmed that the gospel is how God saves people. It is powerful—it changes lives. It has no boundaries—it is for all people, no matter where they come from. Anyone who believes the gospel message can be saved. For these reasons, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What stands out to you about the way Paul described the gospel?

Based on the way Paul described the gospel, believers can trust that the gospel works—it is the “power of God.” It is the gospel that saves, not our persuasiveness or cleverness in sharing it. Our role is simply to be faithful in sharing His message. We should never be embarrassed to talk about the gospel—it is the good news that people need, and the power that changes lives.

What does it look like in real life to be unashamed of the gospel? Who around you needs the hope of the gospel?

Agree to text Romans 1:16 to each other over the next week as a reminder to live unashamed of the gospel.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 1:13-15

Look for the reasons Paul was eager to visit Rome.

Paul was eager to visit the Christians in Rome. So far, his work prevented him from going there. He looked forward to being with them because he had many friends in the church (Rom. 16:3-16). But he also had another reason for wanting to be with them. The visit would strengthen their spiritual kinship for the sake of fruitful ministry. The Lord had called Paul to serve as a missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). With the help of the church in Rome, he intended to expand his ministry to new areas where Christ was not known (see Rom. 15:23-24).

Paul passionately embraced his call to mission work. He considered himself obligated to people who had not heard the gospel. They needed to know about Jesus and the gift of salvation that is centered in Him. Some of them spoke the Greek language. Others, like the barbarians, spoke other languages. Likewise, they may have been known as wise, or they could have been categorized as foolish. All of them shared one need in common: to hear the good news about Christ. Jesus had changed Paul's life forever, and the need for others to know Him compelled the apostle to stretch himself as far as possible to take the gospel to them.

How can you nurture a desire to share the gospel with others?



Day 2: Romans 1:16-17

Highlight the words “not ashamed.”

Paul did not consider his obligation to share the gospel to be a heavy burden. Quite the opposite, he took hold of it with whole-hearted enthusiasm. He looked forward to walking through the doors of opportunity God would open for him. At this time in His ministry, walking through the door meant going to Rome and deepening his relationship with the church there.

Paul's testimony reminds us that we should never be “ashamed of the gospel.” The good news about Jesus is the “power of God” that changes lives and brings salvation to everyone who believes. Paul's mention of both Jew and Greek reminds us that the gospel has no boundaries—it is good news for all people everywhere.

Receiving the gift of salvation through Christ changes everything. Most importantly, it makes us right with God. Trying to earn righteousness by our good deeds leads to nothing more than emptiness and frustration. A right relationship with God results from placing our faith in Christ to save us. When Jesus makes us right with God, He will then guide us toward maturity. The level of faith we exhibit in spiritual infancy gives way to a more mature level of faith as we follow Him. From one level of faith to another, we grow stronger and deeper in our walk with Him.

How does remembering the gospel as “the power of God for salvation” give you greater confidence in sharing it?



Day 3: Romans 1:18-20

Pay attention to the distinction between general revelation and special revelation.

Having affirmed the power of the gospel, Paul explained why people need to hear the gospel. He explained that “God’s wrath” is being “revealed . . . against all godlessness and unrighteousness.” Paul noted that God’s wrath was directed toward those who “by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” Paul was talking about people who closed their eyes to the obvious signs of God’s presence in their world.

The reality of God’s existence screams to us. Not only does the evidence exist all around us, but He has also gone to the trouble of making sure we see it. Therefore, no one can say they have never “known about God.” The most obvious evidence of God’s presence can be seen in His creation. Granted, nobody has seen His “invisible attributes.” We cannot see His “eternal power.” Neither can we behold His “divine nature.” However, anyone can clearly perceive His attributes in the world that He created for us. Nobody has an excuse for denying God’s reality and presence in the world.

Theologians have a name for the everyday evidence of God’s presence: general revelation. In the Bible, God shows Himself in a way that’s called special revelation. There we meet Jesus. God’s special revelation about Jesus in Scripture is necessary for salvation.

How would you help someone understand why there is no excuse for denying the reality of God?



Day 4: Romans 1:21-23

Underline the words “worthless,” “senseless,” and “fools.”

When people refuse to see God in His creation, they spiral downward spiritually. They begin to foster notions about themselves and their world that are “worthless.” They ignore the truth about God at every turn. With their minds closed to the certainty of His presence, their hearts turn cold toward Him. The chilling emptiness in their hearts redirects their passions in a destructive way. As they adore their own “senseless” ideas and misdirected passions, they consider themselves to be enlightened. In reality, they are stumbling along in spiritual darkness.

Paul pointed to the result of their deception. The people who reject the reality of God’s presence continue to mislead themselves. They lie to themselves about how their world works and how they work in their world. Instead of telling themselves the truth about God’s presence in their world, they choose to deceive themselves into thinking that He does not exist. They consider their self-deception to be wisdom. Actually, it has made “fools” of them.

They show their foolishness in the objects they choose to worship. They pay no attention to the “immortal God.” Instead of choosing wisely to worship the Lord, they decide to indulge in the practice of paying homage to “images.” They shape the images into pagan idols that they adore and worship.

How does pride contribute to exchanging the truth about God for distorted ideas?



Day 5: Romans 1:24-25

Circle the words “truth” and “lie.”

In response to unbelievers’ foolish choices (vv. 21-23), God reflects His eternal wisdom. He has the authority to destroy them completely or to wash His hands of them for good. But instead of choosing either option, He determined to hand them over to their pagan passions. Their hearts crave “sexual impurity.” He released them so they could follow their hearts in their attempts to find spiritual contentment in unbridled sexual encounters. In turn, they took a nosedive into an empty lifestyle of morally degrading behavior. In so doing, they continue to disgrace themselves as they sink deeper into spiritual darkness.

By choosing such a self-destructive path, they make an exchange. They replace “truth” with a “lie.” If they would take hold of truth, they would give themselves to worshiping and serving God. Unmistakable validations of His living presence surround them. But they turn their backs on the truth. Instead, they place their faith in a lie of the worst kind. Consequently, they devote themselves to a lifestyle that renders spiritual emptiness. They reject “the Creator” who could fill their lives with spiritual contentment. He alone deserves to be “praised forever.”

How do misplaced worship and misplaced identity reinforce one another?

APPLY THE TEXT

Look at your own determination to share the good news of Jesus. How do you exhibit your confidence in the power of the gospel? What will you do this week to demonstrate your eagerness for others to hear it? With whom will you start a gospel conversation?

JOURNAL



SESSION 2

Coming Judgment

ROMANS 2:1-13

GOD WILL JUDGE EVERY PERSON ACCORDING TO THEIR RESPONSE TO HIM.



Standing before a judge can be a sobering experience, even if it's only for the speeding ticket in your hand. When a police officer pulls you over and gives you a ticket, you set it aside and get back on the road. However, from that moment on, you know that one day you will be accountable to a judge. On that day, the ticket testifies to your accountability.

WHAT DOES A SPEEDING TICKET TEACH US ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Romans 1:18-25, Paul described the guilt of the Gentile world. The Jews likely would have stood and applauded at Paul's proclamation of the Gentiles' guilt. But in chapter 2, Paul reminded the Jews they were no different from the Gentiles when it came to facing God's judgment. Had they responded to the truth that God had given them in Christ? God's judgment is based on truth and is impartial—both Jews and Gentiles will be judged in the same way. Mere knowledge of the law does not justify; obedience to God's Word is what matters (Rom. 2:1-16).

In 2:17-29, Paul addressed those Jews who relied on the law and boasted in their Jewish heritage yet failed to obey God. External signs like circumcision were meaningless without inward obedience. True circumcision is of the heart, by the Spirit, not merely by the letter of the law.

In 3:1-8, the apostle acknowledged that Jews had an advantage—they had been entrusted with God's Word, the Old Testament. Even though some Jews were unfaithful to God, He remained faithful and true. Human failure cannot nullify God's promises. Paul also emphasized that God is always just in judging sin.

In 3:9-20, Paul concluded that all people—Jews and Gentiles—are guilty of sin. He cited multiple Old Testament passages to show that no one is righteous, no one seeks God, and all have turned away (Pss. 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 53:1-3; 140:3). The law cannot justify anyone; it only reveals sin and holds the world accountable to God. The whole world stands guilty before Him. Righteousness must come from God, not human effort.



1 Therefore, every one of you who **judges** **A** is without excuse. For when you judge another, you **condemn yourself**, **B** since you, the judge, do the same things. **2** Now we know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the **truth**. **C**

3 Do you think—anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same—that you will escape God's judgment?

4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to **repentance**? **D** **5** Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of **wrath** **E** when God's righteous judgment is revealed. **6** He will repay each one **according to his works**: **F** **7** eternal life to those who by persistence in **doing good** **G** seek glory, honor, and immortality; **8** but wrath and anger to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness. **9** There will be affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek; **10** but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does what is good, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. **11** For there is **no favoritism** **H** with God. **12** For all who sin without the law will also perish without the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. **13** For the hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the **doers** **I** of the law will be justified.

A. Not just saying something is wrong. This represents a pride and arrogance that expects God's judgment on someone.

B. Warning against hypocrisy. Some in the Roman church were condemning behavior, yet participating in the same activities.

C. Unlike human judgments, God's verdicts are accurate and just in every way.

D. A changed heart that turns from sin. Without it, people store up judgment for themselves.

E. Not human anger, but divine justice. God's wrath represents His appropriate response to sin.

F. God's judgment is not capricious or unjust. He will judge every human being by the same standard: their response to His Son, Jesus.

G. Not works-based salvation, but good works performed as the result of a life transformed by Jesus and aligned with God's values.

H. Whether Jew or Gentile (vv. 9-10), every person is accountable for how they respond to truth.

I. True righteousness is demonstrated through action. Hearing alone is not sufficient (see Jas. 1:22-25).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. No Excuses

(Rom. 2:1-5)

We should focus on our own sin rather than judging others.

- **Why do individuals tend to judge others while overlooking their own sin?**

2. Perfect Standard

(Rom. 2:6-11)

Our eternal destiny is based on our response to God in this life.

- **Based on these verses, what is the key to a healthy relationship with God?**

3. One Way

(Rom. 2:12-13)

Unbelievers need to understand that good works will not justify them before God.

- **Why can't my good works make me right with God?**

Apply the Text

Discuss with your Bible study group some of the opinions you have heard about how people are justified before God. How can you use this week's passage to give a biblical answer?

KEY DOCTRINE:

Man

In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. (See Genesis 3; Psalm 51:5.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.

People have used Romans 2:13 and other passages to claim that salvation is achieved by works that are needed in addition to faith. Read the following passages and determine what the Bible teaches about salvation by faith: John 6:28-29; 11:26; Acts 16:31; Romans 1:17; 4:6-8; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 3:9. How do these verses relate to Paul's words to the Romans about the universality of judgment?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 2:11. When have you seen someone get special treatment—either fairly or unfairly?

Paul emphasized in Romans 2 that God's judgment is always impartial and rooted in truth. People's response to God's grace will determine where they spend eternity. He doesn't give special treatment based on ethnicity, background, religious privilege, or outward status. Those who follow Him will experience eternal life. Those who pursue their own ways will face His wrath. Everyone will be judged by this standard because God does not play favorites.

What contrast does verse 11 imply between God and human ways of judging?

Romans 2:11 reminds us that God's impartiality leaves no room for pride, favoritism, or self-righteous comparisons. Because God judges everyone by the same righteous standard, we are called to humility before Him and fairness toward others. This shapes how we view ourselves, treat people, and depend fully on God's grace rather than personal merit.

Based on Romans 2:11, what changes do we need to make in the way we treat people—especially those we disagree with?

Write Romans 2:11 on a card or place it on your phone. Review it each day this week.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 2:1-5

Compare Romans 2:1 to Romans 1:20.

Most Jewish people in Paul's day considered themselves to be spiritually superior to non-Jews. Here, Paul asserted that the Jews were "without excuse" in judging others. He had previously said this about the Gentiles (Rom. 1:20). He reminded them that all people are without excuse because all people are sinners before God. Those who were judging others were themselves under "God's judgment," and God's judgment is "based on the truth." God's judgment is always truth-based and just, whereas the judgment of others is often prejudiced by self-righteousness and hypocrisy.

Some presume upon God's "kindness" to believe that He would never judge sinners. Others believe God's kindness applies only to themselves. Paul already established the universality of sin and the fact that all people stand guilty before God apart from His grace. Now he explained that the kindness of God was to lead people to repentance. Realizing they are sinners and that God has thus far withheld His wrath against them should lead them to turn from their sin to Him. However, rather than seeing God's kindness as an opportunity to repent, many have a "hardened and unrepentant heart." Paul warned that they are "storing up wrath" for themselves in "the day of wrath." The day of accounting is coming.

How should God's kindness lead to repentance rather than complacency?



Day 2: Romans 2:6-8

Identify the two categories of people in these verses.

Paul supported the truth of His assertions by citing two Old Testament passages (Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12). Both of these passages drive home the same truth about God's righteous judgments. The day is coming when the Lord will "repay each one according to his works."

Paul asserted that all people will belong to one of two categories when they stand before Him in final judgment. One category consists of everyone who receives the gift of "eternal life." They devote themselves to "doing good" in response to what God has done for them. They live to bring "glory" and "honor" to Him.

The second category consists of misguided people who have deceived themselves. They can count on facing a different outcome. Instead of being rewarded with eternal life, they will be paid the wages of their sinful lifestyles. Their wages would be counted out to them in the currency of God's "wrath." Anyone who rejects Jesus will be faced with the humiliating reality that they embraced a lie of the worst order. They disobeyed "the truth" about their need to be made right with God through Christ.

How do your desires—whether for God's glory or for self—shape the direction of your life?



Day 3: Romans 2:9-11

Note the contrasts and similarities between different groups of people.

Paul had more to say about the coming day of God's judgment. "Affliction and distress" await anyone who demonstrates an eagerness to give their lives to evil practices. A completely different outcome awaited others. Instead of being cursed with a miserable existence of unending anguish, they could look forward to a choice blessing. They would be able to keep on glorifying God. The privilege to honor Him with their lives would be extended into eternity. Furthermore, they would enjoy the abiding sense of peace with God. Jewish people would be judged first. God's standard would not be different for them. He would judge them first because He had given His Word to them first. However, He would not use a different yardstick when He judged Gentiles. He would judge them by the same standard.

There is "no favoritism with God." He judges all people in the same way. Like the Jews of the first century, some individuals today may view themselves as uniquely special to God because of their heritage. They may believe that their connection with spiritual leaders in the past qualifies them for preferred status with God. Or they may think that God favors them because they have made huge donations to a variety of charities. Nothing could be further from the truth. No one can count on favoritism with God to give them a right relationship with Him.

How do these verses confront both human pride and despair?



Day 4: Romans 2:12

Pay attention to what this verse teaches about accountability.

God does not play favorites. He applies the same standard of judgment to each person. His judgment is based on how people respond to Him. Paul noted that Gentiles sinned against God just like Jews. However, they did not understand as much about sin. They did not have the Scriptures. Jewish people had a deeper understanding of sin because God had given them the law. For example, the Ten Commandments identified specific sins to be avoided. When God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery centuries earlier, He gave the commandments to them at Mount Sinai (Ex. 20:1-17). Since that time, generations of Jewish people learned about avoiding sinful behavior. Gentiles lived "without the law." But God still held them accountable to Him.

Even though the Gentiles did not have the law, God made Himself known to them. When they rejected Him, He judged them for not responding to the truth He revealed to them. In turn, they would "perish." The Jews could not treat God's law as nothing more than a keepsake. The same truth applies to us: those who have God's Word cannot treat it as nothing more than a keepsake. The Jews possessed and knew the law, and they still transgressed it. Both the Jew and the Gentile were condemned apart from Christ, whether they knew the law or not. Jews were not safe from the wrath of God because they possessed the law, and Gentiles were not safe because they did not possess the law.

What does this verse teach about our accountability to God?



Day 5: Romans 2:13

Pay attention to how “doer of the law” is defined.

Again, Paul divided his listeners in two categories: the “hearers of the law” and the “doers of the law.” For anyone to be “righteous” before God, they would need to do more than just hear the words of Scripture. They had to be “doers.” Being a doer does not suggest that people can work their way into being right with God. In chapter 3, Paul made the point that no one is saved “by works of the law” (3:20). Only one person who has ever lived was a righteous doer of the law—Jesus. The doers of the law are those who put their faith in Him.

In verse 13 Paul used the word “justified” for the first time in Romans. The word *justified* is derived from legal terminology. It describes a person who is declared innocent, upright, or righteous. The message of Romans is that it is only by the substitutionary death of Jesus and faith alone in Him that any person can be forgiven and declared right with God (3:23-24; 5:1,8,10). What Paul said in verse 13 set the stage for a fuller explanation of the gospel in the following chapters.

Why are your good works unable to make you right with God?

APPLY THE TEXT

As you apply this Bible study to your own life, think about your personal response to God. How have you responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ? How are you responding to the gospel message today—how is your life being changed?

JOURNAL



SESSION 3

Saving Faith

ROMANS 3:21-4:5

A RIGHT STANDING WITH GOD COMES BY FAITH ALONE.



We put our faith to work every day. When we sit in a chair, we trust it to hold us upright so we won't fall on the floor. We entrust our lives to a bridge to safely get us across a river. Throughout our daily routines, we put our faith in people around us. We trust that the sun will rise in the morning and set in the evening. However, we often struggle with trusting the Lord.

*IN WHOM OR IN WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN PLACING YOUR TRUST LATELY?
WHAT FACTORS CAN MAKE TRUSTING OTHERS CHALLENGING?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

So far in Paul's instruction, we have learned that all people are guilty of sin, and there is nothing we can do to remove our guilt. However, God has done something about our sin that reflects His grace. He will forgive us freely because Christ paid the price for our sin. By allowing Jesus to die in our place, God has provided the only way for our sins to be forgiven for good.

Nothing we do will ever be enough to earn God's forgiveness. For that reason, we cannot brag about what we have done to be righteous. Our right standing with God comes through Christ alone. He offers the gift of his forgiveness freely to every person in the same way. When we turn to Christ by faith, we will be forgiven.

Paul pointed to two Old Testament heroes who validated the truth about forgiveness. First, he noted David's affirmation of God's forgiveness. Second, he pointed to Abraham, who trusted God in faith. Abraham could not brag about anything he had done to cause God to accept him as righteous. He simply placed his trust in God. In response,

God made Abraham right with Him. God demonstrated Abraham's right standing with Him by making a promise that proved to be monumental. He did not make the promise because Abraham kept His law perfectly—this was before God gave the law. On the contrary, the promise resulted solely from Abraham's believing God.

The remarkable account of Abraham serves as a stirring testimony of God's grace to anyone who puts their faith in Him. According to Paul, the testimony of Abraham's faith in God applies to us as well when we believe in Jesus. Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave so we could be made right with God by faith alone.



3:21 But now, apart from the law, the **righteousness of God** ^A has been revealed, attested by **the Law and the Prophets**. ^B

22 The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who **believe**, ^C since there is no distinction. **23** For all have sinned and fall short of the **glory of God**; ^D **24** they are justified freely by his **grace** ^E through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. **25** God presented him as the **mercy seat** ^F by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God **passed over** ^G the sins previously committed. **26** God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and justify the one who has faith in Jesus. **27** Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith. **28** For we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. **29** Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, **30** since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. **31** Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law. **4:1** What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? **2** If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God. **3** For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was **credited** ^H to him for righteousness. **4** Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. **5** But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.

A. God's perfect justice, which makes people right with Him. It is revealed apart from the law and is available only through faith in Jesus.

B. The Old Testament Scriptures. While the Mosaic law could not save anyone, it did point people toward the Messiah, along with the messages of God's prophets.

C. To fully trust Jesus for salvation. The verb in Greek is similar to the noun translated "faith" earlier in the verse and refers to an acceptance beyond intellectual agreement.

D. God's majesty, perfection, and holiness. This stands in sharp contrast to human sinfulness.

E. The unearned and voluntary kindness of God. He gives grace freely, not out of obligation.

F. The cover built for the ark of the covenant (see Ex. 25:17-22). This is where the priest applied the blood on the Day of Atonement. Through His blood, Jesus becomes the place where God's justice and mercy meet.

G. God postponed His final penalty for sin until Jesus fulfilled His plan for redemption.

H. An accounting term, signifying an asset added to an account. Abraham did not earn favor with God by works. The Lord made the "deposit" by His grace based on Abraham's faith.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Falling Short

(Rom. 3:21-26)

Everyone falls short of God's standard, so everyone needs Jesus.

- **Why can't good works lead to salvation?**

2. Finding Hope

(Rom. 3:27-31)

We can never be "good enough" to make ourselves right with God.

- **What does it mean to be justified by faith instead of works?**
- **How would you explain the importance of the law to a new believer?**
- **Would you rather have someone tell you how to do something or show you how to do something? Why?**

3. Following Faith

(Rom. 4:1-5)

God calls all people to accept His offer of salvation through faith in Jesus.

- **In what ways do you sometimes try to "earn" God's favor through your actions?**

Apply the Text

Discuss with your Bible study group any troubling issues people have regarding God's gift of forgiveness.

- **What prevents people from accepting God's offer of salvation? Do they struggle with faith, or do they doubt the sacrifice of Christ?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Salvation (Justification)

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 2:16.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use Bible study tools to learn about key words in Scripture.

Read Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:1-20. Use a Bible dictionary and other Bible study tools to learn more about the meaning of a "covenant." Read and reflect on Genesis to identify the various elements of a covenant. Answer these questions: How did this covenant ceremony highlight the faith of Abraham? Why do you think that Abraham needed this covenant ceremony to remind him of the promises of God in Genesis 12:1-3?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 3:23-24. How do you usually respond when you fall short of an expectation or goal?

Paul stated that God has revealed salvation “apart from the law” (Rom. 3:21). Salvation is not earned but is given freely by God’s grace, made possible through Christ’s death on the cross. While everyone is guilty of sin, everyone has the opportunity to be saved. Christ’s blood paid the penalty for our sin, and we can be made right with God through Jesus alone.

What do these verses teach us about God's role verses our role in salvation?

Romans 3:23-24 explains both humanity's deepest need and God's solution to that need. God's solution to our sin problem frees us from constant striving to earn His approval. Our obedience to God flows from gratitude, not fear. As followers of Jesus, our identity is grounded in His grace, not in our performance.

What does it look like in daily life to live as someone who has been justified freely by God's grace?

Review Romans 3:23-24 in various translations and create a paraphrase of the verses.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 3:21-24

Identify the way to a right relationship with God.

Paul emphasized that having the law and trying to obey it was not the way to achieve “the righteousness of God.” In other words, good works do not make anyone right with God. The law showed the problem of sin, but it did not provide the way to fix it. “But now,” God has revealed His way of being right with Him. The Law as well as the Prophets of the Old Testament declared it. His way of being right with Him does not result from earning a good standing with Him. It does not have anything to do with good works. On the contrary, it has everything to do with faith. “Faith in Jesus Christ” makes people right with God.

All of us share one reality in common. We “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Apart from Christ, we all are equally lost and without hope.

Again, Paul used the key term “justified.” When God justifies us, two things happen: first, we are declared no longer guilty of sin. Second, we are declared righteous. Paul used another key theological word in verse 24: “redemption.” Redemption referred to the purchase of freedom for slaves, prisoners of war, or condemned criminals. All this is “by his grace,” a gift offered “freely.” But what is free to us was not free to God; it came with a cost.

How do these verses help you better articulate the gospel in a clear, Christ-centered way?



Day 2: Romans 3:25-26

Compare these verses to Leviticus 16:14-16.

Paul declared that God presented Jesus as “the mercy seat by his blood.” Other translations render the Greek term as “propitiation” or “the sacrifice of atonement.” This is language of the Old Testament sacrificial system. After God delivered His people from Egyptian slavery, He directed them to build the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant. He instructed them to place the mercy seat on top of the ark (Ex. 25:17-21). Once each year, on the Day of Atonement, He gathered His people for a worship experience that focused attention on their sin and His forgiveness (Lev. 16:1-30). The high priest sprinkled blood from sacrificed animals on the mercy seat. This portrayed the reality that a sacrifice had been made to atone for their sins. Likewise, the blood of Jesus made Him the mercy seat or the atoning sacrifice for everyone who places their faith in Him. The focus is on the sacrifice of the blood Jesus shed for our sin.

When it comes to our sin, God is just in His judgments. He requires that a sacrifice be made to atone for our sin. At the same time, He is the judge who justifies “the one who has faith in Jesus.”

How does the imagery of blood help you grasp the seriousness of sin and the cost of forgiveness?



Day 3: Romans 3:27-31

Note the reason boasting is excluded.

Paul addressed the question of boasting. If we could earn our salvation by working for it, then we would have a reason to boast. We could give ourselves a pat on the back for our achievement. But because salvation is by faith alone and not by works, boasting is excluded.

The Jews believed they had the unique privilege of an exclusive relationship with God. For that reason, they considered themselves to be superior to Gentiles. Paul addressed this by affirming that God favored Gentiles just as much as He favored the Jews. Just as God loves all people in the same way, He will “justify” everyone in the same way. His gift of forgiveness is offered to anyone who places their faith in Jesus.

Paul addressed yet another question that Jews and Gentiles alike would raise. The question focused on the need for the law since forgiveness came through faith. The Jews viewed the law as a sign of privilege and assurance that God included only them as His people. Consequently, Gentiles saw the law as a reminder that they had been excluded. For both groups, being pardoned through Christ did not nullify the law. On the contrary, what God did through Christ upheld the law (Matt. 5:17). The penalty of the law still had to be paid—and Jesus paid it on the cross.

What kind of boasting was Paul talking about—and why is it excluded?

In what subtle ways do people still try to boast spiritually—even while they affirm salvation is by grace?



Day 4: Romans 4:1-3

Compare these verses to Genesis 15:6.

Paul turned to Abraham—the forefather of the Jews—to make his argument that salvation is by faith. For Jewish people, Abraham personified their conviction that a person could earn justification by works. Without a doubt, Abraham gained an esteemed reputation with everything he had done in his life. He left his homeland and traveled far away to a new land. There he and Sarah started a family that grew to be the nation called Israel. For Jewish people, his works had earned God’s favor. Paul, however, argued that before God, Abraham had no reason to boast about his accomplishments.

Paul’s argument came directly from Scripture. According to Genesis 15:6, Abraham was made right with God because of his faith—not his works. Abraham became a righteous person when he believed God.

Paul noted that Abraham’s faith was “credited to him for righteousness.” The word *credited* comes from the world of accounting and meant to deposit or to place in the positive ledger column. It implied a transaction. However, this credit did not happen because of work performed but grace freely given.

How would you explain to someone the meaning of faith being “credited” to Abraham as righteousness?



Day 5: Romans 4:4-5

Note how Paul contrasted a gift with something owed.

When people work at a job for an employer, they expect to be “credited” for their labor by being paid. They would not consider their pay to be a gift from their employer. Rather, the employer owed the money to the employee.

Anyone reading what Paul said about paying a person who worked for an employer would have understood what he meant. Employees deserved to be paid when they worked for an employer. For them, a wage would never be thought of as a gift. From there, Paul affirmed the profound truth about God’s way of making a person right with Him. He did not pay Abraham for his work by declaring him to be a righteous person. When Abraham took a simple step of faith, God presented him with the most precious gift of all. He made Abraham right with Him. Paul went on to affirm that God will give the same gift to anyone—even the most ungodly person—who turns to Him in faith.

How can this passage shape the way you talk about salvation with people who are burdened by guilt?

APPLY THE TEXT

As you reflect on God’s gift of salvation through Christ, how often have you boasted over your spiritual accomplishments? What place does grateful humility have in your personal relationship with God? In what ways do you demonstrate your concern for others who need Jesus?

JOURNAL



SESSION 4

Restored Relationship

ROMANS 5:1-11, 18-21

CHRIST DIED FOR SINNERS, MAKING RECONCILIATION WITH GOD POSSIBLE FOR ALL.



Reconciliation paints a picture of love at work. Imagine two children in trouble with their mom. When their mother confronted them about their disobedience, their responses were tinged with disrespect. Their bad behavior built a wall between them and their mother. She knew that something had to be done to restore the relationship. Because she loved her children, she took the first step toward making things right. So did God when Christ died for us.

*WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN RECONCILIATION IN ACTION LATELY?
WITH WHOM HAVE YOU SOUGHT RECONCILIATION?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In chapter 4, Paul emphasized justification by faith in Christ. He pointed to Abraham, who lived before God gave the law. Abraham was justified by faith rather than by his works (Rom. 4:3). This occurred also before he was circumcised (4:9-12). Just as Abraham was justified by his faith, God justifies people today through faith—not works. No one can be reconciled to God by good deeds or good intentions. Reconciliation is the result of justification. Because God has justified us, He has also reconciled us to Himself.

In Romans 5, Paul listed three results of reconciliation. First, reconciliation with God brings a new peace with God (5:1-5). Those who are justified by faith in Jesus now live at peace with God. Grace gives them a new standing with the Father and hope for eternity. In addition, Christ followers can rejoice because even their afflictions are used to nurture their spiritual maturity.

The second result of reconciliation is that it witnesses to God's unconditional love (5:6-11). Jesus died as a substitute for the ungodly. His death served as a perfect sacrifice for sin and a perfect demonstration of God's love.

Finally, reconciliation initiates a growing grace in the life of the believer (5:12-21). Jesus reversed the curse of Eden. While Adam's disobedience led humanity into condemnation, Christ's obedient sacrifice leads to justification and reconciliation for all who accept Him in faith. Sin creates a universal problem, but it cannot compare to the overwhelming grace of Jesus. He has brought sin's reign of death to an end, offering reconciliation and eternal life to everyone who believes. Jesus accomplished what the law could not. The law highlighted sin, leading to more guilt; but Jesus redeems individuals from sin's power.



1 Therefore, **A** since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in **the hope of the glory of God.** **B** **3** And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces **endurance,** **C** **4** endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. **5** This hope will not disappoint us, because **God's love** **D** has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. **6** For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. **8** But God proves his own love for us in that **while we were still sinners,** **E** Christ died for us. **9** How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. **10** For if, while we were enemies, we were **reconciled to God** **F** through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. **11** And not only that, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation. [. . .] **18** So then, as through **one trespass** **G** there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone. **19** For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the **one man's obedience** **H** the many will be made righteous. **20** The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more **21** so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A. Paul had spent four chapters focused on humanity's need for justification. Based on that, he shifted to reconciliation in Romans 5.

B. Rather than wishful thinking, the Greek word for "hope" indicates utter confidence in God's promises.

C. This is a steadfastness produced by suffering. It includes the capacity to remain faithful through difficulty.

D. This is not an abstract consideration of God's love, but a reality demonstrated through action—particularly in Christ's death for sinners.

E. Christ met us where we were. We did not have to "clean up" for Him. He paid the price for our sins while we were still under God's wrath (v. 9).

F. The Greek wording suggests two opposing sides coming to the same conclusion. However, God alone initiated our reconciliation to Himself through Jesus. We receive it as a gift as part of our justification by faith.

G. A reference to the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Their rebellion corrupted the entire human race.

H. Jesus's death on the cross reconciles people to God. He reversed the curse of sin and made righteousness possible by faith.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. A New Peace

(Rom. 5:1-5)

Believers should embrace their new relationship with God.

- **How does “peace with God” affect your life today and in eternity?**

2. A Proven Love

(Rom. 5:6-11)

Individuals can be reconciled to God thanks to the loving sacrifice Jesus offered on the cross.

- **Who would you be willing to die for? How do those individuals compare to people you consider your enemies?**
- **How does Jesus’s death prove His love for humanity?**
- **How should we respond to this awesome gift of justification and reconciliation with God?**

3. A Growing Grace

(Rom. 5:18-21)

Our lives can be transformed by the matchless grace of Jesus.

- **How do I know Jesus’s death was meant for me?**

Apply the Text

Identify all the promises given to believers in this week’s focal passage.

- **Which of these truths is hardest for you to embrace right now? How can your group encourage one another to live in that promise?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Salvation (Justification)

Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God. (See Romans 3:28; Titus 3:5-7.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Study the life of a key character in Scripture.

Use a Bible dictionary and other Bible study tools to learn more about the life of Esau, focusing on the reconciliation of Esau and Jacob. Identify the events that prompted Esau to hate his twin brother Jacob. Read Genesis 33 and reflect on the brothers’ reconciliation. Consider: What anxiety did Jacob feel about reconciliation? What had to happen before the two brothers could be reconciled? How did Jacob try to reconcile with gifts and good works? Why was reconciliation ultimately dependent on Esau’s grace?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 5:19. Do you usually try to figure things out on your own, or ask for help?

Paul emphasized that Jesus undid the curse that began in the garden of Eden. Adam's disobedience brought separation from God, but Jesus's obedience brought forgiveness and a restored relationship with Him. Jesus broke the power of sin. Because of Him, sin and death no longer have the final word. Everyone who believes in Christ receives reconciliation and eternal life.

Discuss the contrast between Adam's disobedience and Jesus's obedience. What were the differences in the outcomes and the impact? How does this verse help explain why effort and good intentions alone cannot save us?

Because Jesus died on the cross for us, we don't have to earn God's approval. We can trust Christ, be released from guilt and shame, and live each day in the new life He has given us. Our hope is found in what Jesus has done for us, not in our own efforts.

**Discuss your responses to this question:
Am I trusting Jesus today, or just trying to
fix myself?**

Memorize Romans 5:19, being mindful of the sacrifice Jesus made for you.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 5:1-2

Pay attention to the word “therefore.”

The word *therefore* looks back to everything Paul has said up to this point about the need for justification (chaps. 1–3) and the means of justification (chap. 4). The phrase “since we have been justified” indicates Paul is now turning his attention to those who have placed their faith in Christ. Because we have been justified, we have “peace with God.”

Peace with God through Christ gives way to other blessings. One of them involves access. Jesus opens the door to a personal relationship with God. With the door opened, we step into the wonders of His magnificent grace to us. Because of His grace, we’re forgiven. Furthermore, we have new life in Him that will never end. Abiding in His grace, we’re anchored to Him. He is our rock-solid foundation, and nothing can separate us from Him. Another blessing of God’s peace comes in the form of hope. We can “boast in the hope of the glory of God.” Previously, Paul said all people fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). But those who have been justified by faith reflect His glory and find hope. While we cannot boast in our own efforts to be right with God, we can boast in the peace that He has brought to us through reconciliation.

What do you think it means to “stand” in grace?



Day 2: Romans 5:3-5

Identify the benefits of peace with God.

Another blessing of reconciliation involves unshakable hope even when we face afflictions. Peace with God does not always mean freedom from suffering. In fact, peace with God may result in suffering for the sake of the gospel. Jesus said, “You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you *because of me*” (Matt. 5:10, emphasis added). Believers can rejoice in affliction because they recognize God is at work in those difficult circumstances.

Paul listed benefits that accompany suffering for the sake of the gospel. When we suffer for the gospel, God produces endurance in us. This endurance involves perseverance in continuing to live for Christ. Endurance produces character, and character produces hope. This hope is a deep sense of peace that God has a plan for our lives that no circumstance can derail (Rom. 8:28).

The hope we have is rooted in God’s love. For this reason, our hope in Him will “not disappoint” us. Paul wrote that God pours out His love on us—it covers us completely. His love is “poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” As believers, the Holy Spirit indwells us. The Spirit of God nourishes us with the love of God, so that our hope in Him grows stronger in difficult times.

How does “peace with God” affect your life today and in eternity?



Day 3: Romans 5:6-11

Re-read verse 8 several times, then turn it into a prayer of thanksgiving.

Before being justified through Jesus, we were in a state of helplessness. Earning our salvation was not possible. We can never be good enough to make ourselves right with God. In the face of our helplessness, Christ died for us even though we were ungodly. Jesus dying for ungodly people does not make any logical sense to us. That's exactly what He did. Christ's death for us can be traced to one motivation: God's "own love for us."

Some people think they must "get right" before God will accept them. Verse 8 proves the error of that way of thinking. We can never be good enough to deserve what Christ did for us. If you ever wonder about God's love for you, the cross should be all the proof you need.

Because we have been justified by God through faith in Christ, we have been saved from His wrath. Believers will never suffer the wrath of God because Jesus suffered as their substitute on the cross. In verse 10 Paul used the word *reconciled*. The word reconciled indicates there was something broken that needed to be fixed. In this case, it was our relationship with God. It is worth noting that our reconciliation to God was initiated by God, accomplished by Christ, and is received by us. Jesus is the reconciler; we are the objects of His reconciliation.

What does it mean to you that God loved you and acted on your behalf before you changed?



Day 4: Romans 5:18-19

Reflect on how Jesus's "one righteous act" changed everything.

"One trespass" refers to Adam's sin. Because sin entered the world through Adam, there is condemnation for everyone. Adam's sin condemned Adam, and it condemned everyone else who came after him. Adam's children—and everyone who has lived since Adam—inherited a sin nature, evidenced by Cain killing his brother (Gen. 4:8).

Thankfully, that is not the end of the story. Jesus's "righteous act" changes everything. Because of what Jesus did, "there is justification leading to life for everyone." By everyone, Paul did not imply that Christ's atoning death automatically provided justification for all people. "Life for everyone" in verse 18 means believers, not unbelievers. Eternal life is not given to those who do not believe—only to those who put their faith in Christ.

Adam's act of disobedience had a ripple effect on everyone everywhere. Also, we are accountable to God because we have chosen to sin against Him ourselves. Just like Adam, we face the certainty of God's judgment. In stark contrast to the darkness of eternal punishment that awaited us, the obedience of Christ glistened with the brilliant light of eternal hope. Through His obedience, Jesus changed everything for us. By being obedient, He became the appropriate sacrifice for our sinful disobedience. His sacrifice will have an eternal effect on us.

How would you explain to someone how Jesus changed everything for us?



Day 5: Romans 5:20-21

Pay attention to how Paul contrasted the reign of sin and the reign of grace.

Once again Paul discussed the law. The “law came along to multiply the trespass.” God’s law clarified more precisely what disobedience and sin looked like. The law multiplied sin in the sense that it increased awareness and accountability. But while the reality of sin grew more troubling, the presence of grace became even more amazing.

In light of Paul’s explanation so far, we’re wise to take a long look at the breathtaking gift of God’s lavish grace to us. We’re sinners because we belong to Adam. Furthermore, we have chosen to disobey God ourselves. Therefore, we’re accountable for our disobedience to Him, and His law gives us no excuse for being confused about what sin looks like for us. Our sin separates us from God, and it leads to death. When death reigned over us like a brutal tyrant from whom we could never escape, God’s grace came to our rescue and delivered us. Not only has God in His grace liberated us from death, He also placed us in His kingdom. We live under the reign of His amazing grace, and we live eternally with Him “through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Why is grace a better motivator for obedience than law?

APPLY THE TEXT

As you reflect on your personal relationship with God, how has the truth about being justified through Christ influenced your attitude about yourself? What difference has knowing that you’ve been reconciled through Christ made in your daily life? Find a quiet time and place this week to write down your reflections.

JOURNAL



SESSION 5

Freedom

ROMANS 6:1-14

BELIEVERS ARE FREED FROM THE POWER OF SIN.



The words “debt free” make a happy sound in our hearts. So do the words “cancer free.” Each of these terms brings up different realities. However, they share one word in common: free. For a person drowning in debt, being liberated from it would be a game changer. Anyone who’s dealing with cancer would be ecstatic to be told it was gone. Of course, being freed from sin’s power brings the greatest joy.

IN WHAT WAYS WOULD THE PROMISE OF FREEDOM MAKE YOU HAPPY?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Chapter 6 plays a pivotal role in the flow of Romans. Chapters 1–4 highlight humanity’s sin and justification by faith. In chapters 5–8, Paul focused on the results of justification, moving from the doctrine of justification to its implications.

Chapter 6 addresses a critical question raised in Romans 5:20. If grace increases where sin abounds, then should believers sin more? Paul was addressing believers who might be tempted to think salvation by grace gave them a license to sin even more. Because sins can be confessed and forgiven, they might conclude that it didn’t really matter how they lived. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Paul reminded the Romans that they were not just forgiven of their sins—they were dead to sin. When they accepted Jesus’s sacrifice, they died to sin because all their sins were nailed to the cross. Not only that, but as Jesus rose from the dead, they had been raised to walk in newness of life. They were to stop embracing the old ways and embrace their Savior rather than their sin.

Paul used the image of baptism to make his point. Baptism pictures the old life of sin being buried with Christ and being raised with Him to live for Him. Paul also used the image of slavery. Before justification, we were slaves to sin. Now we are slaves to righteousness. Jesus has provided a way for believers who were dead in sin to be made alive and free. Like a slave redeemed from physical slavery, believers are set free from sin’s enslavement. This does not mean we no longer battle sin (see Rom. 7) or that we can now live sinless lives. But sin as a power no longer holds us in its enslaving clutches.

Chapter 6, therefore, is key because it connects justification to sanctification. The theme has moved from what God has done for us to what God is now doing in us. The “therefore” in verse 12 introduces the application based on the truths of verses 1–11. We are to demonstrate in the way we live that sin is no longer in charge of us—God is.



1 What should we say then? Should we **continue in sin** **A** so that grace may multiply? **2** Absolutely not! How can we who **died to sin** **B** still live in it? **3** Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death**? **C** **4** Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection. **6** For we know that our **old self** **D** was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be **enslaved** **E** to sin, **7** since a person who has died is freed from sin. **8** Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him, **9** because we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, **will not die again**. **F** Death no longer rules over him. **10** For the death he died, he died to sin **once for all time**; **G** but the life he lives, he lives to God. **11** So, you too **consider** **H** yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. **13** And do not offer any parts of it to sin as **weapons for unrighteousness**. **I** But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. **14** For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace.

A. Ongoing, willful sin. Some argued for more sin as a way to experience more of God's grace.

B. Not the elimination of sin, but a resistance to temptation. Sin no longer controls believers.

C. Baptism symbolizes one's death to sin in Christ and resurrection to new life in Him (v. 4).

D. Before Christ, believers were dominated by sin and rebelling against God.

E. Slaves have no option beyond serving their masters. Believers have been released from the bondage of sin and are free to serve Christ as their new Master (see v. 7).

F. Others have been raised from the dead, only to die again. Jesus, though, destroyed the power of death and will never die again.

G. Jesus's sacrifice on the cross was final. His death is the sufficient payment for our sin. Nothing more is required to make salvation possible.

H. An accounting term in Greek, Paul used it to emphasize a transformed mindset that recalculates the position of sin in one's life.

I. The Greek word typically relates to tools or implements used to fight a battle. See also 2 Corinthians 6:7; 10:4.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Dead to Sin

(Rom. 6:1-7)

Believers need to understand that they live in union with Christ and act accordingly.

- **Why shouldn't believers continue living in sin if sin multiplies God's grace?**

2. Alive in Christ

(Rom. 6:8-11)

Believers are to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

- **What does it mean to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God? What does this look like practically in your life?**
- **How does the resurrection of Jesus give you confidence in your daily struggle with sin?**

3. Instruments of Righteousness

(Rom. 6:12-14)

Believers are to offer themselves to God for the accomplishment of His righteous purposes.

- **How can a person keep from obeying sin and its desires? How can a person avoid allowing sin to become his or her master?**

Apply the Text

- **How does baptism symbolize your new life in Christ? How does recalling your baptism encourage you to remain focused on devoting yourself to God?**

KEY DOCTRINE: Baptism

Baptism is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. (See Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42.)

BIBLE SKILL: Create a compare/contrast chart.

On one side of a vertical line, identify words and phrases that describe life that is lived with sin as the monarch or ruling authority. On the other side, note words and phrases that describe life that is lived with God as the monarch or ruling authority. Use the first 6 chapters of Romans that we've covered so far to inform the list that you make:

Sin as the Monarch	God as the Monarch
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TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 6:11. Discuss the difference between knowing something is true and living like it's true.

Paul began Romans 6 by asking a rhetorical question: If we're saved by grace, does that mean we can just keep on sinning so that grace can be demonstrated more? His answer was an emphatic no. He explained that when we come to Christ, we die to sin and are raised to live a new kind of life. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, sin and death no longer have power over us. Therefore, Paul said we are to think about ourselves this way—dead to sin but alive to God in Christ.

Why do you think Paul focused on how believers should think before he talked about how they should act?

This verse challenges us to consider how our new identity in Christ influences our daily lives. If we are dead to sin and alive to God, our choices, habits, and attitudes should reflect that truth. This isn't about achieving perfection, but about the direction of our lives. We are learning to live from who we are in Christ now, not from who we used to be.

Discuss how considering yourself “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ” changes the way you face temptation.

Agree to text Romans 6:11 to each other throughout the week.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 6:1-2

Compare Romans 6:1 to 5:20.

At the end of chapter 5, Paul affirmed that God's grace multiplied in response to multiplied sin. Once Paul made the affirmation, he immediately raised a probing question about it. If believers wanted God's grace to be multiplied, should they sin more? Growing disciples would have asked the question innocently and honestly. However, enemies of the gospel would have asked the question in an effort to deceive people who had placed their faith in Christ.

Paul's terse answer to the question keeps us from pondering it for even one second: "Absolutely not!" Paul used the phrase translated *absolutely not* ten times in Romans (3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11). Each time it was to distinguish orthodox teaching from heresy. The reason for such a stern response here drives home the truth about the reign of sin in a believer's life. When we gave our lives to Christ, we died to a way of life controlled by sin. We renounced the rule of sin over us. This powerful truth answers Paul's question about sin and grace. No one who claims the power of the gospel should intentionally go looking for chances to sin.

Why shouldn't you continue living in sin if sin multiplies God's grace?



Day 2: Romans 6:3-7

Reflect on the meaning of baptism.

Baptism serves as a reminder of our liberation from sin. For that important reason, we should not lose sight of what being baptized means. Baptism symbolizes Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection. It also represents the believer's own death and burial to sin and his resurrection to a new life in Christ. Baptism is a picture that we have been changed by Jesus to walk in "newness of life." Thus, baptism signifies a change in lifestyle. We now embrace a new way of living.

We didn't just receive forgiveness of our sins. We also received a new power to live differently. Baptism serves as a tangible reminder that the Christian life involves both dying and living. Our "old self was crucified" with Christ on the cross and His death freed us to live under a new Master.

Paul emphasized his point about newness of life with the picture of slavery. Slaves to sin live under its control. Sin has a firm grip on their thoughts, words, and actions. Slaves to sin do not have the ability within themselves to be liberated from sin's tyranny over them. Liberty from the reign of sin takes place only when a person turns to Christ by faith. Jesus has "rendered powerless" the rule of sin over anyone who puts their trust in Him. He sets them free from the rule of sin.

How would you explain the meaning of baptism to someone who doesn't understand it?



Day 3: Romans 6:8-9

Circle the words “we believe” and “we know.”

Paul used repetition to reinforce the truth that following Christ means identifying with His death. Jesus’s death was only one part of the story. His crucifixion reflects our death to sin, but His resurrection means life for us. Because “we died with Christ,” we will also “live with him.”

Because of Jesus’s resurrection, we are free from the power of sin. We are both justified—declared righteous—and sanctified—set apart for God’s purposes. We live in the power and presence of Jesus each day.

Paul placed our hope in the certainty of Jesus’s resurrection. He said “we know” that Christ has risen from the dead. Our assurance is not drawn from mere speculation or wishful thinking. Neither is it based on anything we have done. Instead, we know with certainty that His resurrection is the foundation for our assurance of eternal life.

We also know that His resurrection was unique in the sense that He would not die again. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but Lazarus would die again (John 11:38-44). He raised the widow of Nain’s child and the centurion’s daughter (Luke 7:11-15; 8:49-55), but they would die again. Jesus would never die again, and those incorporated into His resurrection will not die spiritually again.

What does Jesus’s death and resurrection mean for you?



Day 4: Romans 6:10-11

Underline the phrases “dead to sin” and “alive to God.”

Paul affirmed that Christ died to sin “once for all time.” In the first part of verse 10, Paul emphasized the finality of Christ’s sacrifice. In the second half of verse 10, he emphasized the ongoing result. Jesus voluntarily experienced death to break sin’s dominion. But this one-time event opened a way of life to all who would trust in Him.

In verse 11, Paul focused on the responsibility of believers to “consider” themselves “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” The word *consider* came from the world of accounting. It could be translated as “count, credit, or think.” It carries the challenge to accept God’s words as true. We have died to sin, and we are alive to God in Christ Jesus. We must consider that truth as reality and live in it. Going through the motions, pretending to be dead to sin, isn’t enough. We should consider that it is a reality granted by the cross. With sin no longer our master, we should devote our loyalty to our new Master: Christ Jesus.

What does it mean to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God?

What does this look like practically in your life?



Day 5: Romans 6:12-14

Compare Romans 6:12-13 to 12:1-2.

Sin dominates and enslaves those who live under its authority. But everything changes in Christ. The phrase “do not let sin reign” is a command. Not letting sin reign over us involves an exercise of the will. As believers, we have a responsibility to declare war on sin in our lives.

Paul used the language of warfare. Before we came to Christ, our mortal bodies were “weapons for unrighteousness.” The enemy used us in his battle against God. But now, we “offer” ourselves to God as “weapons for righteousness.” The word *offer* points to the Old Testament sacrificial system and worship. We offer ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2). When we yield to God, we become weapons for His righteous purposes.

Verse 14 contains a promise, which ends this section: “sin will not rule” over believers. Because sin no longer rules over us, we no longer need to worry about satisfying the demands of the law—or being condemned by it. We live under grace. Under grace, the penalty of death was satisfied in the death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus offered Himself freely on the cross so that we might now freely offer ourselves to God.

How can you avoid allowing sin to rule you?

APPLY THE TEXT

Take a look at your personal walk with Christ. How do you exhibit your new life in Him with your thoughts, words, attitudes, and actions? Where does God’s grace fit into your life as you try to devote yourself to Him each day?

JOURNAL



SESSION 6

Struggle

ROMANS 7:4-6, 14-25

BECAUSE SIN REMAINS A POWERFUL FORCE, BELIEVERS SHOULD NOT
BE SURPRISED WHEN DOING RIGHT IS A STRUGGLE.



Everyone loves a good rescue story. Some rescue stories are dramatic, like the firefighter who pulls an elderly couple out of a bedroom window just before their house collapses in flames. Others are less dramatic but no less inspiring, like the teacher who stays after school to tutor students who are struggling in class. However, nothing compares to the way God rescued us through Jesus.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE “RESCUE” STORY? WHO COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU ARE ASKED TO NAME THE FIRST PERSON WHO EVER RESCUED YOU?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul returned to the question of whether Christians should continue to sin because they are under grace rather than the law (Rom. 6:15). Did grace give license to sin? Again, Paul strongly objected, “Absolutely not!” (see also 6:1-2).

The apostle used two illustrations to show the power of grace to battle sin rather than submit to it. First, he explained that everyone is a servant—either to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness. Believers, freed from sin through Christ, now serve God, resulting in holiness and eternal life. Paul concluded that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus” (6:16-23).

Second, Paul used an illustration from marriage to show that believers are released from the law’s authority through Christ’s death. Just as death ends a marriage covenant, Christ’s death frees us from the law so we can belong to Him and bear fruit for God (7:1-6).

Paul clarified that the law itself is not sinful; rather, it reveals sin. The law exposes human inability to keep it perfectly, and sin uses the law to produce death in us. The law shows our need for grace (7:7-13).

However, just because believers are set free from sin’s power and are dead to sin, it doesn’t mean that they no longer struggle with sin. In Romans 7:14-25, Paul described the inner struggle of desiring to do good but being pulled by sin. This tension shows human weakness and dependence on Christ. Paul ended with gratitude: deliverance comes through Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus is our Rescuer.



4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ so that you may **belong to another**. **A** You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may **bear fruit** **B** for God. **5** For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused through the law were working in us to bear fruit for death. **6** But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in **the newness of the Spirit** **C** and not in the old letter of the law. [. . .] **14** For we know that the law is **spiritual**, **D** but I am of the flesh, sold as a slave under sin. **15** For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but **I do what I hate**. **E** **16** Now if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. **17** So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. **18** For I know that **nothing good lives in me**, **F** that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. **19** For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. **20** Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one that does it, but it is the sin that lives in me. **21** So I discover this law: When I want to do what is good, evil is present with me. **22** For in my inner self I delight in God's law, **23** but I see a different law in the parts of my body, **waging war** **G** against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body. **24** What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? **25 Thanks be to God** **H** through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am serving the law of God, but with my flesh, the law of sin.

A. Through Christ's death, believers are no longer bound to the law. Instead, they belong to Jesus, serving Him as Master and Lord.

B. Jesus emphasized the importance of bearing fruit as a sign of one's true relationship with Him (see John 15:1-7).

C. The transformed life empowered by God's Spirit, in contrast to the futile efforts of trying to obey the "old letter of the law."

D. Rather than diminishing the Mosaic law, Paul affirmed that it had served a proper purpose in salvation history.

E. Despite dying to sin, believers still struggle with an internal tug-of-war between sinful desires and devotion to God. In some cases, they fall into the very sins they want to reject.

F. Paul admitted that he had no power on his own to effect spiritual transformation in his life. He wanted to do right, but had no ability to follow through on his good intentions. He expounded on this dilemma in verses 19-21.

G. Believers wrestle with an inner conflict between our redeemed minds and the sinful tendencies still present in our bodies.

H. Despite his personal limitations, Paul praised God for providing Jesus as the answer to his spiritual struggles.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Freed

(Rom. 7:4-6)

Believers bear fruit for God when they live in the Spirit of God.

- **What did Paul say about the law in these verses?**
- **What practical difference should it make that a believer belongs to Christ? In what ways does it change your identity and purpose?**

2. Conflicted

(Rom. 7:14-23)

Believers need to recognize that the struggle with sin is real, and they need help.

- **How does recognizing sin's presence in you change the way you depend on God?**

3. Hope

(Rom. 7:24-25)

Believers can express gratitude to God that they do not have to battle sin in their own power, but that Christ provides the victory.

- **In light of the difficulty in battling sin, what keeps us from despair and hopelessness?**
- **In what ways can you live more consciously in the freedom Christ provides?**

Apply the Text

Discuss with others in the Bible study group a believer's conflict over sin.

- **What approach do they take in dealing with it? How does the conflict make them more productive and grateful believers?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Sanctification

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. (See Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Summarize the argument.

Read through the entirety of Romans 6:15-7:25 to summarize the argument Paul made regarding the ongoing effects of sin. First, make an outline of the argument. Second, write a one-sentence summary of this argument. Consider how sin effects a believer's life and the significance of dying to sin. Respond to these questions: How does this argument encourage you? Does it discourage you in any way?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 7:4. What relationships do you have that shape the way you live or make decisions?

In the previous chapter, Paul explained that believers have died to sin (Rom. 6:2). Because we have died to sin, our lives bear the fruit of sanctification (6:22). Chapter 7 deals with similar themes. Paul explained that we have died to the law and now belong to Christ. The new life we have in the Spirit results in the fruit of a righteous life (7:4).

Why is it significant that Paul says believers “belong to another” (Christ), rather than simply saying they follow new rules?

Since believers have died to the law, obedience to God is no longer driven by external rules but by a relationship with Christ. When we attempt to live the Christian life through self effort or rule keeping alone, frustration will follow. But belonging to Christ changes everything. Our lives are shaped by His presence, and obedience becomes the result of walking in step with the Spirit. Romans 7:4 calls us to stop measuring faithfulness merely by compliance and instead evaluate whether our lives are producing spiritual fruit that reflects our relationship with Jesus.

Discuss the practical steps you can take to live more intentionally out of your relationship with Christ rather than out of obligation.

Memorize Romans 7:4, considering how your life reflects your union with Jesus.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 7:4-6

Highlight the phrase “you belong to him” (v. 4).

Paul wanted believers to know they now belonged to Christ. Because of Jesus’s death, we have died to the law with Him. Likewise, because He rose from the dead, so do we when we place our faith in Him. Paul looked back to the time when we lived “in the flesh.” Instead of living to please God, we lived under the control of sinful passions. When we gave in to those passions, we sinned against God. As sin aroused our passions, we sinned even more. Our passions kept on working in us like seeds planted in the soil. The seeds became sprouts that kept on growing stronger. Eventually, the sprouts became plants that produced “fruit for death.” In other words, the law, which meant to show us the righteous commandments of God, instead became an instrument that led to sin. The law provoked our old nature to sin, which led to death.

But we have been “released from the law” and “have died to what held us.” The law held us captive because we could not meet its demands. The old letter of the law told us what to do but did not create true spirituality. What we needed was to serve in the “newness of the Spirit.” The law told us how to live, but we were unable to live that way. In Christ, we have both the desire to obey and the power for obedience.

What practical difference does it make that you belong to Christ?



Day 2: Romans 7:14-17

Compare these verses to Galatians 5:17.

In verses 7-13, Paul explained that the law itself is not sinful; rather, it reveals sin. Without the law, we would not recognize sin. In verses 14-16, Paul explained that the problem was not with the law but with human nature—“the flesh.” As evidence, he pointed to the ongoing battle with sin in his own life. At times he did what he knew to be wrong and failed to do what he knew to be right. Paul was giving his own testimony regarding the conflict with sin that continued to trouble him.

As Paul testified about his struggle, he acknowledged the truth about the law. He confessed that when he gave himself to sinful behavior, he did not want to do it at all. The spiritual conviction that tore at his heart because of his sinful behavior validated the purpose of the law. Paul noted that the law cast a bright light on sin. For that reason, he saw the law as altogether good.

As believers, we still battle the power of sin even though Jesus has set us free from it. This ongoing battle will not be settled until Jesus returns (1 John 3:2).

Where do you recognize in you the same conflict Paul described?

How can recognizing this ongoing conflict lead you to greater dependence on God?



Day 3: Romans 7:18-23

Consider the extent to which you can echo Paul's words, "I delight in God's law."

Paul had "the desire to do what is good." This desire comes from the Holy Spirit. However, there was no "ability" to do good. He struggled to "do the good" he wanted to do, doing instead "the evil" he did "not want to do." Paul was acknowledging that sin is still a formidable enemy, even after salvation. Death to sin does not remove its allure. Rather, it creates an uncomfortable tension in a believer's life.

Paul experienced sheer delight at the thought of devoting himself to honoring God's law with his life. But much to his disappointment, he observed that a "different law" had an extremely powerful influence over the various parts of his body. This new law constantly is "waging war" against God's way and works to make a believer a "prisoner to the law of sin." Though sin may not rule over believers any longer, we still can yield the "parts of our body" to evil, including our minds, hands, mouths, ears, and eyes—just to name a few. The opposing laws waged war with each other, and Paul's life became the battlefield.

How does recognizing sin's presence in you change the way you depend on God?



Day 4: Romans 7:24

Reflect on how much you long to be delivered from the power of sin.

Like Paul, we agonize over our inner conflict. We're conflicted in that we don't do what we want to do, and we do what we don't want to do in our relationship with God. The frustration over the endless battle within ourselves because of the inner conflict compels us to echo his one-word description of himself: "wretched." The word suits us well because it underscores the misery we feel in our hearts because we're disgusted with ourselves. But at the same time, we can't seem to do anything about changing our behavior because we simply lack the personal strength to do it.

For that reason, we join Paul in determining that we need help. As we consider his assessment of the help we need, we affirm that we need more than good advice from a person who understands our conflict. Good advice alone will not solve our problem. Like Paul, we need someone to rescue us from our struggle. Paul's statement about "this body of death" hits home with us. We have died to the reign of sin over us. However, we're frustrated with the way sin's corpse keeps hanging on to us. Sin still wants to control our lives and prevent us from experiencing spiritual joy in our walk with God. We long to be rescued.

What does Paul's question about who will rescue him reveal about where deliverance comes from—and where it does not come from?



Day 5: Romans 7:25

Consider what Paul expressed gratitude for.

Paul concluded this section with gratitude to God. We can express our thanks to Him because He sent Christ Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sin. When we turn to Him by faith, we experience God's grace. We thank Him wholeheartedly for His grace in setting us free from the tyranny of sin. Now Christ Jesus reigns supremely as our Lord. For that reason, our hope centers in Him alone. Because of our hope in Him, we rejoice in the certainty that He hears our cry for help by rescuing us.

We know from experience that some conflicts can be resolved. In those cases, the intense struggle between two opposing forces, ideas, or people can be replaced with peace. However, some conflicts in our lives will never be resolved. Instead, they can be managed, but the struggle involving them will never end. In those cases, life will go on, and the conflict will continue to be a part of it. Like Paul, we trust Christ to help us as we manage the inner conflict with sin. Our minds will continue to serve "the law of God." However, our flesh will keep on nudging us to obey "the law of sin."

Give thanks to God for delivering you through Christ, even though the struggle continues. Pray that you would rely on His grace rather trying to overcome sin by your own efforts.

APPLY THE TEXT

When did you recognize that sin would always present a problem for you? How do you show your gratitude to God for helping you to be victorious through Christ?

JOURNAL



SESSION 7

Indwelt

ROMANS 8:14-27

THOSE WHO TRUST JESUS ARE INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
WHEN THEY ARE ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD.



A happy family always makes space for everyone. During holiday gatherings, the house might feel packed, but no one worries about being left out at bedtime. Beds fill up fast, and cozy spots on the floor become welcoming places to sleep. Come breakfast, there's plenty for all—because the kitchen never runs out of pancakes.

*WHEN YOU PICTURE A HAPPY FAMILY, WHOSE FAMILY DO YOU THINK OF?
HOW DOES BEING A PART OF GOD'S FAMILY SHAPE YOUR SENSE OF BELONGING?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In chapters 1–4, Paul addressed the universal sinfulness of humanity. In chapters 5–6, he shifted to emphasize Jesus's work in providing salvation for sinners. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus opened the way to a new life. Those who die to sin through Him are raised to walk in a transformed life. Yet, overcoming sin is not as simple as flipping a switch. In chapter 7, Paul lamented his struggle—how easily he did what he should not and failed to do what he should. In anguish, he cried out for deliverance, then answered with a triumphant declaration, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:25).

This victory cry leads into Romans 8, where Paul explained how the Holy Spirit enables believers to live a victorious Christian life. He began by contrasting life under the law with life in the Spirit (8:1-11). The law exposes sin in the flesh, but the indwelling Spirit empowers believers to live out their new life in Christ.

In verses 12-17, Paul used the image of adoption to highlight the believer's secure

relationship with God. Living by the Spirit rather than the flesh proves that one is truly God's child—a relationship marked by intimacy and guaranteed inheritance. Those who belong to God by faith are “heirs of God and coheirs with Christ” (8:17).

Paul then focused on freedom in the Spirit (8:18-30). Believers receive the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits of their adoption into God's family. Through the Spirit's presence, Christians live with hope, anticipating the full redemption at Christ's return. Positionally, believers already belong to God's redeemed family, even as they battle the flesh in this life. Practically, the Spirit empowers them to resist sin and live according to God's will.

In 8:31-39, Paul returned to the theme of freedom from condemnation. Because Jesus paid the penalty for sin, believers stand before God without accusation. God's love in Christ guarantees that nothing can separate us from Him. Since Jesus died and was raised for our justification, we can live now with confidence in His love and life.



14 For all those **led by God's Spirit**^A are God's sons. **15** For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the **Spirit of adoption**,^B by whom we cry out, "**Abba**,^C Father!" **16** The Spirit himself **testifies together**^D with our spirit that we are God's children, **17** and if children, also **heirs**^E—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. **18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. **19** For the **creation eagerly waits**^F with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. **20** For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of him who subjected it—in the hope **21** that the creation itself will also be set free from the **bondage to decay**^G into the glorious freedom of God's children. **22** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with **labor pains**^H until now. **23** Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. **24** Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? **25** Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience. **26** In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but **the Spirit himself intercedes**^I for us with inexpressible groanings. **27** And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

A. Following the Spirit's guidance. This is an indication of a genuine relationship with Christ.

B. Rather than slaves, God adopts believers into His family. Through the Spirit, they enjoy the full rights of sons and daughters.

C. An Aramaic term that reflects an intimate cry to God, showing a close, trusting relationship like a child with a loving parent.

D. The Holy Spirit confirms that believers are true children of the Father.

E. As God's children, Christ followers share fully in the inheritance of the Son. Ultimately, this includes eternal life in the glory of God.

F. Like us, the created order suffers the effects of sin. But when God frees His children, creation also will be freed from the impact of sin.

G. Jesus will reverse the curse of Genesis 3. The broken state of sin will be replaced by freedom.

H. Just as a woman's pain in labor is not without hope, our groaning in the present age points us to eternity and our ultimate redemption (see v. 23).

I. The Holy Spirit prays for believers. His prayers are effective because they align with the will of the Father.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Relationship

(Rom. 8:14-17)

Believers can confidently approach God as Father.

- **According to these verses, what are some key differences between a believer and an unbeliever?**
- **How does calling God “Abba, Father” impact your understanding of prayer and intimacy with Him?**

2. Hope

(Rom. 8:18-25)

The indwelling of the Spirit and the promise of what is yet to come motivates believers to live with hope.

- **How does the hope expressed in these verses help you in times of adversity?**

3. Help

(Rom. 8:26-27)

Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit is interceding to the Father for them.

- **When was the last time you didn’t know what to pray? What practical difference does it make knowing that the Holy Spirit intercedes for you?**
- **How does knowing that God understands both your heart and the Spirit’s intercession give you peace?**

Apply the Text

- **What difference should it make in your daily life to know you belong to God’s family? Specifically, how should it affect the way you relate to others this week?**
- **What practical step can you take to rely more fully on the Spirit rather than your own strength?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. (See 2 Corinthians 4:17; Revelation 21:1.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about the Holy Spirit.

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit. Reflect on these questions: How did the Holy Spirit’s work differ in the Old and New Testaments? What kind of work does the Holy Spirit do in the life of a believer in the New Testament? Note any findings about the Holy Spirit that were new for you.



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter’s Bible passages.



TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 8:15. Recall a time when knowing you belonged made a meaningful difference in how you felt or acted.

Paul contrasted two identities: living as a slave, driven by fear and insecurity, and living as a child who belongs to God. He explained that life in Christ is not marked by fear or spiritual slavery, but by adoption into God's family through the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit assures us of our new identity and freedom in Christ.

What does the word “adoption” suggest about belonging and identity in God’s family?

Spiritual adoption means more than forgiveness—it means belonging. We are not merely rescued from sin; we are welcomed into God’s family with full rights and privileges. Knowing we are God’s children helps us move from fear to confidence in our relationship with God. We obey God not out of fear, but out of love and security. The Spirit’s work is to continually remind us who we are and to whom we belong.

How should understanding our shared adoption into God's family shape the way we relate to other believers?

Read Romans 8:15 in different Bible translations, then put the verse into your own words.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 8:14-15

Note the contrast between the spirit of fear and the Spirit of adoption.

The blessings of salvation include the indwelling of God's Spirit. Paul reminded the Romans that believers are led by God's Spirit. We are not free to live as we please. We follow the Spirit's direction and guidance. Following the Spirit is not simply a matter of obedience. It is also a matter of identification. We know we are "God's sons" because we walk with the Spirit.

Paul contrasted the difference between two spirits. A "spirit of slavery" is marked by the fear of being punished. In contrast, "the Spirit of adoption" does not deal in fear. The Holy Spirit assures believers that God has adopted them into His family. The difference between a slave and a child was significant.

The word *Abba* is a term of endearment similar to "daddy" in English. It is the language of a child running into the arms of a loving father. We once ran from Him in fear and guilt. Now we run to Him with the assurance that we are His children.

Paul wanted the Roman believers to grasp the depth of what it means to be God's children. They were invited to relate to Him as their "Abba, Father." Just as Jesus approached God with intimate confidence, believers—adopted into His family—have every right to cry out with the same closeness: "Abba, Father" (Mark 14:36)!

Where do you notice fear shaping your actions?



Day 2: Romans 8:16-17

Reflect on the implications of being an heir of God.

Paul taught that the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence works alongside our own spirit to affirm "that we are God's children." At times, believers who falter may wrestle with doubts about their salvation. In those moments, the Spirit serves as a decisive witness to their place in God's family. Though the enemy may try to plant seeds of doubt, the Spirit's confirmation settles the matter. Fear is removed, and the truth stands firm: this believer belongs to God.

Paul noted that we are "heirs of God" and "coheirs with Christ." As members of God's family, we have access to all of God's riches. Paul was not proclaiming a prosperity gospel here—he was stating that God's resources are enough to meet our every need.

Paul also reminded the Romans that being coheirs with Christ can involve suffering with Him in this life. This statement echoes Jesus's warning to His disciples that they could expect to experience suffering because of the gospel—just as Jesus did (see John 15:18-21). However, if we suffer with Christ on account of our faith, we can be sure that we will ultimately be "glorified with him." Any struggles in this life cannot compare to the blessings of eternity.

How does being an "heir of God" change how you view your present circumstances?



Day 3: Romans 8:18-22

Pay attention to the contrast between the temporal and the eternal.

When Paul wrote of “the sufferings of this present time,” he was drawing from his own experience. He had endured ridicule, beatings, imprisonment, and even a near-death encounter. Paul faced hardships most of us can hardly imagine, yet he called them “light affliction” (2 Cor. 4:17). He refused to focus on suffering—his eyes were fixed on the glory that awaited him. Paul knew his trials for the sake of the gospel were nothing compared to the glory that will one day be revealed.

As God’s children, we share that same hope. We look forward to the glory to come—and creation longs for it too. A day is coming when Christ will restore all things in a new heaven and new earth. Using vivid personification, Paul pictured creation straining with anticipation for that moment. Just as sin corrupted the entire universe, Christ’s return will bring complete renewal. God will recreate everything according to His original design, and creation’s beauty will reflect His purity and glorify Him.

Paul emphasized that creation lives in hope. Redemption extends beyond humanity. As believers are freed from corruption through Christ, so creation will be liberated from decay. To illustrate, Paul used the image of childbirth. Creation groans under the weight of sin like a woman in labor, longing for delivery. These “labor pains” signal that renewal is near. When the time of suffering ends, creation will be reborn—restored to its intended glory.

Where do you see evidence of creation “groaning”?



Day 4: Romans 8:23-25

Underline each occurrence of the word “hope” in these verses.

Until that day when God restores His creation, believers can depend on the Holy Spirit to produce “firstfruits.” This word picture depicts a bountiful harvest of fruit. It points to the beginning of a relationship with God that will be fulfilled completely one day. That’s when believers will experience the complete joy of their “adoption” and the “redemption” of their bodies.

This inspiring picture of hope encourages us. Our hope came alive when He saved us. Our salvation includes the adventure of growing from spiritual infancy to maturity in our walk with Him. Along the way, our hope matures as well. We can agree with Paul that our hope prompts us to look forward to what awaits us. Our hope in Him will not allow us to be satisfied only with what we can see and experience right now. Granted, we have been given a few glimpses of what will happen one day yet to come, but not the complete picture. We’re eager as we wait to see what awaits us then. But we also have patience because our hope settles us.

How does the hope expressed in these verses help you in times of adversity?



Day 5: Romans 8:26-27

Note the ways the Holy Spirit helps us.

Paul emphasized that the Holy Spirit works to strengthen our hope in Christ. Put simply, the Spirit “helps us.” As we anticipate the day that is still to come, we hold fast to the truth of our eternal inheritance as God’s children. The blessings awaiting us are beyond anything we can imagine. Yet we can be confident of that inheritance because the Holy Spirit lives within us. His presence now is the guarantee—the down payment—of what is to come.

We can be especially thankful for His help in “our weakness.” Weakness often shows up as confusion or uncertainty that leads to frustration. In those times, even knowing “what to pray for” can feel overwhelming. The Spirit intercedes for us when words fail. He carries our burdens to God when we cannot express them ourselves.

The Spirit “intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” Ultimately, God’s will is what matters most. As believers, we can find hope in knowing that God’s will is accomplished in our lives—even when we are weak and unsure how to pray. This is the context of the promise in Romans 8:28: “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” God may not always answer our prayers in the way we expect, but He answers according to His perfect will, which is always for our good.

How are you most aware of your weakness right now?

In what ways does knowing the Spirit assists you in your weakness reshape how you pray?

APPLY THE TEXT

What effect does your personal relationship with God as your Father have on the durability of your hope? How much do you depend on the Holy Spirit to help you when you pray?

JOURNAL



SESSION 8

Believe

ROMANS 9:30–10:3, 9-17

EVERYONE WHO CONFESSES AND BELIEVES IN JESUS WILL BE SAVED.



When people hear about someone making a confession, their thoughts may go to the criminal justice system. Thinking that way wouldn't be a mistake. When a person confesses to a crime, it usually means that the law has been broken and justice will be served. In the legal system, confession confirms guilt and results in punishment. But in the gospel, confession of Jesus acknowledges our need for Him and leads to freedom and salvation.

*WHAT'S THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CONFESSING TO A CRIME
AND BELIEVING THAT YOU BROKE THE LAW?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul exposed his heart for the Jews as he wrote to the church in Rome. He recounted how God had blessed them throughout their history as His people. God had embraced them as His people, given them His law, graced them with His presence, and fulfilled His promise to them regarding Jesus Christ.

In the face of Israel's rejection of Christ, Paul insisted that God had not failed them. God's relationship with them across the centuries underscored His sovereign wisdom. Paul touched on an assortment of ways in which God worked with His people in keeping with His eternal purpose. God's actions reveal that He made decisions about them that would glorify Himself. Accordingly, nobody had the authority to question His wisdom any more than a lump of clay had the right to doubt the potter.

In keeping with His eternal plan, God included Gentiles as well as Jews. Unlike the Jews, Gentiles did not have the Mosaic law to guide them. They lived in spiritual darkness. However, when some of them

heard the good news of Christ, they gave their lives to Him by faith. Meanwhile, Jews stumbled over Christ like runners who tripped over a stone on their path.

Paul went on to assert that Jesus alone provides the way to salvation. Anyone who believes in Him and confesses Him as Lord would be saved. Likewise, everyone who receives the gift of salvation through Him will never be ashamed of entrusting their lives to Him.

Paul asserted that Jewish people could not say that God had not given them the opportunity to hear the message of salvation. He cited three Old Testament passages to support it. He referred to Psalm 19:4 as he underscored the truth regarding the proclamation of God's Word. Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1 confirmed that they had an awareness of God's ways with them. Even so, they refused to obey Him.



9:30 What should we say then? Gentiles, who **did not pursue righteousness**, **A** have obtained righteousness—namely the righteousness that comes from faith. **31** But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not achieved the righteousness of the law. **32** Why is that? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the **stumbling stone**. **B** **33** As it is written, Look, I am putting a stone in Zion to stumble over and a rock to trip over, and the one who believes on him will **not be put to shame**. **C** **10:1** Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation. **2** I can testify about them that they have **zeal** **D** for God, but not according to knowledge. **3** Since they are **ignorant** **E** of the righteousness of God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to God’s righteousness. [. . .] **9** If you **confess with your mouth**, **F** “Jesus is Lord,” and **believe in your heart** **G** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. **11** For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame, **12** since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. **13** For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. **14** How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? **15** And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. **16** But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? **17** So **faith comes from what is heard**, **H** and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

A. Gentiles did not keep the law. They received God’s favor by faith. In contrast, the Jews could never find righteousness in the law.

B. Literally an obstacle that causes one to trip. For many Jews, Jesus was a stumbling block to earning God’s favor through the law of Moses.

C. Paul referred to Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 to show that God sent Jesus as Messiah to remove Israel’s shame and turn the nation back to Him.

D. The Israelites were passionate about God, but their passion was misguided.

E. Not an intellectual ignorance. Rather, the Jews lacked a proper understanding of God’s plan for salvation. As a result, they blindly pursued their own path to Him through the law.

F. The Greek word translated “confess” means to “speak the same” or “agree.” It aligns the speaker with the reality that Jesus is Lord. This suggests a submission to God’s plan for salvation over any human plan.

G. Faith in the finished work of Jesus. Confession and faith work together to bring individuals into a personal relationship with God through Christ.

H. Saving faith becomes active when one hears and accepts the gospel. The content of the gospel is the “message about Christ.”

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Righteousness through Faith

(Rom. 9:30-33)

All people need to understand that true righteousness comes through faith not by works.

- **Why might people stumble over the message of the gospel?**

2. Misguided Zeal

(Rom. 10:1-3)

Believers can follow Paul's example by praying for the salvation of lost people.

- **How did Paul's love for the Jews lead him to respond to their needs**
- **Whose salvation are you continually praying for?**

3. Salvation Available to All

(Rom. 10:9-13)

Any person who has not yet believed and confessed Jesus can do so and be saved.

- **What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord?**

4. Go Tell

(Rom. 10:14-17)

Believers must tell others the gospel message and send missionaries throughout the entire world.

- **What hinders people from calling on Jesus for salvation? What role do believers play in removing these hindrances?**

Apply the Text

Spend time with your Bible study group sharing accounts of your most recent conversations about Jesus with lost people. Then have several members share their testimonies about how they gave their lives to Christ.

KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.
(See John 14:6; Acts 4:12.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use other Scripture to help understand another Bible passage.

Read Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14-41. List all the main points that you see in his sermon and compare it to what you find in Paul's teaching from Romans 9-10. Peter's message and Paul's writings make up what has been called Christianity's "kerygma," or the preaching of the apostles. Consider how you can share these truths with those around you. Evaluate your effectiveness in sharing the gospel with those in your sphere of influence.

TALK IT OUT

As you focus on Romans 10:9, identify the key words.

Salvation involves personal faith in Jesus and a public confession of Him. These are really two sides of the same coin. Paul emphasized the need to confess “Jesus is Lord.” This involves a public confession that Jesus really is who He said He was, the Son of God and Savior. To “confess” literally means to acknowledge or to agree. A person who confesses Jesus as Lord agrees with God about the divinity and reign of His Son. Paul also emphasized the need to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. The crucifixion and resurrection serve as the linchpins for the Christian faith. Paul declared that if Jesus was not raised from the tomb, then our faith as Christ followers is in vain (1 Cor. 15:17-19).

In what ways can confession be more than words—how might it be reflected in daily choices and attitudes?

Romans 10:9 teaches us to trust Jesus in our hearts and follow Him with our lives. When we believe He is alive and confess Him as Lord, our faith shows through daily obedience and trust.

What does following Jesus look like in your everyday life?

Place Romans 10:9 on your phones and memorize it together.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 9:30-33

Note the contrast between Gentiles and Jews in these verses.

Paul has explained in Romans that all people—Jews and Gentiles—have sinned against God and need salvation. There is one way of salvation for all people—through Christ. Here, Paul noted that Gentiles did not “pursue righteousness.” On the contrary, they wandered in spiritual darkness. But when they heard the good news about Jesus Christ, many Gentiles believed and placed their faith in Christ, receiving His gift of salvation.

The people of Israel chose a path that led them in a different direction. They pursued righteousness based on works. They thought that if they kept the law, they could earn righteousness. Consequently, they turned their backs on the gospel message that centered in Christ. They rejected Jesus and the way of salvation that He alone could provide. His life, death, burial, and resurrection served as the stone they stumbled over as they sought to achieve righteousness by way of the law.

In verse 33, Paul pointed to two Old Testament passages to make his point. In Isaiah 8:14, the Lord said that the Messiah would be a sanctuary for some, but for the house of Israel, He would be “a stone to stumble over and a rock to trip over, and a trap and a snare.” In Isaiah 28:16, the prophet noted that the Messiah would be a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation for the one who believes.

Summarize Paul’s point in these verses.



Day 2: Romans 10:1-3

Consider how these verses prompt you to pray.

Paul addressed the believers in Rome with sincere affection. Even though he had not yet visited the church, he affirmed their spiritual kinship as “brothers and sisters.” At the same time, he revealed his affection for the Jewish people. His heart had been broken for them, and he had a genuine desire to see them come to faith in Christ. Paul’s heavy burden over their lostness caused him to pray for their salvation.

Paul could testify to the difficulty Jews had in trusting Jesus for salvation. He knew they possessed a “zeal for God.” They tried to obey the requirements of the law to attain righteousness on their own. However, they lacked the spiritual knowledge necessary to grasp God’s intention regarding the law. It’s not that they lacked intelligence. Rather, they suffered from spiritual ignorance. They had been ignorant of the way God intended for them to be made righteous. They continued to work toward earning their own righteousness by keeping the law. They simply had not submitted to God’s way of being right with Him through faith in Christ.

Whose salvation are you continually praying for?



Day 3: Romans 10:9-13

Underline the words, “Jesus is Lord.”

God’s way of salvation involves confessing “Jesus is Lord.” Confession is an external sign of one’s acceptance of Him, but accepting Jesus goes beyond simple lip service. Faith demands that you “believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.” Salvation involves both believing and outwardly confessing.

While Paul emphasized that salvation is something that takes place in the heart, he also stressed the importance of the mouth. Ultimately, confession and belief are two sides of the same coin. When we confess, we express with our words what’s going on in our hearts.

Paul underscored the truth that the good news of salvation is for everyone. God did not intend for the gospel to be shared only with certain individuals. He wants every person to hear it. Those who place their faith in Jesus will never be ashamed of entrusting their lives to Him. The word shame can also mean “disappointed.” Everyone, both Jew and Gentile, can have confidence that God saves those who put their trust in Him.

In verse 13, Paul emphasized that everyone is welcome at the cross. Consequently, God does not want anyone to be excluded from the opportunity to hear the good news of salvation and to call on the name of the Lord Jesus to be saved.

How would you explain to someone what it means to confess Jesus as Lord?



Day 4: Romans 10:14-15

Pay attention to the chain of steps Paul built with his questions.

In light of the truth that the gospel is for all people, Paul raised four questions. Each question began with the same word: “how.” First, he asked how individuals would “call on” Christ to save them if they have not “believed in” him. Second, he wanted to know how people could believe in Jesus “without hearing” about Him. Third, how could they hear about Jesus “without a preacher”? He considered a preacher to be any believer who shares the gospel message.

The fourth question asks how they can preach “unless they are sent.” This fourth question points to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). Paul’s poignant question challenges us to support missionaries and other vocational ministers as they share the gospel. They’ve been called to proclaim the good news of Christ around the world. However, it also challenges all believers. We have been sent to share the gospel in our neighborhoods and around the corner. Paul’s reference to Isaiah 52:7 in verse 15 inspires us as we take to heart our call to make sure that others hear the gospel.

What do these verses suggest people need before they can call on the Lord?



Day 5: Romans 10:16-17

Reflect on the relationship between believing and obeying.

Everyone needs an opportunity to hear the gospel. However, not all people who hear the gospel will respond by receiving the gift of salvation. Paul said that not all will obey the gospel. He may have been thinking about Jewish people in his day. They rejected Christ and the gospel message that centered in Him. However, they couldn't say that the gospel had never been shared with them. Paul echoed Isaiah's assertion that the message of salvation had been presented to them, but they refused to believe it (Isa. 53:1).

Receiving the gift of salvation requires people to place their faith in Jesus. When individuals place their faith in Him, they will be saved. They cannot earn their salvation. Neither can they expect to be saved because they happen to have some sort of relationship with believers. Therefore, the challenge confronting believers is to make sure that others have the opportunity to hear the gospel. After people hear about Christ, they will be able to respond to what they have heard. Hearing the good news about Christ prompts them to place their faith in Him.

Who in your world needs you to share the good news of Christ with them?

APPLY THE TEXT

When did you place your faith in Jesus and receive His gift of salvation? What kind of difference does He make in your life right now?

JOURNAL



SESSION 9

Kindness

ROMANS 11:11-24

GOD'S PLAN FOR REDEMPTION INCLUDES ALL PEOPLE.



Who should be included on the invitation list? That question often puts event planners in a tough spot. They must determine how many invitations can be sent based on the event's purpose and the budget available. Ultimately, they're forced to wrestle with the difficult decision of who will receive an invitation and who will not. They would never simply declare that everyone is invited. Yet that's exactly what God does. His invitation is open to all.

*WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU RECEIVED AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION TO SOMETHING?
WHAT HAS GOD SHOWN YOU ABOUT HIS OPEN INVITATION TO EVERYONE?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Romans 11, Paul raised two crucial questions about Gentiles who had been saved. First, he asked if God had rejected the Jews. He answered the question by pointing to himself. He was a Jew who had been loyal to Judaism when he gave his life to Christ. Then Paul mentioned God's encounter with Elijah. Elijah considered himself to be the last standing Israelite. God assured the prophet there were other Israelites who were loyal to Him.

Second, he asked if the Jews had gone too far in their rejection of Christ. The answer to this question sheds light on the truth about God's grace. Paul used the image of a tree with grafted branches to exhibit God's grace to Jews and Gentiles. Jews who rejected Christ would be like branches that had been removed from the tree. When they turned to Christ by faith, they would be restored to Him. In that way, God's grace would be extended to believing Jews as well as believing Gentiles.

Paul stressed that God had not turned His back on Israel. His mercy toward the Jews would never be smothered. Quite the opposite, His abiding love for them would always fuel the fire of His mercy toward them. His love for them reached all the way back to the original Old Testament patriarchs who followed His leadership during the formative years of Israel's history. Consequently, God showed his mercy to Jews and Gentiles alike.

Explanation gave way to adoration as Paul continued to write about God and His relationship with His people. The apostle praised God for His priceless wisdom and awe-inspiring judgments. He also glorified God because His relationship with His people enriched them in ways they would never be able to comprehend completely.



11 I ask, then, have they **stumbled so as to fall?** **A** Absolutely not! On the contrary, by their transgression, **salvation has come to the Gentiles** **B** to make Israel jealous. **12** Now if their transgression brings riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will **their fullness** **C** bring! **13** Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Insofar as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, **14** if I might somehow make my own people jealous and save some of them. **15** For if their rejection brings reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? **16** Now if the **firstfruits** **D** are holy, so is the whole batch. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. **17** Now if some of the branches were broken off, and you, though a wild olive branch, **were grafted** **E** in among them and have come to share in the rich root of the cultivated olive tree, **18** do not boast that you are better than those branches. But if you do boast—you do not sustain the root, but the root sustains you. **19** Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” **20** True enough; they were broken off because of unbelief, but **you stand by faith.** **F** Do not be arrogant, but beware, **21** because if God **did not spare the natural branches,** **G** he will not spare you either. **22** Therefore, consider God’s kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen but God’s kindness toward you—if you remain in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. **23** And even they, if they do not remain in unbelief, will be grafted in, because God has the power to graft them in again. **24** For if you were cut off from your native wild olive tree and **against nature** **H** were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these—the natural branches—be grafted into their own olive tree?

A. Earlier, Paul told the Romans that Jesus and salvation by faith were stumbling blocks for the Jews (9:32). The logical question was, *Could they recover from this stumbling?*

B. The Jews’ rejection opened the door to salvation for the Gentiles. This would make Israel “jealous,” creating a spiritual longing that could move God’s people back toward Him.

C. Paul argued that while Israel’s rejection of the gospel brought blessings to the world, their eventual restoration would be even greater. (See v. 15.)

D. An offering taken from the initial reaping at harvest (see Num. 15:17-21). The holiness of the firstfruits (early Jewish believers) sanctified “the whole batch” (future Jewish believers).

E. When branches from one tree are joined to a different tree. Gentiles were like wild branches grafted into a cultivated olive tree, representing God’s family.

F. Gentiles were grafted only because they had faith in Christ.

G. God judged the Jews’ lack of faith, and He would do the same in regard to Gentiles (see v. 22).

H. Grafting is not a natural event. Likewise, God would move outside what might be considered normal to restore His people.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Rejection

(Rom. 11:11-16)

We can be assured that the gospel is for all people.

- **If God's plan of salvation embraces all peoples, what is one next step—prayer, conversation, hospitality, giving, or going—you will take to participate in that plan this week?**

2. Grafted

(Rom. 11:17-22)

As members of God's family, believers should embrace humility and resist spiritual pridefulness.

- **When might we feel boastful of our spiritual blessings? How can we turn from spiritual pride to genuine care?**

3. Restoration

(Rom. 11:23-24)

Believers can take comfort in knowing God has the power to save those who repent.

- **What do you learn about God's heart from His willingness to restore those who previously rejected Him? How might that influence the way you view people who have walked away from faith?**

Apply the Text

Share with your Bible study group how you will apply the truth that God intends for everyone to hear the gospel.

- **In what ways would a lack of humility prevent you from sharing the good news of Christ?**

KEY DOCTRINE: God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. (See Ephesians 1:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10.)

BIBLE SKILL: Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.

This session emphasizes a Christian's eternal security once he or she has accepted Christ as Savior. Paul's teaching refutes the idea that true believers are in jeopardy of losing their salvation. Read the following Bible passages and note what each one teaches about the security of the believer: Matthew 10:22; 24:13; John 5:24; 6:37; 10:27-28; Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:6; 1 John 2:19; 3:9; Jude 1:24-25.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 11:33. What is something that amazes—even though you don't fully understand how it works?

Earlier in this chapter, Paul explained how Israel's rejection of the gospel resulted in the gospel being shared with the Gentiles. The Gentiles did not replace the Jews in God's plan—unbelieving Jews can repent and be saved by faith in Christ. God's plan of redemption includes both groups. This led Paul to praise. He marveled at the depth of God's wisdom and stood in awe of God's ways—that are too deep for us to fully understand.

When God's ways feel too difficult to understand, do you find yourself trying to explain Him or learning to trust Him?

The appropriate response to God's plan of redemption in Christ is humility and awe. Paul has affirmed that salvation depends entirely on God's grace rather than human effort. As we consider His redemptive plan, we are reminded that God's ways are deeper than our understanding and cannot be reduced to simple explanations. Instead, they draw us into worship—calling us to trust Him, to rest in His wisdom, and to respond with praise.

What does it look like to move from trying to explain God's ways to simply trusting and worshiping Him?

Read Romans 11:33 in different Bible translations, then put the verse into your own words.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 11:11-12

Note the cause-and-effect relationships in these verses.

After answering the question about whether God had rejected the Jews, Paul went on to ask if they had gone too far in their rejection of God's gift of salvation through Christ. He answered the question decisively: "Absolutely not!" He acknowledged they had stumbled over Jesus instead of embracing Him. However, their transgression when they rejected Christ opened the door for the gospel to be shared with the Gentiles. When the Gentiles heard the message about salvation through Christ, they received Him. In turn, the Jews became jealous of them.

God transformed Israel's transgression into a blessing for the Gentiles, allowing them to experience the benefits that come with believing in Christ. The Gentiles brought spiritual richness to their lives. In this way, Israel's failure to turn to Christ opened the door for people across the world to come to Him by faith. From that point, Paul shifted his focus toward his hope for Israel's future. Although Israel's spiritual emptiness had not prevented others from being saved, he wondered what would happen when the Jewish people themselves embraced Christ and experienced the fullness of life found in Him.

What did Paul mean when he said Israel stumbled but did not fall?



Day 2: Romans 11:13-16

Compare these verses to Acts 9:15.

Paul's purpose in writing about the effectiveness of his ministry had nothing to do with selfish pride. He knew God alone deserved the credit for the victories in his missionary work. His interest in sharing the reports of salvation among the Gentiles centered in fostering jealousy among Jewish people. In their selfish pride, Jewish people had come to believe that God worked through them exclusively. Now they could see Him at work in the lives of others. Paul hoped their envy would give way to their surrender to Christ.

Paul pondered what would happen when the rejection of the Jewish people turned into their acceptance of Him. He compared it to something like resurrection. Their spiritual awakening would look like life that had been sparked from the dead.

The possibility of the Jews receiving Christ prompted Paul to reflect on the stewardship principle of firstfruits. In the Old Testament, God instructed His people to present a loaf of bread as an offering to Him from the first batch of dough after the grain harvest (Num. 15:17-21). By setting the first loaf apart to Him, they acknowledged that the entire batch had been made holy to Him. Paul elaborated on the principle by saying if the root of a tree had been dedicated to God, then the branches would be set apart for Him also.

What is one next step that you will take to participate in taking the gospel to people this week?



Day 3: Romans 11:17-19

Consider how these verses addressed the Gentiles' temptation to boast.

Paul compared Gentiles to a “wild olive branch.” God “grafted” them in so they could thrive as His people. Also, the “root” brought to mind the nourishing presence of God among His people. The grafted branch flourished because it enjoyed the privilege of receiving the same kind of nourishment that had enriched the “cultivated olive tree.” Paul intended for the cultivated tree to serve as a reference to Jewish people.

The Gentiles ran the risk of considering themselves to be better than the Jews. Paul referred to Jewish people as “those branches.” Boasting would show that Gentiles had forgotten the central truth about their salvation. It did not center in the branch. Instead, their salvation started in the root. The applause over salvation belonged to God. He had been like the root that sustained the branch.

Gentiles who boasted about being saved had become blind to the most important aspect of their salvation. They demonstrated that they had damaged their spiritual vision by considering themselves to be God’s favorites. Such a declaration would have suggested that God moved the Jewish people out of the way to make room for them. Using the image of the olive tree, they ran the risk of saying that God decided He would prune the Jewish branches so He could graft in the Gentile branches. Consequently, it would have wrongly implied that God loved Gentiles more than Jews.

Where do you feel tempted to feel spiritually superior to others? Why is that dangerous?



Day 4: Romans 11:20-22

Identify the two responses to God's grace in these verses.

Paul conceded that people who rejected Christ could have been compared to branches that were broken off the tree. However, God’s pruning of them was not because He didn’t love them. Instead, their unbelief led to their removal. By the same token, by His grace, He grafted Gentiles onto the tree according to their faith in Christ. Gentile Christians needed to beware of arrogance.

God would not spare Jewish people who rejected His way of salvation through Christ. He removed them even though they had been rooted in a relationship with Him that began in the early days of the Old Testament. Therefore, Gentiles needed to remember that He would not spare them either.

God demonstrated His grace with countless expressions of His kindness. He made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles regarding who would be saved. But neither did He exhibit any distinction regarding His severity. He would judge anyone who had fallen into the trap of spiritual arrogance. For that reason, Gentile and Jewish Christians demonstrated wisdom by responding humbly to God’s kindness.

How did Paul hold God's kindness and severity in balance?



Day 5: Romans 11:23-24

Note the conditional language in these verses.

For the Jews, being removed did not mean their relationship with God would never be restored. However, their restoration depended on their willingness to return to Him. Using the word picture of a tree once again, Paul assured believing Jews that they would be “grafted in” by God’s grace. In other words, the relationship that believing Jews had with Him would be restored.

The only fitting response that they could make to Him was to abandon their unbelief and put their faith in Christ alone. If they made such a response, they could trust God to be gracious and open His arms to them.

Paul turned his attention to believing Gentiles. They started as branches of their “native wild olive tree.” When Jesus came into their lives, something remarkable took place. Like branches that were “grafted into a cultivated olive tree,” they became members of God’s family. God did something that went against what farmers had learned in nature about olive trees. In those days, farmers would take a branch of a cultivated olive tree and graft it into a native olive tree. Grafting a branch in that way would make the native olive tree more productive. God grafted believing Gentiles into the cultivated tree with believing Jews. As a result, the tree that included Gentiles as well as Jews who trusted in Christ became stronger and more productive.

How might these verses impact the way you pray for unbelieving family and friends?

APPLY THE TEXT

As you reflect on God’s power to save anyone, who have you considered “unreachable”? Commit to pray for that person’s salvation. What barriers do you need to remove so you can share the gospel with that person?

JOURNAL



SESSION 10

Sacrifice

ROMANS 12:1-13

THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER IS ONE OF SACRIFICE AND COMMUNITY.



What's in it for me? It's a question we've all heard—and one we've probably asked ourselves. When we give our time, money, or abilities, we feel entitled to know what benefit we'll receive in return. But when we shift from being consumers to being participants, a different question emerges: *What can I do to help?*

WHICH QUESTION—‘WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME?’ OR ‘HOW CAN I HELP?’—
TENDS TO SHAPE YOUR THINKING MOST, AND WHY?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul has been guiding his readers through a rich exploration of the theology of sin and salvation. He has shown that every person—no matter their background or ethnicity—stands guilty before God (Rom. 1–4). Yet the story is not without hope. God has made a way for us to be rescued from sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus (chap. 5). Those who choose to follow Christ can no longer live for themselves; they have died and been buried with Him (chap. 6). And by His power, God has raised them to live for His glory through the work of His Spirit (chaps. 7–8).

In chapters 9–11, Paul paused his main argument to address the history and future of the Jewish people. Since the Roman church was likely made up of both Jews and Gentiles, he wanted each group to understand that God had not abandoned His chosen nation. Although many Jews had rejected the Messiah, their rejection was not total. Some—Paul himself included—had embraced Christ, and many more would receive the gift of salvation.

Paul also explained that Israel's rejection opened the way for Gentiles to hear and respond to the gospel. No matter one's nationality or ethnicity, he emphasized that salvation comes through faith in Christ. This message may have been difficult for Jews who were deeply committed to the law, but faith—not works—had always been God's means of drawing people to Himself.

With this theological foundation in place, Paul turned his attention in the final chapters of Romans—including chapter 12—to the practical implications of salvation. Having laid the theological groundwork, he now urged his readers to live out their faith in daily life. In doing so, they would display the gospel to the world around them.



1 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a **living sacrifice**, **A** holy and pleasing to God; this is your **true worship**. **B** **2** Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. **3** For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, **think sensibly**, **C** as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. **4** Now as we have **many parts in one body**, **D** and all the parts do not have the same function, **5** in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. **6** According to the grace given to us, we have **different gifts**: **E** If **prophecy**, **F** use it according to the proportion of one's faith; **7** if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; **8** if **exhorting**, **G** in exhortation; giving, with **generosity**; **H** leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness. **9** Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. **10** Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another. **11** Do not lack diligence in zeal; **be fervent in the Spirit**; **I** serve the Lord. **12** Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. **13** Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality.

A. Under the law, sacrifices were slaughtered and burned. In Christ, sacrifices are living and active in service to God.

B. Worship through personal sacrifice is a logical response to God's mercy demonstrated in salvation.

C. Focusing on God promotes humility and proper perspective in the church.

D. Paul used the human body to illustrate the church. Believers are individuals, yet they are unified under Jesus, their Head.

E. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, but no one has every gift. So, believers need each other to build the church into what God desires.

F. A Spirit-inspired proclamation. It can relate to future events, but it often deals with practical application of truth.

G. Depending on context, the Greek word can mean to comfort or to challenge. It is translated "urge" in verse 1.

H. The Greek term suggests sincerity. Generous people give freely to honor God and help others without an agenda or ulterior motive.

I. Central to his list of practical ways to display faith, Paul challenged the Romans to lean into the Holy Spirit and to let Him fuel their efforts.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Living Sacrifice

(Rom. 12:1-2)

As believers, our lives are to be shaped by God, not by worldly influences.

- **What obstacles might prevent us from offering our lives to God as “living sacrifices”?**

2. In the Church

(Rom. 12:3-8)

Believers are to serve alongside each other, exercising their God-given gifts.

- **Why is it important for each believer to serve within the church? What results can we anticipate if believers fail to use their gifts in the church?**

3. In Relationships

(Rom. 12:9-13)

As believers practice sacrificial love in their relationships, their lives give evidence of God’s grace.

- **How can you be more diligent and intentional in your service to the Lord and His people?**

Apply the Text

Share with your Bible study group your approach to presenting yourself as a living sacrifice to God. Discuss the difference between worshiping God—which is true worship—and worshiping worship itself.

KEY DOCTRINE:

The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. (See Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:7.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Memorize a verse and apply it to a real-life situation.

Memorize Romans 12:1-2 in your preferred translation. Paraphrase the verse to meditate on the meaning. Evaluate ways that you are offering yourself as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Also evaluate ways the world is trying to conform you to its image. List ways your mind can be renewed to the will of God.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 12:1-2. What's a habit you've tried to change? What made that process difficult?

Paul urged the Roman believers to be “living sacrifices,” offering their lives to God as an act of worship. He warned them not to conform to the world’s values and patterns. Instead, they were to be growing in godliness so they could increasingly know and act on God’s will.

How would you describe the difference between being conformed to the world and being transformed by God? What are some common ways Christians today may unintentionally conform to the world instead of being transformed?

In Romans 12:1–2, Paul urged believers to respond to God by surrendering to Him every part of life as an act of worship. As God renews our minds through His Word and Spirit, we are transformed to live differently from the surrounding culture and gain discernment to follow His good, pleasing, and perfect will in daily life.

Discuss ways you feel pressure to conform to the patterns or values of the world. What steps could you take this week to intentionally align your life with God's will?

Memorize Romans 12:1-2, considering how these verses can shape your everyday life.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 12:1-2

Consider the motivation for Paul's instruction in these verses.

In response to the mercy God had shown them in Christ, he admonished the Romans to present their “bodies as a living sacrifice” to Him. Gentiles and Jews alike who lived in Rome would have known about sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem as well as the pagan temples in Rome. Worshipers sacrificed animals on altars. Unlike the animal sacrifice that had no choice in the matter, believers choose to become living sacrifices. This is our “true worship.” Worship is not an event that happens only on Sunday morning, nor is it a place to go on Sundays. Worship is the active and willing choice to live in submission to God.

The world expects us to conform or fit into a particular mold. But instead of trying to fit into the world's way of living, God expects His people to be “transformed.” The Greek word used here is related to the English word *metamorphosis*, which refers to a transformation from one thing to another. Being transformed starts on the inside. It is a work of the Holy Spirit in us. The transforming work of the Holy Spirit involves the “renewing” of our minds. He changes the way we think and how we see the world and our place in it. As we discern His will for us, we'll learn what is good and pleasing to Him.

What does it look like in everyday life to offer yourself to God as a living sacrifice?



Day 2: Romans 12:3-5

Identify how Paul described the church.

As spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ, we remain susceptible to pride—becoming arrogant when we perceive ourselves as more gifted than others. Such attitudes can foster the harmful habit of viewing ourselves as more significant than fellow members of the church.

Paul's emphasis on humility protects us from falling into selfish pride. Rather than yielding to arrogance, we exercise wisdom when we think with sober judgment. Such judgment is demonstrated when we put our faith into practice by employing the spiritual gifts God has entrusted to us. Paul illustrated the importance of each gift by comparing the church to the human body. Just as a body is composed of many parts, each with its own distinct function, so too the church is made up of many members who contribute in unique ways.

This analogy helps us recognize the Lord's wisdom in granting diverse spiritual gifts to His people. The church comprises individuals who share a common testimony: each has received God's gift of salvation. Though we differ in our abilities and backgrounds, we belong to “one body in Christ.” Because we are united, we work together in mutual dependence. When we faithfully use our spiritual gifts in cooperative service, the church matures and grows strong.

How do these verses challenge the individualistic “just Jesus and me” view of the Christian faith?



Day 3: Romans 12:6-8

Note the variety of gifts in these verses.

God has given us “different gifts” so we may serve Him together. These gifts are employed toward a shared aim: the strengthening of the church. The Lord has entrusted some members of the church with the gift of prophecy. They exercise this gift faithfully when they speak His Word with clarity and conviction for the benefit of His people.

Some serve the Lord through gifts of service. They demonstrate their faith by willingly embracing opportunities to assist and support others. The church also requires those whom God has given the gift of teaching. These individuals employ their faith by instructing others in the truths of Scripture, thereby fostering spiritual growth within the congregation.

The practice of using spiritual gifts extends to other areas of ministry as well. Believers with the gift of exhortation are eager to encourage and uplift fellow Christians. Others express their faith through generous giving. Still others reveal their faith by leading with diligence, guiding their spiritual brothers and sisters with care and responsibility. Those who have been graced with the gift of mercy minister with cheerfulness rather than reluctance, compassionately attending to those who are suffering.

What steps can you take this week to intentionally build up another believer through your gifting?



Day 4: Romans 12:9-10

Consider how these verses define love as more than a feeling.

It is important to remember that we do not labor alone. We serve alongside fellow believers within the church. For this reason, Scripture provides us with a series of imperatives that guide our collaboration. These foundational directives, when taken seriously, strengthen our relationships as we serve Him together. The first imperative directs our attention to love, which functions as the overarching principle. Genuine love rejects all forms of hypocrisy. We love sincerely when we cling to what is good and deliberately reject every expression of evil. Hypocrisy, however, allows space for merely pretending to value what is good rather than embracing it wholeheartedly.

The command to “love one another” is directed toward a clearly defined community—our fellow believers within the church. This love reflects true spiritual maturity only when it rises above superficial sentiment. We are called to love one another “deeply,” exhibiting the kind of genuine affection characteristic of a healthy family united as brothers and sisters in Christ. As spiritual siblings, we possess the capacity to cultivate profound and enduring bonds of love. We demonstrate this familial affection by affirming and honoring one another. Rather than seeking recognition for ourselves, we intentionally celebrate the contributions of other believers. We willingly and wholeheartedly step forward to acknowledge and esteem our fellow members in the body of Christ.

What does love look like according to these verses?



Day 5: Romans 12:11-13

Identify all the commands in these verses.

As we mature in our relationship with Him, we cultivate an eagerness to serve Him with diligence. Increasing love for God produces a zeal aimed at pleasing Him. We come to understand that zeal is rooted in attentiveness to the guidance of the Spirit. Spiritual sensitivity forms and sustains our eagerness to follow His leading. Consequently, we do not approach our discipleship with reluctance or indifference; rather, we remain focused on our highest priority—rendering faithful service to the Lord.

Our love for the Lord and for one another equips us to withstand the difficulties we encounter as we work together. Even in circumstances that appear devoid of hope, we remain steadfast in the Lord. His leadership sustains us, prompting us to rejoice in the assurance of His unfailing guidance through every challenge. Consequently, we do not surrender to panic when difficulty arises. Instead, our hope in Him steadies our hearts, enabling us to persevere with patience.

Love also compels us to look beyond our own concerns. When we see our brothers and sisters in Christ are struggling, we give assistance. We care for one another without hesitation, generously providing whatever support is needed so that their needs might be met. A spirit of genuine hospitality moves us to open both our homes and our hearts to one another.

How can you be more diligent and intentional in your service to the Lord and His people?

APPLY THE TEXT

How would you describe your love for the Lord today? In what ways do you reflect your love for Him in your love for others in the church? What changes do you need to make so you can demonstrate your love for them?

JOURNAL



SESSION 11

Represent

ROMANS 13:1-14

BELIEVERS REPRESENT CHRIST WELL BY HONORING
CIVIL LEADERS AND LOVING THEIR NEIGHBORS.



Live up to your family name. It's a charge many parents give their sons and daughters early in life, and over time it becomes ingrained in their children. As those children grow into adults, that calling shapes their decisions and guides their relationships. In the same way, believers have been entrusted with the responsibility of honoring the name of Jesus.

*HOW HAVE THE EXPECTATIONS YOU GREW UP WITH SHAPED
THE CHOICES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUR ADULT LIFE?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In chapter 12 Paul highlighted behavior within the church. In chapter 13 he turned his attention to how believers interact with people outside the church. While we are citizens of heaven, we also live as citizens of earth. Accordingly, we want to represent Christ well in our world so that others will be drawn to Him through our relationships with them.

Paul began this chapter by pointing to the need for believers to submit themselves to the leaders of the Roman government. Christians are to pay taxes to whom they owe taxes, give respect to whom they owe respect, and show honor to whom they owe honor. God instituted government for the good of all people. In His grand scheme, governing authorities are God's servants to dispense justice in the world (Rom. 13:1-7).

In verses 8-10, Paul addressed the need for believers to nurture healthy relationships with their neighbors. He used the Ten Commandments to illustrate the relationship between love and the law. Sins like adultery, murder, theft, and coveting are caused by

selfishness, which is the opposite of sacrificial love. As believers, we owe a debt of love to others. What God expects of us can be summed up in a single principle: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 9).

Every day that passes puts us closer to Jesus's return. In view of this reality, Paul admonished the believers to "wake up from sleep" as our salvation is "nearer than when we first believed" (v. 11). We should avoid spiritual lethargy, drunkenness, sexual impurity, quarreling, and jealousy. Instead, we are to display Christlikeness outwardly in our daily lives.



1 Let everyone submit to the **governing authorities**, **A** since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are **instituted by God**. **B** **2** So then, the one who resists the authority is **opposing God's command**, **C** and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. **3** For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. **4** For it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not **carry the sword** **D** for no reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. **5** Therefore, **you must submit**, **E** not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience. **6** And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's servants, continually attending to these tasks. **7** **Pay your obligations** **F** to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor. **8** Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. **9** The commandments, Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet; and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: **Love your neighbor as yourself**. **G** **10** Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law. **11** Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to **wake up from sleep**, **H** because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. **12** The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. **13** Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. **14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

A. For Paul and the Romans, the highest human authority was the emperor. Many authorities would be skeptical, or even adversarial, toward Christianity.

B. No human authority rules apart from God's sovereign rule.

C. Since God established rulers, rebellion against them without cause is like rebelling against Him.

D. Part of the government's role is punishing those who do evil. Ideally, it is "an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong."

E. Submission does not mean obeying authority when it is wrong. But God does expect His people to serve as agents of peace.

F. Civic responsibility includes paying taxes that are due (v. 6), but also showing respect and honor to those in positions of authority.

G. Both the Mosaic law (Lev. 19:8) and Jesus (Matt. 22:39) affirmed this truth. Loving others fulfills the spirit of the Ten Commandments.

H. When living with a heavenly perspective, believers should shake off spiritual lethargy and remain alert to God's leadership.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Honor Authorities

(Rom. 13:1-7)

Believers should honor civil authorities.

- **How does Paul's teaching that rulers are God's servants for your good challenge or affirm your perspective on government?**

2. Honor Each Other

(Rom. 13:8-10)

Believers are to love our neighbors.

- **What are some ways you can practically show love to those around you?**
- **Paul said that love does no wrong to a neighbor (v. 10). In what ways—through actions, attitudes, words, or silence—might you unintentionally wrong others? How can you become more aware of how your choices impact the people around you?**

3. Honor Christ

(Rom. 13:11-14)

Believers are to display Christlikeness so that their lives reflect Jesus.

- **What steps can we take to prevent spiritual lethargy?**
- **How aware are you of Christ's return, and how does that awareness—or lack of it—shape your daily choices?**

Apply the Text

With your Bible study group, discuss why submitting to governing authorities qualifies as a meaningful way to represent Christ. Also share the challenges you face as you try to show His love to the people around you. Pray for one another so that each will represent Him well.

KEY DOCTRINE:

Religious Liberty

Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. (See 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-17.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Identify the imagery in a verse or passage and discover what it communicates.

Compare Romans 13:11-14 with Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:10-12. What does this imagery communicate with you about the old life before Christ and the new life in Christ? How does this imagery help you in understanding how God would want you to respond when you battle the flesh, the old person you were before you came to know Christ?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 13:14. When you start planning your day, what shapes your priorities?

In this verse, Paul called believers to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”—to make His ways our way of life—and to deny the sinful impulses of the flesh rather than planning for or indulging them. The verse emphasizes intentional, decisive living that reflects a transformed life rather than passive resistance to sin.

Discuss the difference between merely avoiding sin and putting on Christ.

This verse urges us to move beyond simply avoiding sin and instead to live with intentional Christ-centered focus every day. To “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” means we allow Him to shape how we think, plan, and act. Authentic Christian living does not happen by default or by chance—it is marked by intentional, daily decisions that reflect our identity as people who belong to Christ.

Discuss what “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ” can look like in your daily routines, conversations, and decision-making.

For the next seven days, make “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” a repeating event on your phone calendar.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 13:1-4

Identify the command given.

Paul addressed believers' responsibilities to submit to the governing authorities. Such submission reflected their recognition that all authority ultimately resides with God. He, in His sovereign wisdom, instituted governmental structures for the order and well-being of society. Consequently, anyone who opposed governmental authority was, in effect, resisting the divine order established by God and would therefore be held accountable by Him.

Our Christian faith does not give us the freedom to flaunt the legal system. Of course, at some point, we may be forced to choose between the rule of government and the principles of God. In those cases, we still are subject to the law and must endure the repercussions of our choices. Paul and the Romans understood this truth, having suffered for faith on numerous occasions.

Government leaders remain accountable to the Lord, who expects them to guide the populace in accordance with His standards of goodness. Authorities possess the power of the sword, meaning they are divinely authorized to administer justice and impose appropriate punishment upon wrongdoers. In this respect, government functions as "God's servant, an avenger" through which He brings wrath against those who engage in evil.

How does Paul's teaching that governing authorities are God's servants challenge or affirm your perspective on government?



Day 2: Romans 13:5-7

Identify the obligations listed in verses 6-7.

Because God established human government, discerning believers recognize their responsibility to submit to civil authorities. Paul had already identified a significant reason for believers to place themselves under the authority of governing officials: refusal to do so would inevitably result in the government's wrath. Paul then introduced an additional basis for submission. Mature believers should seek to let their conscience guide them. Conscience compelled them to pursue what is right and to avoid what is wrong as they served God. Submitting to governing authorities was inherently proper, for government existed by God's own design. Moreover, wise believers demonstrated their integrity as citizens by putting their conscientious convictions into practice in straightforward, practical ways. One clear expression of this was their willingness to pay taxes.

The directive regarding submission to government focused on the word "obligations." If believers want to be good citizens, they will take their obligations seriously. The integrity of their testimony depends on it. For that reason, they are to pay their taxes and show respect and honor to government leaders.

Which of the obligations listed in these verses do you find most challenging?



Day 3: Romans 13:8-10

Note how love is described.

Beyond taxes owed to government, Paul pointed to a larger debt believers owe—“to love one another.” Unlike financial debts, the debt of love will never be paid in full. We are always under an obligation to love others.

Paul illustrated his point with the Ten Commandments. Adultery, murder, stealing, and coveting are rooted in selfishness. Selfishness is the opposite of self-giving love. God’s expectation of believers can be summed up in the command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This represents “the fulfillment of the law.”

Love for others is a recurring theme throughout the New Testament. In John’s Gospel, Jesus taught that His followers would be identified by their love for one another (John 13:34-35). The early church embodied this principle through practical expressions of care (Acts 4:32-35). Later, Paul reminded the Corinthians that genuine love consistently seeks the good of others (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Likewise, both John (1 John 3:18) and Peter (1 Pet. 4:8) urged believers to demonstrate sincere and steadfast love. In the same way, we must learn to love others well.

What are some ways you can practically demonstrate love to those around you this week?



Day 4: Romans 13:11-12

Identify the contrasts in these verses.

Paul offered an additional reason to honor governing authorities and to love one another: believers live in anticipation of Christ’s return. Although Paul did not know when Jesus would come again, he understood that the appointed time was coming. Because of this, he urged the Roman believers to “wake up” spiritually and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the nearness of that day.

Though two thousand years have passed, each day brings us closer to His return. As Paul reminded his readers, the fulfillment of “our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”

Paul used the imagery of night and day to contrast the moral darkness of the world with the light of faith. He reminded his readers that a new day would soon dawn. In the midst of prevailing darkness, Paul challenged believers to shine as lights in their communities. The first step in doing so was to “discard the deeds of darkness.” Christ had already redeemed them from that former way of life; there was no reason to return to it. Instead, they were to “put on the armor of light.” Just as armor equips a soldier for battle, God’s spiritual armor equips believers to illuminate the darkness as they await the return of Christ (see also Eph. 6:10-18).

What does it mean to “wake up” spiritually?



Day 5: Romans 13:13-14

Pay attention to the instructions given in these verses.

Paul compared the believer's way of living to a walk—an appropriate comparison, since life is a journey that steadily moves us toward eternity. He urged believers to walk “with decency,” living in such a way that their conduct could withstand the scrutiny of those around them.

This type of lifestyle stands in stark contrast to the behaviors commonly embraced by the surrounding culture. Paul highlighted examples of how people, lacking a moral compass, attempt to dull their pain through “carousing and drunkenness,” or seek a counterfeit form of intimacy through “sexual impurity and promiscuity.” While Christians are called to be known by their love, the world often tears itself apart through “quarreling and jealousy.”

The only remedy for the cycle of emptiness is Jesus. Those who “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” discover healing, genuine community, and lasting hope. Rather than becoming enslaved to the desires of the flesh, believers are freed by Christ to become all that God created them to be.

Ultimately, the issue returns to submission. When we submit every aspect of our lives to God, we remain in right fellowship with Him and shine as a light to those around us.

What does it mean to “put on” Christ?

APPLY THE TEXT

Reflect on your relationships with people around you. What significance do you place on honoring Christ by being a person who strives to live with integrity? Who's holding you accountable for behaving in ways that others can see Christ in you?

JOURNAL



SESSION 12

Unity

ROMANS 14:5-20

BELIEVERS PROMOTE UNITY BY ACCEPTING AND EDIFYING ONE ANOTHER.



One day, a teacher invited her students to debate an issue that had surfaced in class. The students immediately began sharing their viewpoints, and the discussion quickly grew intense. As the debate escalated, the teacher noticed that while the students were passionate about their perspectives, their disagreements were becoming disrespectful. At that moment, she challenged them to disagree agreeably. Paul did the same—because of Christ.

*WHEN HAVE YOU FOUND YOURSELF NEEDING TO DISAGREE WITH SOMEONE
IN A RESPECTFUL WAY? WHAT MADE IT CHALLENGING?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Believers in Rome found themselves divided over matters such as dietary rules and the observance of special days. Those from Jewish backgrounds often disagreed with their Gentile brothers and sisters about how to handle these issues. Paul reminded them of a crucial truth: they were not to appoint themselves as judges over fellow believers whose convictions differed on these secondary matters. Each believer served the Lord, and He alone held the authority to judge them.

Rather than dwelling on their disagreements, Paul urged them to keep their focus on Jesus. Honoring Him was what mattered most. Because of this, they were wise to bring their personal convictions before Him, seeking His approval. They also honored Christ by respecting the opinions of others within the church. Serving Him together was more important than debating differences over non-essential concerns. This unity would lead them toward spiritual maturity and allow them to experience the joy and peace that flow from a close relationship with Him. Such mutual

respect would be possible only when believers allowed love to guide them. Love creates space for differing opinions. Love also motivates believers to build one another up.

Jewish believers had the privilege of receiving God's law and His promise of the Messiah, while Gentile believers had the privilege of hearing the good news of Christ. Both groups were fully welcomed into God's family. To emphasize this, Paul pointed to Old Testament passages that affirmed God's plan to include both Jewish and Gentile believers as spiritual brothers and sisters in Him.



5 One person judges **one day**^A to be more important than another day. Someone else judges every day to be the same. Let each one be fully convinced **in his own mind**. **B** **6** Whoever observes the day, observes it for the honor of the Lord. **Whoever eats**, ^C eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; and whoever does not eat, it is for the Lord that he does not eat it, and he gives thanks to God. **7** For none of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself. **8** If we live, **we live for the Lord**; ^D and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. **9** Christ died and returned to life for this: that he might be Lord over both the dead and the living. **10** But you, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or you, why do you **despise** ^E your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the **judgment seat**^F of God. **11** For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God. **12** So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. **13** Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister. **14** I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that **nothing is unclean in itself**. ^G Still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to that one it is unclean. **15** For if your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer walking according to love. **Do not destroy**, ^H by what you eat, someone for whom Christ died. **16** Therefore, do not let your good be slandered, **17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. **18** Whoever serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and receives human approval. **19** So then, let us **pursue what promotes peace** ^I and what builds up one another. **20** Do not tear down God's work because of food. Everything is clean, but it is wrong to make someone fall by what he eats.

A. Some Roman believers, likely Jews, viewed Sabbath and holidays as sacred. In contrast, Gentiles treated “every day . . . the same.”

B. Paul sought unity within the body, but not uniformity. Believers needed to leave room for grace in areas of conscience and conviction.

C. Dietary restrictions (possibly related to Old Testament laws or meat offered to idols) were another potential point of tension between Jews and Gentiles.

D. In “disputed matters” (v. 1), believers must not judge the efforts of others to please God. Everyone is accountable to God.

E. More than a passing dislike, but seeing someone as nothing or without value.

F. Not a judgment of salvation, but accountability for the quality of one's works (v. 12).

G. Jesus declared all things clean (Mark 7:17-19) and reaffirmed it to Peter (Acts 10:9-16). But believers still must respect others' convictions.

H. Abolish, ruin, or make helpless. In Luke 15, Jesus used a similar verb to describe a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son.

I. The goal of Christian conduct includes building unity within the body and encouraging the faith of individuals.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Disagreement

(Rom. 14:5-8)

Believers should allow other believers to express their love for God as God directs them.

- **What kind of spiritual practices might believers disagree over today? How can we implement Paul's instruction when we encounter disagreements like these?**

2. Accountability

(Rom. 14:9-12)

Every person will be held accountable for their actions and choices.

- **How should these verses shape our understanding of God and His desire for our lives?**
- **When you disagree with another believer, how does the gospel factor into your response and attitude?**

3. Love

(Rom. 14:13-18)

As members of the body of Christ, we're to spur on each other to spiritual growth.

- **What practical things can we do to spur on others and not be a stumbling block?**

4. Edification

(Rom. 14:19-20)

Believers are to build up one another, pursuing peace in our relationships with other believers.

- **Why is peace so significant in the body of Christ? What might we forfeit if strife or dissension are allowed to grow?**

Apply the Text

Discuss with your Bible study group current issues that resemble the dietary laws and special days in Paul's day.

- **How can your group handle these differing convictions in a way that promotes unity and builds one another up, rather than creating frustration or division?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

The Church

Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. (See Ephesians 2:19-22; Colossians 1:18.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use another Bible passage to understand the focal passage.

Read Acts 10:9-16. Summarize the vision that Peter had about clean and unclean foods. How did God use that vision to help Peter understand that he should also take the gospel to Cornelius and the other Gentiles in Caesarea (see Acts 10:1-8)? Compare that with Galatians 2, where issues of circumcision and eating with the Jews caused division in the church. How did Paul respond to each of these issues?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 14:19. What's one thing that helps you feel like you belong in a group, even when people don't all think alike?

After addressing disputes between believers over food and sacred days (Rom. 14:1-18), Paul summarized the goal: believers are to intentionally pursue what promotes peace and builds one another up. Unity and spiritual growth take precedence over winning arguments or proving maturity.

What two things did Paul call believers to pursue? Why do you think he used such active language rather than passive language?

When we pursue something, we don't just hope it happens—we go after it on purpose. Paul encouraged the church to make peace its intentional aim and to work toward what strengthens unity. In a church made up of people with different backgrounds, preferences, and perspectives, peace doesn't just happen naturally or by default. It takes intentional choices and ongoing effort. At the same time, we are to actively look for ways to build one another up. When we choose encouragement over criticism and others' growth over personal preference, the church becomes a place where people are strengthened in their faith and unity is nurtured.

Discuss ways your group and church can intentionally foster an environment that builds people up.

Place Romans 14:19 on your phones or on cards and memorize it together.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 14:5-8

Look for the repeated phrase in these verses.

In verses 1-4, Paul addressed tensions in the Roman church—especially between Jewish and Gentile believers—over disputable matters such as food laws. In addition to tensions over food laws, he addressed divisions over holy days. One person “judges one day to be more important than another day,” while someone else “judges every day to be the same.” Most likely, Jews in the church at Rome were observing the Sabbath and other important feast days. Others in the church, likely Gentile believers, did not feel any obligation to a religious calendar. While not all believers held the same convictions, every believer had the responsibility to honor the Lord. Those who chose to observe certain days or eat certain foods were to do so in ways that honored God. Likewise, those who chose not to eat those foods or observe those days were to abstain in ways that honored the Lord. Note the repetition of the phrase, “for the Lord.”

Believers today continue to deal with tensions that stem from conflicting convictions. Unity in Christ does not mean that we must agree on every issue that comes up in the church. We diminish the tension when we remember that we are accountable to the Lord. If we seek to honor Him with our convictions, we’re more willing to respect others in the church who also want to honor Him—albeit in different ways.

What does living “for the Lord” look like in your everyday life?



Day 2: Romans 14:9-10

Pay attention to the warning in verse 10.

All of Paul’s readers had one thing in common: they confessed Jesus as Lord. What united them was far greater than any secondary differences that might divide them. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus frees believers from condemnation. For that reason, no Christian has the right to impose bondage on a fellow believer whom Christ has already set free.

To drive the point home, Paul asked two rhetorical questions. First, why would a believer “judge your brother or sister”? Second, why would a believer “despise your brother or sister”? We are not permitted to sit in judgment over those who hold different convictions, nor are we free to treat them with contempt. Both attitudes are out of place in the body of Christ.

Paul then reminded his readers of a sobering truth: each one of us will one day stand before the judgment seat of God. This judgment will not determine salvation but will evaluate our faithfulness to the Lord. In light of this reality, believers should extend grace, not judgment, to one another.

How does remembering the judgment seat of God change the way you relate to other believers?



Day 3: Romans 14:11-12

Compare these verses to Philippians 2:10-11.

Paul quoted Isaiah 45:23 to remind his readers that “every knee will bow” before God and “every tongue will give praise” to Him. This was to remind his readers that He is Lord—and Judge—over everyone and everything.

In writing to the Philippians, Paul emphasized how Jesus humbled Himself on a cross, God raised Him up, every knee will bow before Him and every mouth will confess His authority (Phil. 2:5-11). The context of Philippians was similar to our passage in Romans. The Philippian church had also been struggling with a lack of unity and judgmental attitudes (Phil. 2:1-4). Whether it’s the church at Rome, Philippi, or the church you attend today—the answer is the same. What unites us is the gospel. Grounded in the gospel, we are to nurture unity—not create division. In verse 12, Paul highlighted our motive: each of us will one day “give an account” of ourselves to God.

How do these verses shape your understanding of God and His desire for your life?



Day 4: Romans 14:13-18

Note the connection between love and freedom.

“I know and am persuaded,” said Paul, that “nothing is unclean in itself.” Jesus had “declared all foods clean” (Mark 7:19). Paul understood this, but not all believers did. He explained that we must consider the brother or sister who thinks differently than us. If we selfishly ignore their convictions and press our freedom to eat what they call unclean, we will hurt those who think differently. Therefore, Paul encouraged that in the interest of love, we are to patiently lay aside our rights to await growth in others.

The kingdom of God is not about petty things like “eating and drinking.” Rather, it’s about “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Paul urged the Romans to focus not on secondary matters but on the greater priorities—the spiritual growth the Spirit was bringing about in weaker believers.

When we choose to limit our freedom for the sake of someone else’s spiritual growth, we are serving both Christ and our fellow believers. “Whoever serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God.” Additionally, by limiting our freedom we will receive “human approval.” This reminds us that other believers are watching us, and our choices can either harm them or help strengthen their faith.

What practical things can you do to spur on others and not be a stumbling block?



Day 5: Romans 14:19-20

Identify the two goals believers are to pursue.

Paul urged believers to “pursue what promotes peace and builds up one another.” We promote peace when we do everything possible to build up each other as we work together in God’s family. We are to pursue what builds up other believers. Overlooking our responsibility to edify one another has a damaging effect on God’s work. Instead of focusing our attention on doing His work together, we’ll get sidetracked pitting ourselves against one another with our petty disagreements. By referring to food, Paul’s instruction underscores the temptation to give primary concern to secondary issues. The rules about food in Paul’s day call to mind a number of secondary issues in our day. Disagreements over secondary issues can distract us from the primary work that centers in the gospel.

Growing past the points of disagreement means moving beyond the notion that serving the Lord only consists of keeping rules and honoring rituals. Getting beyond such notions involves handling disagreements in a way that builds up believers as we live for Christ together. Mature believers don’t want to do anything that would cause a brother or sister in Christ to fall into confusion regarding what matters most in serving the Lord.

Where in your relationships do you need to intentionally “pursue what promotes peace”?

APPLY THE TEXT

Consider what it might look like to prioritize someone else’s spiritual growth over your own freedom or comfort. What is one practical step you can take this week to build up another believer in their walk with Christ?

JOURNAL



SESSION 13

Purpose

ROMANS 15:14-21,30-33

BELIEVERS ARE TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TO ALL PEOPLE.



We recognize the importance of being intentional about our health—brushing our teeth, paying attention to what we eat, and staying active. We try to show that same intentionality in our work by getting up when the alarm goes off and arriving on time. Likewise, as believers we are to be intentional about making Christ known to all people.

WHICH AREAS OF YOUR LIFE COME MORE NATURALLY WHEN IT COMES TO BEING INTENTIONAL, AND WHICH AREAS REQUIRE MORE EFFORT OR DISCIPLINE?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In chapters 1–11 of Romans, Paul focused on the core doctrines of justification and reconciliation. Then, in chapters 12–14, he turned to the practical implications of the gospel for everyday living. As he brought his letter to a close, the apostle returned once more to the theme of salvation—but from a different angle. Earlier, he emphasized that all people need a Savior; now he highlighted the responsibility believers have to share the good news of salvation with others.

Paul's purpose was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He explained his calling to the Romans so that they might join him in fulfilling it. He could not take any credit for his past ministry. Christ had accomplished it using him, as evidenced by signs and wonders. In the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul had preached the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum. Paul's aim now was to take the gospel beyond Rome and into regions untouched by its message (Rom. 15:20–29). Knowing he could not fulfill this mission alone, he appealed to the believers in Rome for support. While financial help may have

been included, Paul's primary request was for their prayers. He asked them to pray for deliverance from unbelieving Jews in Judea, that his ministry would be acceptable to the believers there, and that he would complete his journey to Rome one day (15:30–33).

As he concluded his letter, Paul recognized a number of fellow believers who had faithfully partnered with him in ministry (16:1–16). Though he had never visited Rome, he had met some of its church members during his travels, and he wanted them to know how much he valued them. He ended with a final warning (16:17–18) and a closing blessing (16:19–27).



14 My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced about you that you also are full of **goodness**, **A** filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. **15** Nevertheless, I have written to remind you more boldly on some points because of the **grace given me** **B** by God **16** to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, serving as a **priest** **C** of the gospel of God. God's purpose is that the Gentiles may be an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. **17** Therefore I have **reason to boast** **D** in Christ Jesus regarding what pertains to God. **18** For I would not dare say anything except what Christ has accomplished through me by word and deed for the obedience of the Gentiles, **19** by the power of **miraculous signs and wonders**, **E** and by the power of God's Spirit. As a result, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to **Illyricum**. **F**

20 My aim is to preach the gospel **where Christ has not been named**, **G** so that I will not build on someone else's foundation, **21** but, as it is written, Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand. [. . .]

30 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to **strive together with me** **H** in prayers to God on my behalf. **31** Pray that I may be **rescued from the unbelievers in Judea**, **I** that my ministry to [q] Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, **32** and that, by God's will, I may come to you with joy and be refreshed together with you. **33** May the God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

A. Moral excellence and virtue that is lived out in a meaningful way. The word emphasizes action.

B. Paul's authority was the result of God's grace, not anything he earned or achieved on his own.

C. Priests brought offerings to God. Paul's offering included Gentiles who had been redeemed by Jesus and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

D. Paul would never boast in his own accomplishments. Rather, he boasted in what Christ had done through his ministry (v. 18).

E. The supernatural things God accomplished through Paul validated the gospel, as well as his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles.

F. A region along the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea. This marked the northeastern extent of Paul's travels and includes modern-day Albania.

G. Paul was setting his sights on pioneer regions. He wanted to minister to unreached people.

H. Paul recognized the value of spiritual partnerships and asked for the Romans' prayers for his work.

I. The apostle had a sense that he would face stiff persecution in Judea. This opposition eventually would bring him to Rome.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Joint Ministry

(Rom. 15:14-16)

Believers are to join with others in ministry.

- **What is our responsibility in becoming spiritually ready to minister to others?**

2. Spirit's Power

(Rom. 15:17-21)

Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit empowers us to share the gospel.

- **Where do you sense God's Spirit inviting you to attempt something that will fail unless He supplies the power? What is the first step of obedience?**

3. Focused Prayer

(Rom. 15:30-33)

Believers need to pray for the spread of the gospel.

- **What do believers stand to gain when they unite in prayer for the sharing of the gospel?**

Apply the Text

Discuss with your Bible study group why believers need to work together in sharing the gospel with unreached people around the world and around the corner. Consider ways your group or church can be involved in doing this.

KEY DOCTRINE:

Cooperation

Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. (See Philippians 1:5; 4:15-16.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Create a chart to better understand a Bible passage.

Read the following verses and determine how prayer influences sharing one's faith: Matthew 9:37-38; Acts 4:29-31; Romans 10:1; Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1. How would you summarize the role of prayer in evangelism? In what ways do these verses motivate you to pray for your sharing of the gospel and those who are taking the gospel to the unreached?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 15:30. What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase “we’re in this together”?

Paul requested the Roman believers pray for him and his ministry in Jerusalem. He asked them to pray for deliverance from unbelieving Jews in Judea, that his ministry would be acceptable to the believers there, and that he would complete his journey to Rome one day.

What does it look like to “strive together” in prayer rather than just offering occasional or casual prayers?

Ministry is not meant to be carried out in isolation but through shared effort, especially prayer. Paul asked the Roman believers to join him by “striving together” in prayer, showing that prayer is an active partnership in God’s work. Even when believers cannot physically go or take the lead, they can still participate meaningfully by praying for those who do, trusting God to use those prayers to accomplish His purposes and strengthen His servants.

In what ways can your group better view and practice prayer as active partnership in God's mission?

Memorize Romans 15:30, considering how you can put this verse into practice.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 15:14-16

Notice how Paul described the Roman believers.

Paul called the believers in Rome his “brothers and sisters,” even though he had never met many of them. He expressed his sincere appreciation for them. He was convinced they were “full of goodness” and “filled with all knowledge.” Also, they demonstrated their ability to “instruct one another.” In these ways, they reflected their spiritual growth and the character of Christ.

Nevertheless, Paul knew they still had room for growth. He could not allow himself to overlook his obligation as an apostle to remind them of the areas to which they still needed to give attention. His goal was to help them become more like Jesus.

God had called Paul to be “a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.” He compared his ministry with the Gentiles to the work of a priest. In the Old Testament, priests spoke on behalf of God. Paul saw his responsibility in a similar way. Additionally, priests presented offerings. Paul embraced that metaphor. He wanted to present as many Gentile believers as possible to God as “an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

Who is one believer you will affirm this week for his or her spiritual growth, and what specifically will you say or do?



Day 2: Romans 15:17-19

Identify what Paul boasted in—and what he refused to boast in.

Paul never bragged about his accomplishments as a minister of the gospel. He understood that anything that had been done was accomplished by Christ working through him. Therefore, he had “reason to boast in Christ.” He wanted the Romans to know that if they chose to support him, they would be supporting Christ’s work. Paul was not promoting his own personal agenda. Today, we recognize the impact of Paul’s ministry. Perhaps the Romans understood it as well, even in the first century. Nevertheless, Paul demonstrated his humility in giving all the credit to Christ.

Notice the word *power* used twice in this verse. Many “miraculous signs and wonders” were accomplished through Paul. Some of these are recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 14:8-10; 16:16-18; 20:9-12). Paul knew these were accomplished by “the power of God’s Spirit.”

Paul was able to say that he had “fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum.” Of course, he was not claiming that everyone in these vast regions had heard the gospel. Rather, he was saying that he had saturated these regions with the gospel. Jerusalem was the place that Christianity began, and Illyricum was a Roman province between Greece and Italy in modern-day Albania on the Adriatic Sea.

How do these verses shape your understanding of success in ministry?



Day 3: Romans 15:20-21

Pay attention to Paul's aim.

Paul's desire was to "preach the gospel where Christ has not been named." Though he sometimes revisited cities where he previously had shared the gospel (Acts 15:36), he understood that his main mission was to take the gospel to unreached people. He wanted to preach in Rome, which had heard of Jesus, but his ultimate goal was to preach in Spain (Rom. 15:24,28). His desire to take the gospel to where it had never been heard was the reason he did not want to "build on someone else's foundation." This was not his calling (1 Cor. 3:10).

In verse 21, Paul quoted Isaiah 52:15 to emphasize the importance of his plan. This verse in Isaiah says that the kings of many nations "will see what had not been told them, and they will understand what they had not heard." He clearly saw this as a reference to the salvation of the nations. Paul knew that many would respond to the gospel if they were given the opportunity, and he wanted to be God's instrument for giving them that opportunity.

Where do you sense God's Spirit inviting you to attempt something that will fail unless He supplies the power? What is the first step of obedience?



Day 4: Romans 15:30-31

Identify Paul's specific prayer request.

Paul planned to carry the gospel as far as Spain, and he hoped the Roman believers would partner with him in that mission (Rom. 15:22-24). Before traveling to Rome, however, he intended to go to Jerusalem to deliver a financial gift collected by Gentile believers for those in need. After completing that task, he would continue to Rome. Knowing the challenges that awaited him in Jerusalem, Paul urged his brothers and sisters in Rome to "strive" in prayer for him. The word translated *strive* is the word from which we get our word "agonize." It also has the prefix "together" attached to it. Prayer is a way of joining others who are taking the gospel to the unreached people of the world.

Paul understood that traveling to Jerusalem would be dangerous. He knew that unbelievers there would try to put a stop to his ministry. He asked the Roman believers to pray that he would be rescued from any of their attempts to silence him. He also asked them to pray for the Jewish believers who would receive the financial gift collected by Gentile Christians. Paul referred to these Jewish believers as "saints"—people set apart to God as holy. They had been set apart when they placed their faith in Christ. Paul hoped they would receive the offering with gratitude, recognizing the sincere care shown to them by Gentile brothers and sisters.

How can prayer deepen your partnership with other believers in the work of ministry?



Day 5: Romans 15:32-33

Note the role God's will played in Paul's plans.

Paul shared yet another prayer request with the believers in Rome. He asked them to pray that he would be able to travel to Rome and spend time with them. He anticipated that once he arrived, their fellowship would bring him joy and their time together would be refreshing.

Incidentally, God answered all three parts of Paul's request. In Jerusalem, God protected him from danger (Acts 23:10). Jewish believers received him warmly (21:17-20). And ultimately, Paul set sail for Rome (25:11-12).

Paul didn't stop at asking the Roman believers to pray for him. He also offered a benediction—a prayer for their wellbeing. The believers in Rome lived in a dangerous period of the empire's history. At any moment they could be expelled from the city, or worse, arrested simply because they followed Christ. Knowing this, Paul committed them to God's care. Only God could sustain them and enable them to live in peace. Of course, experiencing that peace required them to trust God. They already had peace with Him through their faith in Christ. Now Paul longed for them to be filled with the confidence of God's peace as they faced the uncertainties of their daily lives.

How can you be a source of joy and refreshment to others?

APPLY THE TEXT

As you live out your call to serve Christ intentionally by sharing the gospel with others, who is praying for you? How much will you trust the power of God's Spirit as you talk with others about Jesus?

JOURNAL



LEADER HELPS

Using the Daily Discipleship Guide to Lead a Bible Study Group

The *Daily Discipleship Guide* was created for the purpose of building disciples. As the leader of the group, you play a major role. You can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, facilitating smaller groups, and apprenticing future leaders.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Leading the group Bible study time is the most direct way you will build disciples. Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, challenge the group to act on that passage, and encourage them to reflect more deeply in the week that follows. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Read the Bible passage for the coming session, and review Understand the Context and Key Words.
- If a QR code is available in the Leader Helps, scan it to gain additional information on what's found in the passage.

Through the Week

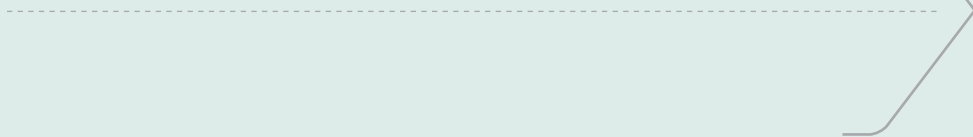
- Ask God to use the Daily Explorations to help you understand and apply the lesson to your life.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Talk It Out to start your conversation.
- Pay careful attention to the Apply the Text sections for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.
- Start gathering items you may use in the group time.

The Day before Group Study Time

- Review the group plan in the back of the *Daily Discipleship Guide*.
- Review the first four pages of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for that session and the commentary provided in the Leader Helps for that session.
- Review your responses and notes from the completed Daily Explorations.
- Listen to the weekly podcast at goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training.
- Adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group.
Note: You can create custom plans using the DOC file provided in the Digital Download for the Leader Pack—it's the same content printed in the Leader Helps.
- Consult *QuickSource* for additional insights and ideas.
- Review the weekly Adult Extra idea on the Explore the Bible blog (goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras).
- Consult the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional insight.
- Pull needed posters from the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (or create your own using Visual Ideas on pages 160–161).
- Make sure you have all your resources gathered including extra copies of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for guests.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early. The group time begins when the first person arrives so make sure that is you.
- Pray for the study and the group.
- Adjust the room as needed.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.



After the Group Study Time

- Consider the After the Session idea at the end of the group plans.
- Contact the group, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests and other appropriate information.
- Record insights gained about teaching, individuals in the group, and Scripture.
- Pray for specific needs of people in the group.
- Do it all again, asking God to open you mind and heart to His Word this week.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.

- **VISIT THEM.** Deliver a copy of the Daily Discipleship Guide to every person in your group.
- **ASK THEM.** That seems simple, but the simple is not always easy. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement instead of a question, such as, “I hope you took a look at the Day 3 activity for this week.” It’s a question disguised as a statement, so it’s not as threatening.
- **TELL THEM.** Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- **SHOW THEM.** Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day 1 as a group.
- **INVITE THEM.** Call on pre-enlisted volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they are using the Daily Exploration section.

As teachers, we have taken on the responsibility of encouraging everyone on our ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. We can’t make them do it, but we can provide them with a tool and encourage them to use it.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

Talk It Out is designed for smaller groups of three to four people to meet weekly. The goal of the smaller groups is simple: holding ourselves and others accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Explain the importance of the smaller groups, emphasizing the goal.
 - Allow the group to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups). This tends to work better than assigning groups.
 - Allow the smaller groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
 - You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
 - Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new people and guests.
 - As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.
-

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
 - Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
 - Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
 - Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.
-

Be in a smaller group:

- Meet with two or three other Bible study leaders as part of your weekly preparation.
- Be part of a smaller group within your class.
- Host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

Building Disciples by Apprenticing Other Leaders

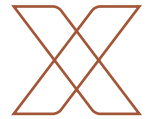
Starting new groups is critical to the life of your church and the lives of the individuals in your group. People in your group need to be challenged to take on a greater role in your church. Providing the opportunity to do so helps them grow and removes the largest barrier to starting new Bible study groups—finding a leader. You can make a difference in the growth of individuals and in the future growth of your church by apprenticing potential group leaders. Here's how you can use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* to make this happen.

- **STEP 1:** Prior to group time, ask a potential leader to follow along in the Leader Helps for that session as you lead the group. Tell him or her to note what you did and what you adjusted. You're just coaching your apprentice to use the book he or she has in a different way.
- **STEP 2:** After that group experience, spend time with the group member going over what you did and how you adjusted the leader material for the group.
- **STEP 3:** Invite him or her to do this again in a few weeks.
- **STEP 4:** Ask him or her to lead a group time or part of one using the suggestions in the Leader Helps for that session. You may be away that week, or you can simply observe as a group member. Offer to help him or her prepare if needed.
- **STEP 5:** As your apprentice gains confidence, allow him or her to teach more in the near future.
- **STEP 6:** As a need for a new group surfaces, prepare to move on to lead the new group, with the apprentice becoming the leader of the current group (which tends to work best), or commission the apprentice and a few others from the group to start a new group.
- **STEP 7:** Do it all again.

Not everyone in the group will become a Bible study leader. For those who do, you can become a mentor to potential leaders, extending your teaching ministry and demonstrating discipleship.

True Power

Session 1 • Romans 1:13-25



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The First-Century Roman Empire*) and **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Romans Time Line*). Bring an envelope to use in the introduction.

ASK: What's a memorable good news moment you've had? How did it affect you? (p. 13)

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud the opening paragraph on page 13. Lead a brief discussion on ways people receive good news.

ILLUSTRATE: Hold up an empty envelope. Allow a few volunteers to share about times they received an envelope containing good news. Explain that the apostle Paul once sent a letter to the Christians in Rome that explained the greatest news imaginable—what we know as the “gospel.”

SHARE: Summarize this content from page 13:

- “Paul introduced himself to the church in Rome by way of the gospel. When anyone used the word ‘gospel’ in those days, they meant that they had good news. For Paul, the gospel meant the good news of

salvation in Jesus Christ. . . . He wanted to encourage believers there, and he also wanted them to partner with him in proclaiming the gospel to others who had not heard it. He testified that telling others the good news of Jesus did not embarrass him. On the contrary, he shared the message with eagerness. He had an obligation to proclaim it everywhere.”

TRANSITION: *In today's study of Romans 1, Paul began building a powerful theological argument for salvation in Christ. And He began by emphasizing the importance of the gospel.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Direct attention to **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The First-Century Roman Empire*) and **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Romans Time Line*) to set the historical context of Rome and Paul's letter to the Romans. Note that Paul wrote this letter toward the end of his third missionary journey.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Romans 1:13-17 as the group listens for why Paul wanted to come to Rome.

EXPLAIN: Point out “Introduction” on **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*). Note that Paul did not plant and had not visited

the church in Rome, so he needed to provide some form of introduction. Share that he used this introduction to launch into a discussion about how every person needs the gospel.

IDENTIFY: Guide the group to work in pairs to examine the verses and make a list of key words or phrases that reveal why Paul wanted to go to Rome. After a few minutes, allow the pairs to share their findings. Highlight the desire for a fruitful ministry.

REVIEW: Encourage volunteers to suggest why “gospel” is such a significant idea in these opening lines of the letter. Share that the good news about Jesus is the power of God that changes lives and brings salvation to everyone who believes.

GUIDE: Direct the group’s attention to Romans 1:16. Encourage the group to memorize this verse, so they can recall it easily when provided an opportunity to share their faith.

ASK: How does remembering that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation” change your confidence in sharing it? (p. 15)

SAY: *Paul had dual desires. On one hand, he wanted everyone to hear the good news of Jesus, the gospel. On the other hand, he wanted believers to grow stronger in Christ. Preaching the gospel could accomplish both.*

WRITE: On a whiteboard write, *No excuses*.

READ: Direct the group to read silently **Romans 1:18-20**, considering how God reveals himself through His creation.

DISCUSS: What does creation teach us about God’s attributes? (p. 15)

GUIDE: Highlight the meaning and purpose of God’s wrath:

- **(1:18)** God’s wrath is not some wild, emotional outburst. Indeed, God’s nature is compassionate, which causes Him to be slow in pouring out His anger (Ex. 34:6). But He does not deal with sin lightly, and His wrath represents a natural response that demonstrates His divine displeasure against sin.

WRITE: Under *No excuses* write the words *General* and *Special*.

EXPLAIN: *Theologians use the words “general revelation” for seeing God through His creation. “Special revelation” comes through Jesus, who we primarily come to know through the Scriptures. Paul emphasized that those who had not received special revelation were still accountable to God because of His general revelation.*

ASK: How are God’s invisible attributes displayed through creation? How should that influence the way we live each day? (p. 15)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 1:21-25** as the group listens for the consequences of rejecting God.

GUIDE: Reflect on the way people deceive themselves when they disconnect from God’s reality:

- The refusal to acknowledge God affects sinners’ minds and hearts. Paul said their

thinking becomes worthless. The word *worthless* also can be rendered as idle, empty, fruitless, useless, powerless, or lacking truth. Their mind chases empty pursuits. Also, their senseless hearts are darkened. Their knowledge of God is clouded with the effects of their evil.

DISCUSS: Group adults into teams of three or four. Direct them to read the passage again and to focus on the “images” people worshiped. Encourage them to discuss why it might be appealing to worship an element of the creation rather than the Creator.

ASK: How do people exchange truth for lies today—and how might you be tempted to do the same? (p. 15)

EXPLAIN: *Paul emphasized that people are accountable for their choices. If they reject the Creator, He will let them follow their own passions and suffer the consequences. But Paul also knew the power of the gospel, which is why he was so passionate about shining the light of truth in a dark world.*



Paul's Letters

Scan here to learn more about Paul's letters in the New Testament and why he wrote them.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers seek opportunities to share the gospel's power with those who need it.

- We can point others to God through what he has revealed in His creation.
- Rejecting God ultimately leads to devastating consequences.

HIGHLIGHT: Refer back to *No excuses* on the board. Remind adults that every person can see what God has created and can make a choice to worship Him. Emphasize that there are no excuses for idolatry today, just like in Paul's day.

DISCUSS: Encourage adults to work in their small groups to read and respond to the first **Apply the Text** activity on page 15. Allow a few minutes for discussion and prayer for those who need to hear the gospel and for adults to find opportunities to share that message with those individuals.

PRAY: Call on a pre-enlisted volunteer to close the group time in prayer, asking God to open the door for opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session, sending the group a text or email reminding them to look for opportunities to share the gospel. Encourage them to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions from page 19. Emphasize that they have valid reasons for being confident in the power of the gospel. Assure them that you will continue praying that God will provide opportunities for them to share the gospel with someone who needs it.

Coming Judgment

Session 2 • Romans 2:1-13



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *The Doctrine of Man*) and **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *Key Words in Romans*). On a whiteboard write *law, accountable, and judge*.

ASK: What does a speeding ticket teach us about accountability? (p. 21)

INTRODUCE: Read aloud the opening paragraph on page 21. Direct the group to signal with a thumbs up or a thumb down if they agree or disagree with the following: *Many people are guilty of speeding on the highways. A speeding ticket usually acts as a deterrent and changes behavior.*

REVIEW: Point to the words recorded on the whiteboard and ask how the three words are related to one another. Summarize the following:

- “In Romans 1:18-25, Paul described the guilt of the Gentile world. The Jews likely would have stood and applauded at Paul’s proclamation of the Gentiles’ guilt. But in chapter 2, Paul reminded the Jews they were no different from the Gentiles when it came to facing God’s judgment. . . . God’s judgment is based on truth and is impartial—both Jews and Gentiles will be judged in the same way.” (p. 21)

EXPLAIN: Emphasize the key truth of today’s session: *God will judge every person according to their response to Him.*

ASK: Why will you come before God to be judged?

TRANSITION: *Today’s study examines Romans 2, where Paul shifted his focus from the Gentiles to the Jews. In the end, even God’s people needed to recognize that knowing, and even obeying, the law did not free them from accountability for their sins.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

REVIEW: Write *No excuses* on the whiteboard. Remind the group that in Romans 1:18-25, Paul focused on the Gentiles having no excuses for their sin. Explain that in Romans 2:1-5, Paul shared that the Jewish people had no excuses either.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Romans 2:1-5** as the group counts the number of times words like “judge” are used.

GUIDE: Explain what kind of judgment Paul was addressing.

- **(2:1)** Jesus had warned against judging others in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:1). This is not a simple evaluation of someone’s actions or holding them

accountable. Rather, it involves hypocrisy, where the one doing the judging is doing “the same things.” The verb’s present tense indicates that a “judge” is also a habitual sinner.

DISCUSS: Direct attention to **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *The Doctrine of Man*). Lead adults to suggest ways Paul’s words in verses 1-5 align with this statement about humanity. Note that our universal guilt removes any moral high ground for judging others.

ASK: Why do individuals tend to judge others while overlooking their own sin? (p. 23)

IDENTIFY: Guide the group to identify the three characteristics of God in Romans 2:4. Point out that all people live under God’s judgment, but He delays judgment to move people toward repentance. Emphasize that one day, though, the ones who reject His kindness will face His wrath.

DRAW: Draw two columns on the whiteboard or a large sheet of paper. Label one column *righteous* and the other *unrighteous*.

READ: Instruct the group to read Romans 2:6-11, looking for characteristics of the righteous and the unrighteous.

RECORD: Direct the group to work in pairs to read the verses again and share the characteristics they discover. After a few minutes, allow a few volunteers to share their responses. Record their answers on the chart.

EXPLAIN: Point out that Paul wanted both Jews and the Gentiles to realize that good

works do not provide salvation. Highlight the truth that good works bring glory to God and reveal our relationship with Him, but they will never save anyone from judgment.

DISCUSS: Based on these verses, what is the key to a healthy relationship with God? (p. 23)

DISCUSS: To illustrate Paul’s point, share the following case study:

- *John and Sam both love to play golf. On a par three hole, John takes three strokes and records a par, while Sam takes five strokes and records a par. Sam thinks he deserves the same score as his friend. Ask: **How do people treat God with indifference and expect the same result as their friend who honors God? How do Paul’s words in these verses relate to that?***

REVIEW: Emphasize God’s impartiality when it comes to judgment:

- **(2:11)** God judges all people impartially; He shows no favoritism. Like certain Jews in the first century, some today believe their heritage gives them a special standing with God. Nothing could be further from the truth. A right relationship with Him is never based on favoritism.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Romans 2:12-13 as the group listens for how God responds to those who hear or know His commands, yet refuse to obey them.

GUIDE: Encourage adults to consider the distinctions between hearing God’s words and obeying God’s words. Discuss why Paul

(and God) would place such an emphasis on doing, not just hearing.

REVIEW: Summarize this information to dig deeper into the need for obedience:

- **(2:13)** Hearing God’s Word alone is not enough to make someone righteous before Him; it must be lived out. Yet this obedience is not a means of earning righteousness. Only Jesus has ever fully obeyed the law. Those who put their faith in Him are the true doers of the law.

ASK: Why can’t my good works make me right with God? (p. 23)

INSTRUCT: Encourage a few volunteers to define “justification.” Direct attention to **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Key Words in Romans*) and highlight the definition. Note other words that appear in these verses (examples: *sin, law, righteous*). Emphasize that hearing the gospel is not sufficient for salvation. Share that people must embrace Jesus’s sacrifice and His offer of salvation.

SHARE: As time allows, walk the group through the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover. Assure adults that you are available to speak with anyone who has questions about a personal relationship with Jesus.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible study passage:

- We should focus on our own sin rather than judging others.
- Our eternal destination is based on our response to God in this life.
- Unbelievers need to understand that good works will not justify them before God.

DISCUSS: Place adults in groups of three or four and direct each group to discuss the **Apply the Text** activity on page 23. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what some people trust to be right with God. Encourage the larger group to compare those beliefs to what Paul expressed in Romans 2.

REFLECT: Highlight the **Apply the Text** questions on page 27. Challenge adults to spend time during the week reflecting on their personal relationship with Jesus. Remind them that you are available to speak with anyone who has questions about Jesus. Note that even those who have a relationship with Jesus still need to trust Him fully each day.

PRAY: Refer back to the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** QR code on page 15. Challenge adults to use the prayer prompt in the prayer guide to pray through the Scripture passage this week. Close the session in prayer, asking God to move in powerful ways during the week.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by sending the group a text or email that assures them you are praying for them. Encourage them to share requests with you so your prayers can be more focused.



Saving Faith

Session 3 • Romans 3:21–4:5



ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Outline of Romans) and **Pack Item 4** (Poster: Key Words in Romans). Make copies of **Pack Item 10** (Handout: Justification by Faith). Position an empty chair where adults can see it.

ASK: In whom or in what have you been placing your trust lately? What factors can make trusting others challenging? (p. 29)

READ: Read aloud the opening paragraph on page 29. Highlight the last sentence.

ILLUSTRATE: Direct attention to the chair. Sit in the chair and explain that there are things we accept by faith, like believing chairs will hold our weight. Lead the group to list other examples of everyday faith. Record the responses on the board.

SHARE: Emphasize the importance of faith when it comes to experiencing the forgiveness God offers through Jesus:

- “Nothing we do will ever be enough to earn God’s forgiveness. For that reason, we cannot brag about what we have done to be righteous. Our right standing with God comes through Christ alone. He offers the gift of His forgiveness freely to every

person in the same way. When we turn to Christ by faith, we will be forgiven.” (p. 29)

REFLECT: Guide the group to consider where they have placed their faith and why. Discuss other things people might trust to find peace with God and why those things are ultimately futile.

TRANSITION: *To this point in Romans, Paul focused on proving that we’re all sinners who cannot save ourselves. In this session, we’ll see that God has made a way for faith to be the solution to a right standing with Him.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

REVIEW: Highlight the following truths to set the context for this session: *all people have a problem called sin; our sin problem is only solved through a relationship with Jesus Christ; forgiveness is given, not earned.* Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Outline of Romans), noting that today’s session begins the third point on the outline.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Romans 3:21-26** as the group listens for how a right standing before God becomes a reality.

ASK: Why can’t good works lead to salvation? (p. 31)

EXAMINE: Point out the word “Justification” on **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Key Words in Romans*). Lead a brief discussion of how Paul used the word and why it is significant.

COLLABORATE: Group the adults into teams of two to four people. Provide a copy of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Justification by Faith*) and a highlighter for each person. Assign each team one of the sub-topics in the handout, directing them to read and highlight key words or phrases and discuss how the information clarifies their understanding of justification.

SUMMARIZE: Summarize this content related to “redemption”:

- **(3:23-24)** Redemption refers to the purchase price for slaves, prisoners, or criminals. The word would have reminded Jews of their liberation from Egypt (Deut. 7:8; 9:26; 15:15; 24:18). Paul emphasized our redemption is “by his grace,” a gift offered freely. But what is free to us was not free to God; it came with a cost.

EXPLAIN: Point out that Paul used language related to the ark of the covenant to describe Jesus’s death on the cross. Note that just as priests would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement, Jesus shed His blood for us. Emphasize that as our substitute, He both satisfied God’s demand for justice and made salvation by grace through faith possible.

WRITE: Write *Falling Short* on the board or a large sheet of paper. Clarify that everyone falls short of God’s standard, so everyone

needs to accept the price Jesus paid (redemption) so they can experience right standing with God (justification).

READ: Read aloud **Romans 3:27-31** as the group listens for why people have no grounds for spiritual bragging.

SHARE: On the whiteboard write *Finding Hope*. Explain that since none of us can stand perfect before God, we can only find hope through faith in Jesus Christ.

ASK: What does it mean to be justified by faith instead of works? (p. 31)

REVIEW: Point out that God is impartial in judgment and in justification. Note that for Him, the issue is faith. State:

- *Because God loves all people in the same way, He justifies all people in the same way. His forgiveness is available to anyone who trusts in Jesus. Although Jews set themselves apart through circumcision and viewed Gentiles as uncircumcised, those distinctions were irrelevant to the one God who offers one means of salvation to everyone.*

READ: Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 5:17 and another to reread Romans 3:31. Encourage the group to listen for the role of the law in the life of a believer. Note that Paul did not disregard the law, but he did affirm that it fails to provide what is necessary for salvation.

ASK: How would you explain the importance of the law to a new believer? (p. 31)

TRANSITION: *The Jews considered themselves children of Abraham. As he continued building his case, Paul used Abraham as a prime example of one who was justified by faith, not works.*

ASK: Would you rather have someone tell you how to do something or show you how to do something? Why? (p. 31)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 4:1-5** as the group determines why Abraham was considered righteous.

REVIEW: Summarize Abraham's role in the Jewish faith:

- **(4:1-3)** For Jewish people, Abraham embodied the belief that justification could be earned through works. His life seemed to support that conviction. He left his homeland, journeyed to a distant land, and with Sarah became the father of a family that eventually grew into the nation of Israel. From a Jewish perspective, such accomplishments appeared to merit God's favor. Paul, however, insisted that before God, Abraham had no grounds for boasting. His case rested squarely on Scripture. Genesis 15:6 says, "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Abraham was made right with God because of his faith—not because of his works

EXPLAIN: Enlist a volunteer to read Genesis 15:6. Point out that "credited" means adding something to the positive side of a ledger. However, this transaction was the result of God's gracious gift, not a payment for works performed—by Abraham or by us.

ASK: In what ways do you sometimes try to "earn" God's favor through your actions? (p. 31)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Everyone falls short of God's standard, so everyone needs Jesus.
- We can never be "good enough" to make ourselves right with God.
- God calls all people to accept His offer of salvation through faith in Christ.

ASK: What difference does God's gift of forgiveness through Christ make in your life?

DISCUSS: Direct adults to work in pairs to discuss the **Apply the Text** activity on page 31. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their thoughts. Encourage adults to share ideas for breaking through those barriers, especially those related to works-based salvation.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for the gift of salvation. Encourage volunteers to voice a sentence prayer expressing their gratitude to God for His gift of salvation.

AFTER THE SESSION

During the week, send the group a text or email that encourages them to memorize Romans 3:23-24 as a way to remember God's gift of salvation.



Restored Relationship

Session 4 • Romans 5:1-11, 18-21



ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 5** (Poster: Key Verse: Romans 5:19). Make copies of **Pack Item 9** (Handout: *Praying Scripture in Romans*). Gather several Bible dictionaries.

INTRODUCE: Direct the group to read the opening paragraph on page 37 to themselves. Encourage them to reflect on times when they have been on either side of the adult-child conversation.

REFLECT: **When have you seen reconciliation in action lately? With whom have you sought reconciliation?** (p. 37)

DISCUSS: Draw two columns on the board or a large sheet of paper: *Forgive others* and *Seek Forgiveness*. Encourage adults to share which one they feel is easier and why. Record their thoughts in the appropriate column. Point out that every person needs to be reconciled to God.

TRANSITION: *Through today's focal verses, Paul gave believers reasons to rejoice in Christ because we have been reconciled with God through faith in Him.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Read Romans 4:3. Remind adults that Paul taught that everyone needs to be reconciled to God, but that this reconciliation cannot be earned by good works. Note that he pointed to Abraham as a prime example of someone who was made righteous by faith, not works.

READ: **Invite a volunteer to read aloud Romans 5:1-5** as the group identifies blessings found in these verses. Point out that the first word in Romans 5:1 is “therefore,” indicating that Paul’s message here was an extension of his teaching on justification in earlier chapters.

GUIDE: Encourage adults to share the blessings they noticed as they read the verses and record their responses on the board. Group adults into three teams and give each team a Bible dictionary. Assign each team either *peace*, *grace*, or *hope*. Instruct each team to scan the definition in the dictionary and to discuss how believers and non-believers might use the term differently. (Note: For larger groups, create more teams and allow more than one team to research the same term. For smaller groups, an individual can be a team.) After a few minutes, allow volunteers to recap their discussion.

HIGHLIGHT: Draw attention to the reality of suffering for those who belong to Christ. Affirm that being a believer does not free us from facing afflictions in this life:

- **(5:3)** Believers can rejoice in suffering because they know God is at work through it. Paul explained that suffering for the gospel produces endurance, which shapes character and leads to hope. This hope is a steady confidence that God's purposes cannot be undone by any circumstance (Rom. 8:28).

ASK: How does “peace with God” affect your life today and in eternity? (p. 39)

SHARE: *Paul said that the hope God provides is grounded in His love for us. Through His Spirit, He covers us with that love. And, as we learn to embrace His love for us, our hope keeps growing.*

READ: Read aloud **Romans 5:6-11** as the group listens for how God proves His love for humanity.

ASK: Who would you be willing to die for? How do those individuals compare to people you consider your enemies? (p. 39)

HIGHLIGHT: Share how Paul emphasized God's illogical love for the human race:

- **(5:6-8)** Jesus's death for ungodly people defies human logic. While someone might rarely die for a good person—or willingly sacrifice for a loved one or the innocent—no one chooses suffering for an enemy. Yet that is what God did. Christ died for us for one reason alone: God's love, fully displayed at the cross.

ASK: How does Jesus's death prove His love for humanity? (p. 39)

SUMMARIZE: Lead the group to share how they would summarize Romans 5:8 in ten words or less. Emphasize “still sinners.” Remind adults that Jesus didn't wait for us to improve ourselves or reach a certain spiritual landmark. Affirm that He met us where we are by dying for sinners, enemies of God.

ASK: How should we respond to this awesome gift of justification and reconciliation with God? (p. 39)



Salvation

What does it mean that we have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved, according to Scripture? Scan here to learn more.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 5:18-21** while the group considers the contrast between Adam and Jesus.

DISCUSS: On a whiteboard draw a two-column chart. Label one column *Adam* and the other *Jesus*. Lead a brief discussion on what the verses say about each one. Record responses on the chart.

REVIEW: Summarize the following to highlight how Jesus's death overcame the curse of Adam's sin:

- **(5:19)** Adam's disobedience sent consequences rippling across all humanity, placing everyone under the certainty of God's judgment. In stark contrast, Christ's

obedience shone with the hope of eternal life. Through His obedience, Jesus changed everything, becoming the perfect sacrifice for our sinful disobedience.

GUIDE: Direct attention to **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Key Verse: Romans 5:19*). Read the verse aloud together as a group. Distribute a sticky note and pen to each person, encouraging them to copy the verse and place it in their Bible to focus on memorizing.

ASK: How do I know Jesus's death was meant for me? (p. 39)

TRANSITION: Affirm that what Adam lost, Jesus restored. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Romans*) or encourage use of the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on p. 15). Encourage adults to pray Romans 5:19 back to God.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers should embrace their new relationship with God.
- Individuals can be reconciled to God thanks to the loving sacrifice Jesus offered on the cross.
- Our lives can be transformed by the matchless grace of Jesus.

EVALUATE: Using a scale of one to five, with one being "seldom" and five being "often," direct adults to respond to these statements:

- My attitude toward myself reflects my relationship with Christ.
- Knowing I am reconciled with God affects my daily life.
- It is easy for others to see that my life has been transformed by the matchless grace of Jesus.

DISCUSS: Lead a brief discussion on the **Apply the Text** activity on page 39.

PRAY: Refer back to **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Key Verse: Romans 5:19*). Encourage the group to use **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Romans*) or the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** as they continue praying through that verse this week. Close the session in prayer, thanking God for sending Jesus as Savior and asking Him to reveal opportunities to share the gospel with someone else during the week.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send the group a text or email during the week to focus on the **Apply the Text** questions on page 43. Encourage them to evaluate their walk with Jesus honestly and to consider the difference He should make in their lives each day. Consider calling any adults who have not attended this quarter. Share what has been covered in Romans to this point and encourage them to join the group for the next session.



Freedom

Session 5 • Romans 6:1-14



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*). Prepare copies of **Pack Item 11** (*Handout: A New Way of Life*). On the board, write “_____ Free” and “Free _____.”

READ: Read the opening paragraph on page 45, encouraging adults to consider things from which they have been set free. Note the feelings associated with “debt free” and “cancer free.” Allow adults to suggest other words that might fit in the blanks for “_____ Free” and “Free _____.” Record their responses under the proper heading.

ASK: In what ways would the promise of freedom make you happy? (p. 45)

REVIEW: Remind adults that Paul had already shown everyone needs a Savior and Jesus is that Savior. Summarize this content from page 45 to highlight Paul’s next step:

- “Paul reminded the Romans that they were not just forgiven of their sins—they were dead to sin. When they accepted Jesus’s sacrifice, they died to sin because all their sins were nailed to the cross. Not only that, but as Jesus rose from the dead, they had been raised to walk in newness

of life. They were to stop embracing the old ways and embrace their Savior rather than their sin.”

EXPLAIN: Point to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*), highlighting the fourth point: *New Life in Christ*. Share that today’s session focuses on the freedom believers experience in Christ.

TRANSITION: *In a relationship with God, the natural progression is to move from justification to sanctification. Because we are right with God, our lives should reflect Him to others. As we’ll see, that transformed behavior was Paul’s focus in Romans 6.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Ask a volunteer to read **Romans 6:1-7** as the group underlines recurring words in the verses. Allow adults to share words they noted. Record them on the board.

SHARE: Explain Paul’s opening question in verse 1 and why it’s significant to understand:

- **(6:1)** Paul affirmed that God’s grace increased where sin increased (Rom. 5:20). Having made that claim, he immediately posed a question: If grace grows with sin, should believers sin more?

Faithful disciples might ask this sincerely, but opponents of the gospel would raise it to mislead those who trusted in Christ. Paul's response leaves no room for debate: "Absolutely not!" His sharp answer underscores a crucial truth—when we gave our lives to Christ, we died to a life ruled by sin.

ASK: Why shouldn't believers continue living in sin if sin multiplies God's grace? (p. 47)

DISCUSS: Highlight the word "baptized" (v. 3). Distribute copies of **Pack Item 11** (*Handout: A New Way of Life*) and encourage adults to scan the article. Lead a brief discussion on how baptism illustrates what Paul was sharing about new life in Christ. Talk about the contrasting images of death and life.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Romans 6:8-11, listening for the contrast between being dead in our sin and alive in Christ.

DISCUSS: Write *Suggestion* and *Command* on the board. Allow adults to share differences between a suggestion and a command. Record their responses on the board under the proper word. Read the following sentences and encourage the group to share if they are suggestions or commands:

- Clean your room.
- Try to eat healthy today.
- Consider yourself dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus.

ASK: What does it mean to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God?

What does this look like practically in your life? (p. 47)

SHARE: Explain that Romans 6:11 is not optional; it is a command to be obeyed. Highlight the role of Jesus's death and the importance of our obedient response to die to sin:

- **(6:11)** Jesus died to break sin's rule and open new life for those who trust Him. In verse 11, Paul calls believers to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. The word "consider" comes from the language of accounting and can mean "count," "credit," or "reckon." It calls believers to accept God's declaration as true. We have died to sin, and we now live to God in Christ Jesus. That truth must be embraced as reality and lived out.

SAY: *Paul used the term "in Christ" eighty-six times in his letters, eleven times in Romans, and twice in chapter 6 (vv. 11,23). To be "in Christ" means to live out a new identity as He lives in us, reshaping our character, priorities, and purpose. We are connected to Christ as the head of His body and to the other members of His body.*

ASK: How does the resurrection of Jesus give you confidence in your daily struggle with sin? (p. 47)

TRANSITION: *The Christian life is never just about knowing more. It's also about doing. We are His hands and feet in this world.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Romans 6:12-14 as the group listens for the challenge that comes with being alive in Christ.

EXPLAIN: Highlight the word *therefore* and explain how Paul turned his attention to the freedom believers enjoy in Christ.

ASK: How can a person keep from obeying sin and its desires? How can a person avoid allowing sin to become his or her master? (p. 47)

REVIEW: Explain the “ruler” image Paul’s wording conveys in these verses. Highlight the challenge to decide who or what will govern our lives as believers.

- **(6:14)** Paul described sin as a ruling power, but believers are commanded not to let it reign. Though this resistance depends on grace, it also requires the will. Having died to sin (v. 11), believers must actively fight its influence in their lives.

SAY: *Romans 6:12 is a command, indicating believers have a choice and a responsibility. We are dead to sin, but we still need to reject sin’s temptations and influence. We need to replace that desire for sin with a passion for obeying God and being used by Him to fulfill His purposes in our lives and in the world.*

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points:

- Believers need to understand that they live in union with Christ and act accordingly.
- Believers are to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.
- Believers are to offer themselves to God for the accomplishment of His righteous purposes.

DISCUSS: Lead adults to talk about the imagery of baptism in this session’s verses and its significance for believers.

ASK: How does baptism symbolize your new life in Christ? How does recalling your baptism encourage you to remain focused on devoting yourself to God? (p. 47) If adults have not been baptized, challenge them to take that step of faith.

REFLECT: Direct adults to read the **Apply the Text** questions on page 51 silently. Suggest they spend time this week talking with God about what His new life should look like in them. Urge them to make changes that He reveals.

PRAY: Remind adults that salvation comes to us as a free gift from God because of His grace. Call on a volunteer to close in prayer, thanking God for His gift of salvation and asking that each adult will have the strength to abstain from sin and to follow Christ in obedience during the week ahead.

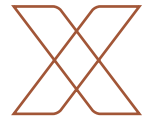
AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by sending the group a text or an email that encourages them to consider how effective they are at denying sin and offering themselves as instruments of God’s righteousness. Remind them that spiritual warfare is a part of the Christian life, but God has given us everything we need to be victorious. Challenge them to reflect on the gift of God’s justification with a commitment to sanctification in their lives.



Struggle

Session 6 • Romans 7:4-6, 14-25



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outline of Romans*) and **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *Key Words in Romans*). Prepare copies of **Pack Item 12** (Handout: *To Do or Not to Do*). Write the following words on the board or a large sheet of paper: *inhaler, life preserver, firefighter, GPS maps, and CPR*.

ASK: What's your favorite "rescue" story? Who comes to mind when you're asked to name the first person who ever rescued you? (p. 53)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 53. Talk about other ways people might use the term *rescue*.

DISCUSS: Direct the group's attention to the words on the board or paper. Lead a brief discussion on how each one might relate to the idea of being rescued. Share that Paul understood the importance of our spiritual rescue from sin:

- "Everyone is a servant—either to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness. Believers, freed from sin through Christ, now serve God, resulting in holiness and eternal life. Paul concluded that 'the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ

Jesus' (6:16-23). . . . However, just because believers are set free from sin's power and are dead to sin, it doesn't mean that they no longer struggle with sin. In Romans 7:14-25, Paul described the inner struggle of desiring to do good but being pulled by sin. This tension shows human weakness and dependence on Christ." (p. 53)

EXPLAIN: Direct the group to the fourth point on **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outline of Romans*), "New Life in Christ." Share that this study focuses on how even though sin remains a powerful force, Christ gives us the power to overcome.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

REVIEW: Direct attention to **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *Key Words in Romans*) and encourage adults to share words that the group has considered in earlier sessions of the study of Romans. Highlight terms like *faith, gospel, justification, grace, righteousness, sanctification, and sin*.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 7:4-6** as the group listens for another word that appears on **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *Key Words in Romans*). Point out the word *law* and its definition.

ASK: What did Paul say about the law in these verses? (p. 55)

REVIEW: Point out that the law and sin are two sides of the same coin. Share that while the law is not sinful, it reveals our sin and stirs up a desire to sin—yet it can’t do anything to free us from sin. Summarize the following:

- **(7:4-6)** Paul addressed believers as his “brothers and sisters” to emphasize their shared relationship with God. Through Christ’s death, they died to the law and now belong to Him. Though the law revealed God’s righteous standards, it stirred the sinful nature and led to death because its demands could not be met. The law told us what to do but could not produce true spiritual life. What believers needed—and now have—is the ability to serve God in the newness of the Spirit.

ASK: What practical difference should it make that a believer belongs to Christ? In what ways does it change your identity and purpose? (p. 55)

READ: Lead the group to read silently Romans 7:14-23, noting how Paul described his struggle with sin.

GUIDE: Share about the spiritual tension Paul experienced between sin and righteousness:

- **(7:18-20)** Paul desired to do what was good—a desire awakened by the Holy Spirit—but he found himself unable to carry it out. Instead, he repeatedly did the very evil he opposed. In these verses, Paul exposed the intense struggle that continues even after salvation.

Though believers have died to sin’s authority, its attraction remains, creating a real and persistent conflict within the Christian life.

ILLUSTRATE: On a whiteboard draw a line representing a rope used for a tug-of-war. On one end write *Holy Spirit* and on the other end *Sin Nature*. Discuss how the tension between obeying Christ and giving in to temptation is ongoing even in the life of the believer.

ASK: How does recognizing sin’s presence in you change the way you depend on God? (p. 55)

EXPLAIN: Affirm that our struggle with sin is real. Remind adults that temptation in itself is not a sin. Point out that our response to temptation and sin is what matters. Note that while the struggle is difficult, the tension should encourage us to make the right choices and to rely on God to help us overcome sin.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Romans 7:24-25 as the group listens for Paul’s conclusion about his own condition. Encourage adults to share how Paul’s emotions resonate with their own feelings at times.

ASK: In light of the difficulty in battling sin, what keeps us from despair and hopelessness? (p. 55)

HIGHLIGHT: Highlight Paul’s solution for dealing with the tension we face as believers who are still tempted by sin:

- **(7:24-25)** Paul’s statement about himself gives us needed direction as we face

the conflict that goes on inside us. From experience, we know that some conflicts can be resolved. Yet other conflicts in life are never fully resolved. They can be managed, but the struggle itself does not end. Life continues, and the conflict remains part of it. While Paul struggled within himself, he also realized that God had not left him to fight the battle on his own. Like Paul, we place our trust in Christ to help us manage the ongoing inner struggle with sin.

PARAPHRASE: Divide the group into teams of three or four. Give each group an index card and pencil. Direct them to work together to create a paraphrase of Romans 7:24-25. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their work. Affirm our need to lean into Christ to experience victory in our struggles against sin.

ASK: In what ways can you live more consciously in the freedom Christ provides? (p. 55)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these bullet points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers bear fruit for God when they live in the Spirit of God.
- Believers need to recognize that the struggle with sin is real, and they need help.
- Believers can express gratitude to God that they do not have to battle sin in their own power, but that Christ provides the victory.

EVALUATE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: To Do or Not To Do*). Encourage the group to spend time analyzing their own struggles with sin.

DISCUSS: Direct attention to the **Apply the Text** questions on page 55. Discuss how believers can deal with the tension sin creates and how we can demonstrate gratitude for God's help.

PRAY: Remind adults that Romans 7:4 is the memory verse for this session. Encourage adults to pray it back to God as a way to memorize it. Urge them to focus on how God can help them die to sin when they experience temptation. Close in prayer, thanking God for victory in Christ as we battle sin.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send the group an email or text during the week, reminding them to pray for one another. Encourage them to read and reflect again on Paul's practical words about overcoming sin in Romans 7. Let them know that you are praying for them and encourage them to share things that you can pray with them about specifically. Close the message with the text from Romans 7:4, this session's memory verse.



Indwelt

Session 7 • Romans 8:14-27



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *Key words in Romans*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Romans Time Line*) and **Pack Item 13** (Handout: *Adoption in the First Century*) for the group.

ASK: When you picture a happy family, whose family do you think of? (p. 61)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 61. Encourage adults to suggest images or ideas that represent family or home to them.

ASK: How does being a part of God's family shape your sense of belonging? (p. 61)

REVIEW: Note that Paul used the idea of family to illustrate the Christian life. This family isn't connected by DNA but the work of the Holy Spirit. Living by the Spirit rather than the flesh proves that one is truly God's child—a relationship marked by intimacy and guaranteed inheritance. Those who belong to God by faith are "heirs of God and coheirs with Christ" (8:17).

TRANSITION: *Sometimes, the Bible's teachings about the Holy Spirit can make believers uncomfortable or confused. But Romans 8 makes it clear that the Spirit's*

work in our lives is a blessing and evidence of our family relationship with God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CONTEXT: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Romans Time Line*). Remind adults that Paul likely wrote this letter during his third missionary journey. Use **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *Key Words in Romans*) to review key words in the letter.

READ: Read Romans 8:14-17 aloud as the group listens for changes that occur when a person turns to Christ in faith. Allow volunteers to share what they noted.

ASK: According to these verses, what are some key differences between a believer and an unbeliever? (p. 63)

REVIEW: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (Handout: *Adoption in the First Century*). Encourage adults to scan the article and to note how ancient adoption compares to spiritual adoption. Briefly explain that "Abba" is a term of endearment that emphasizes the tender relationship between a father and child.

DISCUSS: How does calling God "Abba, Father" impact your understanding of prayer and intimacy with Him? (p. 63)

HIGHLIGHT: Summarize the following to explain what it means to be an heir with Christ:

- **(8:17)** As members of God's family, we have access to all of His riches. Paul was not promoting a prosperity gospel; rather, he was affirming that God's resources are sufficient to meet every need. He also reminded the Romans that being coheirs with Christ may include suffering alongside Him. Yet when we suffer for the sake of our faith, we can be confident that we will ultimately share in His glory.

SAY: *Any struggles in this life cannot compare to the blessings of eternity.*

READ: Direct the group to read silently **Romans 8:18-25**, noting the hope expressed in these verses.

SHARE: Note that Romans 8:19-22 shares how creation will be set free from the curse of sin, while verses 23-25 affirm that God's "adopted children" will be redeemed as well. Point out that both creation and believers suffer because of sin, and both look forward to a future hope thanks to Jesus.

ASK: How does the hope expressed in these verses help you in times of adversity? (p. 63)

- **(8:18)** Paul said suffering was part of being an heir in God's family, but he also emphasized that the "sufferings of this present time" can't compare with the "glory . . . to be revealed." This was the first of three encouragements God offers suffering believers. Paul reminded the

Romans that God would reveal His glory (Rom. 8:18-25), that God provides the Holy Spirit (vv. 26-27), and that God works for our good (vv. 28-30).

DISCUSS: Read Romans 8:23 again aloud. Explain the significance of "firstfruits."

- **(8:22-23)** All creation joins humanity in groaning. The "labor pains" point to Christ's return (Mark 13:8), when God's children will be fully redeemed. Until that day, believers possess the Spirit as the firstfruits. In the Old Testament, firstfruits were the initial portion of the harvest set apart for God (Ex. 23:19; Lev. 23:9-14). In the same way, the Spirit guarantees that God will finish His work in His people through the redemption of their bodies at the final resurrection. Until then, the struggle between flesh and Spirit continues.

TRANSITION: *The Holy Spirit gives us the confidence we need to know that we are God's adopted children. His presence also reminds us that there is more to life than what we are experiencing here on earth. Those assurances should fill us with hope for the future and offer security until that day comes.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 8:26-27** as the group listens for how the Holy Spirit supports the hope we have in Christ.

ASK: When was the last time you didn't know what to pray? What practical difference does it make knowing that the Holy Spirit intercedes for you? (p. 63)

SHARE: Point out that as humans we can feel overwhelmed by our circumstances, which makes it hard to articulate our heart to God. Note that this is why we need the Spirit's help in prayer.

- **(8:26-27)** We can be especially grateful for the Spirit's help in our weakness. Weakness often appears as confusion or uncertainty that leaves us frustrated, unsure even of how to pray. In those moments, the Spirit comes to our aid. He intercedes when words fail and carries our unspoken burdens to God on our behalf.

ASK: How does knowing that God understands both your heart and the Spirit's intercession give you peace? (p. 63)

SAY: *Between the Holy Spirit praying for us and God the Father searching our hearts, we have many reasons to rejoice. We can be confident that we have access to the Father through Christ, hope for the future, and the Holy Spirit supporting us when we feel weak.*

ASK: How much do you depend on the Holy Spirit to help you when you pray?

PRAY: Challenge the group to depend more on the Holy Spirit's leadership, especially when they don't know how to pray.

CHALLENGE

HIGHLIGHT: Review these bullet points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers can confidently approach God as Father.

- The indwelling of the Spirit and the promise of what is yet to come motivates believers to live in hope.
- Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit is interceding to the Father for them.

EVALUATE: Lead the group to evaluate their own response to the following statements on a scale of 1-5, with one being "seldom" and five being "often":

- I approach God confidently as my Father.
- The presence of the Holy Spirit motivates me to live in hope.
- I recognize that the Holy Spirit is interceding for me.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to respond to the **Apply the Text** questions on page 63.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for making us a part of His family, and for His Spirit's continuing work in our lives.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by sending the group a text or email that reminds them the Holy Spirit is praying for them. Encourage them to spend time meditating on Romans 8:15, this session's memory verse. Challenge them to consider their adoption and to ask God to help them live it out in practical ways each day.

Believe

Session 8 • Romans 9:30–10:3, 9–17



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: The Doctrine of Man*). Make copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Justification by Faith*).

READ: Direct the group to read the opening paragraph on page 69. Encourage volunteers to share stories of when they did something wrong and resisted confessing.

ASK: What's the connection between confessing to a crime and believing that you broke the law? (p. 69)

SHARE: Write *Confessing Christ* on the board. Point out that this is a different kind of confession, but it still involves telling the truth. Explain that rather than admitting a mistake, we are affirming Jesus as the one true hope for all that we have done wrong.

ASK: From what you've learned from Romans, how did many Jews feel about accepting Jesus as the Messiah? Why?

CONTEXT: Share that today's session focuses on Romans 9–10, where Paul turned his attention to the nation of Israel. He expressed a longing for his fellow Jews to accept Jesus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PREPARE: On a whiteboard draw a two-column chart with one side labeled *Jews* and the other *Gentiles*.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Romans 9:30–33 and encourage the group to listen for the different paths the two groups followed. Allow the group to share the distinctives between Jews and Gentiles based on these verses. Record their responses under the appropriate column on the board.

SUMMARIZE: The Gentiles were not seeking righteousness and lived in spiritual darkness, yet many believed when they heard the gospel. Israel, by contrast, pursued righteousness through works, devoting themselves to the law rather than trusting in Christ—a path that kept them from being right with God.

ASK: Why might people stumble over the message of the gospel? (p. 71)

TRANSITION: *Paul recognized many Jews rejected Jesus with a misguided zeal for the law, while Gentiles with no background in the law more easily embraced faith in Christ. He longed for them to redirect their zeal and accept what Jesus had done for them.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Romans 10:1-3 while the group identifies Paul's desire for the Jewish nation.

SHARE: In the *Jews* column on the board, write *Misguided Zeal*. Note that while the Jews had a passion for God and His law, their zeal moved them in the wrong direction. Point out that trusting in their own efforts pushed them farther from God instead of closer to Him.

ASK: How did Paul's love for the Jews lead him to respond to their needs? (p. 71)

SUMMARIZE: Discuss responses. Highlight Paul's desire to pray for the salvation of His fellow Jews.

EXAMINE: Note that Paul was no stranger to a misguided zeal related to the Mosaic law. He carried a deep burden for the Jews because he once shared their mindset. He had taken pride in his Jewish credentials. Encourage adults to read Philippians 3:3-11 silently. When they are done, lead a discussion of those verses focused on these two questions:

- **Why did Paul understand the zeal the Jews had regarding law?**
- **What did he learn about righteousness from the law after He came to Christ?**

SAY: *Paul had checked all the boxes for being an upstanding Jew. If anyone could claim a right relationship with God through the law, it was him. But once he met Christ, Paul knew that the law would never be enough. Now he wanted other Jews to see and understand that as well. That's what drove him to pray for them.*

ASK: Whose salvation are you continually praying for? (p. 71)

READ: Read aloud Romans 10:9-13, encouraging the group to listen for key words in Paul's message. Highlight the words *confess* and *believe*.

ASK: What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord? (p. 71)

SUMMARIZE: Discuss responses. Summarize this content to provide more insights:

- **(10:9)** Confessing Jesus as Lord is to acknowledge Him as God—something many Jews found difficult and a key reason they rejected Him. This confession is the outward expression of genuine faith, which goes beyond mere words to a heartfelt belief that God raised Jesus from the dead. Belief and confession together form the essence of saving faith, they are two sides of the same coin.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Romans 10:14-17 as the group listens for four questions posed by Paul. Lead the group to name the four questions and discuss how they describe the process of coming to a saving relationship with Jesus.

ASK: What hinders people from calling on Jesus for salvation? What role do believers play in removing these hindrances? (p. 71)

REVIEW: Draw attention to **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: The Doctrine of Man*). Read the text on the poster aloud as a group. Talk about how this doctrine aligns with the needs Paul described in Romans 10:14-17.

FOCUS: Highlight the fourth question in the list. Note that while the others are related to the person receiving the message, the fourth emphasizes the need for believers to share the message.

- **(10:15)** This fourth question echoes the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), challenging us to support missionaries and other vocational ministers called to proclaim the gospel worldwide. At the same time, it reminds every believer that we are sent to share the gospel where we live. Paul's reference to Isaiah 52:7 encourages us to embrace our responsibility to ensure others hear the good news.

COMPARE: Divide the group into teams of two to four people to complete the **Bible Skill** activity on page 71. After a few minutes, allow time for each team to recap their discussion. Highlight the truth that those who have heard and accepted the gospel have a responsibility before God to share that message with those who still need to hear. Lead a brief discussion on practical ways believers can prepare to share the gospel and to be alert for opportunities God provides to be "sent."

CHALLENGE

HIGHLIGHT: Review these bullet points from this week's Bible study passage:

- All people need to understand that true righteousness comes through faith not by works.

- Believers can follow Paul's example by praying for the salvation of lost people.
- Any person who has not yet believed and confessed Jesus can do so and be saved.
- Believers must tell others the gospel message and send missionaries throughout the entire world.

REVIEW: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Justification by Faith*). Encourage adults to scan the article and suggest points that affirm this session's key passages.

REFLECT: Direct adults to the **Apply the Text** activity on page 71. Give them a few minutes to think about when they accepted Christ as Savior. Then, allow a few volunteers to share their stories. Discuss how their testimonies can help them become more effective in sharing the gospel with others.

PRAY: Lead adults in a time of silent prayer, asking God to empower each person to look for opportunities to share the gospel with someone who needs to hear about Jesus this week. Thank God for our salvation and the privilege of sharing with others.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send the group a text or an email challenging them to spend time this week reflecting on the difference Jesus has made in their lives, and to let that truth motivate them to look for opportunities to share the gospel this week.



Kindness

Session 9 • Romans 11:11-24



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*). Make copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Rome*). Write the word *Invitation* on the whiteboard.

DIRECT: Read the opening paragraph on page 77. Highlight the word “Invitation” on the whiteboard. Note that people send invitations in many ways today. Point out that sometimes we are the ones inviting others, while at other times, we are the ones receiving the invitation.

ASK: When was the last time you received an unexpected invitation to something? (p. 77)

SHARE: *Paul understood the tension between the Jews and the gospel. But he also knew that God wasn't done with the Jewish nation. He was living proof that God's invitation for salvation was still open to Israelites—as well as to Gentiles.*

EXPLAIN: Summarize this content from page 77 to highlight God's universal offer of salvation:

- “Paul stressed that God had not turned His back on Israel. His mercy toward the Jews would never be smothered. Quite the

opposite, His abiding love for them would always fuel the fire of His mercy toward them. . . . God showed his mercy to Jews and Gentiles alike.”

TRANSITION: Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*) and highlight Romans 9–11, “The Mystery of Israel.” Remind adults that the last session examined verses from chapters 9–10. Share that this session concludes this section on the nation of Israel by looking at chapter 11.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Ask a volunteer to read **Romans 11:11-16**, listening for how Israel's rejection of the gospel benefited the Gentiles.

REVIEW: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Rome*). Direct adults to work in pairs to scan the article and to highlight things that resonate with them. Lead a brief discussion on how the themes in the article connect to Romans 11:11-16.

EXPLAIN: On a whiteboard write *Jews reject, Gentiles believe, Jews jealous*. Highlight Paul's desire to share the gospel with Gentiles and the impact it could have on Jews who needed to come to Jesus. Note that seeing God at work in the lives of Gentiles

through Christ would prompt the Jews to turn back to Him.

REVIEW: Summarize this information to explain the relationship between the Gentile's acceptance of the gospel and Paul's hope for the Jews:

- **(11:15)** Through the rejection of the Jews, God brought reconciliation to the world. The Gentiles had the opportunity to receive Christ even as the Jews rejected Him. Paul also believed that the acceptance of the Gentiles meant life from the dead for the Jews. It is a cycle of grace. Because the Jews rejected Christ, the Gentiles received Him. Because the Gentiles received Him, the Jews would move toward a spiritual awakening of faith. Israel's faith would move them from being dead in their sin to being made alive in Christ.

ASK: If God's plan of salvation embraces all peoples, what is one next step—prayer, conversation, hospitality, giving, or going—you will take to participate in that plan this week? (p. 79)



God's People

Paul compared Israel to a cultivated olive tree, with Gentiles as wild branches grafted onto the original.

READ: Read aloud Romans 11:17-22 as the group listens for the imagery and process of grafting. Share that the olive tree is a common Old Testament symbol for Israel, God's people.

GUIDE: Explain that grafting connects an outside branch to an existing tree. Note that over time, the grafted branch becomes a vital part of the tree to which it was grafted. Share how Paul used this image to explain the Gentiles' place in God's kingdom:

- **(11:17)** Paul compared the Gentiles to a wild olive branch that God grafted in so they might flourish as His people. The root, in turn, evoked God's life-giving presence among His people. The grafted branch thrived because it shared in the same nourishment that had sustained the cultivated olive tree—an image Paul clearly intended to represent the Jewish people.

DISCUSS: Write the word *boasting* on the board or a large sheet of paper. Lead a brief discussion on why Gentiles might be inclined to boast after being grafted into God's people. Use the following information to supplement the discussion.

- **(11:19-21)** The Gentiles' boast would be that the branches were broken off so wild branches could be brought in. The rejection of the Jews led to the grafting of the Gentiles. However, Paul emphasized that the broken branches resulted from unbelief (v. 20), while the grafting was the result of faith. God didn't favor one group over the other. He saved members of both groups as they came to Him in faith.

SAY: *Paul reminded the Gentiles that God had not spared the original branches from being broken off when they were disobedient. That meant He would use the same standard and judgment for them if they became arrogant.*

ASK: When might we feel boastful of our spiritual blessings? How can we turn from spiritual pride to genuine care? (p. 79)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read

Romans 11:23-24 as the group listens for words that indicate hope for the future that comes through repentance and faith.

DISCUSS: Write the word *grace* on the board. Lead a brief discussion on how these verses demonstrate God's grace.

REVIEW: Summarize the following information to emphasize God's ability to save anyone who comes to Him in faith.

- **(11:23-24)** Paul had already said God was willing to save Israel (Rom. 10:21); here he emphasized that God was able to do so. God has the power to graft broken branches back in, but unbelief—not His ability—stood in the way. God would not force them to return; they had to believe in Jesus. Jews and Gentiles share the same path to salvation: repentance and faith in Christ. When they turn to Him, God is able to restore them to His family.

ASK: What do you learn about God's heart from His willingness to restore those who previously rejected Him? How might that influence the way you view people who have walked away from faith? (p. 79)

HIGHLIGHT: Focus on Romans 11:33 as this session's memory verse. Note that this verse calls believers to praise God for His grace. Direct the group to read the verse aloud chorally. Allow time for them to paraphrase the verse in their own words.

TRANSITION: *Paul acknowledged that God's grace provides hope for restoration for both Jews and Gentiles who put aside their unbelief and put their faith in Christ.*

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- We can be assured that the gospel is for all people.
- As members of God's family, believers should embrace humility and resist spiritual pridefulness.
- Believers can take comfort in knowing God has the power to save those who repent.

REFLECT: Organize the group into small teams of three or four people each. Direct the groups to read and discuss the **Apply the Text** activity on page 79. After a few minutes, review responses and highlight the importance of humility in sharing the gospel with others.

PRAY: Encourage adults to think of people or groups they might consider unreachable, and to ask God to change their heart this week. Close the session in prayer.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by sending a text or email to the group. Encourage them to ask God to open their eyes so they can see people who might need to hear about Christ's power to restore them to God.



Sacrifice

Session 10 • Romans 12:1-13



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outline of Romans*) and **Pack Item 6** (Poster: *Key Verse: Romans 12:1*). Write the following words on the board or a large sheet of paper: *money, time, recognition, fame, promotion, profit, and pride.*

READ: Direct attention to the opening paragraph on page 85. Highlight the two questions, “What’s in it for me?” and “What can I do to help?”

ASK: Which question—“What’s in it for me?” or “How can I help?”—tends to shape your thinking most, and why? (p. 85)

SHARE: Point out “Exhortations about the Christian Life” on **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outline of Romans*). Note that Romans 12 presents a shift in the book of Romans:

- “With [a] theological foundation in place, Paul turned his attention in the final chapters of Romans—including chapter 12—to the practical implications of salvation. Having laid the theological groundwork, he now urged his readers to live out their faith in daily life. In doing so, they would display the gospel to the world around them.” (p. 85)

TRANSITION: In Romans 12, Paul focused on a practical application of the foundational doctrines he described in Romans 1–11. This session is a good reminder that He wants believers to live out their salvation, not just rely on head knowledge.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 12:1-2** as the group listens for what Paul describes as “true worship.”

ASK: How often do you use instruction manuals or “how-to guides” when working on things? Why?

CONTEXT: Discuss responses. Affirm that some folks rely solely on instruction manuals, while others are more “do it yourself” people. Share that in Romans 12, Paul moved to the “how-to” part of his letter.

SAY: After laying some solid theological groundwork about salvation, he began teaching the Romans how to live out their faith in a real way each day.

SHARE: Direct attention to **Pack Item 6** (Poster: *Key Verse: Romans 12:1*) and read the verse together as a group. Highlight what Paul meant by becoming a living sacrifice:

- **(12:1)** Both Jews and Gentiles in Rome were familiar with sacrifice, whether in the Jerusalem temple or pagan temples. Unlike animals offered without choice, believers willingly become living sacrifices. This is true worship—not a Sunday event or a place to go, but a daily, intentional life of submission to God.

EXPLAIN: Explain being conformed and being transformed.

- **(12:2)** Paul encouraged his readers to not be “conformed to this age.” The Greek word translated “conformed” refers to a pattern or a mold. Paul did not want them to be squeezed into a worldview that was hostile to God. Instead, he encouraged them to “be transformed.” The Greek word for “transformed” shares a root with our English word *metamorphosis*. This transformation takes place by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 7:6; 8:27).

ASK: What obstacles might prevent us from offering our lives to God as “living sacrifices”? (p. 87)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 12:3-8**, encouraging the group to identify the specific spiritual gifts in the verses. State that the church is made up of diverse people who are called to serve Christ by sharing their spiritual gifts.

SHARE: Note that an understanding of spiritual gifts begins with a focus on humility.

- **(12:3)** As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are vulnerable to pride—becoming conceited or arrogant when we view

ourselves as more gifted than others. This mindset can lead us to see ourselves as more important than fellow members of the body. Paul’s call to humility guards us against slipping into selfish pride.

DISCUSS: Why is it important for each believer to serve within the church? What results can we expect if believers fail to use their gifts in the church? (p. 87)

READ: Read aloud **Romans 12:9-13** as the group listens for Paul’s imperatives related to sacrificial love.

GUIDE: Give each adult an index card and pen. Direct them to make a list of the imperatives in Romans 12:9-13. Using **Pack Item 6** (Poster: Key Verse: Romans 12:1) and the lists made by each adult, lead the group to compare how Romans 12:1 relates to Romans 12:9-13.

SHARE: Summarize the following to emphasize that the Christian life should be walked out in a practical way each day:

- **(12:9-13)** As we put our spiritual gifts into practice, we are reminded that our service is never solitary. We serve alongside other believers in the church, guided by biblical imperatives that direct our shared labor. When embraced, these foundational commands deepen our unity as we serve Him together.

DISCUSS: Encourage adults to review again the lists of practical imperatives Paul shared in these verses. Lead a brief discussion on how believers can live out each imperative today.

ASK: How can you be more diligent and intentional in your service to the Lord and His people? (p. 87)

SAY: *Sacrificial love for others calls for our lives to give evidence of the grace God has given us. We can't just talk about our faith. We have to demonstrate it in a way that the world can see it is real and meaningful. In this way we are not conformed to the way of the world but transformed to be more like Christ.*

PRAY: Encourage adults to spend a few minutes in silent prayer, asking God to reveal areas where they are not living out their faith as effectively as they should. Also, direct them to ask God for the wisdom they need to show their faith to others, pursuing transformation instead of settling for conformation.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- As believers, our lives are to be shaped by God, not by worldly influences.
- Believers are to serve alongside each other, exercising their God-given gifts.
- As believers practice sacrificial love in their relationships, their lives give evidence of God's grace.

TESTIMONY: Encourage adults to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** activity on page 87. Allow one or two volunteers to share their approaches to presenting themselves as living sacrifices to God. Direct them to describe the difference between worshipping

God, which is true worship, and worshipping worship itself.

DISCUSS: Write the following words on the board: *Transformation, Spiritual Gifts, and Practical Faith*. Remind adults these are the key ways Paul talked about the Christian life in Romans 12:1-13. Encourage adults to review the **Apply the Text** questions on page 91. Challenge them to respond to these items in prayer during the week.

PRAY: Share the following quote by Oswald Chambers: "Beware of harking back to what you once were when God wants you to be something you have never been."¹ Close in prayer, asking God to help each adult move forward with Him this week.

1. <https://utmost.org/classic/what-next-classic/>

AFTER THE SESSION

Send each member in the group an individual text or email during the week. Remind them of the session's memory verses, Romans 12:1-2. Suggest they use the verses as a reflection throughout the week and continue working to memorize them. Challenge them to consider where they are in terms of spiritual transformation and practical application of faith.



Represent

Session 11 • Romans 13:1-14



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*) and **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Showing Honor*).

ASK: How have the expectations you grew up with shaped the choices and relationships in your adult life? (p. 93)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 93. Discuss the importance of families. Note that while the way we represent our families is important, how the world sees Jesus in our lives is even more important.

ASK: How faithfully do you represent Jesus?

CONTEXT: Point to “Exhortations for the Christian Life” on **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*). Remind adults that in Romans 12, Paul had talked about personal holiness and how believers should relate to one another. Share that in Romans 13, he turned his attention to those outside the church, especially how Christians relate to authority figures.

- “While we are citizens of heaven, we also live as citizens of earth. Accordingly, we want to represent Christ well in our world so that others will be drawn to Him through

our relationships with them. . . . God instituted government for the good of those who do what is right. In His grand scheme, they are God’s servants to dispense justice in the world (Rom. 13:1-7).” (p. 93)

TRANSITION: *A tension has always existed between church and state, but our response to authority can have a powerful impact on our testimony for Jesus. As you examine today’s verses, determine ways you can do a better job of honoring the authorities God has placed in your life.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

BACKGROUND: Encourage adults to share what comes to their minds when they think of Roman emperors. Share that Christians in the first century dealt with some wicked emperors who consistently persecuted the church, including Caligula (AD 37–41), Claudius (AD 41–54), and Nero (AD 54–68).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 13:1-7** as the group notes how believers are called to relate to governing authorities.

ASK: Based on what you know about Roman leaders from that time, do these directions surprise you? Why?

HIGHLIGHT: Emphasize what Paul shared about a believer's responsibility toward government leaders:

- **(13:1-2)** Our Christian faith does not give us the freedom to flaunt the legal system. At times believers may have to choose obedience to God over government, accepting the consequences. In those cases, we still are subject to the law and must endure the repercussions of our choices. Civil authorities were established by God.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to turn to a neighbor and discuss how these verses relate to the words “honor” and “respect.”

APPLY: Direct attention on **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Showing Honor*). Allow adults to identify specific actions believers can take to honor human authorities. Record responses on the pack item.

ASK: How does Paul's teaching that rulers are God's servants for your good challenge or affirm your perspective on government? (p. 95)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read

Romans 13:8-10 as the group highlights key words or phrases. Invite volunteers to share what they noticed in the verses.

DISCUSS: Encourage the group to list common kinds of debt in our society. List their responses on the board or on a large sheet of paper. Lead a brief discussion on some dangers associated with being in debt.

SHARE: Highlight Paul's reference to our obligation to love others. Talk about how this debt is different from others listed:

- **(13:8)** Beyond taxes owed to government, Paul pointed to a larger debt believers owe—to love one another. Unlike financial debts, the debt of love will never be paid in full. We are always under an obligation to love others. (See also John 13:34-35; Acts 4:32-35; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; 1 John 3:18; 1 Pet. 4:8.)

SAY: *Paul never distinguished between loving saved people and loving lost people. He emphasized that Christ followers are called to love all people. We are called to love others because that love reflects the character and compassion of God, who loves everyone.*

ASK: What are some ways you can practically show love to those around you? (p. 95)

APPLY: Record responses on **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Showing Honor*). Remind adults that love requires action, and challenge them to identify one idea they will put into practice this week.

READ: Read aloud Romans 13:11-14 as the group listens for how believers should respond to the urgency of Christ's return.

ASK: How do you wake up in the morning?

GUIDE: Note that some folks set an alarm, while others wake up on their own. Affirm that many like to hit the “snooze” button. Share that Paul urged his readers to wake up to a spiritual reality: the return of Jesus and the fulfillment of our salvation.

- **(13:11-12)** Though Paul did not know when Christ would return, he knew the appointed time was drawing near. He urged the Roman believers to live with spiritual alertness, shaped by the nearness of that day. Though centuries have passed, each day brings us closer to His return, and our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

ASK: How aware are you of Christ's return, and how does that awareness—or lack of it—shape your daily choices? (p. 95)

HIGHLIGHT: Briefly discuss the list of sins believers are called to avoid in verse 13, along with the challenge to put on Christ in verse 14. Use the commentary for verses 13-14 on page 99 to supplement the discussion.

DISCUSS: What steps can we take to prevent spiritual lethargy? (p. 95)

APPLY: Lead the group to identify specific ways believers can honor Christ and record the information in the third column of **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Showing Honor*).

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers should honor civil authorities.
- Believers are to love our neighbors.
- Believers are to display Christlikeness so that their lives reflect Jesus.

REFLECT: Direct attention back to **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Showing Honor*). Encourage adults to consider how the three application points relate to the activities listed on the poster. Challenge adults to put their faith into action by selecting at least one idea from each column to implement this week.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to read and consider the **Apply the Text** activity on page 95. Lead a brief discussion on what it means to honor civil authorities as a believer today. Remind adults that they don't have to agree with every policy or position, but they do need to show respect for the individual that God has placed in authority.

PRAY: Remind adults about the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on p. 63) and encourage them to use it as a prayer prompt during the week. Close in prayer, asking God to help each adult represent Christ by honoring leaders, other people, and Jesus.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session, sending a text or email to the group. Encourage them to memorize Romans 13:14 and to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions on page 99. Urge them to consider ways they can show honor to someone else this week and to find someone who will hold them accountable for this kind of activity on a regular basis.



Unity

Session 12 • Romans 14:5-20



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*). Make copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Rome*). Hang *Agree* and *Disagree* signs on opposite sides of the room.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 101. Lead the group to respond to the following statements by moving to the *Agree* or *Disagree* signs.

- It is hard to agree to disagree.
- Disagreements have to become disrespectful.
- Opposing viewpoints are OK in the church.

ASK: When have you found yourself needing to disagree with someone in a respectful way? What made it challenging? (p. 101)

CONTEXT: Affirm that disagreements and conflict over those disagreements can affect every area of our lives, including our relationships with other believers. Summarize this content from page 101 to set the context:

- “Believers in Rome found themselves divided over matters such as dietary rules and the observance of special days. Those from Jewish backgrounds often

disagreed with their Gentile brothers and sisters about how to handle these issues. . . . Rather than dwelling on their disagreements, Paul urged them to keep their focus on Jesus. Honoring Him was what mattered most.”

TRANSITION: *Paul knew the church in Rome had both Jews and Gentiles in it and that their diverse backgrounds could lead to conflict and tension. So, in Romans 14, he emphasized unity.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Using **Understand the Context** (p. 101) and **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*), set the background for Romans 14. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Rome*).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 14:5-8** as the group listens for the sources of conflict among the believers.

GUIDE: Point out that verses 1-4 reveal a rift over food. Explain the conflict over special days in verses 5-8:

- **(14:5-8)** Some believers in Rome, likely Jewish Christians, observed the Sabbath and special days, while others, likely Gentiles, did not. Paul urged each group

to act according to their convictions, remembering that all were responsible to honor the Lord. Whether observing certain days or abstaining from them, eating certain foods or refraining, each choice was to be made in a way that honored God.

ASK: What kind of spiritual practices might believers disagree over today? How can we implement Paul's instruction when we encounter disagreements like these? (p. 103)

SAY: *Paul's focus here was on unity, not conformity. He wasn't saying everyone had to agree. But he did emphasize that Jesus needed to be the center of every discussion and every action as the Roman Christians worked through differences in a way that honored Christ. When we live for Him and die for Him, we maintain respect for others and protect the reputation of Jesus to the world.*

READ: Read aloud Romans 14:9-12 as the group listens for who will be held accountable before God.

ASK: How should these verses shape our understanding of God and His desire for our lives? (p. 103)

LIST: Direct the group to read Romans 14:9-12 again silently and to identify the words that relate to our own accountability before God. Record their responses on the board or a large sheet of paper. Lead a brief discussion on the significance of seeing God as the ultimate Judge for every person—and how our own accountability should affect the way we treat others.

SHARE: Summarize the following to provide additional insight into Paul's teaching:

- **(14:10)** Scripture does not permit believers to judge or despise those who hold different convictions. Both attitudes are incompatible with life in the body of Christ. Paul reminded his readers that each one of us will one day stand before God's judgment seat—a judgment that assesses faithfulness, not salvation. With that future in view, we should choose grace over judgment in our relationships with one another.

ASK: When you disagree with another believer, how does the gospel factor into your response and attitude? (p. 103)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Romans 14:13-18 while the group considers the role believers have in supporting the spiritual growth of others.

ASK: Who has been instrumental in helping you grow spiritually?

DISCUSS: Encourage adults to suggest key words from the verses that relate to helping or hindering others from growing spiritually. Record their responses on the board. Discuss why each of the terms is significant. Highlight words like *stumbling block*, *pitfall*, *hurt*, *love*, *destroy*, and *serves*.

STATE: Explain why it's important for believers to consider the feelings and needs of other believers.

- **(14:13-15)** A stumbling block or pitfall is anything that harms another believer's conscience. Paul reminded believers to

consider those who think differently and to restrain their freedom in love. True love values others above personal rights and patiently waits for spiritual growth.

ASK: What practical things can we do to spur on others and not be a stumbling block? (p. 103) Challenge adults to consider taking one step this week toward building other believers up instead of being a stumbling block or hindrance to them.

READ: Guide the group to read Romans 14:19-20 silently, noting Paul's admonitions in these verses.

DISCUSS: Write *peace* on the board or a large sheet of paper. Lead a brief discussion on what peace means in our culture. Allow a few volunteers to share words or images they associate with peace. Note that peace was Paul's concern for the church in Rome.

ASK: Why is peace so significant in the body of Christ? (p. 103)

LEAD: Note that along with peace, Paul mentioned to pursue what builds up others in the faith. Point out how these two actions work together in the church—and the dangers of ignoring them. The opposite of building up is to tear down. Overlooking our responsibility to edify one another has a damaging effect on God's work.

REFLECT: What might we forfeit if strife or dissension are allowed to grow? (p. 103)

TRANSITION: *Above all else, the Lord wants us to love others, to refrain from being a stumbling block, and to focus on building up peace among our fellow believers.*

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers should allow other believers to express their love for God as God directs them.
- Every person will be held accountable for their actions and choices.
- As members of the body of Christ, we're to spur on each other to spiritual growth.
- Believers are to build up one another, pursuing peace in our relationships with other believers.

IDENTIFY: Encourage adults to read the **Apply the Text** activity on page 103. As they suggest issues today that resemble the disputes in Paul's time, record their responses on the board. Challenge them to come up with practical ways to work through conflict in a godly manner and to adopt at least one idea that they will put into practice to resolve a conflict this week.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking God to help each person to see ways they build up others and seek peace each day.

AFTER THE SESSION

Follow up this session by sending an email or a text encouraging the group to read and respond to the **Daily Exploration** (pp. 105-107) during the week.



Purpose

Session 13 • Romans 15:14-21,30-33



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The First-Century Roman Empire*), **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*), and **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Key Words in Romans*). Prepare the scenarios below on individual cards. Distribute the scenarios as adults arrive.

READ: Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 109.

ASK: Which areas of your life come more naturally when it comes to being intentional, and which areas require more effort or discipline? (p. 109)

DISCUSS: Emphasize the impact of intentional living in various areas of life. Encourage adults who have a scenario to read their cards. Lead a brief discussion about each situation:

- John and Andy work out two mornings a week, holding each other accountable.
- David and Shelby want to save for a new car, so they develop a budget that allows them to build up their savings.
- Amelia sets a goal of reading the Bible in a year and faithfully follows through on reading daily.

WRITE: Point out that Paul's aim was to take the gospel beyond Rome and into regions untouched by its message. Knowing he could not fulfill this mission alone, he appealed to the believers in Rome for support.

TRANSITION: *Spreading the gospel is a partnership. Just as Paul sought partners to support him, we can support others as they share the good news of Jesus—and they can support us as well.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*) and note that the group is moving toward the end of Paul's letter. Briefly review the terms from the book of Romans found on **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Key Words in Romans*). Highlight the word *gospel* and share that today's session will examine Paul's desire to partner with the Romans in spreading the gospel to other regions.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 15:14-16** as the group notes three characteristics that describe the believers in Rome.

DISCUSS: Encourage the group to name the three characteristics in verse 14 and discuss how the characteristics would strengthen the church.

- **(15:14)** Paul praised the Romans for three qualities. First, they were “full of goodness,” a fruit of the Spirit that showed the gospel had changed them (Gal. 5:22). Second, they possessed sound knowledge—their minds had been renewed to see the world through a Christlike lens (Rom. 12:1-2). Third, they were able to instruct one another, a term Paul also used for parental training and for learning from Israel’s past mistakes (Eph. 6:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

SHARE: Explain how Paul viewed his ministry—and why he believed the Romans might be willing to partner with him:

- **(15:15-16)** God called Paul to serve as a minister to the Gentiles, and Paul understood his role in priestly terms. Like Old Testament priests, he spoke on God’s behalf and presented offerings to Him. Paul embraced this image, longing to present as many Gentile believers as possible to God as an acceptable offering.

ASK: What is our responsibility in becoming spiritually ready to minister to others? (p. 111)

READ: Read aloud Romans 15:17-21 as the group listens for Paul’s testimony regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in his life.

EXPLAIN: Using **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The First-Century Roman Empire*), highlight locations such as Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus, Galatia, Philippi, Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, and Thessalonica. Point out that these are places where God used Paul to make a huge difference for the kingdom.

SHARE: Point out Spain (Tarraconensis) on the map. Note that this was Paul’s next desired destination. Explain why Paul longed to serve in unreached areas:

- **(15:20)** Paul sought to preach the gospel where Christ was unknown. Though he hoped to visit Rome, his greater ambition was to carry the gospel beyond it to unreached places like Spain, refusing to build on another’s foundation (Rom. 15:24,28; 1 Cor. 3:10).

WRITE: Write *Holy Spirit* on the board. Emphasize that Paul knew Jesus’s power through the Holy Spirit was the only reason he had enjoyed a fruitful ministry. Remind adults that we all need the Spirit to empower and equip our service for Christ.

ASK: Where do you sense God’s Spirit inviting you to attempt something that will fail unless He supplies the power? What is the first step of obedience? (p. 111)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Romans 15:30-33 as the group listens for Paul’s appeal to the believers in Rome.

IDENTIFY: Lead the group to identify Paul’s specific requests. Lead a brief discussion on why each request was significant. Use information from **Day 4** and **Day 5** (pp. 114-115) to explain Paul’s offering for suffering Jews in Jerusalem and how that relates to the three requests.

SHARE: Note that while we ask people to pray for us, we also can be active in our prayers for them. Note that Paul offered a prayer on behalf of the Roman Christians.

ASK: What do believers stand to gain when they unite in prayer for the sharing of the gospel? (p. 111)

PRAY: Point out that Romans 15:30 is the memory verse for this session. Emphasize again the importance of prayer in our lives, especially when it comes to sharing the gospel with others. Suggest that a proper response to studying verses about prayer would be to spend time praying. Direct adults to find a partner and spend a few minutes praying for those who are sharing the gospel in dangerous situations and for their own sensitivity to opportunities God provides to share the gospel each day.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers are to join with others in ministry.
- Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit empowers us to share the gospel.
- Believers need to pray for the spread of the gospel.

CHALLENGE: Encourage the group to consider each of these points and to write at least one idea for practically applying them in the margin. Urge them to pray about what they wrote and to find ways to act on their ideas during the week.

REFLECT: Direct adults to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** activity on page 111. Allow some volunteers to suggest ways your group can partner with missions efforts by either praying, giving, or going.

APPLY: Guide adults to read the **Apply the Text** questions on page 115 during the week. Urge them to create a prayer journal where they can record names of people who need to accept Jesus and pray for them.

PRAY: Read aloud the lyrics of "Make Me a Channel of Blessing" (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 375). Lead the group to consider how they can be a channel of blessing to others this week. Close in prayer, asking the Lord to use each person to spread the gospel and thanking Him for the Spirit's power in doing so.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send the group a text or email, reminding them to look for ways to be a blessing to others this week. Let them know that the next session will begin a new series from the book of 1 Samuel.

VISUAL IDEAS

These items are available in the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (see goExploreTheBible.com) or you can use these descriptions to create your own.

Pack Item 1

Map: The First-Century Roman Empire
Sessions 1-13

Locate a map that highlights the key regions and cities that defined the Roman Empire during the time of Paul.

Pack Item 2

Poster: Outline of Romans
Sessions 1-13

Refer to page 9 of the DDG to create a poster that outlines the book of Romans.

Pack Item 3

Poster: The Doctrine of Man
Sessions 2, 8

Create a poster with a quote from Article III on “Man” in the *Baptist Faith and Message (2000)*.

Pack Item 4

Poster: Key Words in Romans
Sessions 2, 3, 5, 7, 13

Create a poster that defines key terms from the book of Romans, such as *atonement, faith, grace, gospel, justification, law, righteousness, sanctification, sin, and works*.

Pack Item 5

Poster: Key Verse: Romans 5:19
Session 4

Create a poster with the text of Romans 5:19.

Pack Item 6

Poster: Key Verse: Romans 12:1
Session 10

Create a poster with the text of Romans 12:1.

Pack Item 7

Poster: Showing Honor
Session 11

Create an application poster with three columns: *Authorities, Others, and Christ*. Leave room for responses under each column so adults can suggest ways to show honor to each group over the course of the session.

Pack Item 8

Handout: Romans Time Line
Sessions 1-13

Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events related to the book of Romans. Include both biblical and non-biblical historical references for context.

Pack Item 9

Handout: Praying Scripture in Romans
Sessions 1-13

Create a handout to help adults pray through key Scriptures in the book of Romans. Focus on these questions: *What does this passage teach you about God and His character? How is God leading you to respond to what He is showing you about Himself?*



Pack Item 10

Handout: Justification by Faith Sessions 3, 8

Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create an article that describes the biblical teaching of justification by faith, both theologically and practically, especially as it applies to Romans.

Pack Item 11

Handout: A New Way of Life Sessions 4-7

Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create an article that describes how Paul used baptism as a symbol of a believer's new life in Christ and why it is significant in Christianity.

Pack Item 12

Handout: To Do or Not To Do Session 6

Create a handout that allows adults to identify things they do that they should not and things they want to do but don't (Rom. 7:14-23). Provide additional space for adults to list practical steps for aligning their lives with God's plan.

Pack Item 13

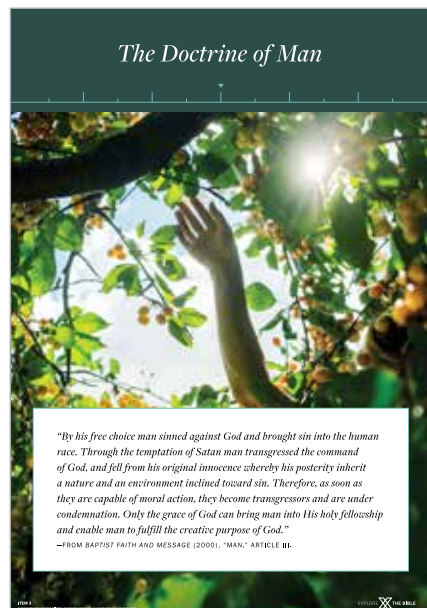
Handout: Adoption in the First Century Session 7

Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create an article that describes adoption in the first century and how Paul used it as an illustration of a believer's relationship with God.

Pack Item 14

Handout: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Rome Sessions 9, 12

Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a handout with three columns: *Jewish Believers in Rome*, *Gentile Believers in Rome*, and *Key Principles from Romans*. Under the first two columns, list distinctives of each group. In the third column, highlight key principles for their unity from the book of Romans.



LEADER PACK SAMPLE POSTER

COMING NEXT QUARTER



1 SAMUEL

Session 1: **Prayer** (1 Samuel 1:9-18,24-28)

Session 2: **Calling** (1 Samuel 3:1-14)

Session 3: **Savior** (Luke 2:8-20)

Session 4: **Supremacy** (1 Samuel 5:1-10; 6:13-15,19-20)

Session 5: **King Demanded** (1 Samuel 8:1-9,19-22)

Session 6: **Obedience** (1 Samuel 15:7-23)

Session 7: **Valued** (Psalm 139:1-10,13-16,23-24)

Session 8: **Anointed** (1 Samuel 16:1-13)

Session 9: **Victory** (1 Samuel 17:32-47)

Session 10: **Friendship** (1 Samuel 18:1-9; 20:35-42)

Session 11: **Respect** (1 Samuel 24:1-11,16-20)

Session 12: **Discernment** (1 Samuel 25:14-19,29-35)

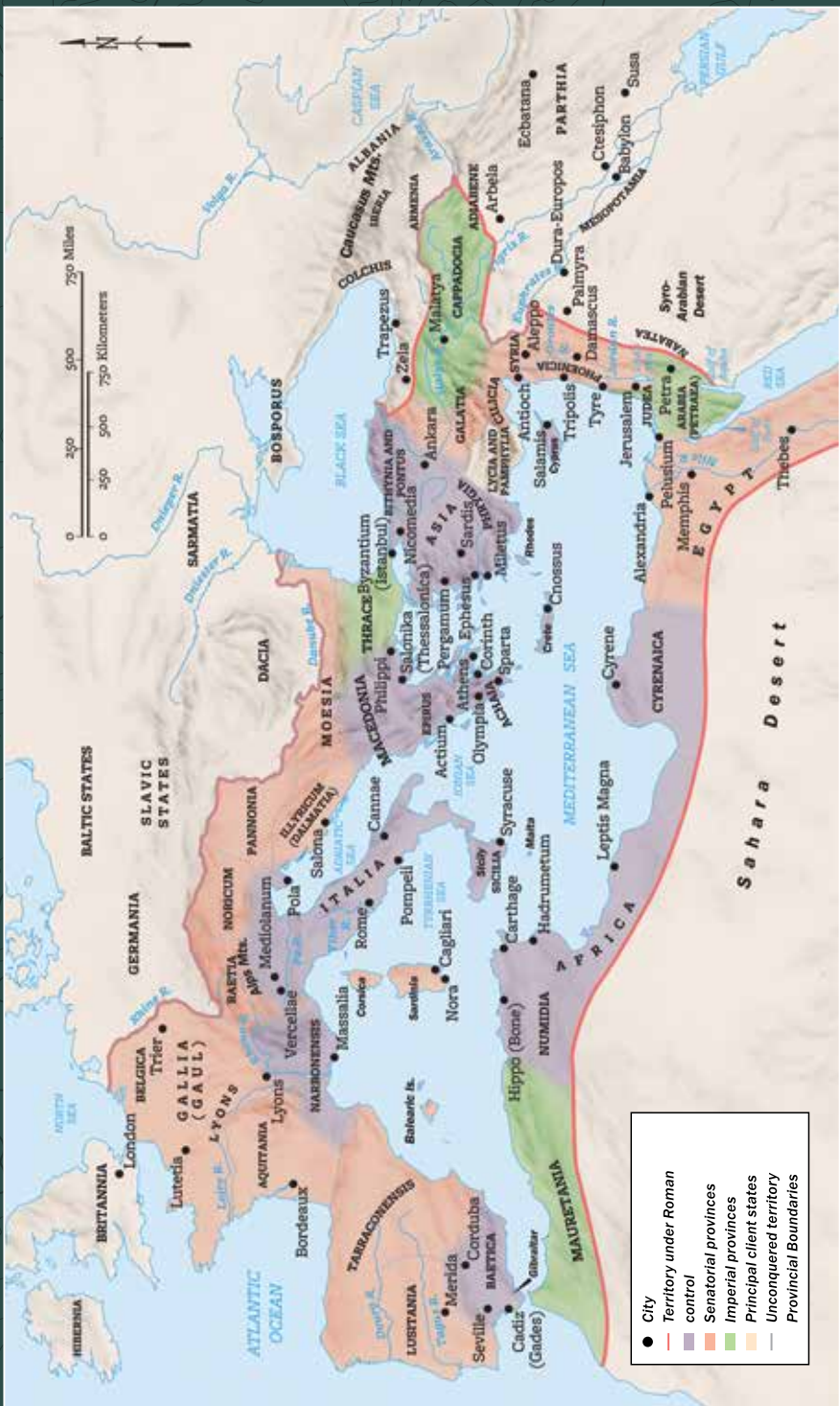
Session 13: **Guidance** (1 Samuel 30:1-8,21-25)

Explore

“You will seek me and find me when you search for me
with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

THE FIRST-CENTURY ROMAN EMPIRE

"The First-Century Roman Empire" is adapted from "The Roman Empire in the Age of Augustus" in the Holman Bible Atlas (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1988), 186. Used with permission.



ROMANS

In some ways, we live in a world defined by sound bites and social media posts. We condense key events of our days down to 280 characters or to quick videos that are here today and gone tomorrow. While brevity can be a good thing, our obsession with what's temporary also runs the risk of trading genuine substance for empty cliches. In his letter to the Christians at Rome, Paul rejected flimsy theology. His systematic and logical explanation of the gospel left no doubt about the world's need for a Savior and our responsibility as Christ followers. By studying his words to the Romans, we can gain a better understanding of who God is, what God does, and the impact it should have on our lives each day.

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