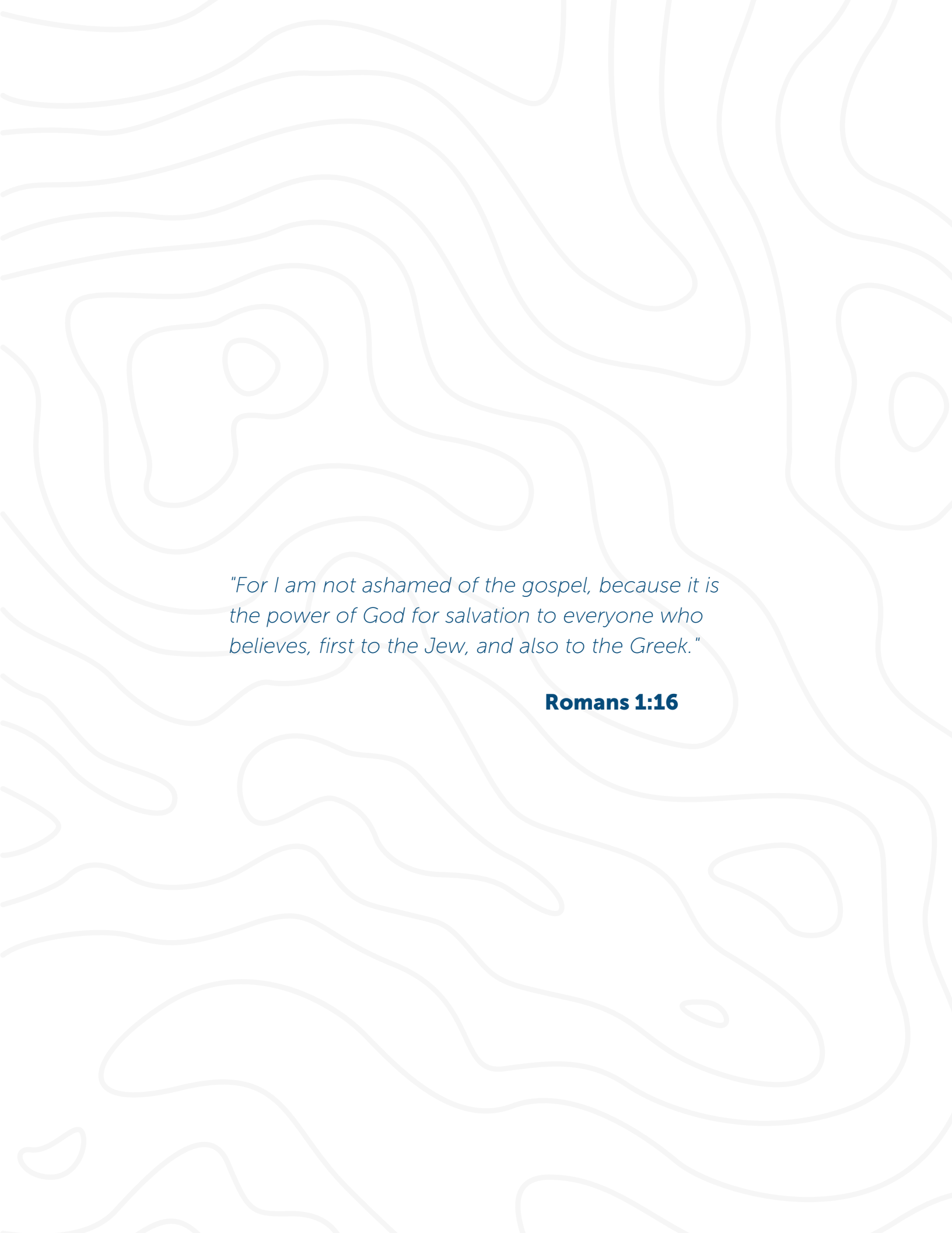




—THE BOOK OF—
ROMANS
CONNECT GROUP STUDY GUIDE

ROMANS 1-3



*"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

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the next year we will be studying the book of Romans together. Pastor Michael along with other various pastors and speakers, will preach through Romans verse by verse, and all of our Connect Groups will study the book of Romans together in their group meetings.

Romans is an important and powerful book that will challenge us to dig into the Gospel like never before. As we journey through this book together, we'll grow to understand God's righteousness, our unrighteousness apart from Him, the sufficiency and significance of Jesus, and the practical implications of the Gospel in our everyday lives.

This Roman's study will encompass four "*sectional*" studies produced for all of our Connect Groups this year. Each Bible study series is designed to aid both our personal study of Romans and facilitate our Connect Group discussions. This current volume will investigate Romans 1–3, which introduces us to God's righteousness in the Gospel.

Throughout our study of Romans, our hope is that we will all grow to see the Gospel with greater appreciation and to love God with greater passion, as we seek to apply the message of Romans in ways that impact our everyday lives and bear witness for Christ in our communities.

How to use this guide.

As you start this study, each week, will begin with key verses that we want to encourage you to memorize along with key principles for each passage, followed by a devotional introduction to prepare our hearts and minds. Then, the Study Guide section incorporates a series of questions specifically designed to help us engage the text of Romans in personal study and Connect Group discussion, according to the **SOAP** method of Bible study:

- **SCRIPTURE:** Read and study everything in the passage.
- **OBSERVATION:** What are some observations that you notice from this text? Remember, context is everything.
- **APPLICATION**– How does the text apply to your every day life? Based off the text, what are some measurable next steps that you can take, starting today?
- **PRAYER** – Pray God’s word back to Him, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Work through these at any time throughout the week. Some may find it helpful to work through the exercises slowly throughout the week, in sections, while others may want to study the whole passage in one sitting.

Whichever approach you choose to take, please answer the exercises **before** your Connect Group meeting. In Connect Groups, we will discuss our answers to the Bible study questions and discuss what next steps God is leading us to take through the weekly passage.

To maximize our study of God’s Word and the impact it can have on our lives, we encourage everyone to personally work through all of the questions in each of the 6 weekly studies, but Connect Group leaders may choose to focus more on some questions than others.

Week One: [Romans 1:1-17]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed ...” - Romans 1:16-17

Key Principles

- Romans reveals the Gospel like few other books of the Bible do.
- The Gospel reveals both God’s power and God’s righteousness.
- The Gospel is for all people(s).
- Romans shows us that the Gospel was even proclaimed in the Old Testament prophetic writings.
- Romans gives us information that is vital to our growth in our relationship with God.

Read

Romans is a powerful book! God has used its pages to change the lives of many influential people in history (*John Wesley & Martin Luther to name a few*). We are going to study this book slowly to allow every ounce of its power to be unleashed in our hearts and lives as we go through it together. This week, we will look at Romans 1:1–17.

In the opening verse, we see that the apostle Paul is the author of this letter (1:1), and these first 17 verses serve as the introduction of the book, where Paul:

1. Introduces some **key concepts** about the Gospel.
2. Tells us **why** he is writing.
3. Gives us the **theme** for his letter.

1) Key Concepts (1:1–6)

Paul wrote many of the letters in the New Testament, and he often began his letters in a similar pattern—introducing himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ for the sake of the Gospel and providing a series of descriptive phrases that tell us more about the Gospel and his mission.

In Romans, this introduction takes up the first six verses. After introducing himself to the Romans as “*an apostle set apart for the Gospel of God*” (1:1), Paul moves on to descriptive phrases about the Gospel and his specific mission in it. Much of what Paul uses in Romans 1:16 is different from how he describes himself and the Gospel in his other letters. We learn much more about the Gospel in this introduction, but three points are unique to Romans and essential for understanding message of this book.

First, Paul makes sure we know that this is *God’s Gospel*. Other books of the Bible might mention phrases like the “*Gospel of Christ*” (see *Galatians 1:7*; *Philippians 1:27*), and Matthew’s preferred phrase is “*the Gospel of the kingdom*” (*Matthew 4:23*; *9:35*; *24:14*). But in Romans, Paul calls it the “*Gospel of God*”—defining our relationship with God Himself. Even more broadly, Paul describes how all the nations of the entire world relate to God. Verses 16 and 17 add further detail, saying that the Gospel is important because it reveals both God’s power for salvation **and** God’s righteousness.

Second, this introduction tells us that the Gospel has been God’s idea from the beginning of time. Romans 1:2 explains that God had been promising this Gospel would arrive one day, and the fact that we have seen it come to fruition means two things—God is *faithful* to keep His promises and is *powerful* enough to put them in motion. Paul is going to show us throughout this book that the Gospel was proclaimed even in the Old Testament prophetic writings.

Third, the introduction declares that the Gospel is for *all nations* (1:5). Sure, the Gospel comes through Jesus, who is the direct descendant of the Jewish king David, but Jesus is also the Son of God who will receive obedience from *every nation* (1:5). Paul will spend a great deal of time showing how Jews, Gentiles (or “Greeks”; *Paul uses these words interchangeably*), and every human can take part in this Gospel and what will happen to them if they do not.

2) Why Paul is writing (1:7–15)

Next, in Romans 1:7–15, Paul tells us why he is writing this letter. Paul longs to visit the Christians in Rome and preach the Gospel to them in person. He knows that such a visit would strengthen (1:11) and encourage (1:12) his brothers and sisters in Christ as well as himself. If we pay close attention to the content and context of Romans, it suggests that Paul had three main purposes in writing this letter— a **missionary** purpose, to raise support for a mission to the unreached and unengaged in Spain (15:23-24), a **pastoral** purpose about divisions in the church at Rome (14:1–15:13), and an **apologetic** purpose as he had previously failed to visit Rome as the “*apostle to the Gentiles*” and Rome was a location where many Gentiles lived (1:11-15).

3) Theme (1:16–17)

Romans 1:16–17 functions as theme verses for Paul. In these verses, Paul gives his topic for the letter—**the Gospel**. The Gospel reveals both God’s power for salvation and God’s righteousness to those who *believe*. And this Gospel is available to everyone.

Read Romans 1:16–17 a few times before each week’s study to help keep you focused on Paul’s main theme.

We’re going to learn a lot about God’s character by taking a deeper look at the Gospel in Romans. So, whether you’re new to Christianity or you’ve been following Jesus for years, Romans provides information that is vital to our growth in our relationship with God.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help you study the text of Romans and see how the Gospel displays God’s righteousness.

Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question **before** your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 1:1–17 in preparation for this week’s study.

Scripture

- 1.) Reread Romans 1:1–17, keeping in mind that this is the introduction to a long letter. Based on this introduction, what do you think we can expect in the rest of this letter to the Romans?

- 2.) Looking at Romans 1:8–15, what does Paul want for the Roman Christians? What different ways does Paul express his affections for the Roman believers?

- 3.) Read Romans 1:1–6 again. Now, flip to the end of the book and read Romans 16:25–27. What similarities can we identify in these two sections?
 - *Remember, many in Paul’s audience would hear this letter recited out loud instead of reading it with their own eyes. And writers in Paul’s time often repeated main ideas at the beginning and the end, which helped the audience remember key phrases and concepts.*

- 4.) In your own words, write a sentence that summarizes what you think the theme of Romans is.
 - *We’ll come back to this question when we have finished studying the entire book and compare your answers.*

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

Observation

- 5.) Romans 1:2 declares that the Gospel was promised beforehand "*through God's prophets in the Holy Scriptures*". Why is this important?
- 6.) Paul uses the terms "*faith*" and "*belief*" several times in Romans 1:1–17. What do we learn about faith from this passage?
- 7.) Romans 1:1–17 contains a number of words that are important for Christians—"*Gospel*," "*salvation*," and "*righteousness*." How are these words related to one another in Romans 1:1–17? Based on Paul's use of these three words in this passage, how would you explain each term?
- 8.) What groups are mentioned by Paul in Romans 1:14? Why is Paul obligated to them and what must he do because of this obligation?
- 9.) **Why** is Paul not ashamed of the Gospel? How should this understanding affect our lives? Has it?
- 10.) **How** is the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel?

5.) _____

6.) _____

7.) _____

8.) _____

9.) _____

10.) _____

Application

11.) What do you think Paul means by the phrase “*obedience of faith*” in Romans 1:5? What does it look like to practice that *obedience* in our own lives?

12.) Paul says clearly that he is “*not ashamed of the Gospel*” in Romans 1:16. What would it look like to be ashamed of the Gospel? How have you experienced temptations to hide what you believe about Jesus?

13.) Reflect on the ways Romans 1:1–17 shows us that Jesus deserves our worship and respect. How do these truths encourage you to share the Gospel? Share the practical steps you will take this week to share the Gospel with your Connect Group.

- *Who can you share the Gospel with this week? Write their name here and pray over them and for an opportunity to share. Share their name at Connect Group and pray over each name at group.*

14.) What does it look like to mutually encourage one another as believers like Paul desired to do in Romans? How can we do that as a Church/ Connect Group? What will keep us from doing that?

15.) Verse 6 says that believers are “*called to belong to Jesus Christ*.” What does it mean to belong to Jesus Christ? How is your life *practically* different because you belong to Jesus? What actions, decisions, or priorities is the Holy Spirit prompting you to adjust/ surrender?

16.) What questions do you want answered about the Gospel, faith, or the book of Romans during our study this year?

11.) _____

12.) _____

13.) _____

14.) _____

15.) _____

16.) _____

In Romans 1–3, Paul references specific Psalms in order to grow our understanding of God’s righteousness. Each week this study guide will include a recommended Psalm that helps us focus on the righteousness of God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected Psalm and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this Psalm on your own at home and together with your Connect Group. And for those looking for more passages to pray, feel free to return to Romans 1–3 and pray through those passages as well.

This Week’s Prayer Passage: Psalm 143

Read Psalm 143

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Give God praise for these characteristics that you see in Psalm 143:
 - He is steadfast (143:8,12).
 - He is merciful (143:1).
 - He is righteous (143:1,11).
 - He is faithful (143:1).
 - He is what our soul truly needs (143:6)
- **Confession:** Plead with God for His mercy. The Lord has every right to judge us for our unrighteousness. Confess to God how we have not been steadfast and faithful like he has been to us.
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for the following blessings:
 - God lifts our souls and guides us when we are down.
 - God already has victory over our greatest enemies—sin, death, and the devil.
 - Thank God that he has maintained his relationship with us in His steadfast love.
- **Supplication:** Ask God that He would help lift our spirits where situations in our lives have made us downcast (143:3–4). Ask that God would guide us in your next steps in our lives (143:10). Ask that God would be our refuge (143:9).

Week Two: [Romans 1:18-32]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“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.” - Romans 1:21

Key Principles

- God brings judgment against all unrighteousness and it is right for Him to do this.
- God turns people over to their sin if they continuously ignore Him.
- The God of the Gospel cannot be truly glorious to us without a profound understanding of our sin.
- Those who have been forgiven much will demonstrate great love in return.

Read

There are a few "*recurring themes*" throughout the book of Romans that Paul brings up in the first three chapters:

- Spiritual growth and maturity.
- God's righteous judgment on all those who choose to worship creation over the Creator.
- The sharp contrast between righteousness and unrighteousness.

As to the third theme, Paul ends Romans 1:17 with the sentence, "*The righteous shall live by faith.*" This quotation, referring to Habakkuk 2:4, raises the topic of righteousness, a recurring theme in Romans that Paul often uses to describe both God and faithful people who are in right-standing with God. A basic definition of righteous is "*morally right or justifiable; virtuous*". Righteousness, then, is an attribute, a characteristic, and a state of being—the extent to which one is morally right or virtuous. For example, when Paul mentions God's righteousness, he is often describing how God is faithful, true, and just (*Romans 3:1–8*). Other times, Paul is talking about how God's righteousness is a gift that He has given believers. Through Christ, we get to claim His righteousness, His right-standing with God, as our own. What an amazing gift! Throughout your reading, take note of how Paul uses the word "*righteousness*" and who it describes.

In Romans 1–3, Paul begins his explanation of righteousness by describing what righteousness is **not**. In other words, in order to help us understand how righteousness works, Paul spends the next few chapters showing how unrighteousness works. And just like you would imagine, it is the opposite of all that is faithful, true, and just.

The first thing we need to know is that God judges unrighteousness. Romans 1:18 carries the message that God is currently against all unrighteousness, and will destroy it completely in the future. At first glance, any of us might be tempted to excuse ourselves from being labeled "*unrighteous*." After all, the description of unrighteousness in Romans 1:18–32 lists some of the worst sins and behaviors we could imagine. Yet Paul explains in Romans 1:18–32, that God's wrath and judgment fall upon those who practice any of this unrighteousness. Let that idea sink in. When any of us do just one unrighteous act or think one unrighteous thought, we deserve to die (1:32). This means that all of us are guilty of practicing unrighteousness and deserve God's judgment. And we deserve God's judgment because God is perfectly righteous, so any amount of unrighteousness is unacceptable for our righteous God.

But how can this be? How did we get like this? Did we really become slaves to all sorts of evil desires? First, God has made himself known through creation, so that we would worship Him (1:19–20). All of us have foolishly worshiped creation instead of the Creator and now our hearts are darkened because of our rebellion (1:21). Though God has given us His matchless glory, we ignored Him and settled for worshiping idols (1:23). Then, we started practicing all sorts of evil and unrighteous behavior, and we gave approval to those who did the same (1:32). It is a scary progression and one that we all are equally guilty of following apart from God's grace in our lives.

Paul repeatedly states that because God is a good and righteous God, he must judge all unrighteousness. They dishonored God, so He, in turn, dishonored their bodies by delivering them over to corrupt desires (1:21–24). They exchanged God for images and exchanged His truth for a lie. Thus, God gives them over to exchange their natural desires for unnatural ones (1:23–27). And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a corrupt—literally translated as *dis-acknowledged*—mind (1:28). Every form of sin is met with an appropriate righteous judgment from God. Consider the sins listed in this section and how they are not only the cause of God's judgment but also the evidence of God's judgment on the world.

This means that the more we make it our practice to ignore God, the more we prompt God to give us over to different forms of unrighteousness. For example, when we sin with our words and lash out in sinful anger and bitterness against another person, God often gives us over to the consequence of friction in the relationship. Each of us can probably think of other practical examples in our own lives and communities. The seriousness of our unrighteousness and God's wrath can be seen in an illustration from 20th-century British author and professor C.S. Lewis. According to Lewis, God's judgment is not about a vindictive, malicious God tormenting innocent people. Instead, as Lewis metaphorically stated, "*There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in hell choose it.*" As we look around at unrighteousness in our world, and more importantly, in our own lives, we should be sobered by the seriousness of God's righteous wrath.

In Romans, God does not offer us a superficial diagnosis of our problem. He mercifully teaches us that our deepest problems concern sin and wrath. All of us are sinful in rejecting God, and God Himself has righteous wrath against us. Knowing the true nature of our problem will help us cherish God's kindness in the Gospel. Romans 1:18–32 lays out the things that God must overcome in order to save us.

He must remain righteous and true to Himself, yet forgive and transform sinners. Can a good and righteous God ever simply let sinners walk away free? If God is righteous, He must offer exact retribution. Christ would take on every bit of the righteous wrath of God for those that would trust in Him. What kind of God would do such a thing? The God of the Gospel cannot be truly glorious to us without a profound understanding of our real problem, sin.

Hopefully, taking a closer look at what happens to the unrighteous makes us realize the terrible and undesirable outcomes of consistently choosing unrighteousness. Paul explains that we are **all** equally lost without God's grace and we all have a desperate need for God's glorious Gospel. Understanding this deep need for a Savior will help us appreciate how much Christ has done to save us. As Jesus Himself explains, those who have been forgiven much will demonstrate great love in return; *"but the one who has been forgiven little, loves little"* (Luke 7:47). Consider this week how dark our paths were without Christ, how much God has given us in Christ, and how much we *still* need God's grace.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the Gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 1:18–32 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

- 1.) What words does Paul use to describe the actions of unrighteous people in Romans 1:18–32? What words does he use to describe God’s actions? Do you see any similarities?

- 2.) How are humankind’s actions related to God’s actions in Romans 1:18–32?
 - **Hint:** Notice the words “*therefore*” (1:24), “*for this reason*” (1:26), and “*because*” (1:28).

- 3.) From what we know so far in Romans 1, contrast how Romans 1:18–32 describes an unrighteous person with what we might assume about a righteous person. Share your reflections with your Connect Group.

- 4.) What comes to your mind when you think about the wrath of God? Read Romans 1:18–32 again. How does Paul think about the wrath of God?

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

Observation

5.) According to Romans 1:18–32, what is idolatry and how does it come about?

6.) How do people “*suppress the truth*” (1:18) of God by what they do and what they do not do?

7.) Paul repeats three times in Romans 1:18–32 that God “*gave them up*” or “*delivered them over*” (1:24, 26, 28). What do these phrases tell us about God and about ourselves? What is Paul emphasizing through this repetition?

8. What does it mean to be “*without excuse*” (1:20) and why is this important for how anyone understands the Gospel?

9. What is the overall point Paul is trying to make in Romans 1:18–32? How does this relate to what Paul said in Romans 1:1–17?

5.)

6.)

7.)

8.)

9.)

Application

10.) Paul describes idolatry in terms of how it developed in ancient times, producing wooden statues and false gods. What are some of the ways that our culture expresses idolatry today? How do we worship things other than God?

11.) God deserves our **first** and our **best** in everything, whether it is our time, our talent, or our treasure. What things in your life challenge God's place for the **first** and the **best**?

12. Where are you guilty of judging and condemning others for sins that you excuse in your own life? How might the Gospel influence such tendencies?

13.) How have you seen God's wrath at work in the world? In your own life? In your Connect Group?

14.) Is it hard for you to agree that, according to Romans 1:32, people deserve spiritual death? Why or why not?

10.)

11.)

12.)

13.)

14.)

In Romans 1–3, Paul references specific Psalms in order to grow our understanding of God’s righteousness. Each week of this Study Guide will include a recommended Psalm that helps us focus on the righteousness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected Psalm and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this Psalm on your own at home and together with your small group. And for those looking for more passages to pray, feel free to return to Romans 1–3 and pray through those passages as well.

This Week’s Prayer Passage: Psalm 10

Read Psalm 10.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise the Lord for He is your King forever and ever (10:16). Praise the Lord because He is the helper of the weak (10:17–18). Praise God because He is the immovable, unchangeable I AM.
- **Confession:** Ask God for forgiveness for thinking that He is far away from you in your times of trouble (10:1). Confess to Him your pride and all the ways that you have acted like He does not exist (10:4). Ask for forgiveness for the ways you have been puffed up by pride (10:3 ff.).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that He does not forget the afflicted and brings justice to the oppressed (10:12–18). Thank God for His right judgment on the wicked (10:15). Thank God that He is an ever-present help in times of trouble.
- **Supplication:** Ask God that He would be near to you in the ways that you are experiencing trouble right now. Ask God to show Himself in the midst of your present circumstances.

Week Three: [Romans 2:1-16]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“For there is no favoritism with God.” - Romans 2:11 (CSB)

Key Principles

- We are all equally guilty in God’s eyes and God’s judgment is righteous.
- The law could not and did not produce righteousness in the Israelites.
- God has provided one way of salvation that unites all nations/peoples.

Read

Before we dive in, it's worth noting that the word "*law*" can refer to multiple things in the book of Romans. First, "*law*" may refer to the entire Old Testament, as in Romans 3:19, where Paul quotes from the Psalms and Prophets. Second, "*Law*" with a capital "L" may refer to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament (see *Luke 24:44*). Finally, "*law*" may refer to the Sinai covenant found within the Pentateuch (see *Galatians 3:17*).

In Week Two, we began looking at three themes that will keep coming up in these early chapters of Romans, themes which will also set a tone for the rest of what Paul wants to accomplish in Romans as a whole. Those three themes are:

- Humanity's equality
- God's judgment
- The difference between righteousness and unrighteousness.

In Romans 2:1–16, Paul adds new insight to what he has already taught on these topics. He does so most pointedly in verse 11, with a bold statement that "*there is no favoritism with God*." This statement is actually a summary of a profound truth from Deuteronomy 10:17 and Job 34:19, where the Old Testament goes into detail about how God does not favor some—such as those with wealth or status—over others. We are all equal in God's eyes.

We cannot understand the Gospel, and the rest of what Paul will be writing about in Romans, until we let this concept sink in. God shows no partiality. What does this mean? From God's perspective, there is nothing that we can bring to him on our own, or brag about with our own words, that will ever make Him change His mind about us. This is both good news and bad news.

God's lack of favoritism begins as bad news in these early chapters of Romans. As we have seen in Romans 1:18–32, all people are unrighteous, and God looks upon unrighteous people as deserving of his wrath and judgment. It does not matter how much status or influence we have, what color our skin is, or even how rich or talented we may be. None of these things impress God. None of these things can fix our unrighteousness before a righteous God. God sees right through the surface, examining the core of who we are to determine whether or not we have truly chosen life in His name (see *Deuteronomy 30:15–20*).

But this same attribute—*God's lack of favoritism or impartiality*—becomes good news for us in the Gospel. Since we could never earn our standing before God on our own, God decided to give us righteousness as a **gift**, by His grace, and through faith in Jesus. And this gift is offered to all people, regardless of status, merit, or ethnicity.

Paul will describe this more in the chapters to come, but he mentions God's impartiality here in order to convince Jews and Gentiles (*or "Greeks"; Paul uses these words interchangeably*) that they must be unified in the Gospel. Paul shows that they are all under condemnation; therefore, both groups must acknowledge their own sinfulness without boasting. The Gospel is the only thing that could truly succeed in unifying them.

This message holds true today, just as it did back then. No matter what ethnicity, social class, or country we are from, all of us are under God's wrath. But consider what the Church would look like if we understood that the Gospel message unifies believers in a *supernatural way* for a *supernatural purpose*. Paul was writing to the Romans, but this truth is as powerful and life-changing today as it was when Paul first wrote those powerful words, "*For there is no favoritism with God*" (2:11).

Think about it. God has provided **one way** of salvation that unites all nations. We see in scripture that it is God's heart for His Church to be made up of people from every nation, tribe and tongue. In the words of 1 Timothy 2:3–5, "*This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus.*" This means that all are equal in God's eyes. All were at one time equally guilty and without hope. But through the Gospel, God brings us together into His family, where we are all brothers and sisters, equally redeemed by Christ's blood. Praise God!

Romans 2:1–16 presents two more points about God's judgment. First, God's judgment is right, true, and warranted (2:2). Second, God's judgment is active. God is storing up judgment for those who persist in unrighteousness and continue walking in sin. Jesus took all of God's wrath for the sin of those who put their faith in Him on the cross, so that leaves God's wrath to be poured out only on those who *deny* His Son. This is a warning to us. God's judgment is not just in the past, when Christ took our judgment upon Himself on the cross; it's coming in the future when Jesus returns (2 Corinthians 5:10). We have to be clear with our friends and neighbors: *Judgment from an impartial judge is coming.*

These points about unrighteousness and God's judgment are a vital aspect of the Gospel, and Romans 1–3 only gives us part of the full picture. As Paul will show us, for God to save unrighteous people, he would have to bring a righteousness **to** us that does not come **from** us. We'll read more about this, and who and where this righteousness comes from, later in Romans. But for now, it is enough for us to wrestle with the reality that our God is a righteous judge, and we are not.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the Gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself.

Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 2:1–16 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

- 1.) What do we learn about God's judgment from Romans 2:1-16? How does this compare to what we learned about God's judgment in Romans 1:18-32?
- 2.) What does this passage teach about humanity's equality before God? What standard does the passage say God uses to judge everyone, both Jews and Gentiles?
- 3.) What contrasts and comparisons do you notice in this passage? What differences do you see in this passage between righteousness and unrighteousness?
- 4.) Summarize this passage in your own words. What themes are common in the answers provided by the members of your Connect Group?

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

Observation

5.) What is the difference between our human judgment and God's judgment according to Romans 2:1–16?

6.) In a passage focused on God's judgment, Paul praises God's kindness (2:4). How do these two aspects of God's character work together in the Gospel?

7.) Romans 2:1–16 tells us that God shows no favoritism. What does this mean for your relationship with God? How does this idea influence your relationships with other people?

5.)

6.)

7.)

Application

- 8.) Romans 2:15 mentions that “*the law is written on their hearts.*” This phrase is borrowed from Jeremiah 31:33. How do we demonstrate that the law is written on our hearts?
- 9.) Share something that you consistently feel guilty about or a way that you are trying to justify yourself before God and others. What does Romans 2:1–16 say about our interaction with guilt and self-justification?
- 10.) What sin have you committed recently that God has withheld the consequences for? How does this reflection affect your view of the Gospel?
- 11.) How does this passage affect the way you interact with your family, neighbors, co-workers, church, and community?

8.)

9.)

10.)

11.)

In Romans 1–3, Paul references specific Psalms in order to grow our understanding of God’s righteousness. Each week of this Study Guide will include a recommended Psalm that helps us focus on the righteousness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected Psalm and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this Psalm on your own at home and together with your Connect Group. And for those looking for more passages to pray, feel free to return to Romans 1–3 and pray through those passages as well.

This Week’s Prayer Passage: Psalm 36

Read Psalm 36.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Give God praise for these characteristics that you see in Psalm 36:
 - He is steadfast (36:5, 7, 10).
 - He is just (36:6).
 - He is righteous (36:6).
 - He is faithful (36:5).
 - He is our light (36:9).
- **Confession:** Ask God for forgiveness for the ways we have conspired to do evil with transgressors (36:1). Ask for forgiveness for the ways that you have harbored sin in your life, thinking that you would not be found out (36:2). Confess to God where you have been self-seeking and ask for a change of heart in these areas.
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that we can take refuge in His shadow (36:7). Thank God that He has let you drink from the fountain of life and shined His light on you (36:9). Thank God that feasting on Him is the only sustenance that we truly need (36:8).
- **Supplication:** Ask the Lord to help you see His steadfast love as greater than anything else in your life. Ask Him to keep you from arrogance and to give you a discerning spirit, to know when to run from evil and to run straight toward His fountain of life.

Week Four: [Romans 2:17-29]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“On the contrary, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—by the Spirit, not the letter. That person’s praise is not from people but from God.” - Romans 2:29 (CSB)

Key Principles

- The Old Testament taught that the law cannot save us.
- Having God’s Word is not a help to us in becoming righteous if we do not obey its words.
- We need God’s Spirit to help us obey God's Word.

Read

We see in the Old Testament that God directly revealed to the Israelites what actions constituted righteousness in His eyes. He gave them the law, which was quite the advantage to knowing exactly what **to do** and what **not to do** to glorify God. Had they chosen to follow the commands of God's law, they could have been "*a light to those in darkness*" (2:19) and teachers of wisdom to the nations. But they **could not**, and their inability to attain righteousness on their own made them equal to those who had *never heard* God's Word.

The Jews of ancient times took pride in their "*advantage*." They valued circumcision because of what it meant—they were God's chosen people who had received God's law. But they failed to earn righteousness because they were only able to follow part of the law; they were not able to keep all of its commands. Paul says that they failed with things like stealing and adultery, which even the Gentile cultures knew were unrighteous. Thus, the supposed Jewish "*advantage*" when it came to attaining righteousness was practically **not an advantage at all**.

It's easy to read this section of Romans and think that these Jews were making decisions that were absurd. But doesn't this sound familiar? We have also been given a greater, unifying advantage: Jesus, the Gospel and the Holy Spirit! And although, as Christians, we claim His righteousness as our own, we still fail and give into sin. But praise God that through Jesus, our unrighteousness was paid for by His blood. As believers, we get to put on the righteousness of Christ which not only saves us, but it serves as an equalizer as well. This is what we discussed in last week's study on Romans 2:1–16. Paul is building on the text in 2:1–16 to show that the Jews, in all their pursuit of holiness and superiority were missing the point that the righteousness they needed was not their own—it was Jesus's. Paul will explain this more in Romans 3:21–31.

It is important to note that everything Paul is saying here about circumcision, the law, and needing a new heart is not originally his idea. He's taking several pages out of the Old Testament to make these claims. Consider these statements from the Old Testament:

- The idea of circumcision is really a matter of the **heart** (*Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4*).
- God has to put His Spirit inside us for us to have any hope of following His laws (*Jeremiah 31:33–34; Ezekiel 36:26–27*).
- Israel was supposed to be a light to the nations during the exile, but instead, they brought dishonor to God (*Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 52:5; Ezekiel 36:22–25*).

Here is what these important passages teach us about the message of the Old Testament. First, the Pentateuch was trying to say so much more about faith and obedience to God than simply passing on a "*legal code*" of behavior. Second, the Pentateuch and the Prophets (*books written by Old Testament prophets*) both taught that the law would not be enough to save the Israelites. Third, the Old Testament clearly states that what it means to be truly circumcised has more to do with our obedience and relationship to God than what bloodline you come from. So, to truly be an Israelite is to be faithful to God, but the Prophets tell us that as time went on, the Israelites, like all of humanity, were unfaithful to God and were *unable* to do what God required of them.

And so, God would have to intervene to help heal this broken, sinful people. God would become the light to those in darkness and the teacher of wisdom to all nations. God would reach into the heart of His people and put His Spirit within them in order to make a way for them to become righteous. Only by doing this Himself is He able to get the praise and glory He deserved from the beginning.

The rest of Romans will show us how God intervened to bring righteousness to all nations through the work of His Son, Jesus. Jesus is the light to those in darkness (*John 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35; 12:46*; referring to *Isaiah 9:2; 42:16*) and He has brought the New Covenant that allowed God's law to be written on our hearts. A covenant is generally a binding agreement between two people, and this idea of a New Covenant is God's way of declaring the unconditional relationship that He desires to have with His people in Christ. Keep reading Romans, and we will soon learn more about God's amazing gift to His people in the New Covenant!

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the Gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 2:17–29 in preparation for this week's study.

- 1.) What are some false assumptions people make about obtaining God's approval? How does Romans 2:17–29 help us understand these false assumptions?

- 2.) According to Romans 2:17–29, what is circumcision of the heart and how is it demonstrated?

- 3.) Where do you see references to the Old Testament in Romans 2:17–29? List them below and discuss their significance with your Connect Group.

- 4.) Summarize this passage in your own words. What themes are common within your Connect Group?

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

Observation

- 5.) Why would some Jews think that God viewed them as superior to Gentiles?
Where, in your life, are you tempted to view yourself as superior to others? How so?
- 6.) What, according to Romans 2:12–16, is the relationship between God’s law and His judgment?
- 7.) What other questions do you have from Romans 2:17–29?
- 8.) This passage can leave us feeling hopeless about our inability to please God.
As Christians, what hope do we have to be able to please God?

5.)

6.)

7.)

8.)

Application

9.) Romans 2:17–29 identifies where some Jews are acting in a hypocritical way—many of them took pride in the law, but at the same time, they were breaking parts of it. How have we, as Christians, been guilty of a similar type of hypocrisy? Share and discuss what it looks like to follow God’s commands in a way that honors Him and brings Him glory.

10.) Just like some Jews found purpose and meaning in their ability to follow God’s law, where are you tempted to find purpose, affirmation, or belonging in something other than God? What does it look like to satisfy your desires for belonging, affirmation, and purpose in God’s Gospel?

11.) How does reminding ourselves of the Gospel prevent us from practicing any form of idolatry? How can we preach the Gospel to one another in Christian community so that we do not become self-righteous?

9.)

10.)

11.)

In Romans 1–3, Paul references specific Psalms in order to grow our understanding of God’s righteousness. Each week of this Study Guide will include a recommended Psalm that helps us focus on the righteousness of God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected Psalm and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this Psalm on your own at home and together with your Connect Group. And for those looking for more passages to pray, feel free to return to Romans 1–3 and pray through those passages as well.

This Week’s Prayer Passage: Psalm 5

Read Psalm 5.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God that, in His righteousness, He is opposed to all evil, wickedness, and deceit (5:4–6, 10). Praise God that He is our King, a king who upholds the righteous and deals justly with His subjects (5:7–8, 11–12).
- **Confession:** Ask God’s forgiveness for the ways you have distorted the truth or told lies. Ask God’s forgiveness where you have participated in evil and been an enemy of God. Ask for God to forgive you where you have used your words for death and not for life (5:9–10).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that He hears you and listens to your prayers (5:1–3), even though you have been unfaithful. Thank God that His steadfast love is abundant. Thank God that He has made you righteous through the blood of Christ and that He will bless the righteous and be our shield (5:12).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to make your ways straight and to help you act in a righteous way to your friends, neighbors, family, and even your enemies (5:8). Ask God that you will be an agent for life in other people’s lives. Ask God for the joy that comes with being part of his family (5:11).

Week Five: [Romans 3:1-20]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.”

- Romans 3:10–11 (CSB)

Key Principles

- We are faithless, but God is faithful.
- God’s judgment on the unrighteous is completely just.
- We are equally unrighteous in God’s eyes.
- Paul makes it overwhelmingly clear that everyone is unrighteous apart from faith in Christ.
- God’s righteousness shines all the more clearly amidst the unrighteousness of humanity.
- May our own unrighteousness and sinfulness drive us to God, to cling to Him as the only righteous person in the universe.

Read

In Romans 3:1–20, Paul finally addresses two points that he has been leading up to in the previous chapters: 1) the Jews had an advantage in their familiarity with the law and circumcision (3:1–2), but 2) when it comes to righteousness, the Jews are no better off (3:9).

Paul wants the readers to know that, without a shadow of doubt, “... *both Jews and Gentiles are under sin, as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one*” (3:9–10). Using a litany of quotations from the Old Testament, Paul makes it overwhelmingly clear that everyone is unrighteous apart from faith in Christ. We are told through the Psalms that everyone—even David—is sinful (*Romans 3:4*), David’s enemies are evil (3:13), God’s people are unjust (3:10–14), and the irreligious who deny God are fools (3:10–14). And the book of Isaiah tells us that God’s people have no righteousness and justice was found nowhere in Israel (3:15).

Establishing that humanity is unrighteous is a necessary part of Paul’s argument throughout Romans 1:18–3:20, but it is not Paul’s main point in the whole book. Paul’s larger goal in Romans is to explain God’s righteousness. In Romans 3:1–20, Paul says that God’s righteousness shines all the more clearly amidst the rampant unrighteousness of humanity. Humanity has been unfaithful, but God has remained steadfast in his faithfulness. It’s simply a part of his righteous character: Faithful is who our God is.

Sadly, even with God’s faithfulness and righteousness clearly on display against the unrighteousness of humanity, some of Paul’s audience still didn’t understand. In Romans 3:5–8, Paul responds to two common questions. First, some were asking, does God’s wrath make Him unrighteous (3:5)? As we have already seen in this study, God’s righteousness warrants his wrath and judgment against all unrighteousness. Second, others were asking, should we commit more unrighteousness and sin in order to let God’s righteousness shine more clearly (8:8)? Paul responds to both questions with brief exclamations, such as “*Absolutely not!*” in Romans 3:6.

We might be quick to dismiss or overlook these questions as irrelevant for us today, but the truth is, many of us live in these ways, too. We question the necessity of God’s wrath and judgment. And how many times do we run toward sin, even as believers? How often do we take God’s righteousness for granted? We might profess with our mouths that such notions are absurd, but we all have done similar things—we all have chosen the pleasures of sin and taken God’s righteousness for granted.

Paul corrects this wrong thinking and puts the focus back on God's righteousness, where it belongs, instead of our self-absorbed excuses for our unrighteousness. The real question in Romans 3 has nothing to do with our opinions. Rather, Paul asks, How can this righteous God bring salvation to an unrighteous world?

Paul explains God's plan of salvation for the world by turning to the Old Testament. Everything Paul learned about God's righteousness and man's sinfulness comes from the Old Testament. The Psalms and other passages are intentionally chosen for Romans 3:1–20 to develop a significant theology of God's righteousness. They declare that God is righteous:

- In His judgments against the wicked (Psalm 10; 14; 53; 143).
- In His concern and justice for the poor (Psalm 10; 140).
- In His establishment of righteous words and decrees (Psalm 119).
- In His forgiveness to sinners (Psalm 51).

Conversely, people in these Psalms are, at many times, wicked and harmful to their fellow man. No one is righteous, but there is hope, forgiveness, and refuge for some. Who gets this refuge?

- Those who praise God (Psalm 5).
- Those who draw near to God (Psalm 143).
- Those who dwell in His presence and call on His name (Psalm 63).
- Those who get God's Spirit on them and who receive God's forgiveness (Proverbs 1:23; Psalm 51; Isaiah 59).
- Those who cling to God and are satisfied in Him (Psalm 36; 63).

As we see in Romans 3:1–20, the blueprints for faith and salvation were already in the Old Testament. Paul used that to show that God has been steadfastly righteous throughout all generations, and God's salvation through Jesus will be the ultimate declaration of His righteousness. So, may our acknowledgments of our own unrighteousness and sinfulness drive us to God, to cling to Him as the only righteous person in the universe. It is in Him that we will find refuge from the wickedness of our enemies, the brokenness of the world, and mostly from our own sinfulness.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the Gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 3:1–20 in preparation for this week's study.

- 1.) Read Isaiah 59. When God found a lack of righteousness in Israel, how did He respond? How does the end of this passage remind us of passages we've read before, such as Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31?

- 2.) What do we learn about God's judgment and righteousness from Romans 3:1–20?

- 3.) Notice all the questions that Paul asks in Romans 3:1–8 and Romans 3:1–20. How do they help us follow his argument? How do these questions address common objections to the Christian faith?

- 4.) What key words stand out to you in Romans 3:1–20? Are there any words that you feel like you might know their meaning, but wonder if the Bible has more to say about them?

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

Observation

- 5.) In Romans 3:1–20, why is it important that Paul establishes that all people are unrighteous?

- 6.) How does the unrighteousness of humanity fit into the good news of the Gospel?

- 7.) A common position in our culture believes some people to be more or less sinful than others. Based on our understanding of the Gospel and the end of Romans 3:9, is it worth our time to debate who among us is more or less sinful? Why or why not?

8. What is Paul's main message to his audience from Romans 3:1–20?

5.)

6.)

7.)

8.)

Application

9.) The news that no one is righteous can be unsettling to hear at first. How have you come to accept your own unrighteousness apart from Christ?

10.) Where do you see the effects of unrighteousness? These effects might be from your own sin or the sin of others in your community. Discuss your observations and reflections with your Connect Group.

11.) Briefly review Romans 1:18–3:20. Think about the implications of this passage for how we explain Christianity to others in our communities. How would you explain the unrighteousness of the world to someone that does not believe in God or His standards of righteousness?

12.) Many in Paul's audience had a great degree of misplaced confidence when it came to their relationships with God. How have you been tempted to trust in things other than the Gospel when it comes to your relationship with God?

9.)

10.)

11.)

12.)

In Romans 1–3, Paul references specific Psalms in order to grow our understanding of God’s righteousness. Each week of this Study Guide will include a recommended psalm that helps us focus on the righteousness of God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected Psalm and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this Psalm on your own at home and together with your Connect Group. And for those looking for more passages to pray, feel free to return to Romans 1–3 and pray through those passages as well.

This Week’s Prayer Passage: Psalm 51

Read Psalm 51.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God for the following characteristics that we see in Psalm 51:
 - He is a God of faithful love and his compassion is abundant (51:1).
 - His judgments are blameless (51:4).
 - He is the teacher of wisdom (51:6).
 - He restores, sustains, and gives joy (51:12).
 - He is the God of our salvation (14).
- **Confession:** Let us ask God to bring to mind an awareness of our sin, that we might say along with verse 3, *“For I am conscious of my rebellion, and my sin is always before me.”* Confess your specific examples out loud as displeasing in the sight of God. Ask God to bring awareness to the devastating effects of sin. Acknowledge with your own words the harmful work your sins have done to yourself, to others, and to God Himself.
- **Thanksgiving:** As surely as God is the one to provide awareness for our sin, He alone provides restoration and renewal through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Raise your voice and express your confidence to God in the words of verse 7, in His willingness to purge us and make us clean and His ability to wash us whiter than snow. Thank God that He deals with our sin directly and also offers us forgiveness. Praise God for His grace and mercy toward His people.

- **Supplication:** Ask that God would grant you the grace to experience verse 8, *“Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.”* No matter how dark and deep the circumstances of your sin may be, ask God to restore to you the joy of your salvation. Verse 18 makes a request from the Lord, *“In your good pleasure, cause Zion to prosper; build the walls of Jerusalem.”* Pray for the work that God is doing in and through your local church in your community. Ask Him to provide care for His people and ask Him to rebuild what sin has destroyed. Ask God to do good in your city.

Week Six: [Romans 3:21-31]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“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 (CSB)

Key Principles

- The righteousness of God does not come to us by *“the works of the law”* (Romans 3:20).
- The righteousness of God comes only because of what Jesus did on the cross.
- We can only receive this gift of righteousness by faith.
- Because God set it up this way, we get unity and righteousness, God gets all the glory, and His righteousness is on display in the story of our lives.

Read

Romans 3:1–20, our study passage for Week Five, brings a great conclusion to the larger argument Paul had been making in 1:18–3:20. Here, beginning in 3:21–31, we are **finally** going to see how Christ’s work on the cross solves the problem of humanity’s unrighteousness. This provides us with the answer to the question that hangs over this section of Romans—*How can a righteous God save unrighteous sinners?*

Remember, as we discussed in Week Two, righteousness can be defined as the extent to which one is morally right or virtuous. Romans 3:21–23 serves to summarize what Paul has said earlier in Romans. We cannot create our own righteousness, and doing works of the law cannot make us righteous, so we need a righteousness to come in some other form. This righteousness will come by *faith*. We’ll read in Romans 4 that God had been declaring sinners, like Abraham, righteous in his sight *because of their faith*. This righteousness-by-faith all happened before the law came into existence, since the law came through Moses, and Moses arrived centuries after Abraham. What does this prove? *Righteousness comes to us from something outside of ourselves and something other than the law*. God has graciously provided the righteousness humanity needed all along and it is gained **only by faith** in the work of Christ.

Romans 3:24–26 declares the glorious redemption that Christ brings us. God’s righteousness comes to us as a gift. But make no mistake, it is a costly gift. For a righteous God to declare us righteous, he had to deal with our sinfulness somehow. Think for just a moment of all of the unrighteousness and sin that has existed in your life—and then imagine what it would take to right every single one of those wrongs. God, being rich in mercy, sent His Son to be a sacrifice for our sins. Through His great love, He paid for it all, and not just your sins, but the sins of the entire world. By His blood, Jesus died for our sins and redeemed us from being under judgment. This is the essence of what is meant by the words “*atoning sacrifice*” or “*propitiation*” in verse 25—our sins have been removed and our guilt has been dealt with through the self-sacrifice of Jesus. The atoning sacrifice of God’s own Son is the only way a righteous God can be in relationship with unrighteous humanity. More than that, God’s plans revealed in Christ (3:24) are actually a demonstration of God’s righteousness (3:25–26). By punishing Christ for all sin, God shows His righteousness and can also now declare us righteous by faith.

Romans 3:27–31 explains that our only part in receiving this gift is to have faith in Christ’s finished work of redemption. So, faith becomes our way to enter into God’s righteousness, showing God’s brilliance and great character. We have to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, so that God can receive all the glory for this wonderful salvation. It is through faith in Jesus Christ that Jews and Gentiles alike can be united equally through the same salvation, entering into one righteousness. Because God set it up this way, we get unity and righteousness, God gets all the glory, and his righteousness is on display in the story of our lives.

This week, as you wrestle with the text, look for moments to praise God for the redemption He’s provided through the gift of righteousness. As you reread the text, answer questions, and pray through a psalm, ask the Lord to open your eyes to how profound this gift truly is and to let it take root deep in your heart.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God’s righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Scripture

1.) Summarize Romans up to this point by giving titles to the main sections we have looked at in our study. Write your summary statements next to each passage:

- Romans 1:1:1–17:
- Romans 1:18–32:
- Romans 2:1–16:
- Romans 2:17–29:
- Romans 3:1–20:

When you meet with your Connect Group, share your summary statements and discuss as a group.

2.) How often is righteousness mentioned in Romans 3:21–31? What are the things that put righteousness on display according to this passage?

3.) How do the first two words of Romans 3:21, “*but now*,” tie everything that has come before in Romans with what Paul is about to say in Romans 3:21–31?

4.) How does Romans 3:21–31 say people can obtain righteousness from God? Why do we need it?

5.) Paraphrase this passage in your own words. What themes are common in the responses of your Connect Group?

6.) Think back to week one when we asked you to write a phrase or sentence to summarize the theme of Romans. What do you think the theme is now? Look back to your answer and compare it with your answer now.

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

5.)

6.)

Observation

- 7.) Do all of Paul's uses of the term "*righteousness of God*" refer to the same thing? How might it be different in Romans 3:22?
- 8.) How is Christ's sacrificial death an appropriate solution to the problems and questions Paul has been raising up to this point?
- 9.) Romans 3:22 says that there is no difference or distinction among those who believe in God. List as many ways as possible that Romans 3:21–31 illustrates that there is no difference between people.
- 10.) What everyday implications does Romans 3:24 have on our lives?

7.)

8.)

9.)

10.)

Application

- 11.) In Chapters 1 and 2, some Jews are described as trying to uphold the law, but doing so cannot produce righteousness. At the end of Romans 3:31, Paul says that “*we uphold the law.*” What has changed to make this a possibility for people who join Jesus’s church?
- 12.) Romans 1–3 teaches that we cannot find lasting significance on our own apart from Christ. Where are you tempted to find your identity or significance apart from Christ?
- Hint: Where are you tempted to feel pride or boast in something other than Jesus?
- 13.) How does believing the Gospel humble us and enable us to be honest about ourselves?
- 14.) Consider all that we’ve covered in this six-week study. What have been some of the most important takeaways for you from Romans 1–3? List at least one or two important applications of this study for your everyday life and share them with your Connect Group.

11.)

12.)

13.)

14.)

In Romans 1–3, Paul references specific Psalms in order to grow our understanding of God’s righteousness. Each week of this Study Guide will include a recommended Psalm that helps us focus on the righteousness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected Psalm and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this Psalm on your own at home and together with your Connect Group. And for those looking for more passages to pray, feel free to return to Romans 1–3 and pray through those passages as well.

This Week’s Prayer Passage: Psalm 63

Read Psalm 63.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God that He has reached down to his creatures to be in relationship with us. Praise God because of his steadfast love (63:3). Praise God that He is the ultimate answer to all our desires and hopes (63:1–2, 5–8).
- **Confession:** Confess to God where we have tried to justify our existence in ways that are separate from Him and His will for our lives. Confess to God where you have tried to be satisfied with something other than your relationship with Him. Confess to God where you have praised created things when you should have been praising the Creator.
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that He has saved us! Rejoice that God upholds us and exults us when we cling to Him (63:8). Thank God for satisfying our very souls when we reach out to Him (63:1, 3, 5).
- **Supplication:** Ask God that we would see and understand how He is spiritually upholding us (63:8), even when we feel crushed by the enemy or worried about our lives. Ask God to remove the harmful idols that we try to cling to when we need to cling to Him.

ROMANS 1-3



—THE BOOK OF—
ROMANS
CONNECT GROUP STUDY GUIDE 2

ROMANS 4-8

The background of the entire page is filled with a pattern of light gray, wavy, organic lines that resemble topographical map contour lines or fluid, swirling patterns. These lines vary in thickness and direction, creating a textured, flowing effect across the white background.

*"You have been set free from sin and have
become slaves to righteousness."*

Romans 6:18

INTRODUCTION

As you have noticed by now, the book of Romans is a powerful and life changing book. Throughout history, Paul's letter to the Roman church has transformed lives and altered the course of history through its precise teaching of the Gospel. Martin Luther, a leader in the Protestant Reformation, understood the Gospel for the first time by studying Romans.

The book of Romans teaches heavy theology. However, we should remember that God has designed this book to *transform* us, not merely *inform* us. After eleven chapters, Paul begins Romans 12:1–2a with a “*therefore*,” saying, “*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*”

How are we supposed to be transformed? By the renewing of our minds. Perhaps you know people who are all about life-change and transformation, but they don't want anything to do with renewing their minds. In other words, things like engaged thinking (Romans 8:5) and meditating on God's Word (Psalm 1:2) in order to understand (2 Timothy 2:7) are not high priorities for such people; they would rather **do** than think. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who are all about theology and glorifying God with their minds, but their thoughts about God doesn't transform the way they live their everyday lives. The book of Romans teaches us that a renewed mind is God's plan for changing how we live in the world.

As we continue our dive into studying Romans, don't forget the goal: God wants to transform us through this His Word. The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). This salvation involves past justification (5:1), present transformation (12:2) and future glorification (5:9; 8:3). The Gospel is the power that accomplishes this incredible transformation because it reveals God's righteousness (1:17). Beholding God, in all his righteousness, is the key to true transformation.

Romans: The whole story.

One of the key principles of interpreting any Bible book is this: The whole interprets the parts, and the parts interpret the whole. As you study the parts of a book, you'll gain a better understanding of the whole of the book. And the more you study the book as a whole, the more you will be helped in understanding its parts correctly.

In the book of Romans, Paul declares the righteousness of God in the Gospel (1:16–17). Paul wants the Christians in Rome to know that God is absolutely righteous, meaning He is forever faithful and true (3:1–8) and that He is righteous in His just condemnation of sinners (1:18–3:20). Paul also writes about God's gracious salvation of sinners who trust in Christ (3:21–4:25) and that God is righteous in the way He grants us Christ's righteousness (3:21–30). God is righteous in His dealings with Israel and the nations (9–11). This means we can build our life on God's faithfulness and His righteousness, and we can trust that He will never lie, never do wrong, and always be true to His Word (4:16–25).

When we build our life on His righteousness, the result is unfailing hope (5:1–11; 8:20–39). Like Abraham, we learn to hope against hope in trusting God (4:18), and this hope bears incredible fruit in our lives: the obedience of faith (1:5; 16:26), the putting to the death of our sin (6:12–23; 8:13), and perseverance in suffering (5:1–5; 8:26–39). This hope in the faithfulness of God creates a people who are ready to give up preferences and be united to one another in love (12:1–15:13). As you can see from the many times the word “*righteous*” is mentioned in this paragraph, the book of Romans is built on one solid foundation—the righteousness and faithfulness of God.

Just as this book has changed the minds and hearts of many people through the ages, we look forward to how God will use Romans to transform our church in this season. We have already seen many men and women turn to the Lord during this series. With every Bible study in this series, our hope is that we all will see the Gospel with greater appreciation, love God with greater passion, and apply the messages of Romans in ways that impact our everyday lives and bear witness for Christ in our communities.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” - Romans 15:13

How to use this guide.

Over the course of the next year we will be studying the book of Romans together. Pastor Michael along with other various pastors and speakers, will preach through Romans verse by verse, and all of our Connect Groups will study the book of Romans together in their group meetings.

This Bible study includes eight studies that is the second set in a series of 4 studies produced for Connection Church Rincon Connect Groups this year. Each Bible study series is designed to aid both our personal study of Romans and facilitate our Connect Group discussions. This current study will investigate Romans 4–8 which introduces us to God’s righteousness in the Gospel.

As you start this study, each week, will begin with key verses that we want to encourage you to memorize along with key principles for each passage, followed by a devotional introduction to prepare our hearts and minds. Then, the Study Guide section incorporates a series of questions specifically designed to help us engage the text of Romans in personal study and Connect Group discussion, according to the **SOAP** method of Bible study:

- **SCRIPTURE:** Read and study everything in the passage.
- **OBSERVATION:** What are some observations that you notice from this text? Remember, context is everything.
- **APPLICATION–** How does the text apply to your every day life? Based off the text, what are some measurable next steps that you can take, starting today?
- **PRAYER –** Pray God’s word back to Him, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Work through these at any time throughout the week. Some may find it helpful to work through the exercises slowly throughout the week, in sections, while others may want to study the whole passage in one sitting.

How to use this guide (cont.)

Whichever approach you choose to take, please complete the exercises **before** your Connect Group meeting. In Connect Groups, we will discuss our answers to the Bible study questions and discuss what next steps God is leading us to take through the weekly passages.

To maximize our study of God's Word and the impact it can have on our lives, we encourage everyone to personally work through all of the questions in each of the 8 weekly studies, but Connect Group leaders may choose to focus more on some questions than others.

We have also added a "*sermon notes*" section to each week so that you can take notes during the sermon to better prepare for your Connect Group.

Week One: [Romans 4:1-17]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who declares the ungodly to be righteous, his faith is credited for righteousness.” - Romans 4:4–5 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Justification is a gift by faith, not something earned by works.
- Justification involves both forgiveness of sin and being *credited* righteousness.
- From Genesis and Psalms, Paul clearly shows that God justifies sinners by faith, **not** by works.

Read

Let's review Romans 1–3 before jumping into Chapter 4. Romans 1–3 proclaims that our God is righteous and never at fault in how He relates to sin. This has been Paul's argument all through Romans 1–3: God is righteous in condemning sinners (1:18–3:20), and He is also righteous in how He saves sinners who trust in Christ (3:21–3:30). Every person, both Jew and Greek, has turned away from God (3:9–3:18), and no one can make themselves righteous by performing good works (3:20). The **only hope** for unrighteous people like us is the sacrificial death of Jesus (3:25). But the good news is that Jesus takes on the wrath of God for those who trust in Him. On the cross, Jesus takes their punishment, which satisfies God's righteous demand for judgment. As a result, none of us earn righteousness through our own works, but we are *gifted* righteousness through Christ! This gift-righteousness that God grants to those who trust in Him is what we call "*justification by faith*."

During the original reading and writing of the book of Romans, the New Testament didn't yet exist. So, when the Christians in Rome received this letter, many of them would have wondered, "Is Paul's teaching in line with my Bible, the Old Testament?" So, another natural question they might ask after reading Romans 1–3 is, "*This sounds good, but is this justification by faith what God teaches in his Word?*"

In Romans 4, Paul answers this by referring to Genesis 15 and Psalm 32. He tells us that justification involves two aspects:

1. God forgives our sins. Meaning, our sins are **not credited** against us (Psalm 32:1–2).
2. God credits us righteousness we did not earn. We are **credited** as righteous, while we are still sinners (Genesis 15:6).

Paul shows that the Old Testament teaches both of these truths, but he does so in reverse order. In Genesis 15, God comes to Abraham (*who is childless*) and promises him that his descendants will be more numerous than the stars in the sky. Genesis 15:6 says "*Abram believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness*." The word "credited" is one you'll want to take note of, as it is used multiple times in this chapter.

Genesis 15:6 puts the emphasis on Abraham's **faith**, not his works. In other words, Abraham did not **earn** righteousness by his works, it was credited to him by faith.

When we get paid for working, our wage is not a gift, but what we are *owed* (4:4). But when we trust God instead of working for our righteousness, righteousness is a gracious gift, not something we earn (4:5). Abraham believed God, and his faith was credited as righteousness. That is just one part of justification. God counting us righteous when we trust in him.

But justification also involves God not counting our sins against us. Paul goes to Psalm 32 to show this aspect of justification. Paul says that David speaks of the *"blessing of the person to whom God credits righteousness apart from works"* (4:6). He quotes Psalm 32 which says that the blessed person is the one whose *"lawless acts are forgiven"* and *"whose sins are covered"* (4:7). This is the person whose sin the Lord does not *"credit"* or *"account"* to him. This is why Paul refers to Psalm 32: It helps to clarify the **other side** of justification.

From Genesis and Psalms, Paul clearly shows that God justifies sinners by faith, not by works. In justification, God does not count our sin against us (Psalm 32), but counts us righteous when we trust in Him (Genesis 15). Justification by faith eliminates all boasting (Romans 3:27), so none of us can boast in God's sight, not even Abraham (4:2). We do not work to earn our salvation from God. Instead, we trust him, acknowledging our helplessness, fully relying on His grace to provide what He demands. And trusting God for forgiveness produces in us what it produced in David: a joyful song from the heart, praising God for not counting our wrongs against us.

Abraham was justified, not by circumcision, but by faith. Paul teaches this by using rhetorical questions as objections. In Romans 4:9–13, Paul tackles yet another objection: Wasn't Abraham circumcised? So, isn't justification limited to those who are circumcised and keep the law? And he responds by asking another question: Was righteousness credited to Abraham while he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Paul then tells the Christians in Rome that it was while Abraham was uncircumcised (4:10), showing that circumcision could not have been a condition for justification. Circumcision was only a sign and a seal (4:11), a tangible way for God's people to identify as different, just as physical acts like baptism and the Lord's Supper mark New Testament Christians as different. To be Abraham's children, we don't have to be circumcised, but we do have to have the same kind of faith he had in God (4:11–12). This makes Abraham the father of any Jew or Gentile that trusts God like Abraham did, no matter if they are circumcised or not.

Paul goes on to say in Romans 4:13–17 that Abraham and his descendants did not receive the promise because of his keeping the commandments of the law but because of the righteousness given to him on account of his faith (4:13). It's important to remember that Abraham did not even have the commandments from the law! Remember, the law is given in Exodus 19, which historically came at least hundreds of years after God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. The promise said that God would make Abraham a father of many nations, not just the Jewish nation (4:17, quoting Genesis 17:5). If God's promise to Abraham is to rest on grace (4:16) and not be made void (4:14), it must depend on faith and not law-keeping (4:16).

Paul shows in Romans 1:18–3:20 that both Jews and Gentiles are unrighteous and under God's wrath. Similarly in Chapter 4, he shows that the *righteousness* based on faith is available to both Jews and Gentiles. That God justifies the ungodly **by faith** is not a new teaching. In Chapter 4, Paul helps his readers see that the same truths in the Old Testament are still important today. If you are a Christian, spend some time this week reflecting on what God has forgiven you from and the righteousness He's given you. If you are not, spend some time this week reflecting on why you haven't trusted in Christ for your salvation.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 4:1–17 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

1.) In your Bible, circle the number of times “*credited*” occurs in Romans 4:1–17. Who is crediting? What is being credited?

2.) Highlight the parts in Romans 4:1–17 that are quotes from the Old Testament. Write the references below. How many did you find? Why is this important?

3.) In your Bible, underline the words that are the opposite of “*work*” and “*wage*” in Romans 4:1–17. Write them here. What does Paul refer to as the opposite of work and the opposite of wage?

Observation

- 4.) Paul uses Abraham as an example in Romans 4:1–17. In verses 1–5, what does Abraham’s story teach us about being justified by God?
- 5.) What do verses 9–15 teach us about how faith, righteousness, and obedience work together?
- 6.) From Romans 4:1–5, explain how being *credited* righteousness by faith eliminates our boasting (4:2).
- 7.) Why does Paul quote the Old Testament in Romans 4:1–17 so often?
- 8.) Why was Abraham’s faith not a work that earned the wage of righteousness? Why is it important that **God** declared Abraham righteous before he was circumcised?
- 9.) How would you explain what saving faith is and is not from Romans 4:1–17?

Application

10.) How do you usually think of your works before God? What works hinder your ability to live by faith? How does Romans 4:1–17 challenge you in how you think of works? How can you help others trust God instead of working for righteousness?

11.) What are some instances where you are tempted to boast in yourself? When do you feel like you have earned God's favor? How does Romans 4:1–17 challenge you?

12.) How could Romans 4:1–17 help you share your faith with your "One"? How would you go about explaining forgiveness and righteousness to your "One"?

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In Romans 4-8, Paul references specific Psalms in order to grow our understanding of God's righteousness. Each week this study guide will include a recommended Psalm that helps us focus on the righteousness of God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected Psalm and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this Psalm on your own at home and together with your Connect Group. And for those looking for more passages to pray, feel free to return to Romans 4-8 and pray through those passages as well.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Psalm 32

Read Psalm 32

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** "Be glad in the Lord and rejoice" (Psalm 32:11). Reflect on the kindness of God in forgiving your transgressions (32:1) and praise his glorious grace.
- **Confession:** "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin" (Psalm 32:5). Do as the psalmist did: Run to the Lord and confess all your heart to him. Acknowledge how you have loved created things more than the Creator (Romans 1:25).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for not crediting your sin against you (Psalm 32:2). And thank him for crediting Christ's righteousness to you, apart from works (Romans 4:6).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to be your hiding place (Psalm 32:7). Ask him to protect you from trouble and surround you with joyful shouts of deliverance (32:7). Ask him to instruct you and show you the way you should go (32:9).

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Week Two: [Romans 4:18-25]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“He did not waver in unbelief at God’s promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, because he was fully convinced that what God had promised, he was also able to do.” - Romans 4:20–21 (CSB)

Key Principles

- True faith is about trusting a Person (Jesus), not a religion.
- An impact of a promise depends on who is giving it.
- Faith stands on God’s past faithfulness and hopes in Him for future faithfulness to His promises.
- Faith trusts the firm foundation of God’s excellent Word, even when reasons to doubt God abound.
- When we trust God, He is glorified as El Shaddai.

Read

We're told in Romans that Abraham *believed* God, and it was credited to him as righteousness (4:3). But what exactly did it look like for Abraham to **believe** God? Romans 4:18–25 gives us a fuller picture of what God promised Abraham and also what he promises us!

God had promised Abraham *descendants*. Abraham was over a hundred years old, and still he and his wife, Sarah, had no children. Abraham's body was old, and so was his wife's womb (4:19). As he considered his **own resources** to bring about the promise, *things looked hopeless*. If it was going to happen, it would have to be an act of God. Still, Abraham trusted God, believing that "*what God had promised, he was also able to do*" (4:21). Through Abraham's story from Genesis, Paul teaches some very important truths about the nature biblical faith.

Romans 4:18–25 shows us the object of faith—God. Throughout Romans 4, we see that "*Abraham believed God*" (4:3), and that God is presented as the central focus of our faith. True faith is about trusting a Person, not a religion. We don't just believe that God justifies the ungodly, we believe "*on him*" (4:5). God is that Person "*who Abraham believed*" (4:17). And Genesis was not written for Abraham alone, but also for us (4:23–24). A promise is only as good as the one who is giving it. But we can trust the promises of God because God has continually shown himself to be faithful. We place our trust in the God behind the promise, not the promise itself! As 1 Peter 1:21 says, our "*faith and hope are in God*".

Romans 4:18–25 also reveals that true faith rests on **God's Word**, not on the things we can touch and see. Abraham had zero tangible evidence that God's promise would come true. In fact, everything pointed to the impossibility of him and Sarah having children, as Genesis and Romans affirm. The promise was so incredible that it made Sarah laugh when she heard it (Genesis 18:1–15). Yet Abraham "*believed, hoping against hope ... according to what had been spoken*" (Romans 4:18). Abraham trusted and believed God more than he trusted his circumstances. "*He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body ... and also the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver in unbelief at God's promise but was strengthened in faith*" (Romans 4:19–20). Faith trusts the firm foundation of God's excellent Word, even when reasons to doubt God abound.

Romans 4:18–25 demonstrates that **faith** brings glory to God. We know that God created all things for his glory, and so, everything we do is to be done for the glory of God. *“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God”* (1 Corinthians 10:31). The reason why God’s wrath is against everyone is because everyone has **failed to glorify him** (Romans 1:21). That is what Romans 3:23 means when it says, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* But in Romans 4:20, we read that Abraham *“gave glory to God.”* How exactly can Abraham, an unrighteous man, glorify God?

Abraham glorified God by **trusting Him**. This trust in God is the essence of faith. In a literal translation of Romans 4:20, Abraham *“was strengthened in his faith, giving glory to God.”* Note that *“giving glory”* here means that God is being glorified through the very act of Abraham’s faith. And the next part of the verse clarifies what Paul means. Romans 4:21 says, *“- because he was fully convinced that what God had promised, He was also able to do.”* When we trust God, we glorify Him because we are making a statement about God in our hearts. We are saying, *“I am fully assured that what God has promised, He is able to perform.”* On the contrary, unbelief dishonors God. Unbelief says, *“God is neither faithful, nor willing, to come through on His promise.”* And so, when we trust Him, God is glorified as the powerful Promise-keeper.

Another point about faith from Romans 4:18–25 is faith isn’t merely trusting in what God has done, it also hopes in what God will do in the future. Faith is trusting a Person (God) to be and do what He has promised to do. As Romans 4:18 says, Abraham *“believed, hoping against hope”*. Meaning, Abraham persevered in hope, even when there was no human reason for hope. Hope and faith intersect throughout the Bible. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that, *“faith is the assurance of things hoped for”*. Romans 8:24–25 says it this way, *“hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience”*. As a demonstration of his faith in God, Abraham hoped in what he did not see, trusting God with the future.

Oftentimes, we think that becoming a Christian is only about affirming past historical events— that Christ came, died for our sins, and rose again. And while believing those truths is important, it is not the full picture of Biblical faith. God’s past faithfulness is grounds for trusting him for the future. Notice in the verses that follow, the past grounds our faith in God so that we trust him for the future. Romans 5:9 says, “How much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by his blood [past], will we be saved through him from wrath [future].” Again in Romans 8:32: “He did not even spare his own Son but offered him up for us all [past]. How will he not also with him grant us everything [future]?” Faith looks back on the demonstration of God’s love for us in Christ’s death, and then trusts God to fulfill all his promises in the future.

Romans 4 teaches that God justifies the ungodly by faith, not by works. Faith glorifies God by taking Him at His Word above all other realities. Faith takes a stand on God’s past faithfulness and hopes in Him for future faithfulness to His promises.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself.

Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 4:18-25 in preparation for this week’s study.

Scripture

- 1.) In your Bible, highlight or underline the times Paul quotes the Old Testament in Romans 4:18–25.
- 2.) What are the words Paul uses to describe the impossibility of Abraham and Sarah having children? What words does Paul use to highlight Abraham’s faith?
- 3.) In your Bible, highlight all the times a variation of the word faith or belief is used in Romans 4:18–25.
- 4.) In your Bible, Go through and circle the times Paul uses these connector words: “so that,” “therefore,” and “because.”

Observation

- 5.) Why does Paul quote the Old Testament in Romans 4:18–25?
- 6.) What specifically did Abraham believe about God in 4:21 and why is this significant?
- 7.) How would you define unbelief from Romans 4:21–22? And why does unbelief dishonor God?
8. According to the “therefore” in Romans 4:22, why was faith credited to Abraham as righteousness?

Application

9.) Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify any areas of unbelief in your life. Confess this unbelief **to people** close to you. What are some steps you can take to repent of your unbelief and to walk in faith?

10.) Have you seen people around you who glorify God by trusting His promises, even in impossible situations? What are some ways you can encourage someone going through such circumstances right now?

11. What are you trusting God for right now? Which of His promises do you want Him to come through on this year? Write down the Scripture(s) where you find those promises. Share them with your group.

12.) How does the Gospel give you words to encourage your “*One*”, particularly when he or she is going through difficult circumstances?

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Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 4:18–25

Read Romans 4:18–25.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God that he makes promises to sinners. Praise him that He is faithful and powerful enough to keep every promise He has ever made (4:21).
- **Confession:** How have you wavered “*in unbelief at God’s promise*” (4:20)? Go to the Lord and confess your unbelief in Him. Confess to Him the ways you have dishonored Him in not trusting His Word.
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for the firm foundation of His Word. Praise God for Christ, who went the distance to confirm God’s promises (15:8). Thank God for delivering up Jesus for our trespasses (4:24) and raising Him from the dead.
- **Supplication:** What are some promises from Scripture you want God to fulfill? Ask Him for them. As Charles Spurgeon famously described, plead God’s own handwriting before him. Go to God earnestly, hoping against hope, believing that what He has promised, He is surely able to perform (4:21).

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Week Three: [Romans 5:1-11]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- Romans 5:1 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Being justified by faith brings many blessings to our lives, many of which can change our lives now.
- The Gospel brings us a hope of a glorious future—eternity with God, living a perfected existence.
- God’s love for us, as demonstrated most clearly in the Gospel, is a love like no other.

Read

As Gospel believing Christians, there are two mistakes that we can make that hinder our ability to live lives of faith. The first is to see the Gospel only as an abstract or theoretical idea, meaning that it never truly affects our emotions, attitudes, and affections. When we walk in this wrong way of thinking, we do not actively talk to the God who we proclaim to trust in. We may **say** we have peace with God because we know that God no longer feels like our enemy. But we don't enjoy the relationship that comes from having peace with a living God.

The second mistake is to reduce the Gospel to *a set of feelings*. In this scenario, peace with God becomes something that we feel in our gut when we are confident, but when life throws us curveballs, we begin to doubt whether God has removed His blessing from us. We mistake feelings of anxiety as a sign that God's love is something beyond our reach. In contrast to both of these approaches, the Gospel is a set of unchangeable facts that changes everything... completely, for those who trust in Christ. This reality is what we find in Romans 5:1–11, where Paul explains the many ways the Gospel affects us now and in the future.

The phrase “*since we have been justified by faith*” is a great summary of Paul's argument from Romans 3:21 to the end of Romans 4:25. In 3:21–4:25, Paul explains how God brings justification to sinners, crediting Christ's righteousness to us. We were enemies of God and our future should have ended with God's wrath, but Jesus earned our peace with God and a future full of hope and glory. Our **present reality** is marked by **God's grace**. This grace means that we are saved now, fully reconciled to God and able to live a life in relationship with Him. It also means that we will be saved in the future and will live with our Redeemer for **all** eternity.

How exactly does a knowledge of these facts begin to change our lives, our minds, and our emotions here and now? All of these great facts of the Gospel give us a tremendous, overwhelming hope, which Paul describes in 5:2–5. For Paul, this hope gives us joy (5:2, 11). It makes us steadfast in the face of difficult or changing circumstances (5:3–5). It helps us see beyond the brokenness in our lives to a better future and a truer spiritual reality. Sometimes in our culture, we describe hope as something that is uncertain, but the hope that the Gospel brings is sure. We aren't placing our hope in things that pass away or change. Romans 5:2 tells us that “*we rejoice in the **hope** of the glory of God*”.

But what exactly does it mean to “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (5:2, emphasis added)? It means we joyfully look forward to the glory of God being revealed to us and in us because God has already justified us and reconciled us to himself (5:1). It means that we can be confident—even in the midst of suffering—that God will reveal his glory in us on the last day. This hope we have in the Gospel is a 100% guarantee, as God’s glory is unchanging and eternal. He has proven his trustworthiness in the ways that the gospel fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament. So, when He tells us that heaven is our future, we can have an unshakeable confidence in that future!

To be clear, this hope is not naive but battle-tested. It’s not the type of hope that is wished for merely at the beginning, rather, it is the type of hope that endures through suffering and builds character. Tim Keller says:

“The benefits of justification are not only not diminished by suffering, they are enlarged by it. In other words, if you face suffering with a clear grasp of justification by grace alone, your joy in that grace will deepen. On the other hand, if you face suffering with a mindset of justification by works, the suffering will break you, not make you.”

At the core of this hope is God’s love. Verse 5 says that hope does not put us to shame because God poured His love into our hearts. When we realize how much God loves us, the other circumstances of our lives begin to fade into the background and we are transformed. In the Gospel story, God did something for us that we could not do for ourselves, much less for others. Look at how God’s love goes way beyond what we could ever do or imagine:

- God sent his only Son to die for us (Romans 5:1, 6, 8–10).
- Christ had to shed His blood in order to save us (Romans 5:8–11).
- Jesus died for us while we were God’s enemies (Romans 5:6, 8, 10).
- He then promises that we will have a great future living with Him in perfect paradise (Romans 5:2; 8:17–25, 30).
- And in the meantime, He offers us friendship and reconciliation (Romans 5:1–2, 8–11; James 2:23).

This love is what really captivated the Apostles as they spread the Gospel. Paul says God's love compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14) and John says, "*See what great love the Father has given us*" (1 John 3:1) as he describes the Gospel. God's affection for us is the reason that we can be safe and secure about our future. Stay tuned for Romans 8 for more about how God's Spirit will work in us in the areas of love, hope, and a glorious future.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 5:1-11 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

- 1.) In your Bible, highlight Paul's conjunctions (e.g. *therefore, since, but, because, for, so that*, etc.) in Romans 5:1–11.

- 2.) Romans 5:1–11 begins a description of the blessings that God gives believers in the Gospel. List out all the blessings that you see mentioned in this passage.

- 3.) Looking at verses 6–11, how does each verse describe the work of Christ in the Gospel?

- 4.) Why does Paul point out that Christ died for us “*while we were still helpless*” and “*still sinners*” (Romans 5:6–8)?

Observation

- 5.) According to Romans 5:1–11, how does Christ’s salvation affect us right now in the present? How will Christ’s salvation impact us in the future?
- 6.) Verse 3 says that we “*rejoice in our sufferings*.” What does this mean? How is it possible for Christians to rejoice in our sufferings without minimizing the pain we feel?
- 7.) There are more first person pronouns (we, us, our) in Romans 5:1–11 than in the first four chapters combined. What does this mean? (Hint: Paul no longer distinguishes between Jews and Gentiles, as all believers are united in Christ.)
- 8.) Paul says that believers have now “*received reconciliation*” (5:11). What does reconciliation mean in the context of what we have studied so far in the book of Romans?
- 9.) Paul says that God proves his love for us (5:8). What did God do and how is it proof of his love for us?
- 10.) In Romans 5:1–11, Paul describes the hope we have in Christ. Placing our hope in earthly things will inevitably lead to disappointment, but why will this God-given hope never disappoint us?

Application

11.) How can hope in things God will do bring positive changes to your life right now?

12.) Recall an experience of suffering in your life and be prepared to share it with your Connect Group. Be brave. Be transparent.

- As a group, take time to enter in and “*weep with those who weep*” (Romans 12:15).
- What keeps us from responding to God with the posture of joy and praise found Romans 5:1–11? What would it look like to respond with joy and praise in the midst of your circumstances?

13.) How do you know that God loves you? How would you explain God’s love to your “*One*”?

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Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Psalm 40

Read Psalm 40.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because his deeds are wondrous and there are too many to tell about (Psalm 40:4)! Praise the Lord because no one compares with him (40:5). Praise God because he is a faithful, steadfast, and saving God (40:10).
- **Confession:** Ask God to forgive you for the ways you have been impatient with him and with others in your life. Ask God's forgiveness for how you have been fearful or felt ashamed about doing his will (Psalm 40:14). Ask God's forgiveness for letting our iniquities overtake our lives (40:12). Ask God's forgiveness for how we have restrained ourselves from telling others the good news (40:5, 9).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that he will not restrain his mercy from us, even when we do not bring honor to him (Psalm 40:11). Thank God for making us secure in him (40:2). Thank God that he is trustworthy (40:3–4). Thank God that he has delivered us again and again (40:9, 13, 17), especially in Christ.
- **Supplication:** Ask God that he would hear our cries when we are in need (Psalm 40:1). Ask that God would put a new song in our mouths when we are experiencing difficulty or going through loss (40:3). Ask God for victory over sins, our own or those of the people around us, which threaten to overtake us (40:12). Ask God that you would see, understand, remember, and rejoice in his salvation of your soul (40:16–17).

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Week Four: [Romans 5:12-21]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone.”

- Romans 5:18 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Adam’s sin led to death and condemnation for all humanity.
- Christ’s righteousness leads to life and justification for all believers.
- God worked in ways in the Old Testament that came to fruition in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Read

Original sin (*the idea that all people inherit a sin nature because of Adam's first sin*) is a concept that many believers wrestle with. It can be hard to wrap our minds around the reality that the decisions of Adam and Eve, and their failure to obey God in the garden, *still* impact our lives today. And yet, if we are honest with ourselves we know that we would make the same mistake they did, and we continue to do so today. Because of sin, all of us are in desperate need of redemption. Romans 5:12–21 focuses on these two truths: original sin and our redemption.

First, it's important to note that Paul wanted the believers in Rome to **know** that sin came into the world through one man: **Adam**. *"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned"* (5:12). Because of Adam's sin, death and separation from God entered the world. And it didn't simply enter Adam's world, this passage states that it reigned from Adam to Moses. We all can attest that sin and death still wreak havoc in our world today.

As much as we might dispute the reality and fairness of original sin, Paul shows in Romans 5:12–21 how our sin nature and tendency towards death and brokenness produce a **great need** for redemption. Paul is painting the picture that humanity needed Jesus, our true and better Adam, to come and redeem all of humankind.

Romans 5:14 describes Adam as a *"type of the Coming One."* Throughout Old Testament history, God used small stories of redemption and restoration (*which, at times, seemed quite big*) as ways to foreshadow how he would work salvation through his only Son, Jesus. These past "saviors", "redeemers", "representatives", "shepherds", "prophets", "priests", and "kings" were not perfect, so there are many ways to contrast their lives with Christ, especially Adam. But we typically learn important things from these human figures that help us see the depth and width of the Gospel on display in Jesus Christ. In Romans 5:12–21, Paul is showing how Christ triumphed in every area where Adam failed. He is boldly proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the true and better Adam. This Christ is indeed humanity's redemption.

In Romans 5:12–21, Paul compares and contrasts what Adam and Jesus gifted to humankind.

Adam	Jesus
Sin (5:12)	The free gift of grace (5:15)
Death reigning over many (5:12)	Justification (5:16)
Judgment (5:16)	Righteousness (5:17, 19)
Condemnation (5:16)	Eternal life (5:21)
Separation from God (5:19; Isaiah 59:2)	Reconciliation with God (5:10–11)

Although it would be easy to despair when we look at what we inherited from Adam, Romans doesn't leave us hopeless. Romans 5:12–21 shows us that although death and sin entered through Adam, all of humankind has been offered life and redemption in Jesus! In the words of Romans 5:18, *“So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone.”* Where Adam brought death, condemnation, and sin into our world through just one decision to be disobedient, God made a way through **one righteous act** to provide redemption and life in Jesus for all who believe.

Paul ends the chapter by proclaiming, *“But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (5:20b–21).

Just in case we weren't quite getting it, Paul wants to be clear that the grace of God wins. He's made a way for our salvation. It might feel like sin has multiplied in our lives and the brokenness of this world is still present, but the grace provided in Christ will reign through righteousness. The true and better Adam has come, and He offers eternal life. Our great God brings a grace that is stronger than his judgment, and He brings eternal life that overcomes any form of death. May the Lord continue this work of grace in each and every one of us, transforming us more into the image of Jesus, our Savior, as we study God's righteousness displayed in the Gospel according to Romans 5:12–21.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 5:12–21 in preparation for this week’s study.

- 1.) Go back through all of Chapter 5 and list out the times that something was compared and found to be “*much more*” than what had come previously. What does this show us about **God’s work** in the world?
- 2.) From Romans 5:12–21, describe how grace entered the world.
- 3.) How is Jesus like Adam? How is he different? Compare and contrast in your own words.

Observation

4.) Paul repeats the words “*gift*” and “*grace*” several times in Romans 5:12–21. How do these words highlight the difference between Adam and Jesus?

5.) Jesus is the obedient man in Romans 5:19. Why does “*the one man’s obedience*” matter to us?

6.) What does Paul mean when he says, “*The law came along to multiply the trespass*” in verse 20?

7.) In your own words, how would you summarize Romans 5:12–21?

Application

8.) How can you use Romans 5:12–21 to encourage or challenge someone struggling to know if God really saved them?

9.) In what ways does this passage encourage you? In what areas of your life does it convict you?

10.) Using Romans 5:12–21 (*or previous passages in Romans*), practice how you'll share the Gospel with your One. Write out main ideas and key verses you would want to share. **Leaders**: *Go through these in group!*

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Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Psalm 96

Read Psalm 96.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because His deeds are marvelous, which we see most clearly in the Gospel of Jesus (Psalm 96:3). Declare that He is more glorious than any other god, idol, or source of happiness and fulfillment that we have sought after (96:4–5). Praise God because He is glorious and He deserves praise from everyone on earth (96:3, 8). Praise God alongside all of His creation because He has created it all (96:11–12). Praise God because He is both strong and beautiful (96:6).
- **Confession:** Ask God to divert away from idols that we seek after for beauty and strength (Psalm 96:3–6). Ask God to forgive you for looking for glory in anything other than Him. Confess to God that things much less glorious than Him have grabbed your attention and praise before you have given it to Him. Ask God to forgive you because you have not properly understood His splendor and holiness, and you have not lived according to His holiness in your own life (96:6).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that He has filled the earth with his own splendor, that we can know Him and be part of his family. Thank God for putting a new song in your mouth by saving you and giving you an eternal hope (Psalm 96:1–2). Thank God that He does not leave the world to rot on its own: He reigns and He comes to judge it with righteousness (96:10, 13). Thank God that He has given us reason to rejoice (96:12).
- **Supplication:** Ask God that He would help you exult and rejoice in Him, even when you do not feel victorious in your own life (Psalm 96:11–12). Ask for God's help to "*proclaim his salvation from day to day*" (96:2) as you witness to your *One*. Ask the Lord to give you opportunity to share what you've learned this week with your *One*.

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Week Five: [Romans 6:1-23]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“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. 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.” - Romans 6:4-5 (CSB)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Romans 6:23

Key Principles

- God’s work in Christ (*past and future*) determines how we ought to live right now.
- God’s grace is not only pardon from sin’s guilt, but power to fight sin.
- Through our union with Christ, we are given grace that inspires us not to be lazy with our sin, but to go to war with it.

Read

God unites sinners to Christ in His death and resurrection by faith. Paul presents this precious truth in Romans 6. Paul comes to this truth as He deals with the objections that might arise from His teaching on God's grace. He has said that sinners are justified by grace alone, *apart from works* (Romans 4:4–6). But at this point, someone could find fault with God and His grace. If our justification is based on God's grace and not our works, can't we just keep sinning so that we experience **more** grace? In other words, does the Gospel encourage unrighteousness? (6:1).

Paul answers emphatically, *"Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"* (6:2–3). Paul means that since we are united to Christ in His death, we have died to sin, therefore, we cannot keep living in sin. It's also important to note that by "*baptism*," Paul is referring to their **union** with Christ at conversion, **NOT** water baptism. Water baptism is the *outward sign* of an already existing union with Christ.

Paul goes on to say, *"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."* (6:5). Notice the past tense of union with Christ in His death and the future tense of union with Christ in His resurrection. Believers live in the middle of these realities. God's work in Christ (past and future) determines how we ought to live right now. God's purpose in all this is clear: *"so we too may walk in newness of life"* (6:4b).

In other words, our union with Christ is both a past and future reality that is for our good and His glory, and it impacts how we live our lives today. This present impact is one of the reasons why our church is asking you to start praying for your "*One*"! It is our desire for all people to come to know Christ and be found in Him.

Paul continues his explanation of this union in 6:6–11. God crucified our old self *with Christ*, but why? “*So that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin*” (6:6b–7). In other words, God did this in order to free us from slavery to sin.

Notice the words Paul uses in this passage: “*consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus*” (6:11). Note that the word “*consider*” is the same word Paul used all through Romans 4 when God credits righteousness to sinners. However, here, it is us considering ourselves **dead to sin** and **alive to God in Christ**. Paul is inviting the Christians in Rome to actively embrace their union in Christ and to live lives that display their death-to-life transformation.

So, what exactly does freedom from sin look like? Notice what Paul says in verse 12, “*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires.*” Sinful desires don’t just go away because of our union with Christ! If they did, Paul wouldn’t have mentioned the existence of sin in our lives, and he wouldn’t keep talking about our battle with sin throughout the next two chapters. So, the answer isn’t that we will never be tempted to sin again, but, rather, it’s that ***we don’t let sin reign in our lives***. Paul says we turn *from serving sin* to *serving God* because “*sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace*” (6:14). Sin will not be our master, because our righteousness is not based on law-keeping but on God’s gracious gift. God’s grace is not merely pardon from sin’s guilt but **power to fight sin**.

This brings up the second objection in Romans 6: “*Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace?*” (6:15). Paul has the same answer, “*Absolutely not!*” ***The way you live shows which master you serve***. There are only two ways to live—we either *serve sin* through unrighteousness or *God* through obedient righteousness (6:16). Paul thanks God for giving us a heart that wants to obey Him instead of sin (6:17). We are freed from slavery to sin (6:18, 22), but that does not mean we are without a master. In being set free from sin, we “*have become enslaved to God*” (6:22). God is an infinitely better Master than sin. Sin asks us to obey sinful desires and the wage it provides for obedience is death (6:23). God doesn’t provide wages but grants us a gift. And that gift “*is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (6:23).

Romans 6 is a treasure trove of precious truths and we've barely scratched the surface. Through Christ, we are given freedom from the penalty and power of sin, and one day we will be free from the presence of sin altogether. Through Christ, we are freed from obeying sinful desires and given a heart that longs to obey God. Through our union with Christ, we are given grace that inspires us not to be lazy with our sin, but, instead, to go to war with it. These truths are not only life-changing, they are life-giving. We hope and pray that this week, you are in awe of a God who has made a way to be united with you through the work of Jesus Christ.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 6:1–23 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

1.) In your Bible, circle all the verbs that show what God does in Romans 6:1–23 and underline all verbs that show what we are called to do.

2.) Summarize Paul's point from Romans 6 in your own words. Try using a single sentence and compare with a few people in your Connect Group.

Leader: *Get people to share these.*

3.) According to Romans 6:3–5, list the ways in which Paul says believers are united with Christ.

4.) From Romans 6:15–23, list the ways in which Paul describes being under grace.

Observation

5.) Romans 6:1 asks, “*Should we continue in sin so that grace may multiply?*” Can you put the question into your own words? What answer, and what reason, does Paul give in verse 2?

6.) From Romans 6:3–11, describe what’s been done in the past and explain how that shapes the present and the future.

7.) What does it look like to allow sin to reign in your body? Explain what it is like to not let sin reign in your body from verses 12–15?

8.) According to Romans 6:1–23, what does it mean to be dead to sin and alive to God?

9.) Explain the Gospel using just verse 23.

Application

10.) Based on our study this week, how would you counsel someone who says, “I just couldn’t help sinning in that way.” Use specific examples and verses.

11.) Describe a time when you were tempted to believe that following your own desires was real freedom while obeying God was joyless slavery. What can you do differently in those moments?

12.) How can you regularly remind yourself of your union with Christ, that you are dead to sin and alive to God? In what situations do you find yourself needing these reminders the most?

13.) What attitude do you normally have toward obeying God? Based on our study of this passage, how could it change?

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Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 6:1–23

Read 6:1–23.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God for being a God of grace (6:1, 14), righteousness (6:13), sanctification (6:19), and eternal life (6:22).
- **Confession:** Ask God for mercy for the ways you have used his grace as a license to continue in sin (6:1). Confess to Him all the ways you have obeyed the desires of sin and offered your body to sin (6:12–13).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for uniting you to Christ in His death and resurrection (6:3– 5). Thank God that He has set you free from the slavery of sin and made you a slave of God (6:22). Praise God for giving you a new heart that desires to obey God and not sin (6:17). Thank Him for the gift of Christ, in whom is eternal life (6:23).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to help you grow in your union and communion with Christ, that you would learn to know and enjoy Jesus more and more. Ask God for strength to “*put to death the deeds of the body*” by His Spirit (8:13). Ask Him for faith and hope to believe that one day you will be raised like Christ in glory (6:5) and to give you the courage to share that hope with your One.

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Week Six: [Romans 7:1-25]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“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 and not in the old letter of the law.”
- Romans 7:6 (CSB)

Key Principles

- We can never live up to righteous standards and fulfill the law on our own because of our sinful nature.
- Because we live unified with the risen Christ, we are able to be fruitful in good works beyond what the law could lead us to.
- In Christ, we have started to taste the goodness of our freedom from sin, so we fight against the “*law*” at work in our bodies in the present, with the hope of full freedom to come.

Read

In Romans 1:18–3:20, Paul hammers home the idea that everyone is unrighteous, and that unrighteousness leaves us in an all-consuming mess. His argument came to a conclusion at the end of chapter 3, where we saw that we are saved *through* the work of Jesus in the Gospel, and God gave righteousness to us as a **gift** because of what Jesus accomplished. Here in chapter 7, Paul shows us that the law cannot help us with our sin problem by itself. Paul says that he is *wretched* and at war with himself. This piece of the argument is not particularly encouraging at face value, but it sets up the beautiful conclusion about what *life in the Spirit* looks like for a Christian in Romans 8 (*which we'll study next week*).

But before we get to the good news, we have to hear the sobering truth of Romans 7. It's important to pay attention to verse 1 and note that Paul is talking to a group of people who know God's law inside and out. So, when Paul starts talking about the law, he's not talking over his audience's heads, he's talking straight to their hearts. The chapter starts with an analogy discussing how a spouse becomes freed from marital vows when his or her partner dies, as you would expect from any normal covenant or contract. In this case, death *changes* our relationship to the law.

Paul then draws the analogy to our union with Christ in Romans 7:4–6. When it comes to our relationship to the law, we are the ones that have died, **so we are no longer obligated to the demands of the law**. Here, the resurrection becomes a crucial part of our justification. Because we live unified with the risen Christ, we are able to be fruitful in good works beyond what the law could lead us to.

Paul made similar arguments in Chapter 6 about us being dead to sin and now Paul is saying something similar about the law. He says that the law actually stirs our sinful passions! This leads us to the first of two sets of rhetorical questions and answers in verses 7–12, and then later in verses 13–20. Is the law bad because of how it aroused sin (7:5) and led to death (7:8)? Not at all, Paul still holds the law in high esteem.

To give us a more complete biblical perspective: God's law, given to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai as part of a covenant, was a gift. The law describes how the Israelites could have lived as a society in such a way that put God's glory on display. Through the law, the Israelites

learned what displeased God, and they were alerted to what they needed to make sacrifices and ask forgiveness for. And even though the law is not binding on us, we can still look to the law to learn about God's character and standards. We can gain wisdom from it. The law is a teacher that can help us grow. At every turn, the New Testament affirms the law as having these positive effects. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Jesus even explains the high standards that God's righteousness demands of our behavior.

So, why is Paul saying that the law is no longer our master or guide? First, he describes that, like many good gifts that God brings, humanity's nature did not respond rightly to the law. Human sinfulness used the law to stir up temptation and draw attention to sin. When we get entangled in sin, the forbidden fruit tastes sweeter because it is forbidden. But that is not what the law was designed to do. Second, we needed some other way to produce righteousness and fix the brokenness in each of us. Paul alludes to this in Romans 7:6, where he mentions the new way of the Spirit. In Romans 8:2–4, Paul will explicitly say that the Spirit will **enable us** to accomplish what the law could not do: *live a righteous life!*

Paul's second question is whether this is the law's fault (7:13). *Of course not.* This is where Paul describes what it is like to fulfill the law when we have sinful natures. We know we want to do the right thing and we have a desire to do good, but we just can't make ourselves do the right thing! *It's a constant battle.* The situation sounds so helpless for this person trying to live by the law (7:13–25). In Romans 7, Paul reminds us that ***we can never live up to righteous standards and fulfill the law as long as our sinful nature is within us.*** So, we need an intervention from outside ourselves. And in Romans 8, we'll see that this is where God's Spirit intervenes in the lives of those who have believed the gospel.

In the meantime, Romans 7:13–25 reminds us just how much our sinful nature holds us back from the righteousness that God created us to live in. When we become Christians and the Spirit comes into us to give us desires for right living, a war rages inside of us. Because we live in a fallen world, we must constantly fight with the power of the Spirit to put to death the sinfulness that still dwells inside of us. Paul uses the term "*law*" 23 times throughout this chapter, and each use almost always refers to God's commands in the Old Testament. But these last few instances in verse 23, Paul uses "*law*" to mean something else. He says that God's law is not the force that is controlling his inner being. Rather, it's a natural tendency ("*law*") toward using the members of his body for sin.

In Christ, we have begun to **taste** the goodness of our freedom from sin, so we fight against the “*law*” at work in our bodies in the present, with the hope of full freedom to come. When Christ returns for us, we will be free to live God’s way, in God’s presence, free from our own sin and each other’s sin. For how the Spirit gives us a taste of that life now, read on in Romans 8 next week.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God’s righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 7:1-25 in preparation for this week’s study.

Scripture

- 1.) Summarize what Paul says about the law in Romans 7:1–25. Does he always mean the same thing by the word “*law*”?
- 2.) What rhetorical questions does Paul ask in this passage? What answers does he expect his readers to conclude?
- 3.) If you were to divide up this chapter into sections, how many sections would you make? Where would you put the dividers and why?
- 4.) How do verses 7–25 describe the law as bad? As good?

Observation

5.) Why are people unable to obey the law apart from the Gospel?

6.) What creates the conflict within people, as Paul describes it in Romans 7:13–25?
How have you seen this at work in your own life? Be transparent.

7.) After reading Romans 7:1–25, in what ways has your perspective on sin and the law changed?

Application

8.) Share about a time when reading God's Word exposed your sin. Be transparent with your group. This creates deeper community. Remember James 5:16.

9.) Everyone experiences the battle with sin Paul describes in verses 13–25. How can this group help one another in this battle? Be specific. **AVOID** surface level discussions.

10.) How would you use Romans 7:1–25 to encourage a Christian who is burdened by his or her sin?

11.) How would you respond to people who do not want to become Christians because it will “*restrict their freedom*” to do what they want?

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Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Isaiah 45:14-25

Read Isaiah 45:14-25

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because he was alive before creation, set creation in motion, and will be alive for all eternity (Isaiah 45:17–19). Praise the Lord because He is truthful: What He says is accurate and what He promises will come true (45:19, 23). Praise the Lord because He is the only God (45:22) and eventually, all creatures will recognize it (45:23).
- **Confession:** Confess to God that he is righteous but we are not (45:23–24). Ask for God's forgiveness for how we have angered Him and for how we have been unjustly angry against Him (45:24). Ask God's forgiveness for praying and worshipping gods that cannot save us (45:20)
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for bringing an eternal salvation to his people (Isaiah 45:17). Thank God that He has called us to himself and that He has delivered on his promise to save his people (45:19). Thank God for justifying us and for giving us Himself to glory in (45:25).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to help you in your efforts to help the Gospel advance to the nations (Isaiah 45:22). Ask God for the privilege and joy of seeing others come to faith and join the family of God (45:22). Ask God to raise up the weak and humble those who are using their power against God's purposes (45:14). Ask God to save your One and ask Him for the opportunity to share about his salvation in your life.

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Week Seven: [Romans 8:1-17]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you.” - Romans 8:11 (CSB)

Key Principles

- God’s Spirit dwelling in us gives us a life free from sin and death.
- We can have some victory over sin if we partner with God’s Spirit in putting sin to death in our lives.
- Salvation takes us from being enemies of God into being perfect sons and daughters of God.
- It is crucial for us to remember that the heart of the Gospel, is a relationship with God.

Read

Romans 7 left us thinking about the vicious cycle of sin, death, law, and condemnation. We know we are justified **by faith** in Christ's death, yet we still live in bodies that wrestle with sin. We are still left to face a broken world that afflicts us both from the outside and from within. And we are still left with the shame of failing our God by our sinful behavior. Thankfully, Paul didn't conclude his letter to the Christians in Rome on that note. There is hope for our condition! Romans 8 will show us that we have eternal life, elevated status, victory, inheritance, God's love, and an incredible hope that breaks these cycles in our natural condition; all because ***Christ justified us by his death and resurrection.***

Where do we get these incredible benefits? From God's Spirit who now dwells within us. Paul has already alluded to this new life we have in the Spirit in 5:1–11 and 7:6, but in this chapter, Paul makes it abundantly clear. Christians, it is crucial for us to remember that the heart of the Gospel, the blessing that comes with all these benefits, is a relationship with God. God, the Spirit, now dwells inside of us because we are believers in Christ. The Spirit provides all that we need to battle sin, to pray to our Father, to live a righteous life, and to be conformed to Christ's image. Now that you have God's Spirit inside of you, cultivate that relationship. You will find that the greatest part of the Gospel is the intimacy you can have, now and forever, with your Creator.

So, let's look deeper into what the Spirit is doing in our lives according to Romans 8:1–17. First, if we live according to the Spirit, then our minds and bodies can move beyond the evil "*law*" at work inside of us (7:21–23). We can start to live lives full of life and peace. We begin our eternal life now, here on earth, through the Spirit. We won't be able to do this perfectly, or have complete victory over our sinful natures this side of heaven, but we can begin to put sin to death as the Spirit leads us.

Looking back on all eight chapters in Romans thus far, notice how important the resurrection is to our salvation. In Romans 4:25, Paul says that Jesus was raised from the dead "*for our justification.*" Apparently, it is not just Jesus's death that activates the Gospel story. In Romans 5:17 and 21, and 6:4, we receive eternal life because of the union we have in Christ's story of death and resurrection. Romans 6:4–5 also makes it clear that Christ's resurrection leads us into our new life. Romans 6 continues by saying that we can now be alive in God, set free from sin and death. In Chapter 8, the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus can also give life to our earthly bodies.

The resurrection confirms our hope in the future blessings of the Gospel as well, as it points to how one day we will live forever with God and be completely conformed to Christ's image. And notice in Romans 8 who plays a vital role in all of this. The Spirit is the member of the Trinity who applies all these benefits of the resurrection to our lives right now and allows us to begin living for eternity today.

Lastly, the Spirit confirms the truth of the Gospel. It is an incredible thing to consider that we would ever gain the status of adopted son or daughter of God. Romans 8:14 says, "*For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons.*" It goes on to say that the Spirit testifies together with our spirit that we are indeed the children of God (8:16). The Spirit helps us believe that what the Gospel says is true and helps us pray to the Father who we are only beginning to understand. The Spirit confirms that everything in God's Word about heaven will be true and that we will share in that inheritance. In other words, so often we focus on the work of God the Father and God the Son, but here in Romans 8, we see that God the Holy Spirit also plays an incredible role in our union with Christ.

The trajectory of Romans 8 is breath taking. At the beginning of the passage, we get the declaration that we no longer stand condemned for our sinfulness (8:1). By the end of the passage, we are so far from condemned sinners that we are actually children of God, inheriting what Christ deserved **by his obedience**. The final verse of our target passage for this week (8:17) actually says that we will be glorified with Christ. In the space of these 17 verses, we see the complete picture of the Gospel. We, who were once enemies of God, have now been justified—we will no longer be judged for our sin. But God did not leave us there, he sent his Spirit to help us overcome sin and become freed from its slavery, and with Christ, we also receive **sonship**.

And that's not even close to the end of the story. One day, we will become fully new creations, dwelling with God in heaven, being perfectly righteous in all that we do. Glorification is not a word that we often focus on when it comes to our blessings in the Gospel, but it is one of the most exciting aspects of what we have in Christ. We will become like Him in so many ways. We will become the best versions of ourselves, and we ourselves will become glorious creatures, reflecting God's image *perfectly*. How **great** is the salvation of our God! He brings us from enemies of God to perfect reflections of His image, destined to live forever in peace and harmony!

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 8:1-17 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

- 1.) Compare and contrast main ideas and differences you see between Romans 7 and Romans 8 so far.
- 2.) Make a list contrasting life according to the Spirit with life according to the flesh from Romans 8:5–11.
- 3.) How does Paul describe the identity of believers in Romans 8:14–17?
- 4.) What does this passage teach about the work of the Holy Spirit?

Observation

5.) What has the Spirit done for all Christians that the law could not do? Why is this important?

6.) Is the power of the Spirit available to all Christians according to verse 9? Why or why not?

7.) According to Romans 8:1–17, what does it mean that we are glorified with Christ?

8.) What difference does it make for believers to relate to God as Father and not simply as Master?

Application

9.) Many Christians feel condemned because of their sin. How does Romans 8:1–17 encourage you and release you from feelings of condemnation?

10.) How does Romans 8:1–17 encourage you to cultivate your relationship with God?

11.) What practical steps can we take to have our “minds set on the things of the Spirit” (8:5)?

12.) What is one truth from this passage that you can pray over your “*One*”?

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Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 8:1–17

Read Romans 8:1–17

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because he is a triune God, that He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that He has invited us into relationship with all three members of this Trinity (Romans 8:1–17). Praise God because He is a God of life and peace, not hostility (8:6, 11). Praise God that He is not a God that enslaves, but, rather, sets free (8:1, 14). Praise God that He has resurrection power at his disposal (8:11).
- **Confession:** Ask God's forgiveness for how often we dwell on the flesh and do not commune with His Spirit who dwells inside of us (Romans 8:5). Confess to God that we have done things that necessitated Jesus' death for us to be able to live absolved from our sins (8:3–4). Confess to God the ways you have chosen the path toward death and have not pleased Him with your actions (8:5–8).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for sending his Spirit to dwell within us (Romans 8:11). Thank God for sending his Son to give us freedom and life by His sacrifice (8:2). Thank God for including us in His family so that we could become heirs alongside Christ (8:15–17).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to help you set your mind on the Spirit instead of the flesh (Romans 8:4–8). Ask God for the courage to suffer for Jesus's sake, where that becomes necessary (8:17). Ask God for the ability and opportunity to point your One to life and freedom in Christ.

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Week Eight: [Romans 8:18-39]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- Romans 8:38–39 (CSB)

Key Principles

- God is working to redeem and restore all creation.
- The Spirit helps us to live our lives in sinful bodies amidst a broken world.
- God has been working this plan for our salvation for a long time, and He will continue working for our good for all eternity.
- Nothing can separate us from God’s love displayed through Jesus Christ.

Read

Romans has long been described by church leaders as the crown jewel of the New Testament. If Romans is the crown jewel of the New Testament, then Romans 8 is the gem that helps Romans have such an esteemed position in our Bibles. Romans 8 inspires such accolades because of its thorough explanation of:

1. The new life we have in the Spirit (8:1–17, 26–27)
2. The present and future implications of the gospel (8:1–39)
3. The bold reminder of God’s love bringing all things in our lives to a purposeful end (8:17–39).

So, what makes this chapter full of hope and encouragement for believers? Paul addresses the need for hope right away in Romans 8:18 because we have “sufferings of this present time.” This is no small matter for Paul. Since becoming a Christian, there had not been a time in Paul’s life that was free from suffering. He experienced imprisonment, persecution, and one day, he would be killed because of his faith. This same suffering often marked the lives of the recipients of Paul’s letters (Philippians is a great example). Paul knew very well that we need encouragement and strength to remain faithful to Christ in light of the present reality of suffering. (Romans 1:11–13; 5:3–5).

Paul reminds us in Romans 8:18–25 that suffering is not something we experience alone. The whole world is experiencing suffering and has been since Adam’s original sin. In Romans 8, Paul takes us back to Genesis 3 to explain that all of creation is awaiting its redemption. In Romans 8:20, Paul uses a Greek word for “futility” to describe the brokenness of the world without God’s restoration, and this word, “futility,” connects to similar ideas and concepts in the book of Ecclesiastes. But Jesus ushers in a new chapter to God’s work in the world through his life, death, and resurrection. Thus, creation is now on the verge of tasting its full restoration as God’s complete redemption unfolds first in his salvation of humankind.

Meanwhile, we are individually undergoing a restoration at the hands of the Spirit who lives inside of us. We are weak, we don’t know how to pray, we don’t know God’s will, and our faith fails. But the Spirit intercedes for us and helps us develop a real-time connection with our Heavenly Father. The Spirit also confirms that the hope we have in the Gospel is true. Romans 8:29–30 tells us that in order for us to be saved, God knew us before Creation.

God then set his rescue plan in motion thousands of years ago in a distant land through His only Son, and one day he will also glorify us (8:17). This plan has been in place for so long and Christ has accomplished so much on our behalf—why should we doubt that God will finish this work? The suffering we will experience is part of, not a distraction from, the sanctification and glorification that the Spirit is working in us.

All of the rhetorical questions from Romans 1–8 are answered in Romans 8:31–39. If God has accomplished all this—everything mentioned in the first eight chapters of Romans—through Jesus Christ on our behalf, how can we doubt God’s love for us? Do we think that the trials and tribulations we experience are going to derail God’s purposes for His people? Of course not! Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! Let God’s Spirit feed our souls with these words as we study Romans 8:18–39.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the Gospel displays God’s righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 8:18–39 in preparation for this week’s study.

Scripture

1.) Take a look back at Romans 5:1–11. What key themes, ideas, words, and phrases do you see there that are also in Romans 8:18–39?

2.) What do we learn about God’s Spirit in Romans 8:18–39?

3.) How does Paul describe “future glory” in Romans 8:18–39?

4.) What do we learn about God’s character from Romans 8:18–39?

- 5.) What does it mean that we have been adopted as God's children?

- 6.) How does creation waiting for its own redemption fit into the story of God's salvation for humanity?

- 7.) How do we understand what verse 28 means in its context? What are some ways we may misinterpret verse 28?

- 8.) How does the Gospel help us in our suffering according to Romans 8?

Application

9.) Think of something you fear or worry could separate you from God's love. How does knowing that nothing can separate believers from God's love help deepen your relationship with him?

10.) How do we express the type of hope found in Romans 8:24–25 throughout our lives and relationships?

11.) How does our study in Romans 8 help you pray for your One?

12.) As we conclude this study series in Romans 4–8, how has God worked in your life through your study of his Word? Share one or two verses that have impacted you and how the Spirit has applied them to your life.

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 8:18–39

Read Romans 8:18–39

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because He is eternal. He existed long before us and He invites us into his eternal life (Romans 8:29–30). Praise God that He is more powerful than any other force that can come against us (8:32–39). Praise God that He is love and that His love for us is unimpeachable (8:35, 39).
- **Confession:** Confess to God where you have contributed to the brokenness of the world (Romans 8:19–25). Confess to God that we are weak in our flesh and are dependent on His Spirit to do what is right (8:26). Ask for God's forgiveness for how we have doubted His goodness in the midst of trying circumstances (8:31–39).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for fixing creation and bringing it along in a process of redemption (Romans 8:18–25). Thank God for including us in that redemption and for bestowing an eternal love upon us (8:21, 37–39). Thank God for planning salvation from the beginning and for completing the process in eternity (8:29–30). Thank God for loving us with a love that cannot be thwarted (8:31–39).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to help you stay faithful in the midst of suffering (Romans 8:18, 35–39). Ask God to show us how we can share this amazing love with our friends and neighbors. Ask God to show you how and when He wants you to suffer and sacrifice for his sake (8:18, 36).

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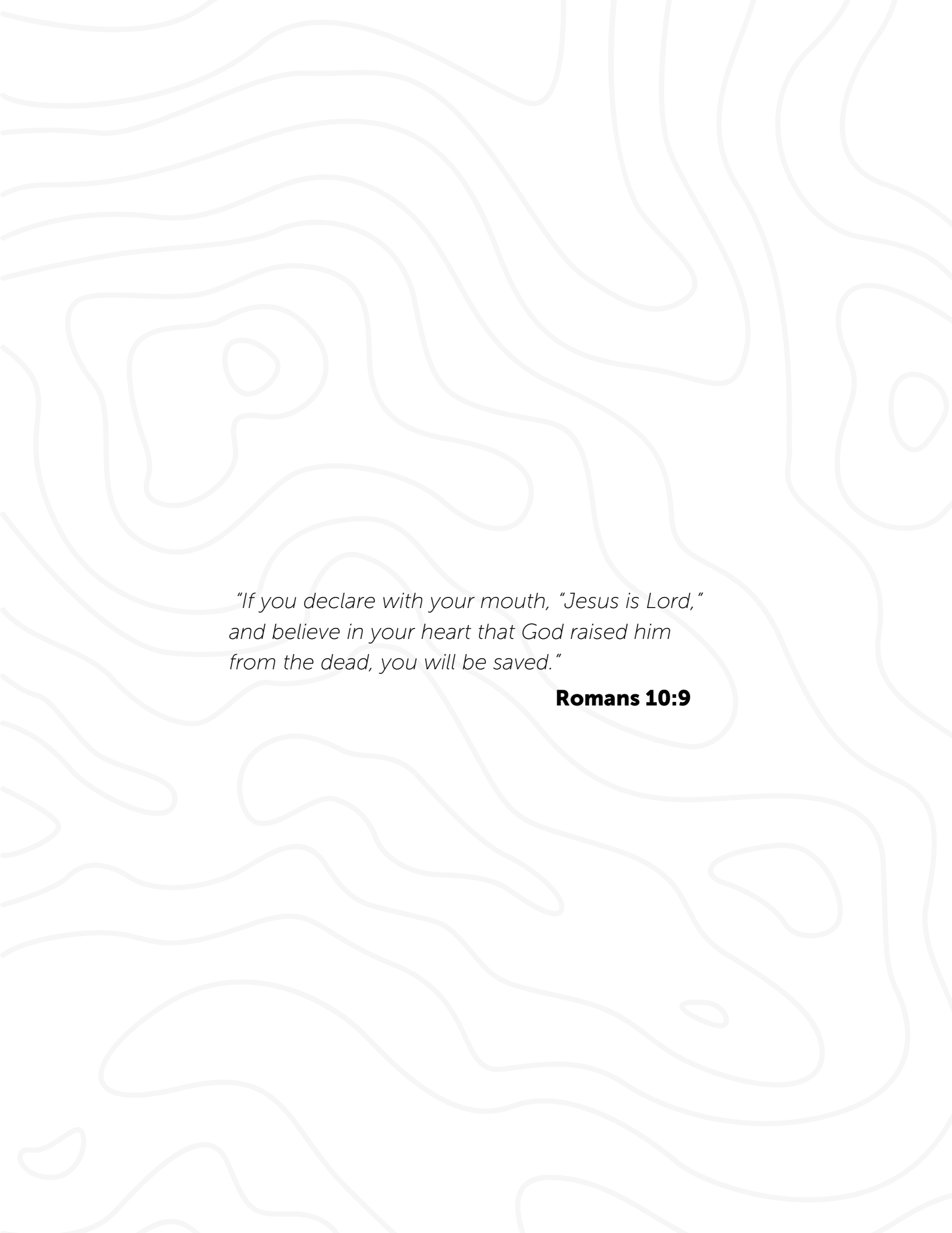
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ROMANS 4-8



— THE BOOK OF —
ROMANS
CONNECT GROUP STUDY GUIDE 2

ROMANS 9-11



*"If you declare 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

INTRODUCTION

This Romans study guide will focus on Romans 9–11, which explains God’s sovereignty and the details of God’s plan to save both Jews and Gentiles into the same family of God. Romans 9–11 builds on the foundation that Paul establishes in Romans 1–8. Before we can understand God’s election and His plan for the Jews, we must understand God’s righteousness in the Gospel (Romans 1–8).

The claims Paul makes in Romans 9–11 are revealed in Romans 1–3; that everyone needs mercy because everyone deserves wrath. Paul goes on to show how salvation is a matter of faith, not nationality or adherence to the law (Romans 2–4). Romans 9 also revisits important questions that Paul answered in Romans 3:1–8, such as: Is there any advantage for Jews regarding salvation? Does Jewish unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness?

You might find it helpful to read through Romans 1–8 again before you start this next section of Romans, paying close attention to the first four chapters. Then, throughout this study, ask yourself how each section fits with, depends on, and relates to Romans 1–8. Our ability to understand these connections will only assist our study of Romans 9–11.

This section of Romans is unique, difficult, and intricate. After a discernible shift at the end of chapter 8, Paul leaves the reader wondering what can separate God’s people from His love, and the answer is emphatically, “*Nothing!*” (8:31–39). But any Jew reading this in the first century would have paused here, knowing that many prominent Jewish groups had not yet received God’s love displayed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So, Paul spends chapters 9–11 expressing his sorrow over this fact (9:2–3; 10:1) and explaining what God is doing among the Jews (9:24–10:4; 10:21; 11:1–12; 11:24–33).

Paul's primary response to this is to trust in God's election—that is, His sovereign choice of who to save—and God's love for His people.

And while chapter 9 makes clear that we cannot expect every individual person descended from Israel to eventually be saved, God makes it known that He still has compassion and mercy for the Israelite people. Chapter 11 ends with an explicit statement that God will save the Jewish people in some major capacity, sometime in the future (11:21–32).

Once again, Paul will make numerous references to the Old Testament to solidify this expectation, relying even more heavily on these Hebrew Scriptures than in any previous section of Romans. What is Paul saying with this? God has not diverted from his original plan for saving both the Jews *and* the nations.

The Doctrine of Election.

The doctrine of election traces the “*decision*” to save back to God Himself in eternity past and affirms that He, not man, determined who will be saved (*Ephesians. 1:3-6*). Romans 9–11 unpacks this concept of God's sovereign choice and the details of God's plan to save both Jews and Gentiles into the same family of God. These are theologically heavy topics and deserve plenty time to study, understand and treasure. If you are a newer believer or just starting your Bible reading journey, don't get frustrated if these topics seem hard to understand or even frustrating. Ask the Holy Spirit for help as you read, process and prepare for group.

Every Christian can benefit from additional resources and study time to better comprehend these deep topics. Here are a few websites we recommend as you study the topic of election.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/doctrine-of-election.html>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/3-objections-to-the-doctrine-of-election/>

Romans: The whole story.

One of the key principles of interpreting any Bible book is this: The whole interprets the parts, and the parts interpret the whole. As you study the parts of a book, you'll gain a better understanding of the whole of the book. And the more you study the book as a whole, the more you will be helped in understanding its parts correctly.

In the book of Romans, Paul declares the righteousness of God in the Gospel (1:16–17). Paul wants the Christians in Rome to know that God is absolutely righteous, meaning He is forever faithful and true (3:1–8) and that He is righteous in His just condemnation of sinners (1:18–3:20). Paul also writes about God's gracious salvation of sinners who trust in Christ (3:21–4:25) and that God is righteous in the way He grants us Christ's righteousness (3:21–30). God is righteous in His dealings with Israel and the nations (9–11). This means we can build our life on God's faithfulness and His righteousness, and we can trust that He will never lie, never do wrong, and always be true to His Word (4:16–25).

When we build our life on His righteousness, the result is unfailing hope (5:1–11; 8:20–39). Like Abraham, we learn to hope against hope in trusting God (4:18), and this hope bears incredible fruit in our lives: the obedience of faith (1:5; 16:26), the putting to the death of our sin (6:12–23; 8:13), and perseverance in suffering (5:1–5; 8:26–39). This hope in the faithfulness of God creates a people who are ready to give up preferences and be united to one another in love (12:1–15:13). As you can see from the many times the word “*righteous*” is mentioned in this paragraph, the book of Romans is built on one solid foundation—the righteousness and faithfulness of God.

Just as this book has changed the minds and hearts of many people through the ages, we look forward to how God will use Romans to transform our church in this season. We have already seen many men and women turn to the Lord during this series. With every Bible study in this series, our hope is that we all will see the Gospel with greater appreciation, love God with greater passion, and apply the messages of Romans in ways that impact our everyday lives and bear witness for Christ in our communities.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” - Romans 15:13

How to use this guide.

Over the course of this year we will continue to study the book of Romans together. Pastor Michael along with other various pastors and speakers, will preach through Romans verse by verse, and all of our Connect Groups will study the book of Romans together in their group meetings.

This Romans study guide includes five weekly studies that is the third set in a series of four studies for Connection Church Rincon Connect Groups this year. Each Bible study series is designed to aid both our personal study of Romans and facilitate our Connect Group discussions. This current study will investigate Romans 9-11 which introduces us to God's sovereignty in the Gospel.

As usual, each week will begin with key verses that we want to encourage you to memorize along with key principles for each passage, followed by a devotional introduction to prepare our hearts and minds. Then, the Study Guide section incorporates a series of questions specifically designed to help us engage the text of Romans in personal study and Connect Group discussion, according to the **SOAP** method of Bible study:

- **SCRIPTURE:** Read and study everything in the passage.
- **OBSERVATION:** What are some observations that you notice from this text? Remember, context is everything.
- **APPLICATION**– How does the text apply to your every day life? Based off the text, what are some measurable next steps that you can take, starting today?
- **PRAYER** – Pray God's word back to Him, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Work through these at any time throughout the week. Some may find it helpful to work through the exercises slowly throughout the week, in sections, while others may want to study the whole passage in one sitting.

How to use this guide (cont.)

Whichever approach you choose to take, please complete the exercises **before** your Connect Group meeting. In Connect Groups, we will discuss our answers to the Bible study questions and discuss what next steps God is leading us to take through the weekly passages.

To maximize our study of God's Word and the impact it can have on our lives, we encourage everyone to personally work through all of the questions in each of the 5 weekly studies, but Connect Group leaders may choose to focus more on some questions than others.

We have also included a "*sermon notes*" section to each week so that you can take notes during the sermon to better prepare for your Connect Group.

Week One: [Romans 9:1-13]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“Now it is not as though the word of God has failed, because not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.”

- Romans 9:6 (CSB)

Key Principles

- We are saved according to God’s purpose and his work in us. Nothing about our salvation is determined by us.
- Not all ethnic Jews are included as the chosen people of God because we all enter into God’s family by grace and through faith.
- God is unwavering in his faithfulness to His Word, and He is absolutely sovereign in the salvation of sinners.

Read

There are days when we feel like God is for us and there are other days where God seems to be absent, even unconcerned about us. Does this mean He doesn't care? Does He not see us? We live with a constant challenge to trust. After all, it's one thing to believe in God, it's another thing to believe God. Will God make good on His promises? Is He faithful to complete what He has started? How can we know He is trustworthy? These questions are Paul's main concern in Romans 9–11.

In Romans 1–8, Paul proclaimed and defended God's righteousness by highlighting God's faithfulness and truthfulness. Romans 9, however, addresses an important objection to God's faithfulness. What makes trusting and resting difficult is that God's faithfulness doesn't always look like faithfulness to us. His goodness doesn't always feel good. In the days before Christ, God made promises with the people of Israel. The promises of God in the Old Testament established a covenant with Israel, as God's chosen people. And yet, somewhat surprisingly, Paul shows that some Israelites are not experiencing the salvation available to them in Christ (9:2–3). Instead, these Israelites are cut off from Christ and their hearts are hardened (9:2–4, 11:5–7). So, the question becomes: *Is God still faithful to his Word?*

Paul's answer to this objection is a relevant one, not only for the Israelites in his day but for any person who hopes in God's Word. After all, if God has been unreliable in his promises to Israel, what hope is there that he will be faithful in his promises to us? This is an important tension because just a few verses earlier, Romans 8 ends with some magnificent promises for the people of God. For instance, God promised in Romans 8 that no amount of suffering, nor even death, could ever separate us from his unfailing love! What a promise for God's people!

Romans 9:1–13 helps us better understand God's faithfulness to His Word and His faithfulness to Israel. In Romans 9:1–5, Paul is grieving. His heart is full of "*great sorrow and unceasing anguish*" (9:2). Paul mourns because fellow Israelites—his own kinsmen—continue to reject Christ and remain outside God's family of promise, because "*not all who are descended from Israel*" are actually God's people. This is difficult for Paul because he knows all the ways Israel enjoyed God's privileges (9:4–5). Think of the Red Sea. Think of the Promise Land. Paul even mentions the law, the temple, the fact that the Messiah came from their family tree. How could Israel, of all people, not trust God? Were God's promises to Israel ineffective?

Paul's wrestling can cause us to reflect on our own times of wrestling with God. We might wonder why God hasn't moved in the lives of our friends. We mourn over the reality that our family members remain far from Christ and uninterested in the Gospel. We wonder how people who have seen God work fail to trust Him for salvation. We fight to continue on believing that God knows what He's doing. In our prayers we exclaim, "*God, why haven't you saved them yet?*" But we must look at how Paul wrestles with God. In Paul's emotional wrestling over the salvation of his kinsmen, he moves to the question, "*Is God's Word trustworthy?*" Paul's concerns start with God's character, not a felt need or a perception of how God should act. As believers, our focus should—like Paul—be on God's righteous character and His ever-faithful Word. We should begin, in short, by answering the same question Paul asks: *Is God's Word trustworthy?*

Paul doesn't leave his struggles open-ended. He knows the lack of Israel's belief doesn't negate God's covenant or tarnish His character. What could be seen as an unfulfilled promise is far from it. The answer to Paul's wrestling appears in Romans 9:6, where Paul explains with confidence that God's Word has not failed, "*because not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.*" Paul shows that being an ethnic Israelite does not automatically make someone a part of God's chosen people. There is ethnic Israel, and there is chosen Israel. Not every ethnic Israelite is a chosen Israelite. Paul makes sense of this reality using two Old Testament accounts.

First, Paul points to the story of Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 15–21). Though both were Abraham's sons, Paul shows that it was Isaac who was the child of promise (Romans 9:8), while Ishmael was merely a physical descendant. As such, Isaac is a part of God's people and Ishmael is not. Genesis 15–21 warns us to not take matters into our own hands, as this passage demonstrates that **God alone is capable of fulfilling His promises**. No other story in the Old Testament illustrates these truths so clearly. Likewise, in Romans 9:8–9, Paul affirms that God's initiative, efforts, and promises determine those who are truly "*Israel.*"

As a second example, Paul cites Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25–35). In Old Testament times, the firstborn son received the blessing, marked by privilege and prominence. According to Genesis 25:23, God chose to bless the younger son Jacob, rather than the older son Esau. Paul reiterates this truth in Romans 9:11–13, emphasizing that God made this decision of unlikely and unearned blessing for Jacob before the sons were even born. Romans 9:13 then states God's choice in the most shocking terms, quoting Malachi 1:2–3, "*I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau.*" The emphasis in these verses is on God's initiative and his choice, not on human lineage or good works.

From these Old Testament stories, Paul shows that the issue of Israel's unbelief does not nullify God's faithfulness to His promises. **Not all ethnic Jews are included as the chosen people of God because we all enter into God's family *by grace and through faith*.** More importantly, God's plans and his promises rest solely on His work. Despite what we may believe when times are difficult and circumstances are dark, God's Word has not failed, nor will it ever fail. We cannot disrupt or dismantle God's purposes and promises. Whatever God promises and determines, He always brings to pass. He is righteous in all His ways and in every choice He makes, even when we disagree or have difficulty with what He chooses. As the prophet Isaiah describes, God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8–9).

In wrestling with the text of Romans 9, we must remember these two truths: **God is unchanging in His faithfulness to his Word, and He is absolutely sovereign in the salvation of sinners.** May we rest in the fact that our salvation— and the salvation of our friends, family, and neighbors—does not depend on us, but on God. It is not determined by anything we do. It is not inherited. It is not what we can achieve. God saves us according to His purpose and His choice. Thank God for your salvation and continue to ask Him for the salvation of those who have yet to believe. We can have great hope knowing that God's promises of salvation in Christ are trustworthy.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 9:1–13 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

- 1.) Underline the list of things that Paul says are true about Israel in Romans 9:1–5.

- 2.) Circle the names of all the individuals from the Old Testament Paul mentions in Romans 9:6–13.

- 3.) Highlight all the quotations from the Old Testament stories referenced in Romans 9:6–13.

- 4.) Highlight all the “*purpose clauses*” in this section. (Hint: Purpose clauses identify the purpose of an action, i.e., “so that.”)

Observation

5.) Why does Paul have “*great sorrow and unceasing anguish*” in his heart (9:2)?

6.) Why does Paul feel the need to emphasize that the Word of God has not failed (9:6)?

7.) What point is Paul trying to make through the stories of Isaac and Ishmael and Jacob and Esau?

8.) Rewrite Romans 9:11–12 in your own words.

Application

- 9.) What are some ways in which you struggle to trust God's Word? How does Romans 9:1–13 speak to your doubts about God's faithfulness to do what He has promised?
- 10.) What motivates God to save people according to Romans 9:1–13? How does this passage influence how you might explain salvation in your own words?
- 11.) Romans 9:1–13 teaches us about God's sovereign choice (9:6, 11). What is comforting about this teaching? What questions does it raise for you?
- 12.) How does Romans 9:1–13 increase your confidence in God as you share the gospel with others?

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Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Psalm 119:1-24

Read Psalm 119:1-24

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** “Lord, may you be blessed” (Psalm 119:12). Praise God for His “righteous judgments”(119:7) and delightful Word (119:16, 24). Reflect on the faithfulness of God in giving and keeping His Word. Praise Him for His faithfulness.
- **Confession:** Acknowledge to God where you have failed to “keep His decrees” (Psalm 119:2). Ask Him to forgive you for not seeking Him with all your heart (119:2). Plead with Him, “Deal generously with your servant” (119:17).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for not being hidden but for revealing His ways and will to us (Psalm 119:14–15, 19). Spend some time thanking Him for all the moments where His Word has given you protection and hope (119:9–11). Thank Him for His faithfulness in Christ to forgive your sins.
- **Supplication:** Ask the Lord to make you wholly devoted to Him and His Word. “Don’t let me wander from your commands” (Psalm 119:10). “Teach me your statutes”(119:12). “Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wondrous things from your instruction” (119:18).

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Week Two: [Romans 9:14-29]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“For he tells Moses, ‘I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’”
- Romans 9:15 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Our salvation is an act of God’s mercy, as well as God’s choice.
- God is always perfectly just, both in executing judgment and in extending mercy.
- Both God’s judgment and his mercy display his glory to the world.
- God’s mercy for humankind shines brighter than his judgment.
- God’s mercy is a key feature of Christ’s work to achieve our salvation.

Read

Last week, we introduced the complexities of God's election (9:6, 11). We considered that, at times, God's faithfulness and his goodness don't always *seem* faithful or *feel* good. It's important for us to realize that when God's actions don't make sense to us or line up with what *we* think they should be, we shouldn't jump to doubt His faithfulness or His goodness. If His ways are truly higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8–9), it would make sense that we won't always fully grasp all that He is doing around us.

These truths help us understand Paul's motivation for writing this letter, specifically chapters 9–11. Paul writes these words from a place of deep anguish for his own people (*the Jews*), because many of them had not yet put their faith in Jesus Christ. Many of the Jews has even rejected Christ as the Messiah. The people Paul loved so much, the Jews, were missing out on the fulfillment of God's plan. Despite all that God had done for them, throughout their history, many didn't understand or see clearly God's greatest provision was Jesus, the promised Messiah.

So where does Paul turn for comfort over the anguish he feels for his people? And where does Paul go to understand how God's salvation works? The answer to both questions might surprise us: Paul goes to what we today call the doctrine of *election*. This is not what Paul would have called it while writing this. This concept is just what Paul knew to be true of God and His sovereignty. As we have already said, the doctrine of election traces the "*decision*" to save back to God Himself in eternity past and affirms that He, **not man**, determined who will be saved (*Ephesians. 1:3-6*). Romans 9–11 unpacks this concept of God's sovereign choice and the details of God's plan to save both Jews and Gentiles into the same family of God.

For many, the idea of election doesn't sit well. It's an aspect of God's character that people wrestle with deeply, and a variety of interpretations exist regarding what election is and how it applies to the Christian life. Another way to look and respond to the doctrine of election is not to balk at the idea of election as unfair or cruel, but to marvel that God has done in making a way through Jesus, back to God.

So, why does Paul turn to election to find comfort in the fact that his people have rejected Christ? Paul sees God's glory in God's plan of salvation, and election teaches Paul that God is powerful, faithful, and loving enough to bring all of His plans to completion. Now, knowing the glorious salvation that Paul communicates to us in Romans 9–11, we can rest in God's merciful plans, righteous judgments, and sovereign choices.

We see the work of election as far back as the Exodus, when God chose to deliver the Israelites from slavery and judge the Egyptians. God chose to harden Pharaoh's heart in order to demonstrate His power, and He chose to place His love on Israel (Deut. 7:7–8). Though Pharaoh experienced the negative side of God's election and judgment, God sovereignly worked through Pharaoh's hard heart to bring mercy to thousands upon thousands of people and **put His glory on display for the nations**. Paul references this Exodus story in Romans 9 because he hopes that God will bring others to know Christ through the hard hearts of those who have rejected the Gospel.

The doctrine of election definitely comes with mystery. Some verses describe Pharaoh hardening his own heart, while others say God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Consider these verses from Exodus to see how divine sovereignty and human responsibility work together:

- God hardened Pharaoh's heart—Exodus 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8.
- Pharaoh hardened his own heart—Exodus 7:22; 8:15; 9:35; 13:5.

Throughout Romans, Paul affirms and expounds on these ideas regarding our salvation. We don't have the power to change God's will for our lives, and at the same time, we are responsible for the choices that we make.

Even with Old Testament examples and Paul's explanations, grappling with the concept of election remains difficult, and a variety of interpretations are possible. For example, why does God send some people to hell (Romans 9:19–24)? First, it's important to remember that **God never sends people to hell without their participation**. Second, Paul explains that our understanding of God's just judgment increases our appreciation for God's mercy. After all, why did God plan for Adam, Pharaoh, Israel, and many others to walk away from him? So that we—as recipients of God's mercy—can truly understand what God did to save us from the judgment we really deserved.

The truth is, God's mercy is the dominant theme of the salvation story throughout history. When we reflect on our own sinful rebellion against the backdrop of God's holiness, we catch a glimpse of just how patient and merciful God is to put up with us all—even with what Paul calls “*objects of wrath*” (9:22).

Paul hopes that we look at Pharaoh's hard heart, as well as the other Old Testament references in Romans 9:14–29, and learn this basic principle through God's history of salvation: ***God's mercy for humankind shines brighter than his judgment.*** So how does all this talk of God's election help us understand what God is doing in our world today?

- We can take great comfort in knowing that God has our salvation, and our friends' salvation, completely in **His** hands. He is a just judge and He will always do what is right. He loves your friends and family even more than you do, and He desires that **all** of humanity would be saved (*1 Timothy 2:4*).
- Notice that the doctrine of election does not make Paul any less energetic in his attempts to share his faith. Paul knows God's plan for the salvation of the world, and he desperately wants to be a part of seeing others come to Christ.
- When we are concerned about our friends' salvation, we can meditate on God's glory.

When we watch how God has worked salvation through the centuries, we can remember how merciful He is. God is both merciful and just, but He leads out in mercy and patience to sinners. As we study Romans 9:14–29 this week, let's express our gratitude for God's mercy and for our status as "objects of mercy that [God] prepared beforehand for [His] glory" (Romans 9:23).

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself.

Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 9:14–29 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

- 1.) What questions does Paul bring up in this chapter? What answers does Paul provide for these questions? (Write down the verses where you find these answers.)
- 2.) What parts of the Old Testament does Paul quote in Romans 9:14–29? What are the main points of these quotations?
- 3.) Read back over Romans 9 and write down every example where Paul describes the character of God.
- 4.) Find and note the verses that highlight God’s sovereign choice. What do you learn about salvation in these verses?

- 5.) How does Paul explain the doctrine of election in Romans 9:14–29?
- 6.) Why is it important that Paul grounds his points in Old Testament Scriptures?
- 7.) How do God's characteristics of mercy and judgment work together in the story of salvation according to Romans 9:14–29?
8. Romans 9:19–24 presents a rapid series of questions, some of which are answering other questions. What do these questions teach us about resisting God's will? What do these questions teach us about God's mercy and judgment?

Application

9.) How are your thoughts about Romans 9 as you try to understand your salvation and election?

10.) Based on your study of this passage, how would you explain salvation to a non-Christian?

11. How would you explain election to a Christian friend who is struggling to understand God's justice?

12.) How does this passage encourage you in your efforts to see your loved ones become believers?

13.) Are there any circumstances in your life right now where it's difficult to trust God's sovereignty? Share them with your small group and pray together.

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Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 9:14-29

Read Romans 9:14-29.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God for being the God of justice, mercy, and compassion (Romans 9:14–18). Praise God for being the Potter, able to shape us and mold us for His glory (9:19–23). Give God glory for being your creator and giving your life meaning and purpose (9:19–24). Praise God that, thanks to His justice, we never have to fear injustice (9:19).
- **Confession:** Confess to God ways you have doubted his goodness, justice, and mercy when circumstances in your life don't go the way you want them to (9:14, 18). Ask God's forgiveness for how you have tried to resist God's will for your life (9:19). Ask God's forgiveness for how you have not lived up to the title "sons and daughters of the living God" (9:26).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that despite our dishonorable and unworthy actions, He has still chosen to save us (9:27–29). Thank God that He shows mercy and compassion to frail, sinful humans (9:14–18). Thank God for showing us His power and His justice (9:14, 17). Thank God for saving you to bring Him honor (9:21). Thank Him for specific ways that He's using you to bring Him honor.
- **Supplication:** Ask God to save your "One" and your lost friends, bringing them into God's family (9:26). Ask God to show His power in your life, specifically in the areas where you face great difficulty (9:17). Ask God for wisdom and understanding as we study through Romans. Ask that God would show you His glory as we look deeper into the Gospel together.

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Week Three: [Romans 9:30-10:13]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“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. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.”
- Romans 10:9–10 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Righteousness has to come through faith; we cannot obtain it on our own.
- Christ is the only path to righteousness, accomplishing what the law could not produce in sinful humanity.
- Salvation is about God’s work, not ours.

Read

When those we love don't follow Christ, it affects us. We long for those we care for to know Jesus. The same is true for Paul. Throughout Romans 9–11, we see Paul's anguish concerning the salvation of Israel. They are people, and Paul longs for his them to come to faith in Christ. It is common for many of us to feel the way Paul does here. We may have an unshakeable confidence in God's ability to save but simultaneously experience a deep disappointment that many people we care about have yet to believe the Gospel.

Paul understands, in the middle of his own wrestling, that ultimately, God is in control of how salvation unfolds **to the nations**. This week, we will see in Romans 9:30–10:13 how the Jewish rejection of the Gospel helped open the door for the Gentiles to experience the power of the Gospel. In other words, even though Jews were rejecting Paul's message, **the Gentiles were not**. This positive Gentile response to the Gospel will later play an important part in Jews responding in faith to Christ as they see God at work in others.

Throughout Romans 9:30–10:13, Paul maintains that the way to bring others to a saving knowledge of the Gospel is to preach the Gospel to all who will listen (Romans 10:8–17). This means that we must keep taking the good news of Jesus into our workplaces, communities, families, and friend groups, with the hope that many will come to saving faith in Jesus!

As we dig into Romans 9:30–10:13, Paul exposes one huge reason that many people in his day resist the Gospel is people are looking for “*right moral standing*” in all the wrong places. This is just as true in our day as it was in Paul's. Many of us try to convince ourselves that we are *good enough* for God through good behavior or even church attendance. Unfortunately, when we get so tied to these forms of self-justification, we become unwilling or unable to accept the true work of justification through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And yet, Paul says God calls us to come to Him in faith on the basis of what He's done, not on the basis of what we've done.

Paul called this reliance on faith a “*stumbling stone*” and a “*rock to trip over*” in Romans 9:32–33. The “*stumbling stone*” language is an idea Paul borrows from the Old Testament book of Isaiah as a reminder to the Roman audience that this is not a new problem. In Isaiah's day, the Israelites thought they could find security in their freedom from political oppression, instead of relying on God. The prophet Isaiah had to remind them that they are God's people, and that faith in God would always be the **only** lasting route to true salvation, security, and significance.

Notice how Paul describes unbelieving Jews in Romans 10:2–5. Paul says they have “*zeal for God*,” but they are still “*ignorant of the righteousness of God*” (10:2–3). Paul is saying that the Jews sought a righteousness from the law instead of the righteousness given by faith. To explain this, Paul pulls from two significant passages in the Old Testament. First, Paul says, “the person who does commandments shall live by them” (Leviticus 18:5). This verse represents a righteousness that could have come from obeying God’s law, from full obedience to all of God’s commands. Paul identifies this as the *wrong* path to righteousness (Romans 10:2–13)! Why is this the wrong path? Because humanity is **unable** and has always been unable to perfectly follow God’s commands.

Second, Paul says, “the message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (Deuteronomy 30:14). This verse shows us that righteousness comes by faith. In Deuteronomy 31:27–29, Moses explains that righteousness earned by obedience to the law will not work! Still, the Jews of Paul’s day reverted to Leviticus 18:5 as the path to righteous living and ignored Moses’s instruction in Deuteronomy 30–33. It wasn’t about outward obedience. **Righteousness is about inward faith.** Paul announces that God’s restoration of the people, predicted by Deuteronomy 30, began when Jesus saved us and put his Spirit inside of us. Thus, the Leviticus 18:5 way of being righteous failed and the Deuteronomy 30 way of being righteous prevailed.

Paul then applies Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 30 to what it is like to have faith in Jesus. Just as Moses said centuries before, Paul says that all a believer has to do is “*confess with your mouth*” and “*believe in your heart*” (Romans 10:9–10). We do not have to make some special effort to find righteousness. So, we shouldn’t try to be like Moses in order to experience God’s saving hand. At the same time, any effort on our part to bring about salvation is essentially undoing what Jesus did for us *in our place*. All we have to do is believe the good news of God’s work in Jesus—that he obeyed God perfectly in our place—and God will restore our hearts. Paul knows that we can’t even believe the good news unless God gives us faith and puts His Spirit inside of us to help us. As we’ve mentioned before, **salvation is about God’s work, not ours.**

What does this mean for us? Paul gives us the simple mechanics of faith in verses 10:9–11. **Believing and confessing is *how we are saved*.** There is no other way. We must believe in God and the work that he accomplished. It’s not about what we can do on our own. We can’t achieve right standing before God by trying to live rightly on our own. Rather, right standing comes from confessing our inability to stand on our own. In our weakness, we put all our hope and trust in what Jesus did for us.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself.

Complete each question **before** your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 9:30–10:13 in preparation for this week’s study.

1.) What questions does Paul address in this passage? Where do you see Paul give the answers to these questions?

2.) What Old Testament passages does Paul quote in this passage? What is the main point of each Old Testament quotation?

3.) List out the elements of salvation according to verses 5–13.

4.) Circle the significant conjunctions in this passage (e.g., and, because, but, yet, etc.). How do these conjunctions move the argument along?

Observation

- 5.) Using Romans 9:30–10:4, explain in your own words why many Jews were not putting their faith in Christ at the time of Paul's writing.

- 6.) In what way is Christ the “end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (10:4)?

- 7.) Why is it important that the “message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (10:8)?

- 8.) Describe the role belief plays in God's plan of salvation according to Romans 9:30–10:13. Why is belief such an important part of salvation?

Application

11.) How do people you know try to prove themselves to be good enough for God?
How are people in your community “ignorant of the righteousness of God” (10:3) in their pursuits?

12.) Romans 9:30–10:13 helps us see the dangers of looking for righteousness in the wrong places. How have you chased after a false sense of righteousness? How can we know when we are drifting into these habits again?

13.) How does Romans 9:30–10:13 motivate us to share the Gospel?

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Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 9:30-10:13

Read Romans 9:30-10:13.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God for being righteous (10:3). Praise God for being the Lord of all people (10:12–13). Adore God for being the Rock that we can count on for salvation (10:13). Praise God for his power, which he wields on our behalf (10:9–10).
- **Confession:** Confess to God that you have wrongly sought righteousness in ways that do not lead back to Christ (9:30–10:4). Confess the ways that you have not submitted to God's righteousness and wanted to establish your own (10:3). Ask for forgiveness for the ways that you have taken Christ's salvation for granted (10:6–10).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for hearing our prayers (10:1) and for acting on our behalf. Thank God for saving people of every nation, tribe, and tongue (10:12–13). Thank God for providing a way of salvation for us, even though we are unrighteous (10:9–10).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to remove any stumbling block from your friends and neighbors, so that they would believe the gospel along with you (9:33). Pray that your friends and neighbors would not be ignorant of the gospel or zealously chase after things that cannot satisfy their souls (10:1–2).

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Week Four: [Romans 10:14-11:10]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“In the same way, then, there is also at the present time a remnant chosen by grace. Now if by grace, then it is not by works; otherwise grace ceases to be grace.”

- Romans 11:5-6 (CSB)

Key Principles

- People come to faith in Jesus Christ through hearing the gospel proclaimed by other people.
- God saved a remnant of Jews in Paul’s day, just as God preserved a remnant throughout the history of Israel.
- The entire Old Testament points to salvation in and through Christ.

Read

In Romans 10:14–11:10, Paul addresses the Jews’ lack of faith through a series of questions concerning God’s justice and His faithfulness, some of which we will study this week. Concerning the absence of salvation among the Jews, Paul asks:

- Is it because the Jews have not heard the Gospel? (10:18)
- Did Israel just not understand? (10:19)
- Has God rejected His own people? (11:1)
- Did Israel fail to obtain what they were seeking? (11:7)

The answers that Paul gives to the questions in this passage are centered around this fact—**people come to faith in Jesus Christ through hearing and receiving the Gospel proclaimed by other people** (10:17). The reality is that the Jews had heard. They just did not obey it or receive it. So, God’s plan is to put His power and blessings on full display by saving the Gentiles.

Through the work of God in the lives of the Gentiles, the Jews would witness God’s goodness and the joys of uniting with Him in Christ. Somehow, God intends even this period of Jewish unbelief to provide a blessing (11:11–12). God had always preserved a faithful remnant throughout Israel’s history. Paul reminds us that this was true as he wrote these very words. After all, Paul himself was an ethnic Jew who believed the Gospel, one of many such examples throughout the New Testament. And it is true for us, even today. This “*remnant*” is an indication that God has not given up on His plan to save ethnic Israelites.

Paul’s answers to these tough theological questions hold extra significance because he grounds them in the OT scriptures. By using the Old Testament, and the book of Isaiah in particular, Paul is reminding his audience that God’s plan of salvation has always been the same. Here are the references to Isaiah that Paul makes in Romans 10:14–11:10:

- Romans 10:15 (citing Isaiah 52:7): “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.”
- Romans 10:16 (citing Isaiah 53:1): “Lord, who has believed our message?”
- Romans 10:20 (citing Isaiah 65:1): “I was found by those who were not looking for me; I revealed myself to those who were not asking for me.”
- Romans 10:21 (citing Isaiah 65:2): “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and defiant people.”
- Romans 11:8a (citing Isaiah 29:10, which itself cites Deuteronomy 28–33): “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that cannot see.”

Understanding the background of Isaiah helps us understand Paul's message in Romans 10:14–11:10. Isaiah was a book that addressed the nation of Israel at a time when they struggled to believe that God would save them. Isaiah implored his people (Jewish people) to have faith, especially in God's future salvation. But many of Isaiah's contemporaries did not believe, and it was disastrous for them. So, Isaiah responded by predicting how God would save in the future, through **a suffering Messiah** (Isaiah 7, 9, 11, and 53), then restore His people, and finally create a new heaven and new earth (Isaiah 65–66) where His people would flourish. Paul took comfort in Isaiah because of this great vision of salvation, and Paul would even see the suffering Messiah—Jesus—with his own eyes (Acts 9). Paul also took comfort in the fact that Isaiah's message was rejected at first, just like what was happening to him. Both Isaiah and Paul had a vision of God's glorious salvation, and they knew it would overcome unrighteousness and unbelief.

In addition to Isaiah, Paul also cites other passages from the major sections of the Old Testament in Romans 10:14–11:10. This arrangement of references is not a coincidence. Paul does all of this in such a short section of Romans to make an important point: **The entire Old Testament points to salvation in and through Christ.**

Notice that these Old Testament references convey a key point from Romans 10:14–17: God has good news for the world, and He uses His people to spread this message of salvation. He allows *us* to participate in His plan of salvation. God's Word even calls the feet of those who bring good news "*beautiful*" (Romans 10:15)! The message of God's righteousness in the Gospel spreads through people! Yes, the local church is God's "*Plan A*" to carry the gospel to those who have yet to believe.

There is so much beauty and honor in taking the Gospel to the world. But Paul knows that taking the Gospel to the world also entails rejection (Romans 10:18–21). Paul's message was rejected by fellow Jews. Faithful prophets like Isaiah and Elijah were also rejected. Even Jesus was rejected. This rejection will also happen to you and me.

Paul's struggles surrounding Israel's acceptance of the Gospel show us that we are not alone when we experience friends and family who reject the good news of the Gospel. Even so, we press on and preach the good news even when we know rejection might come. We know from Romans 9:30–11:10 that throughout history, God chose to save His people by sending his messengers to proclaim the good news. Because of this, we can trust God with our lives and our ministry, as we take the Gospel to our neighborhoods, cities, and the ends of the earth.

And when rejection comes, don't shrink back in fear; ask God for more faith, courage, and boldness (*Acts 4:29; Ephesians 6:19–20*). Continue to share Jesus boldly, even in the face of rejection, just like Paul did among his own people many centuries ago. We are Christians today in part because Paul pressed on to make sure he fulfilled his calling in God's mission to bring salvation to a lost world. Likewise, may we be faithful to make the most of our God-given opportunities to bring the good news of eternal life in Christ to Rincon, Ga and to the ends of the earth.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 10:14–11:10 in preparation for this week's study.

1.) Paul raises many questions in Romans 10:14–11:10. Write down or underline each of these questions and highlight the answers that Paul provides.

2.) What Old Testament passages does Paul quote in Romans 10:14–11:10? Write out the main point of each Old Testament reference in your own words.

3.) What do we learn about God's character in Romans 10:14–11:10? Which verses support these truths?

4.) What do we learn about God's plan of salvation in Romans 10:14–11:10? Which verses support these truths?

Observation

5.) Why does Paul have confidence that God will not give up on unbelieving Jews according to Romans 10:14–11:10?

6.) What is the stumbling block (*or pitfall, in some translations*) that prevents some from believing (Romans 11:5–6, 9)? Why is it important?

7.) Why is preaching the gospel an important part of God's plan for saving people according to Romans 10:14–11:10?

8.) When Paul explains God's plan of salvation in Romans 1–11, grace is an important component. Why? How does Romans 10:14–11:10 *reinforce* these thoughts?

Application

9.) How does Romans 10:14–11:10 motivate you in your efforts to help others believe in Christ?

10.) In your everyday life, what stumbling blocks prevent you from believing and living what God says in this passage?

11.) Are there people you think are beyond God's reach—that you think He has given up on? How does Romans 10:14–11:10 encourage you and help you fight against such hopelessness?

12.) How do we help people whose “*eyes have been darkened*” and “*hearts have been hardened*” (11:7–10)?

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Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 10:14-11:10

Read Romans 10:14-11:10.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God that He is sovereign, always working a plan of salvation that is larger than what we can see and understand (11:1–5). Adore God because He is the God of grace (11:5–6). Praise God as the one who has control over our lives and our fates (11:7–10).
- **Confession:** Confess that we are too weak and self-centered to comprehend God's work in the world (10:19–21; 11:8–10). Confess and repent to God for how you have become frustrated or angry with Him for how He has managed His plan of salvation. Ask God's forgiveness for how we have blinded ourselves and turned our backs on Him (11:9–10).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that He is patient with us (10:21). Thank God for making Himself and His glorious salvation known to us (10:15–18). Thank God for bringing people into your life who have helped you understand God's grace (10:14–18). And thank God for extending His grace to you and changing your life (11:5–6).
- **Supplication:** Ask for the strength, courage, and obedience to preach the good news to your friends and neighbors (10:14–18). Pray that your One would not reject the gospel, but that they would find God and obey his Word (10:20).

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Week Five: [Romans 11:11-36]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? And who has ever given to God, that he should be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.”

- Romans 11:33–36 (CSB)

Key Principles

- As we consider God’s sovereignty in salvation, our hearts should turn to humble and joyful worship.
- God was, and is, bringing Jews and Gentiles together in the gospel.
- God’s inclusion of the Gentiles will lead to the salvation of the Jews.

Read

What brings your heart to a place of worship? Your favorite worship song? An answered prayer? These are all good things. But above all else, God wants our worship to be ignited by who He is and what He has done. The goodness of His character should move us to praise His name. Meditating on these things—God’s Word and His ways—should lift our hearts to joyful adoration of God. This is exactly where we find Paul in Romans 11. As Paul concludes his explanation of God’s incredible plan in salvation, he cannot help but burst into worship.

So, what is it from Romans 9–11 that brings Paul to a place of worship? **God’s faithfulness.** The central theme of Romans 9–11 was stated at the beginning: “It is not as though the word of God has failed” (Romans 9:6). Previously, God had made promises of salvation to Israel, and yet, many Israelites did not experience salvation in Christ. We discussed in week one that, at first glance, it seems that Israel’s present unbelief brings God’s faithfulness into question. How did Paul defend God’s faithfulness? He showed from the Old Testament that salvation was never promised to every single ethnic Israelite. Not every ethnic Israelite is chosen. True Israel was never determined by family lineage or their works. Many Israelites who resisted the Gospel made the error of trying to pursue righteousness through works of the law, instead of faith in Christ (Romans 10:1–4). So, there was a preserved group—a remnant—of Israel that believed in Christ. (Romans 11:1–7)

Paul could have ended his argument here, but he doesn’t. Paul continues because the story of Israel isn’t over. The last word cannot be that Israel is doomed to hardened hearts. The majority of Israel will not always continue to resist the Gospel. For now, Israel has been temporarily calloused to the Gospel so that the fullness of the Gentiles may enter into the family of God (Romans 11:25). But the inclusion of the Gentiles will eventually provoke Israel to jealousy and lead to their salvation (Romans 11:14).

Paul’s line of reasoning here raises many questions about ethnic Jews today. Is Paul claiming that all ethnic Jews will become Christians? Or is he referring, instead, to the “*true Israel*” he introduced in Romans 9:6? Commentators differ about who precisely Paul is talking about in his references to “Israel” in this passage. But one thing is clear: God is not done with Israel.

Paul uses the illustration of an olive tree to explain God's plan for both Jews and Gentiles. Once again, Paul borrows an image from the Old Testament (Jeremiah 11:16–17; Hosea 14:6; Isaiah 5:1–7). As gardeners already know, it is possible—and common—to move a branch from one tree to another. This process is called **grafting**. The way Paul uses the image in Romans 11, the root of the tree represents the patriarchs, while the branches are the descendants (11:16). The natural branches refer to the Jews, while the wild branches refer to the Gentiles (11:17–24). The natural branches (Jews) were broken off, so the wild branches (Gentiles) could be grafted into the tree of God's people.

However, in 11:17–22, Paul warns the Gentiles that their inclusion is no reason for them to boast. A Gentile cannot say, “God rejected Israel and saved us Gentiles because we are better!” Salvation is by God's choice and not because of something in us. As we marvel at God's sovereign choice, may we all remember Paul's warning to the Gentiles (Romans 11:20–22). Pride has no place in the heart of God's people. **Humility and trust should be our response as we consider God's kindness to us in Christ.** As Paul tells the Gentiles, we must continue to trust God and not ourselves.

Romans 11:30–32 gives a great summary of Paul's argument. **Just as Gentiles experienced God's mercy after a time of disobedience, Israel will also receive mercy after their disobedience.** God does this to show his mercy. We can find rest in the fact that God has orchestrated all of His ways in order to magnify his glory and his mercy!

Overcome by the weight of God's faithfulness, Paul overflows into worship. But Paul doesn't just mention vague phrases of praise, he adores God for specific aspects of his character and deeds. Paul praises the depth and richness of God's wisdom and knowledge. He praises God for his supreme nature; the fact that God's judgments and ways are far above and beyond us (Romans 11:33). God's mind is incomparable; no one can understand it. God's actions are always right; no one can instruct Him. God is never in debt; no one can give God anything that isn't already his. Because all things are from Him, through Him, and to Him—all glory belongs to God forever.

For Paul, his thoughts about God lead him to worship God. In this sense, some might say Paul's rich understanding of God has turned into praise for God: his theology has transformed into doxology.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself.

Complete each question **before** your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 11:11–36 in preparation for this week's study.

1.) What questions does Paul ask in Romans 11:11–36? What answers (if any) does he give in these verses?

2.) How many times does Paul mention Jews (or Israel)? Gentiles?

3.) What direct commands does Paul give in Romans 11:11–36?

4.) What Old Testament quotes does Paul reference?

Observation

5.) According to Romans 11:11–36, what was the good purpose for which God hardened many Israelites?

6.) What are the reasons that the Gentiles should not be conceited (11:20)? How are they instructed to fight this conceit (11:22)?

7.) What does Paul say is going to happen to ethnic Israelites in the future (11:25–27)?

8.) In your own words, rewrite the questions from Romans 11:34–35 and turn them into sentences.

Application

9.) What are some ways you can grow in regularly obeying the command to “consider God’s kindness and severity” (11:22)?

10.) Does thinking about God’s election make you more prideful and argumentative? What are some things in this passage that can help you remain humble and joyful?

11.) How often does thinking deeply about God’s Word move you to worship? What are some ways you can grow in this habit and practice it regularly?

13.) It is a good practice to meditate on God’s character until our heart sings with praise. What are some truths we learn about God in Romans 11:32–36? What are some ways to regularly bring these truths to mind in your everyday life?

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Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 11:33-36

Read Romans 11:33-36.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise the “depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God” (Romans 11:33). Consider how “unsearchable” and “untraceable” God’s ways are (11:33).
- **Confession:** Confess to God your low thoughts of Him. Ask Him to forgive you for all the times you have wrongly believed that He needed your wisdom in running the world (11:34–35).
- **Thanksgiving:** What has God graciously given you? Thank God for every good gift you have in your life, “for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things” (11:36). Consider God’s greatest gift of all, His own Son (Romans 8:32). Thank God for giving us Jesus Christ.
- **Supplication:** Ask the Father to grant you a heart that regularly bursts into praise toward Him (11:33). Pray that God would grant you more joy in Christ than all His other gifts. Pray that God would give you the boldness to speak of his greatness to others who do not yet know Him.

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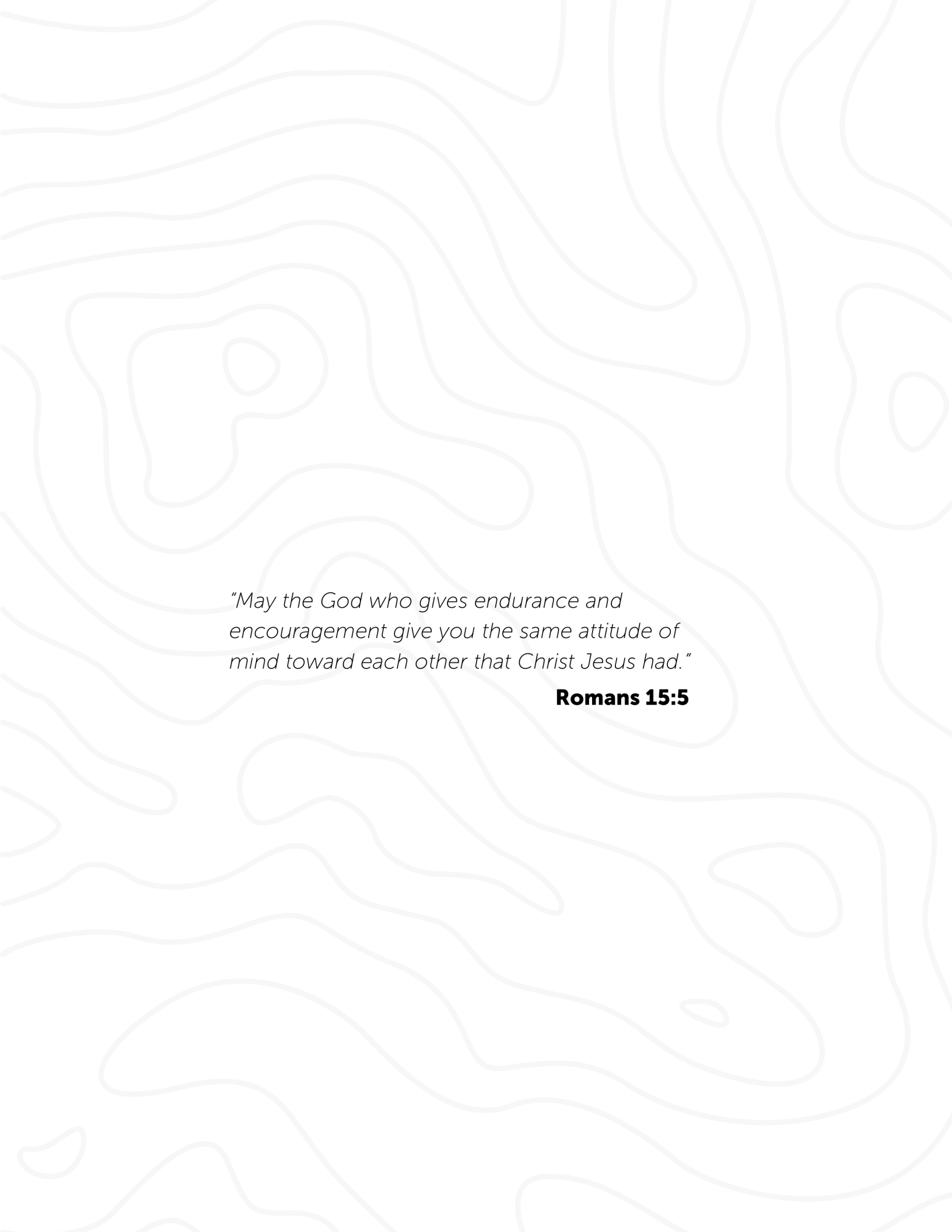
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ROMANS 9-11



— THE BOOK OF —
ROMANS
CONNECT GROUP STUDY GUIDE 4

ROMANS 12-16



"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had."

Romans 15:5

INTRODUCTION

This Romans study guide includes six studies that finish the fourth and final set in a larger series of studies produced for Connection Church Rincon connect groups this year. Each Bible study series is designed to aid both our personal study of Romans and facilitate our connect group discussions. This current volume will study Romans 12–16, where Paul shows that hope in God transforms the church to be united in the mercy of Christ for the sake of the nations.

Romans 12–16 follows the same trends we see in Paul’s other letters. Paul often chooses to explain theological principles at the beginning of a letter, followed by specific commands to apply the Gospel theology he previously introduced. For the church in Rome, Paul writes in part to address possible divisions between Christians from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds.

When Paul instructs the church in Romans 12–16 as a community transformed by the Gospel and united in God’s mercy, he is not introducing a new concept. For 11 chapters, Paul has been developing the idea that all Christians, regardless of cultural background or ethnicity, should live in relational unity as equal recipients of God’s mercy. This goal helped shape Paul’s writing as early as chapter 1, where he said the Gospel was for the salvation of ***all nations***, able to save “*the Jew first, and also to the Greek*” (1:16). Paul proceeds to show in chapters 1–3 how both Jews and Gentiles are in equal need of mercy, as “*both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin*” (3:9). Romans 3:21–4:25 shows that righteousness is attainable for both groups but only through faith in Christ.

Beginning with Romans 5, the language changes significantly through Paul’s choice of pronouns. Paul addresses Jews and Gentiles separately in Romans 1–4, but he then addresses both groups together as “*we*” throughout Romans 5–8.

This observation is significant because Paul makes this shift before he describes the mercy of God to reconcile sinners to himself by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 5–8). So, the use of “we” signifies that God’s grace for all believers becomes our basis for unity in the church. Then, Romans 9–11 details how both Jews and Gentiles will be grafted into the same family of God together, as God’s plan of salvation comes to full fruition.

Paul proceeds to describe this transformed community (*the Church*) in the remainder of his letter to the Romans. The transformed community is a people marked by a genuine love for one another (12:9–10; 13:8–10; 14:15; 15:30). In this community, each individual uses his or her gifts to serve the whole body (12:3–8). They don’t give evil for evil, but seek the good of all, even of their enemies (12:17–21). They are people who live in harmony and peace with others in society, including God-ordained authorities (12:16–13:10). They are jealous to protect their unity in Christ, so they don’t pass judgment on one another regarding personal convictions and preferences (14:1–23). Instead, they support one another, and the “*strong*” bear with the “*weak*.” Just as Christ welcomed all (*both Jews and Gentiles*), they accept one another for the glory of God (15:7–13). They are all co-workers in Christ, even willing to risk their lives for one another (16:3–16). They jealously guard their unity by distancing themselves from deceitful teachers of false doctrine (16:17–18). This community is devoted to God’s mission: ***the obedience of faith among all the nations*** (1:6; 16:26; cf. 15:14–29) for the sake of God’s glory (16:27).

As we study Romans 12–16, let us all, as one church, present our many bodies to God as one living sacrifice. Let’s ask God to unite us as a body and mold us into a church that looks more and more like the transformed community we see in Romans 12–16.

How to use this guide.

Each of these six studies begins with some key verses and key principles for each passage, followed by a devotional introduction to prepare our hearts and minds. Then, the Study Guide section incorporates a series of questions specifically designed to help us engage the text of Romans 12-16 in personal study and connect group discussion, according to the S.O.A.P. method of Bible study:

- **SCRIPTURE:** Read and study everything in the passage.
- **OBSERVATION:** What are some observations that you notice from this text? Remember, context is everything.
- **APPLICATION**– How does the text apply to your every day life? Based off the text, what are some measurable next steps that you can take, starting today?
- **PRAYER** – Pray God’s word back to Him, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Work on these at any time throughout the week. Some may find it helpful to work through the exercises in sections—such as two or three blocks of 15 to 20 minutes each, while others may want to study the whole passage in one, hour-long sitting. Whichever approach you choose to take, please answer all of the questions before your connect group meeting. In connect groups, we will discuss our answers to the Bible study questions together. To maximize our study of God’s Word and the impact it can have on our lives, we encourage everyone to work through all the questions in each of the six weekly studies, but connect group leaders may choose to focus on some questions more than others.

How to use this guide (cont.)

Whichever approach you choose to take, please complete the exercises **before** your Connect Group meeting. In Connect Groups, we will discuss our answers to the Bible study questions and discuss what next steps God is leading us to take through the weekly passages.

To maximize our study of God's Word and the impact it can have on our lives, we encourage everyone to personally work through all of the questions in each of the 5 weekly studies, but Connect Group leaders may choose to focus more on some questions than others.

We have also included a "*sermon notes*" section to each week so that you can take notes during the sermon to better prepare for your Connect Group.

Week One: [Romans 12:1-21]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“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 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Living each day in a posture of worship toward God is the only logical response to the mercy God has shown us in Christ.
- We will be changed as we learn to think according to God’s will—clinging to what is good, actively using our gifts for the benefit of the body, and showing love toward all people, without hypocrisy.

Read

If you could change anything about yourself right now, what would it be? Another word for change is “*transformation*”, and it’s not uncommon for any of us to desire some type of transformation—as long as we get to call the shots. If we can remain in control, change seems desirable. We live in a control hungry and self centered world.

Paul presents a different model for transformation in Romans. God is the one who transforms sinners (1:18–3:23) into God-worshipping saints (5:1–6:23). God changes us by uniting us to Christ through his death and resurrection (6:1–12). Jesus doesn’t merely take the penalty of our sins (3:21–26), but He also grants us His Spirit to battle the power of sin in our lives (8:1–12). The Holy Spirit changes our hearts. He puts sinful desires to death and gives us holy desires for God (8:9–16). Contrary to self-help, Romans shows that God provides the power, the means, and the goals for transformation.

But what is our part in transformation? How exactly do we change? Romans 12–13 answers that question by continuing a line of thought that begins much earlier in Romans. The book of Romans presents an absolutely righteous God (1:17). This God is not merely to be studied but He is to be hoped in (5:1–8; 8:18–24). We can hope in Him because He is forever faithful and true (3:1–8). We can trust that He will never lie, never do wrong, and always come through on His Word (Romans 9–11). When we trust God, we will want to dedicate all of ourselves to Him (12:1–2). Transformation comes through knowing, trusting, and obeying God.

Paul begins Romans 12–16 by calling Christians to live for God as “*living sacrifices*” (12:1). Living each day in a posture of worship toward God is the only logical response to the mercy God has shown us in Christ. When we recall and consider that our lives rest on God’s mercy, we no longer try to earn His acceptance or righteousness nor do we disregard His kindness by continuing to sin. We do not deserve the life that God has given us, so it is only reasonable that our lives should belong to Him for his glory. That is why Paul calls this living sacrifice our true act of worship (12:1).

When we live this way, we do not conform to the ways of the world (12:2). As we saw in Romans 1, the world has suppressed God’s truth, not honoring Him as Creator (Romans 1:18–32). Our world has exchanged God’s truth for its own definition of good and follows ungodly passions rather than conforming to God’s will. Those who are living sacrifices, however, present themselves to the Creator to be transformed and conformed to His likeness and His purposes. Our lives are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19–20), and this life of sacrifice looks to God for purpose, fulfillment, direction, and authority.

The hard part comes when we try to discern what God's purposes for us actually are; we struggle to identify God's will. In Romans 12:2, Paul defines God's will as "*what is good, pleasing, and perfect.*" Instead of suppressing the truth (Romans 1:18–32), Paul calls the Roman church to discover God's will by testing. The Greek word for *discern* (12:2 CSB) means to determine worth or value by putting to the test. What does this testing look like in our everyday lives? It means we test our decisions against the Truth of God's Word so that in the everyday decisions of life, we prayerfully make choices that glorify God, honor His character, and advance His plans for the world.

If we are thinking according to God's will, we will assess ourselves correctly in relation to God and others. In Romans 12:3–8, Paul uses an analogy of the human body to illustrate how Christians function together in harmony as the body of Christ. Just as our human bodies are comprised of different parts all working together, the diverse members of the church—each having different gifts and abilities—are meant to work together as one body of Christ.

Paul then describes the life that is pleasing to God by exhorting Christians in verses 9–21 to live as a unified body in specific ways, as united recipients of God's mercy. First, Paul says love should be "*without hypocrisy*" (12:9), meaning that our outward actions should match our inward thinking. This goes hand in hand with the second command: "*Detest evil; cling to what is good*" (12:9). As Christians, we must knit ourselves to what is good, living a life in line with God's revealed truth. Because of God's undeserved kindness to all of us in Christ, the genuine love of God for us in the Gospel is to be shown toward everyone (12:18). We may be tempted to dismiss people who embarrass us, drain our energy, or get under our skin. However, reflecting on God's mercy toward us should renew our thinking toward those we naturally push away, to the point we seek to serve even our enemies (12:20). If we could not earn our righteous standing before God, how can we require others to earn love from us?

After all, Christ did not retaliate when He was wrongfully harmed; He entrusted His circumstances to God the Father as Judge. Likewise, Christians should follow Jesus and refrain from taking revenge into their own hands because God will soon return to judge everyone (12:19–21). As for us, we are responsible to show genuine love toward all humans who, like ourselves, are equally dependent on God's mercy.

God, in his mercy, has made us righteous through faith in Christ's work. We please God by continuing in faith as a living sacrifice—presenting our lives, which he has spared, to him in worship. We will be transformed as we learn to think according to God's will—clinging to what is good, actively using our gifts for the benefit of the whole body, and showing love toward all people, without hypocrisy.

This is the way of Christ. This is the way of a life lived for the glory of God.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 12:1–21 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

- 1.) Circle all the conjunctions in this passage (*words like “therefore,” “so that,” “for,” or “because”*).
- 2.) Make a list of all the commands in Romans 12.
.
- 3.) From the list above, put a star beside all the commands that have to do with our relationship with other people.
- 4.) Highlight any Old Testament quotations in Romans 12. Where are they from? Go back and read those verses in their Old Testament context.

Observation

- 5.) Explain how the conjunctions from question 1 impact our understanding of Romans 12. Focus especially on the “*therefore*” in 12:1.

- 6.) Revisit the list of commands from Romans 12 in question 2. Paul expects his readers to follow these instructions. Why are Christians called to pursue these behaviors?

- 7.) Why does Paul use the Old Testament references that he uses? How do these references relate to Paul’s points? .

- 8.) What is the difference between mercy and grace? (*Use a dictionary if needed.*) Why is God’s mercy, instead of grace, the proper motivation for us to present ourselves as a living sacrifice to him in Romans 12:1?

Application

- 9.) In what ways are you tempted to be “*conformed to this age*” (12:1–2), and what would it look like for you to live as a “*living sacrifice*” to the Lord in these areas?
- 10.) In the list of practical commands given in verses 9–21, which do you find most difficult to obey and why?
- 11.) Our total devotion to God has radical implications for our relationships with those around us, particularly in the body of Christ (12:5). What are some specific ways you struggle to live in harmony with others? What would it look like for you to take practical steps of repentance?
- 12.) According to Romans 12:9–21, we are told to bless—and not curse—those who persecute us and not repay anyone evil for evil. What should our response be to the sinful actions of others? How do verses 19 and 21 clarify (*and limit*) our role?

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Each week of this study guide will include a recommended scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 12:1–21

Read Romans 12:1–21.

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because His mercy runs so deep that He even extends it to His enemies (Romans 12:1; cf. 5:10). Praise God for all the ways He is righteous and deserving of our sacrifices to Him (12:1–2). Glorify God because He is good and His will is perfect (12:2).
- **Confession:** Confess to God the ways we have been stingy and self-serving with the gifts He has given us (12:4–8). Confess to God the ways that we have thought of ourselves more highly than we ought (12:3). Ask for forgiveness for the ways that we have been vengeful in thoughts, words, and deeds (12:14–21).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for giving us unity within the body of Christ (12:3–6, 18). Thank Christ for the gifts He has given to us and for giving us a family that seeks to build us up (12:3–13). Thank God for renewing our minds and opening us up to his eternal truths (12:2).
- **Supplication:** Ask God for help in valuing His mercy and living in view of His mercies (12:1). Ask God for a greater appreciation for our brothers and sisters in Christ and the gifts that He has given them (12:3–8). Pray for a transformed mind so that we can be instruments of peace to those inside and outside of the church (12:9–21).

SERMON NOTES:

Scripture References:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Week Two: [Romans 13:1-14]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law.”

- Romans 13:10 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Christians obey earthly authorities because we know that God establishes all authority, and earthly authorities are mediators of God’s rule.
- Love is the fulfillment of the law.
- We should live with a sense of urgency in our obedience because the day of Christ’s return is almost here.

Read

When we hope in a merciful God who is forever faithful to all His promises, our whole life changes. In Romans 12, Paul began to describe the specific ways we are transformed as we dedicate all of our life to God. Romans 13 continues to describe this transformed life, and we find three points of emphasis in this chapter. First, Paul teaches us to submit to God through our submission to governing authorities (13:1–7). Next, Paul shows how love is the fulfillment of the law (13:8–10). Paul concludes by pointing us to the future, which serves as a motivation for present obedience (13:11–14).

Throughout Romans, Paul reminds us that God is ultimately in control of what happens on earth. God’s sovereign rule extends over our individual lives as well as what happens in human systems of government. Since we, as Christians, know and serve God as the ultimate Authority, it might be tempting for us to disregard earthly rule. As Paul explains, Christians are to submit to all governing authorities because *“there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God”* (13:1). This means that rebellion against God-ordained authorities constitutes rebellion against God, which will bring judgment (13:2–3). Such verses should produce in us a healthy respect for earthly authority and fear of retribution if we break the laws of our government.

To approach the same idea from a different angle, all authorities—whether they know it or not are ultimately God’s servants. **Christians obey earthly authorities because we know that God establishes all authority, and earthly authorities are mediators of God’s rule.** In other words, our respect for earthly authorities brings honor to God. Thus, Christians are to give people what is due to them whether it be taxes, tolls, respect, or honor (13:7).

Paul’s teaching about authority does not fit naturally with the spirit of our times, as our culture tends to celebrate individual freedoms and rebel against governing authorities. Some people even equate authority with corruption, oppression, and abuse of power. We might be eager to spend the majority of our time discussing situations where Paul’s teaching does not apply. However, we should acknowledge the general principles that are clear in this passage. All authorities (*whether good or bad*) are only in place by God’s sovereign will. Additionally, no one exercises authority perfectly except God. God has called us to obedience to him through our submission to the governing authorities. This means if an authority requires us to sin against God or go against God’s Word, it is always right to obey **God first**. If obeying God rather than human authority brings us negative consequences, we should be willing to trust God as we endure unjust suffering. At the same time, Paul’s general point remains: God calls for our obedience to the authorities he has placed over us.

Paul transitions to the subject of love in 13:8, which he already emphasized in chapter 12. Paul explains that love is the fulfillment of the law. Paul's teaching here reminds us of Jesus' teaching on the "*greatest and most important command*" (Matthew 22:37–40). All of the Law and the Prophets, Jesus teaches, hang on the commands to love God and love one's neighbor. If we genuinely love other people, we will not commit adultery, murder, steal, or covet—thus fulfilling the demands of the law (Romans 13:9–10).

In the final verses of Romans 13, Paul orients our obedience on earth to our future salvation in Christ. Paul's list of commands from Romans 12 extends into Romans 13:1–10. As Paul concludes chapter 13, he references Christ's return in 13:11. This is Paul's way of explaining to the church, "*Obey all of 12:1–13:10 because the end is coming soon.*" Indeed, we should live with a sense of urgency in our obedience because the day of Christ's return is almost here (13:12). The image of putting off and discarding communicates a turning away from sinful patterns of behavior. On the contrary, we are to "*put on the Lord Jesus Christ*" (13:14). Paul warns us to make no provisions for our sinful desires. Furthermore, Paul's emphasis on turning from sinful behaviors to godliness corresponds to the theme from the beginning of Romans 12–13: not being conformed to the world but being transformed in Christlikeness (12:1–2).

Romans 12–13 provides a guide for how we should think about transformation. What part does submission to authorities play in our vision for personal change (13:1–7)? How important is loving others in how we desire to be transformed (13:8–10)? And how can what God has promised us in the future give us a sense of urgency in our lives now (13:11–14)? Our striving to obey these commands is a sign that the Spirit is transforming us. We are not passive in the work of transformation, but the power to change comes ultimately from God.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 13:1-14 in preparation for this week’s study.

Scripture

- 1.) Read chapter 12 and 13 together. Make a list of words or concepts that are the same in both chapters.
- 2.) Circle all the times Paul mentions God in 13:1–6. What verbs are assigned to God?
- 3.) Highlight any Old Testament quotations in Romans 13. Where are they from? Go back and read those verses in the Old Testament for context.
- 4.) Make a list of the different types of imagery Paul uses in 13:11–14.

Observation

5.) How would you explain the connection between Romans 12 and 13 in your own words?

6.) What is the relationship between God and governing authorities?

7.) How does the command to love fulfill the requirements of the law?

8. Summarize Romans 13:11–14 in one sentence.

Application

- 9.) Make a list of the many authorities God has placed over you. According to the truths of Romans 13. What might obedience to each of these authorities look like in both your actions and your heart?
- 10.) Imagine a close friend says to you, “*Christianity is not about obeying rules but about love.*” How would you respond to that statement in light of Romans 13?
11. Earlier in Romans, Paul pointed to God’s past work in Christ to lead us to obedience (*Romans 6*). But in Romans 13:11–14, Paul points us to future realities as a reason to obey. In what areas of your life might you walk in greater obedience to God’s commands because “*you know the time*” (13:11)?
- 12.) What are some ways you are tempted to “*make plans to gratify the desires of the flesh*” (Romans 13:14)? What next step could you take to ask your Christian community to help you fight against these desires?

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Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 13:1–14

Read Romans 13:1–14

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God for being the highest and best Authority. Praise Him that there is *“no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God”* (13:1). Revel in the absolute authority of God over all things.
- **Confession:** Acknowledge to God how we have rebelled against His authority, particularly in rebelling against earthly authorities (13:2). Confess instances of failure in loving our neighbors as ourselves (13:9). Take time to ask for forgiveness for any participation in the “deeds of darkness,” whether it be drunkenness, sexual impurity, promiscuity, quarreling, or jealousy (13:12–13).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for appointing authorities over us so we can know His will for us (13:1–2). Thank Him for transforming us from darkness to light, clothing us in Christ, and changing our walk (13:11–13).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to grant us the Holy Spirit so that we trust His authority in all of life (13:1–6). Ask Him to incline our hearts to a genuine love for others (13:7–10). Pray that God would grant us hope in the second coming of Jesus that gives us an urgency to kill the desires of the flesh and walk in obedience (13:11–14).

SERMON NOTES:

Scripture References:

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Week Three: [Romans 14:1-23]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

- Romans 14:17 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Every Christian should act in a way that seeks to honor the Lord.
- Arguing with, despising, or judging one another based on human opinions dishonors God and minimizes the work of Christ on our behalf.
- When our convictions are rooted in Christ—in God’s Word and our love for others—the Church can, and will, be unified.

Read

Think about cultures, families, or societies that haven't blended together well. American churches, for example, have long struggled to find unity in a nation with a history of racial divisions. Sunday mornings are still separated significantly along ethnic lines, as Christians of different backgrounds worship in different places. What is happening now is not an exact analogy to what was happening in Paul's day, but thinking about both situations helps us to understand the cultural climate of the New Testament and how we can apply Paul's letter to our current context.

Inside the Roman church, cultural practices and preferences divided Christians from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. Instead of accepting one another as God has accepted them, varying opinions regarding what to eat and what was socially acceptable were met with judgment and disdain. Arguments justifying one's own actions and condemning those who differed were prevalent. Paul seeks to address such issues in Romans 14 with the Gospel.

Paul explains repeatedly throughout Romans 1–11 that a life pleasing to God is only possible through the cleansing, sacrificial blood of Christ. Now, in chapter 14, Paul directly addresses the divisions within the church, building on the foundation of the first 11 chapters. Both groups, Jews and Gentiles, had disagreements over how to act in ways that reflect God's righteousness, and in their disputes, they had forgotten what brought them together in the first place: the righteousness of Christ.

There are two sides to every dispute. In Romans 14, Paul uses the terms "*weak*" and "*strong*" to differentiate between two groups of Christians. By this, Paul is not implying that one is better than the other. The term "*weak*" refers to Christians who likely come from a culture where food was ceremonially sacrificed to false gods (1 Corinthians 10:14–22). Thus, such foods—even when they may not have been used to honor false gods—would always remind this weak group of idol worship. The weak group also wanted everyone to observe more holidays with strict religious observances. In these ways, the weak brothers and sisters found it difficult to embrace the freedom they have in Christ and see previously forbidden foods as honoring to God, and they began to view certain behaviors with a sense of legalism. The strong group, conversely, felt free to eat any type of food and to view all days as equal in God's sight.

Paul encourages both sides to not get hung up on these issues. One view is not better than the other. Neither set of rules is completely right. Remember, the Christian life of living sacrifice (12:1) is not about obedience to rules; it's about faith in Christ. Paul points out that both groups can continue to honor Christ with their convictions. The weak brother or sister may choose to abstain from eating certain foods or to observe certain days, the strong can do the opposite, and both groups can honor God with their convictions (14:3–5). The crucial point is that every Christian should act in a way that seeks to honor the Lord (14:6–8).

This is how the Gospel helps us handle disputes like this. Any one of us will be tempted to spend too much time debating which lifestyle choices are most pleasing to God. When we do this, we often put too much emphasis on our opinions and forget that God is the true Judge. According to this passage, the work of God is what was accomplished in the Gospel: Christ died and lived again so we could become members of his kingdom with him as our Lord and Judge (14:9). His kingdom is *“not [a matter of] eating or drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit”* (14:17). Followers of Christ should place their trust in Christ's righteousness, not their own; they should be careful not to elevate human opinion since Jesus is the ultimate Judge. He has accepted both the weak and the strong into His kingdom (14:3). Because of this, we must accept one another. Arguing with, despising, or judging one another based on human opinions dishonors God and minimizes the work of Christ on our behalf.

God's acceptance of us in Christ redefines what is clean or unclean. In other words, the Gospel provides a new freedom in our behavior, as we are accepted by grace and not specific behaviors. This freedom in Christ will lead Christians to a variety of opinions regarding which everyday decisions are most honoring to God. Paul's goal here is that Christians not condemn one another because of their disagreements. Disagreements between brothers and sisters in Christ can be appropriate, but we should never judge or condemn one another for our respective convictions.

Paul commands both parties **not to elevate human opinions above our unity in Christ**. We must not judge or despise. When we sense the Holy Spirit giving us personal convictions and preferences, let's avoid forcing our views onto others in the body. If our freedoms and practices cause others in the body to stumble, may we be willing to lovingly set aside our freedom and abstain (14:15). As verses 18–19 explain, followers of Christ are not to allow rules about food or human opinion to come before honoring and worshiping Him, or cause division between those for whom He sacrificed Himself. For example, Christians can hold different opinions about worship styles, political involvement, financial commitments, or education choices. These decisions are important and should be made from a place of faith in Christ, but Christians can come to different personal conclusions without losing fellowship with each other.

Paul's words urge us to examine our convictions. Are our convictions truly from the Lord? Or are we clinging to cultural practices and preferences as a form of self-righteousness? Even with the best of intentions, no human culture gains more direct favor with God. Paul wants readers to know that Jesus is the only way to obtain righteousness. And when our convictions are rooted in Christ—in God's Word and our love for others—the church can, and will, be unified.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question **before** your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 14:1–23 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

- 1.) Circle all the instances where Paul refers to God in Romans 14, including words such as “*God*,” “*the Lord*,” and “*Christ*.”

- 2.) Highlight any Old Testament quotations in Romans 14. Where are they from? Go back and read those verses in their Old Testament context.

- 3.) Underline each time you see words related to “*honor*,” “*thanks*,” or “*give thanks*” in Romans 14:1–7. In what specific ways is Paul encouraging readers to “*honor*” or “*give thanks*”?

- 4.) Where do you see sets of opposites in Romans 14:1–23 such as “*weak*” and “*strong*” or “*living*” and “*dead*”? List out the verses where you see these contrasting words.

Observation

5.) What does it mean to be “*weak*” and “*strong*” in the context of Romans 14?

6.) Why does Paul encourage his audience to avoid a judgmental attitude?

7.) Read Isaiah 45:23–25 and summarize it in one or two sentences. How does this passage help Paul reinforce what he is saying in Romans 14?

8.) According to the context of Romans 14:5–9, what does it mean to live and die “*for the Lord*” (14:8), and why should we do it?

Application

9.) Romans 14 raises an important idea—the freedom we all have in Christ allows for differences of opinion in many instances. What are some areas where Christians can agree to disagree?

10.) What are some ways you have discouraged others in the body and “*torn down*” the work of God (14:20), even if it was unintentional. What are some practical steps you can take to “*build up*” someone with whom you disagree on a particular issue (14:19)?

11.) How can you and your connect group listen well to each other and honor the Lord in areas where you might have differences of opinion? (*Possible areas of discussion could include worship styles, political affiliations, drinking, financial commitments, education choices, or other preferences.*)

12.) How could Romans 14 impact conversations with your One? Does your One see your life as one ruled by Jesus and his righteousness?

[illegible]

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 14:1–23

Read Romans 14:1–23

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Reflect on how Jesus is the only perfect, all-knowing, and gracious Judge (14:9–12). Praise Him as the One who has died for both the Jew and the Gentile (14:9, 14).
- **Confession:** Admit that we do not always act out of faith (14:5, 9, 22–23). Confess to God the ways that you have tried to stand in His place as judge over others (14:3, 10–12, 22). Confess that we often toil to produce righteousness in ourselves and others rather than resting in what God has provided for us (14:14, 17).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for Jesus. Thank Jesus for being the only Lord and only Judge over the dead and the living (14:8–12). Praise Him for being gracious to us, even if we act out of personal opinions (14:1, 3, 18; 15:7). Finally, thank Him for being our righteousness and leading us into repentance.
- **Supplication:** Ask God to help us rest in His righteousness and remind us that any effort to please him on our own will always fall short. Ask the Lord to give you His power to make decisions out of faith in order to give Him all the glory (14:6). Ask God to lead you in compassion, humility, and grace as you meet others for whom He died and who may have different opinions than you (14:8–9). Ask God to continuously remind us that He is the gracious Judge, and we are not—nor should we try to be.

SERMON NOTES:

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Week Four: [Romans 15:1–13]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“For I say that Christ became a servant of the circumcised on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises to the fathers, and so that Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy.”
- Romans 15:8–9a (CSB)

Key Principles

- Our motivation for living lives of relational harmony comes from the example Christ set for us with his life and ministry.
- Whatever differences could separate us, Christ’s example teaches us to prioritize our oneness in him above our cultural, ethnic, or demographic differences.
- We are called to invite others into our community as we praise our God for his mercy to us all and practice the unity that only the gospel can create.

Read

In Romans 15:1–13, we see a clear example of the integral relationship between theology and daily living. Paul’s purpose in writing Romans is so much more than a long, theological description of God’s redemptive plan. All along, one of Paul’s primary points in writing Romans was to make sure that the Jews and people from any other ethnicity could understand how to worship God together. To do this, Paul had to explain many misconceptions about salvation and righteousness along the way. But he waded through heavy theological statements to make sure we knew this: We are all objects of the same mercy. Both Jews and Gentiles needed mercy, and God made a single way for both groups to receive mercy—in Jesus Christ. God’s plan of salvation culminates when Christ died and rose again. In His crucifixion and resurrection, Christ achieved God’s righteousness **for us** and united God’s people under His sacrifice. Paul unpacks such thoughts in Romans 15:1–13.

Paul’s exhortation here continues some important themes that we saw in chapter 14 and our previous study of Romans 9–11. Romans 15:1 summarizes the previous chapter with the encouragement that the strong in the faith have to bear with the weak. Both chapters 14 and 15 demand that Christians should be welcoming to the weak because this is how God has treated everyone in Christ. Furthermore, once we are in the same faith community together, our stance toward each other should then be to encourage one another and pursue peace in our relationships. For this reason, we should not spend our time passing judgment on one another, as Paul describes in chapter 14, but rather spend our time glorifying God with one voice (15:6).

Paul says that our motivation for living lives of relational harmony comes from the example Christ set for us with His life and ministry. He describes what Christ did in showing us God’s mercy, as we see in Chapter 15:

- Christ did not live for his own comfort. Instead, he suffered for the sake of God’s glory (15:3; cf. Psalm 69:9).
- Christ welcomed all of us (15:7).
- Christ became a servant to the Jewish people (15:8), and He also brought Gentiles into God’s family(15:9–12).

Paul urges us to have the same mindset when we approach the church. Whatever differences could separate us, Christ's example teaches us to prioritize our **oneness** in Him above our cultural, ethnic, or demographic differences. Paul never minimized the important differences between ethnic Jews and Gentiles. In fact, recall that Paul cherished the very qualities that make Jews unique in Romans 9. Our ethnic heritage is something that God has given to us, and it is something that we should use to glorify Him. And yet, our identity in Christ is so glorious that it transcends our important cultural and ethnic heritages.

Christ's salvation gives common ground to Christians of all types because we all are recipients of the same hope and mercy. Christ's sacrifice doesn't just encourage us to tolerate others "*in the name of Jesus*," it actually gives us a supernatural unity in Christ as brothers and sisters in the family of God—a bond stronger than any other bond on earth. Through Christ, God has made us a part of His eternal family. Church is more than attending a weekend event together; we are members of the same family, today and every day!

This unity in Christ has been the underlying motivation for much of Paul's theology in Romans. Throughout Romans 1–11, Paul demonstrated how the Jews and Gentiles had a singular hope, glorious future, and supernatural unity through Jesus Christ. Paul now quotes some familiar Old Testament passages to show that unity in Christ has always been God's goal in salvation (Romans 15:8–12). To do this, Paul returns to the same sections of Scripture that He's relied upon to support previous statements about salvation, law, faith, and the Spirit. First, Paul returns to Deuteronomy 28–33, where Moses says that the law cannot produce righteousness. Likewise, the law can't truly bring together diverse peoples. Then, Paul returns to Isaiah 7–11, which predicts the Messiah who will bring the righteous rule that we need. Lastly, Paul returns to the Psalms where faith, forgiveness, and praise for a righteous God abound. Each of these Old Testament quotations anticipates a day when people of all nations will worship God together. Even books written to and about the Jews point to this incredible vision of the nations coming together in worshiping God.

In Romans 15:1–13, Paul summarizes the hope of the Old Testament in this way: Jesus the Messiah came to the Jews, fulfilling God’s promise of a Savior—for the Jews and the nations—and uniting all people(s) in praise for God’s mercy. Romans 15:8 says that Christ became a servant to the Jews (“*the circumcised*”), which had implications for Jews, Gentiles, and even God’s character! Here’s what was accomplished by Christ’s service to the Jews:

- Everyone would see clearly that God is truthful and fulfills his promises.
- The Jews receive the promises they were waiting for since the time of the Patriarchs.
- The Gentiles now have a path to enter into God’s family.

God shows Himself to be righteous by fulfilling His promises. The Jews receive the fulfillment of all their hopes, expectations, and dreams—the coming King and kingdom. The Gentiles receive God’s mercy and are added into God’s family. This all leads to praise for a worthy God—praise that He deserves from all nations now unified as one people in Jesus Christ.

So, what is our role in this story? How can we apply these truths in our everyday lives? Romans 15:1–13 instructs us to love like Christ loved, welcome others the way Christ welcomed us home, show mercy to others according to what we have been shown by God, and abound in the hope that Christ’s salvation gives to us all. We are called to invite others into our community as we praise our God for His mercy to us all and practice the unity that only the Gospel can create.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question before your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul’s major points. Then, read Romans 15:1–13 in preparation for this week’s study.

- 1.) Circle the words and phrases in Romans 15:1–13 that are repeated from chapter 14.

- 2.) Highlight any Old Testament quotations in Romans 15:1–13. Where are they from? Go back and read those verses in their Old Testament context.

- 3.) Highlight the verses in Romans 15:1–13 that mention Christ as an example and make a list of Christ's actions.

- 4.) What actions does God accomplish in this passage? (Identify specifically what is accomplished by God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Also note what God accomplishes through his Word.)

Observation

5.) Explain the connection between Romans 15:1–13 and Romans 14.

6.) Why does Paul include so many Old Testament verses in Romans 15:1–13? What is he trying to teach the readers through these particular verses?

7.) How does Romans 15:1–13 teach us to overcome differences and live in the unity that Christ brings us?

8.) What do we learn about God's character from Romans 15:1–13?

Application

- 9.) What differences exist in Connection Church Rincon, and what steps can you take this week and this year to address those differences with the Gospel?
- 10.) Paul regularly cites the Old Testament throughout Romans, as we see in Romans 15:1–13. What have you learned about the message of the Old Testament from our study of the book of Romans?
- 11.) What are some tangible ways that you can build up others and be an encouragement to your neighbor as a response to the Gospel (15:2)?
- 12.) How can you reflect God’s character to others in your church/community in the coming weeks and months?

[illegible]

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This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 15:1–13

Read Romans 15:1–13

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Join Paul and the psalmist in praising God for the mercy that He has shown to you (15:9–13). Be amazed at the way God has fulfilled His promises to us in His salvation story throughout the generations (15:9). Glorify God because He is worthy of praise from every tribe, tongue, and nation.
- **Confession:** Confess to God the ways that you have torn down others in the church or simply failed to build others up (15:2). Confess to God the ways that you have deserved the reproach, punishment, and suffering that He actually received for you in your place (15:3). Ask for forgiveness for the ways that you have cultivated division in your church and family instead of working for harmony (15:5).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for welcoming us into his family (15:7). Thank Christ for bearing the punishment that we deserved so that we can stand without condemnation (15:3). Thank God for uniting us as one people who would praise His name forever (15:9–12).
- **Supplication:** Ask God to produce and protect unity in our church. Pray against specific challenges that hinder unity in our body. Pray also for more worshipers to be added to God's family. Pray for specific opportunities to share the Gospel of God's mercy with others in your community.

SERMON NOTES:

Scripture References:

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Week Five: [Romans 15:14-33]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“Therefore I have reason to boast in Christ Jesus regarding what pertains to God.” - Romans 15:17 (CSB)

Key Principles

- Paul was eager to fulfill his mission because the assignment was given by the God he loved.
- People are the mission.
- Like Paul, we are called to love God deeply, do whatever it takes to reach all people, care for our local church, and support other Christians who share in this ministry.

Read

Paul's desires fueled his ministry. After all, Paul had personal motivations for writing Romans, as this is a letter to people he cared about deeply (Romans 15:14–16:27)! This week's study of Romans 15:14–33 demonstrates that Paul's ministry was motivated by three loves—a love for God, a love for unbelievers, and a love for his brothers and sisters in Christ.

First, Paul's ministry flows out of his love for God; he was eager to fulfill his mission because the assignment was given by the God he loved. The calling Paul received from God (Acts 9) defined all the activity of his life **after that moment**. God's call on Paul's life would motivate Paul to travel the world, stand up to potentially violent opposition, take risky journeys, and change his vocation from Pharisee to missionary and church planter. And the vision Paul received in Acts 9 was just the beginning of an ongoing relationship with God in Christ. So, when Paul needed guidance, he continually looked to the Holy Spirit and God's written Word (Romans 15:21; Isaiah 52:15).

Paul's love for God can also be seen through Paul's confident and enthusiastic tone in Romans 15:16–23. In verses 16–17, Paul speaks of his ministry as an offering to God and something he can be proud of in God's sight. What is it that allows him to make such audacious claims without being inappropriately boastful? It's simple: Paul knows that all of the glory belongs to Christ! Paul has been a faithful vessel. It is the Gospel of Christ that has power to save, not any of Paul's words or deeds added to Christ's work. Here is what is encouraging for us: As believers, we also have access to the same power through the Holy Spirit. This means that we can have the same boldness in sharing the Gospel with our families, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. We can stand confidently on God's power to reach the nations, just as Paul did!

Second, Paul's ministry included a genuine love for the unreached. Paul loved the Roman church, but his commitment to share the Gospel with the unreached prevented him from visiting Rome on many occasions (15:22–23). Paul loved non-Christians so much that he pleaded with them, changed his plans for them, and faced persecution so that they would hear and be saved. Paul's ministry calling to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles meant that Paul dedicated his time, treasure and talent to "*preach the gospel where Christ has not been named*" (15:20). Paul's ministry featured an obvious concern for the unreached.

Third, Paul's ministry displayed a deep love for other Christians. In Romans 15:14 & 30, Paul calls the church in Rome his "*brothers*"—an inclusive term that meant both brothers and sisters. We see Paul's love displayed for the Roman church in his longing to visit them (15:23) and how he hopes to see them (15:24). He desires to serve them (15:24, 32). He affirms the Roman church's growth in their faith (15:14), he enjoys their company (15:24), and he is refreshed by them (15:32). Paul may be remembered for being a great theologian and missionary, but Romans 15:14–33 shows us what we see elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 20:17–38)—Paul loved his fellow Christians deeply. And he understood that people are the mission.

Paul tried to pass on this love for the family of God to the churches he founded. Paul hopes that his legacy includes care and concern for healthy relationships between Jews and Gentiles in the local church (Romans 9–11; 14:1–15:13). ***He believes the church should be marked by a genuine love and concern for each other*** (Romans 12:9–21). But here in Romans 15:14–33, this genuine love takes on a new dimension—Paul asks that believers from different regions to *contribute financially* to help Christians with physical needs. To do this, Paul uses the language of "*blessing*."

Those who have received the spiritual blessings of the Gospel should seek ways to be generous towards their brothers and sisters in Christ, even going so far as to say that the believers in Macedonia and Achaia "*owe it to them*" (15:27 ESV). What does Paul mean by "*owe*"? The apostles from the church in Jerusalem strengthened Gentile churches through their ministry and spiritual edification. So, when the Jerusalem church experienced famine, it was appropriate for the Gentile churches to provide financial gifts (material blessing), when they had been recipients of spiritual gifts. In essence, Paul is saying that those who have benefited from the spiritual blessings of others should be generous with material gifts as well.

Like Paul, we are called to love God deeply, do whatever it takes to reach all people, care for our local church, and support other Christians who share in this ministry. The Gospel transforms us into people who are burdened for our families, neighbors, friends, and the nations who have never heard or believed. When we were spiritually needy, God did not withhold from us and bestowed upon us the greatest of all gifts—granting us salvation in Christ and restoration with God. As a people who received a generous gift when we were in need, the Gospel motivates us to joyfully meet the needs of others, whether the need is physical or spiritual. The same Gospel and the same ministry of Paul has been given to all those in Christ.

Paul's love for others in his ministry presents several challenges to us. Church leaders, do we study theology to serve people in the church? Connect groups, do we weep and pray for each other in hard times? Do we share joy, refresh each other, and build each other up? Christians, do we schedule our time in ways that allow us to talk to God and fulfill the specific roles He has given us in His mission? Is our evangelism motivated by a genuine care and concern for others? May our lives be devoted to relationships the way that Paul's was: radically oriented to loving God, the church, and the unreached.

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question **before** your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 15:14–33 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

- 1.) Underline the phrases in Romans 15:14–33 that describe Paul’s ministry.
- 2.) Circle the phrases in Romans 15:14–33 that indicate how Paul feels about the Roman church.
- 3.) Paul expresses his desires for local churches in Romans 12–16. According to Romans 15:14–33, what does Paul hope will happen in and among churches?
- 4.) Highlight any Old Testament quotations in Romans 15:14–33. Where are they from? Go back and read those verses in their Old Testament context.

Observation

- 5.) In Romans 15:16, Paul says, “*My purpose is that the Gentiles may be an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*” How would you explain this sentence in your own words?
- 6.) Paul claims, “*I have reason to be proud of my work for God*” (15:17). In other New Testament passages, Paul gives warnings about boasting in anything except the Lord (Romans 3:27; 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17). Why might it be appropriate for him to boast of his ministry here in Romans 15:17?
- 7.) In Romans 15:21, Paul paraphrases Isaiah 52:15 (*with a slight change*). Go back and read Isaiah 52:7–53:12. How is Isaiah’s prophecy fulfilled, and what is Paul’s role in this fulfillment?
- 8.) Christians in Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution to the church in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26–27). These verses also say that the churches “*are indebted to*” the believers in Jerusalem. Why does Paul ask Gentile Christians to contribute to the needs of the Jerusalem church?

Application

- 9.) Romans 15:14–33 teaches us about Paul’s ministry and the way he viewed it as a gift given to him by God. How is God calling you to minister the Gospel to others in this season of your life?
- 10.) Paul repeats the ideas that he’s proud of the work he’s done for the gospel (15:17) and that he’s fulfilled the ministry to which he has been called (15:17–19). What would it look like for you to say you were proud of your ministry as Paul was?
- 11.) In Romans 15:14–33, the actions of Paul’s ministry (*efforts to share the gospel verbally and in his writings*) spring from his desires—love for God and love for those he is serving in ministry. What would it look like for you to make love for God and love for others the biggest priority in your life and ministry?
- 12.) How do the ideas Paul presents in Romans 15:14–33 encourage us to live a generous lifestyle? In response to Romans 15:14–33, how is God leading you to be generous with your time, talent, and treasure?

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Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 15:14–33

Read Romans 15:14–33

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because He is the God of peace, and He will overcome the chaos in the world when He brings His peace filled kingdom (15:33). Praise God because He is the One who hears our prayers. He is transcendent and yet near enough to hear our individual concerns (15:30).
- **Confession:** Paul has written boldly to the Romans to establish their faith firmly in the truth of the Gospel and to challenge them to live out their faith with integrity. Confess to the Lord the times you have missed the opportunity to preach the gospel to others (15:20, 31). Confess your lack of boldness due to fear, misplaced priorities, or whatever else has kept you from speaking truth.
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that the power to save is His alone. Thank Him that He accomplishes the task of salvation through our words and deeds, but that the power rests with His Spirit (15:17–19).
- **Supplication:** The believers in Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to contribute to the poor in Jerusalem, understanding that they “owed” material blessings to those who had been the means of their spiritual blessings in Christ and the Gospel. Ask God to show you whom He has placed in your life that you can bless with the Gospel. Ask Him for the boldness to speak and share. Ask for His power to change the heart of your One to repent and believe in the Gospel.

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Week Five: [Romans 16:1-27]

Key Verses *(Spend time trying to memorize this verse this week.)*

“Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept silent for long ages but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God to advance the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles — to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ — to him be the glory forever! Amen.” - Romans 16:25–27 (CSB)

Key Principles

- No one grows in the Gospel by themselves.
- The unity and equality we have in the body of Christ transcends that which would otherwise divide us.

Read

Most readers of Romans typically pick up the pace once they reach Romans 16. After all, it begins with a list of names, which are not only difficult to read but also can seem boring and irrelevant to our spiritual life today. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Consider, for instance, that Paul did not merely list names. He listed names with history and with meaning. Prisca and Aquila risked their necks for Paul (16:4). Mary worked hard for the Roman believers (16:6). Andronicus and Junia were people who the apostles themselves mentioned with reverent awe (16:7). Rufus' mother was so dear to Paul that she was like a mother to him (16:13).

Leading this list is a woman named Phoebe. Phoebe was Paul's benefactor (16:2), an honored role in the ancient world, which refers to someone who commissioned and funded the work of a specialist. In this case, Phoebe funded Paul's ministry as a missionary. In addition to her role as Paul's patron, Phoebe was also the one entrusted with the actual letter to the Romans. The text of Romans 16 does not mention this directly, but commentators throughout church history acknowledge this point. As such, consider the trust Paul must have had in Phoebe. The greatest letter ever written was brought to the Romans not by Paul's hand but by Phoebe's. Consider too the weighty privilege Phoebe bore. Paul may have written the book of Romans, but Phoebe was the first to read it out loud to the Roman believers. These names in Romans 16 must not be glossed over. Paul's use of these names reminds us of several important truths.

The first thing that we can understand from this list is that no one grows in the Gospel by themselves. The Apostle Paul was Christianity's most effective missionary and most influential theologian. And yet, even he recognized that his journey of faith was a group effort. There is no sense of "*lone ranger Christianity*" here, nor even an echo of bravado or pride. As Paul closes his letter, he is overcome with how profoundly he has been helped by others. If this was true of Paul, how much more is this true of us? This should be an encouragement for us to reflect on the people that have helped us along in our journey with Christ.

As we've discussed in previous studies, unity has been a key subject for Paul. We see this even in Paul's list of names. The unity and equality we have in the body of Christ transcends that which would otherwise divide us. In this list are rich and poor believers alike, Jews and Gentiles, men and women. Drawing together people from various backgrounds has never been easy, and in the Roman world of the first century, diversity like this was nearly unthinkable. Only the Gospel could unite these women and men. Paul makes a striking display of the Gospel's power by grouping these individuals together. The Gospel has this same power for us today, and it is the only power that can create this type of unity.

Paul's assumptions about what makes a person valuable differ greatly from our own. Paul gives relatively little detail about the names here, and for most of the people in this list, the rest of the New Testament gives no other information. Yet the little that Paul chooses to mention (*or, rather, not mention*) is telling. We know nothing at all about the physical appearance of any of them. We are not given their job titles. We are not even told about their ministry successes. Instead, we are invited to think about their devotion to God and to one another. For Paul, nothing else seemed to matter. This greatly affects how we view others. We must elevate, as Paul did, one's identity in Christ above all, not their accomplishments.

The last thing we can learn from this list is that believers are to love one another. To greet someone is to know them (Romans 16:16; cf. 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). Here is Paul, authoring Scripture itself, traveling the world in an effort to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth—and still not too busy to learn, remember, and mention the names of those who loved him well. For Paul, greeting someone by their name was not just polite. It was a way of saying, "*I know you, I see you, and I love you.*" After all, this is how God has responded to us in the Gospel. In Christ, God has known us, seen us, and loved us unconditionally and eternally. All Scripture is from the mouth of the Lord. Because of this, there is so much to learn about Him and the way He works, even in a list of names!

Paul shows that the people of God are to be known by their love. We are the people who know one another's struggles and choose compassion rather than judgment. As people called by the name of Christ, we are called to display a love like his as we are transformed to become more like him. Having learned this love from Christ—being a people called by His very name—we display a love like His in response to the love He's shown to us.

And that's where Paul fittingly ends the letter. Paul's words of praise in 16:25–27 connect to Paul's introduction to the letter in 1:1–7. Paul repeats some ideas in both sections to reinforce the significance of three themes. First, the Gospel has been God's plan all along, stretching all the way back to the Old Testament writings. Paul even referenced Genesis 3:15 and made explicit how Jesus is fulfilling it in the Gospel (Romans 16:20). Second, the plan of God's salvation extends to all nations, making a way for Jews and Gentiles to be part of the same family. Third, the Gospel teaches an obedience of faith, which Paul has been explaining in Romans 12–16. This phrase "*obedience of faith*" means that our motivation to honor God with our actions flows from our gratitude of what He's done through the Gospel, not from a desire to earn His approval. We build each other up in the faith through love, service, and unity, all of which we learn from Jesus' example.

That's Paul's wonderful and concise summary of the Gospel in Romans: Through the sacrifice of Jesus, our righteous God made a way of salvation for all nations.

To God be the glory!

Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question **before** your weekly Connect Group meeting. Then, when you gather with your Connect Group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 16:1–27 in preparation for this week's study.

Scripture

1.) Highlight Paul's commands in Romans 16:16–19.

2.) Circle the promises that Paul makes in Romans 16:17–27.

3.) Highlight any Old Testament quotations in Romans 16:17–27. Where are they from? Go back and read those verses in their Old Testament context.

4.) Compare Romans 16:25–27 with the opening of the book, specifically Romans 1:1–6. What similarities do you see? What themes from Romans 16:25–27 have been common themes in the entire book of Romans?

Observation

- 5.) Look at the list of names Paul mentions in Romans 16:1–16. How many of these are men and how many are women? What significance do you think this has for the church today?

- 6.) Look at the list of names Paul mentions in Romans 16:1–16, this time focusing on the qualities Paul attributes to them. How does **what** Paul finds commendable differ from the values we tend to celebrate in our society today, even in the church?

- 7.) Why is the false teaching (16:17) from those who practice “*smooth talk and flattering words*” (16:18) so dangerous? How can separating from these people and avoiding them (16:17) preserve unity?

- 8.) As we are at the end of the book, what are some passages in Romans that help us understand the relationship between faith and obedience? How would you summarize the relationship between faith and obedience in one sentence?

Application

- 9.) Paul ended his letter with an extended “thank you” to all the people who had helped him grow in the gospel. Who has been essential in your spiritual journey, and how were they used by God in your life? (For example: Who first shared the gospel with you? Who taught you to read the Bible? Who encouraged you in difficult times? Who are the mothers and fathers and older brothers and sisters, the family of faith, that have loved you?)
- 10.) What are some practical ways you can protect “*the hearts of the unsuspecting*” from deceit (16:18)? What are ways you can prevent yourself from becoming a person who causes division through false teaching?
- 11.) Romans 16 displays a beautiful picture of unity among diverse members in the body of Christ, as brothers and sisters in the church—from various backgrounds—greet each other in Christ’s name. How does this unity in the body of Christ bring God glory? What next steps can you and your small group take to promote this type of unity in the church?
- 12.) What are ways you are tempted to perceive obedience to God’s commands as contrary to faith in God? What are ways you can grow in faith that leads you to obedience to God?

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Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home and together with your Connect Group.

This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 16:1–27

Read Romans Romans 16:1–27

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Adore the eternal God, that He is beyond time and lives forever (16:26). Praise God because He is wise and the source of all wisdom (16:27), all knowledge, and all that is true. Worship God because He is the God of peace, rest, and order (16:20). Thank Him that He is the One who offers that peace to us in Christ.
- **Confession:** Confess to God ways that you have wandered from the doctrine you have been taught (16:17). Ask the Spirit of God to reveal any ways your words or actions have caused unnecessary division for others in the body of Christ. Confess to God the ways that you choose to serve your own selfish appetites, desires, or interests instead of serving our Lord Jesus Christ (16:18).
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God by name for all the people who shared the Gospel with you, have helped you grow in your faith, partnered with you in ministry, and brought you through difficult times (16:3–15). Thank Jesus that He is the God of all comfort and for motivating the rest of His church to edify one another.
- **Supplication:** Ask God to give us the desire to connect with others in a way that reflects the love of Christ. Ask God that our churches would be known for their genuine love (Romans 12:9). Ask God for strength where you need it today (16:25). Ask God to give you the joy to walk in faith and be obedient to His Word (16:26).

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