

## **Study of Romans**

**By**

**Steve Puckett**

<http://web.mac.com/smpuckster/Site/Blog/Blog.html>

### **Study Guide Resources**

*The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness* by A. Katherine Grief

*Romans* by Robert Jewett

*Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* by Luke Timothy Johnson

*Paul for Everyone Romans: Part One* by Tom Wright

*Romans: God's Good News for the World* by John Stott

*Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership* by Sarah Sumner

*Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

*New Revised Standard Version*

## **Lesson 1 - Romans 1:1-17**

1. How does Paul describe himself in this text or introduce us to his story?
2. What do you think Paul means to communicate by these descriptions?
3. What words would you use to describe your relationship with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit?
4. Why was Paul anxious to visit the saints in Rome?
5. Why should we read a letter addressed to someone else about their issues?
6. What is Paul's purpose statement in these opening verses of Romans?
7. Does Paul give a definition of "gospel" in any of his other letters?
8. This first chapter focuses on the story of Paul's apostolic call. Think about the importance of telling our stories and hearing each others' stories. What stories have shaped your life and your deepest

convictions? They may be your own story/stories or they may be stories you have heard and read.

9. When Paul tells his story, he is witnessing to the power of God that has changed every aspect of his life.

How has the power of God changed your life?

If you were to introduce yourself to a group of people who did not know you, what story or stories would you tell?

If you were to describe your church family to someone who had never visited there, what story or stories would best reflect the quality of your congregational life together?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

**Meditation:** In meditation, you seek a deeper, clearer, fuller understanding of God, yourself, and your world. With that purpose in mind, set aside a time to think carefully about what the Lord may be saying to you about your calling. Use Romans 1:1, 4, 14-17 for this meditation.

## **Lesson 2 - Romans 1:18-32**

1. What contrast does Paul present in Romans 1:17-18?
2. How would you define "righteousness" and "wrath?"
3. What is the dominant power in the world and what does it do to human beings?
4. Why are people without excuse when it comes to giving God his rightful place?
5. How can God's eternal power and divine nature be seen in creation?
6. What negative qualities lead people to reject God (not glorify Him)?
7. What is idolatry?
8. How does Isaiah argue against idolatry in Isaiah 44:9-20?

9. When people put something in God's place, refuse to give him glory, what danger do they face?
  
10. Describe what life is like when you worship something other than the true and living God.
  
11. What are some ways we can avoid sinful desires and shameful lusts?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Stillness: To be still is to withdraw for a season from your normal activities—work, play, conversation—so you can place yourself, alone and silent, in God's presence. As you wait there, gaining a "clinical distance" from the world, He begins to show you things from His perspective. This week as you place yourself in a silent place, think about those things in your life that you might be putting in God's rightful place. What are your "idols?" In this still, quiet moment, read Romans 1:18-32 and ask God to remove any foolish, futile, or dark thinking from your heart and to move you into the light of His truth.

## Lesson 3 - Romans 2:1-16

### Lesson Overview:

Be ready, because God's judgment is coming (2:16). Those who repent of their evil ways will receive glory, honor, peace, and eternal life while those who do evil, judge others and have stubborn, unrepentant hearts will receive wrath, anger, trouble and distress.

1. What happens to someone who has a judgmental attitude?
2. What is human judgment usually based on? What is God's judgment based on?
3. How would one show contempt for the riches of God's kindness, tolerance and patience?
4. What is the difference between a repentant heart and an unrepentant heart?
5. How would you explain 2:11 to someone who has a judgmental attitude?
6. Do you have any friends or acquaintances that are not believers, yet live lives that reflect values similar to what God wants from believers? How would you explain this situation?

How does Paul explain it?

7. Based on Romans 2:12-16, what does Paul say is really important to God in his relationship with human beings?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Reticence: Reticence is controlling your tongue by guarding your mouth. It's the habit of thinking before you speak, listening more than you talk, and restraining yourself from speaking your mind whenever silence would better serve the occasion. This week prayerfully consider how you might avoid passing judgment on others. Make at least one try at giving another person in your life the benefit of the doubt or giving someone a second, or perhaps, even third or fourth chance. Remember, a judgmental attitude brings self-condemnation as well as God's judgment (Romans 2:1, 3).

## Lesson 4 - Romans 2:17-29

### Lesson Overview:

In these verses Paul pops the balloon of Jewish pride and presumption. He anticipates an objection that Jews who followed the law would probably have – “We’re better than the Gentiles because of our favored position as God’s chosen people.” Paul writes about the law in verses 17-24 and about circumcision in verses 25-29. He insists that neither guarantees Jewish immunity to divine judgment. A “true Jew” is one who has a Spirit-transformed, humble heart not infected with human pride.

1. Who is Paul speaking to in these verses?
2. What qualities make up the “superiority” complex that Paul describes in 2:17-20?
3. Isn’t it very true that we always see the faults of others and rarely notice our own? What questions does Paul have for those who are supposed to be mature followers of God?
4. In 2:24, Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:22? Why does Paul quote these Old Testament texts?
5. How do verses 17-24 apply to us today?
6. What is circumcision and what was its significance to Jews?

7. What surprising revelation does Paul share about circumcision?
  
8. What kind of circumcision is Paul talking about in 2:25-29?
  
9. From our text today, what would you conclude is important to God?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Prayer: Prayer is conversation with God. Have a talk this week with God about your heart? Are you relying on your position of privilege as a son or daughter of God to build a pride filled heart? Do you find yourself judging others while committing some of the same kinds of sins that they commit? Use Luke 18:9-17 as a guide for your prayer thoughts. Ask God to give you a heart like the tax collector and a heart like a child.

## Lesson 5 - Romans 3:1-20

### Lesson Overview:

In these verses Paul does some explaining of what he means in chapter 2. He anticipates and answers possible objections to his arguments about Jews and Gentiles and their place or position in the world. These verses are a lead-in to his overall conclusion in 3:21-31 that we examine on March 9.

1. Last week, what did we say circumcision meant to the Jews?
2. What are the four questions and answers that Paul shares in 3:1-8?
  - 1-2
  - 3-4
  - 5-6
  - 7-8
3. What issues are at stake in Romans 3:1-8?
4. What can we learn from Romans 3:1-8 for our use today?
5. In 3:2, Paul asserts that there is much advantage to being a Jew, but here in 3:9 he concludes that Jews are not better than Gentiles. How would you explain this possible contradiction?

6. How does Paul show that all are “under sin” and what Old Testaments quotations does he use?
  
7. What is the “character” of sin?
  
8. What is Paul’s conclusion?
  
9. What does it mean for us?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Worship: Worship is single-hearted devotion (faithfulness, loyalty) to the one, true, living God. Romans 3:1-20 reminds us of the devastation of human sinfulness. What God has done to save us from our sinfulness should drive us to our knees in adoration and praise of him! Read Isaiah 6:1-7. Imagine yourself in the company of the seraphs as they praise God and see yourself in Isaiah’s place as God comes to him to purify him. Sing one of your favorite praise songs or hymns to God to thank him for purifying your soul in Jesus or pray a prayer of thanksgiving for cleansing from your sins.

## **Lesson 6 - Romans 3:21-31**

### Lesson Overview:

In our earlier studies of Romans we've read about the unrighteousness of some and the self-righteousness of others. We've discovered that both Jew and Gentile alike stand under the sentence of sin. Now Paul shares what is perhaps the most powerful "But Now!" ever spoken in Romans 3:21. It is a fresh revelation focusing on Christ and his cross.

1. What is the significance of the "but now" of verse 21?
2. What is the righteousness from God that has been made known?
3. To whom does God offer his righteousness – how does it come?
4. What proof does Paul offer for the equality of all human beings?
5. How are we justified (put right with God) and what makes it possible?
6. What is redemption – what does it mean?
7. What does "sacrifice of atonement" mean?
8. What two qualities of God led him to offer Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement, "a propitiation?"

9. What leads religious people to boast?
10. How does Paul say that boasting is excluded (defeated)?
11. How has God defeated boasting in your life?
12. Paul says that by faith we uphold the law. What does he mean?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

**Stability:** Stability is the discipline of staying put when we ought to stay put. It's a willingness to work with the situation God has given us rather than always coveting another situation we think would be better. It's also a refusal to run from our problems. One of the lessons you can take from this lesson is the power of faith to bring stability to your life. Without God and trust (faith) in God, life is chaos and confusion. Spend some time reflecting on the personal impact Romans 3:23 has on your life. Offer a prayer to God and ask him to help you to deal decisively by faith with any problems in your life that might be tempting you to run away from these problems.

## Lesson 7 - Romans 4:1-12

### Lesson Overview:

Read and review Genesis 12-17 to better understand Paul's discussion of Abraham and his faith. In Romans 4, Paul uses both Abraham and David to explain the idea of "justification by faith." He shows how justification by faith was proclaimed in the Old Testament. Also, he explains how Abraham by faith is father to both Jewish believers and Gentile believers.

1. What promise did Abram (Abraham) believe that was credited to him as righteousness?
2. Why did Abraham have to have faith to believe this promise?
3. What argument and what Scripture quotation does Paul use to support his statement about Abraham's faith?
4. What promise must you believe to have your faith credited as righteousness?
5. What is the power of Paul's argument in Romans 4:9-12?
6. What does Paul's argument do to our human ideas about justification?

7. What about Romans 4:1-12 would be a challenge to most believers?
  
8. What encouraging word or words can you take from this text of Scripture?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Gratitude: Gratitude is to live with a grateful heart and to be aware of God's work in your life and all the abundant resources he gives you. This week's lesson reminds us of how much we have been blessed by God because he has made us right with him in spite of our sin. This week begin each day by saying "thank you" to God for at least one thing. Tell God what that one thing means to you. This week practice abstaining from statements about what you don't have. Instead give thanks for what you do have. Write a letter of thanks to someone who has touched your life in the past year.

## Lesson 8 - Romans 4:13-25

### Lesson Overview:

Paul continues his illustration in the life of Abraham of how we are made right in God's sight by faith and how Abraham is the spiritual father of all believers.

1. How do we know that Abraham and his offspring did not receive God's promise through the law?
2. In Genesis, God promises Abraham the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:7) as an inheritance for him and his descendants so how is Abraham to be the heir of the world?
3. Why is law excluded as a possible way to receive God's promise?
4. How is Abraham "the father of us all?"
5. In what kind of God did Abraham believe?
6. What do we know from the story of Abraham in Genesis that lets us in on what Paul meant by "against all hope, Abraham in hope believed?"

7. What happened when Abraham believed in God's power to do what he promised?
  
8. How does Paul connect us to Abraham?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Worship: Worship is single-hearted devotion (faithfulness, loyalty) to the one, true, living God. Reflect this week on how God has blessed you by crediting you with righteousness. Consider the sacrifice God had to make for you to receive this promise. Set aside a few moments to offer God your praise in worship to him. Revelation 4:11 and Hebrews 12:28-29 are two scriptures you can use to help you with this worshipful praise.

## Lesson 9 - Romans 5:1-11

### Lesson Overview:

So far in Romans, Paul has explained the need for humans to be made right with God (justification) in 1:18–3:20. He has explained the way to be made right with God in 3:21-4:25. He now describes the fruit of being made right with God. This fruit includes six blessings for all whom God has made right.

1. What is the first fruit that being made right with God by faith brings?

5:1

2. What does it mean to have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ – what does it mean for you in your life?

3. What is the second fruit that being right with God produces?

5:2a

4. What does it mean to stand in grace?

5. What third fruit does Paul mention?

5:2b

6. How is Christian hope different from the hope in the world?

7. What is the fourth fruit of being made right with God?

5:3-8

8. What is the fifth fruit of being made right with God?

5:9-10

9. What is the final fruit of being made right with God?

5:11

10. How does Romans 5:1-11 give you encouragement?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Meditation: In the discipline of meditation, we seek a deeper, clearer, fuller understanding of God, ourselves, and our world. In short, we seek *wisdom*. With that purpose in mind, set aside some time to think carefully about what the Lord may be saying to you through your study of Romans.

What new things have you learned about God and about yourself in the last month?

What positions have you rethought and changed your mind about in the last few weeks? What does this say about you and your journey?

Who do you know who exemplifies a person with a teachable heart?

How do you respond when you hear an opinion you don't agree with?

Take a moment and ask God to give you a teachable heart.

## Lesson 10 - Romans 5:12-21

### Lesson Overview:

Romans 5:12-21 describes how Christ's life defines the future destiny of believers just as Adam's life defined the future of his descendants. The primary goal of the passage is not to set forth a doctrine of Adam's sin, but to demonstrate the overflowing dominion of grace (5:15-17, 20-21) in the life of all believers (5:17-19, 21).

1. How far back can you trace your family tree? What do you know about your descendants, for good or bad?
2. While one class member reads 5:12-21 think about this question: What significant comparison does Paul make in this reading?
3. According to Paul how did sin and death enter the world?
4. How is it that we are sinners because Adam was a sinner?
5. What was the significance of sin and death entering the world?
6. Make a comparison chart of Adam and Christ from Romans 5.

Adam

Christ

Verse 15

Verse 16

Verse 17

Verse 18

Verse 19

7. What is the purpose of the law?
8. What is the purpose of God's grace gift?
9. What is the relationship of sin and grace to those who believe?

## Lesson 11 - Romans 6:1-14

### Lesson Overview:

Paul speaks clearly in Romans 6:1-14 that the appropriate response to someone who sins IS NOT (*may it never be* in the Greek Text), "That's fine, God loves you!" Your baptism reminds you that you are no longer living in the death grip of sin, but in the new life of Christ. You are now an instrument of God, not a slave to sin.

1. What statement in Romans 5:20 leads Paul to offer the question, "Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?"
2. What picture does Paul use to show that we are not to live in sin?
3. What act is a picture of our union with Christ?
4. What promise is given to us in 6:5, 8?
5. How does this promise encourage you?
6. What important meaning is given to Christ's resurrection from the dead?
7. Paul shows that baptism's power is in what \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, not what \_\_\_\_\_.

8. Why does Paul say you should not let sin reign in your mortal (physical) bodies?
  
9. How do you avoid letting sin be “king” of your life?
  
10. In this text Paul addresses one of the most common misunderstandings in the Christian community—God loves us and forgives us no matter how we live. What can you do on a daily basis to avoid this kind of cheapening of God’s grace?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Humility: Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. Humble people let go of image management and self-promotion. They honor others by making the others’ needs as real and important as their own. To be humble is to become like Jesus in your willingness to choose the hidden way of love rather than the way of power. What have you learned so far in your study of Romans that would lead you to the path of humility? This week seek to make the needs of another person in your life as real and important as your own.

## Lesson 12 - Romans 6:15-23

### Lesson Overview:

Romans 6:15-23 is all about whose slave you are, sin or obedience. Obeying God frees you from the slavery of sin and puts you in his service.

1. If you could have any job, what would it be and why?

2. What are the "grace" parts of your current job?

What are the "law" parts of your current job?

3. Is it possible to be a slave to no one? Why?

4. What question is Paul answering in this text?

5. Compare the two types of slavery in these verses.

<u>Sin</u>	Verse	<u>Obedience</u>
	16	
	19	
	21-23	

6. In your own words why is obedience superior to sin?
  
7. How can we encourage "obedience" living as opposed to "sinful" living?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Solitude: Solitude is giving God time and space that is not in competition with social contact, noise or stimulation. Solitude is sometimes referred to as a "container" discipline, that is, solitude provides time for one to practice other disciplines like prayer and Bible study. Practicing solitude includes taking a retreat, abstaining from constant interaction with others, information and activities, communing with God alone while you walk or run by yourself, and/or practicing disciplines alone like study, prayer, searching your heart and conscience (often called examen), journaling, etc.

The fruits of solitude include freedom from the need to be occupied and stimulated, moving away from being squeezed into the world's mold (Romans 12:2), liberation from constantly living your life in reference to other people, quieting the internal noise so you can better listen to God, giving yourself time and space to internalize what you already know, speaking only what you hear from God rather than speaking out of your store of opinions, and/or including solitude and retreat as a part of your lifestyle.

Use solitude this week to read through the first 6 chapters of Romans. As you read ask God to open your heart and eyes to areas of your life where you are pleasing him and ask him to encourage you in these areas.

## Lesson 13 - Romans 7:1-6

### Lesson Overview:

Romans 7:1-6 compares a married woman who is bound to her husband by the law to bondage to sin that was exposed by the law. The husband's death brings freedom to the wife from her legal obligation to her husband. Our baptism, death to the law and the sin it exposes, frees us from the law through the death and resurrection of Jesus and enables us to serve God in the new way of the Spirit.

1. Paul uses an illustration from the law of marriage to show the change in our relationship to the law. In what ways are we like the wife in this illustration?
2. According to Paul why did we die to the law?
3. Does our death to the law free us for irresponsible and sinful behavior? Why?
4. What are the timeless truths in this text?
5. How do these timeless truths apply to your life?
6. Do you feel more "married" to the living Christ who frees you or to some "religious code" that reminds you how you have failed?
7. In your personal vineyard, what would "fruit to God" look like compared to "fruit to death"?

## **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Rule for Life: A rule for life offers unique and regular rhythms that free and open each person to the will and presence of Christ. The spiritual practices of a rule provide a way to partner with the Holy Spirit for personal transformation. A rule for life is a simple statement of the regular rhythms we choose in order to present our bodies to God as our "spiritual act of worship." Each rule, or rhythm, is a way we partner with God for the transformation only he can bring. Rules aren't a burdensome list of do's and don'ts. One of the early Christian rules for life is found in Acts 2:42. Here we find that believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." This rule shaped their lives and hearts in the circumstances they were in.

Some sample rules are: Dedicate every day (in the morning) for the glory of God. Confess my sins before I go to bed. Don't hold grudges—forgive others. Eat sensibly. Pray for others. Give all wandering thoughts to my Savior. Practice the presence of God.

Some questions to help you develop your own rule: 1. When and where do you feel closest to God? 2. What is most important to you? 3. What do you currently do to realize your goals and longings? Work? Study? Pray? Socialize? Diet? Work out? 4. What practices suit your daily, monthly and yearly rhythms and cycles? 5. Where do you want to change? 6. Choose several disciplines that arise from your desire for God's transforming work and that suit the limits and realities of your life. Begin your practice.

## Lesson 14 - Romans 7:7-25

### Lesson Overview:

The theme of Romans 7:7-25 is the human struggle with sin that continues even after one is made right with God. Paul explains in detail the role of law and sin in the human struggle.

1. Have three class members read Romans 7:7-25 out loud. (7:7-13; 7:14-20; 7:21-25)
2. What is the law?
3. What is sin?
4. What is the connection between the law and sin?  
7:8-11
5. When you sin can you rightfully say that the Devil or the law made you do it? Why or Why not?  
7:12
6. Is the law responsible for my death?  
7:13-17
7. What is the universal struggle of all believers?  
7:18-20
8. Describe the wretched condition that we are in?

7:21-24a

9. What is the solution to this wretched condition?

7:24b-25

10. What are some actions you can take to deal with this universal sin struggle?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Confession: Confession means to surrender my weaknesses and faults to the forgiving love of Christ and intentionally desire and practices that lead to transformation. Confession requires self-examination and letting the Holy Spirit open your heart to what is true about you. Confession accepts Christ's gift of forgiveness and restoration while setting you on a path to renewal and change.

Read these Scriptures: Psalm 139:23-24, Psalm 32:1-2, and James 5:16. Then admit to God your need to rationalize or deny your sin and your need to blame others for your sins. Examine the "sin network" in your life. What sins, weaknesses, self-centered habits do you need to confess or what relationships in your life need to be restored? Choose to replace sinful habits with healthy habits. Seek through prayer God's grace to change. Confess your sins specifically to God and to another person if necessary. If you would like, read Psalm 51 to get an example of a prayer of confession.

## Lesson 15 - Romans 8:1-17

### Lesson Overview:

Romans 8 makes clear that the Christian life is essentially life in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit breathes new life into, sustains, and directs the follower of Christ. Without the Holy Spirit true Christian discipleship would be impossible. Romans 8:1-17 describes the ministry of God's Spirit in liberating, indwelling, making right, leading, witnessing to and resurrecting the children of God.

1. When was the first time you remember being confronted with the reality of death? How did you respond?
2. How do Romans 5:1 and Romans 8:1 complement each other?
3. What does "no condemnation" mean to you? (v. 1) What words or phrases does this bring to mind?
4. What was the law unable to do? Why? (v. 3)
5. How did God accomplish what the law was powerless to do? (v. 3-4)
6. Compare the two kinds of lives that Paul describes

<u>Life in the Sinful Nature</u>	Verse(s)	<u>Life in the Spirit</u>
Sinful Desires	5	Spiritual Desires
Death	6, 13	Life and Peace
Rebel against God	7, 8, 13	Sons and Daughters of God

7. These two ways of life characterize two classes of people. According to verses 9-10, what is the spiritual condition of those who are controlled by the sinful nature? Of those who are controlled by the Spirit?
8. According to verse 13, who is responsible for putting to death the misdeeds of the body?
9. In the context of this passage, what does it mean to be "led by the Spirit" (v. 14)?
10. What do you think it means to be an "heir of God"?
11. Is "putting to death the deeds of the body" a one-time event or a continual process?

What have you found helpful in putting to death sins that you find yourself committing again and again?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

**Prayer Walking:** Prayer walking is a way of physically walking with Jesus through places (hospitals, homes, businesses, churches, schools, playgrounds, housing projects, counties, etc) that you are concerned about. As you walk and pray, ask God to show himself in those places either through you or some event so that others might be blessed or their hearts opened to God's will. This discipline is all about seeking to see places through the eyes of Jesus as well as seeking God's vision for places and people who gather there. The verses below may give you a starting point.

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is

good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

## Lesson 16 - Romans 8:18-27

### Lesson Overview:

Romans 8:18-27 outlines God's plan of salvation for all of God's creation.

1. What kind of "present sufferings" does Paul have in mind here?

8:18 (See Romans 8:35)

What "glory" is he talking about?

(See 1 Corinthians 15:42-43; 1 John 3:2)

2. Who are the "sons of God"? How will they be revealed?

(See 1 Corinthians 15:49-54)

3. Paul pictures "the creation" looking forward with anticipation to the return of Christ and the revelation of the sons of God. What images does the Psalmist use to describe this time?

Psalm 96:10-13; 98:7-9

4. What effect will the revelation of the sons of God have on creation?

8:21

What will this look like?

5. How is the creation now subject to "frustration" and in bondage to "decay"?

8:20-21

Give examples.

How did this happen?

Genesis 1:26-28; 3:17-19

6. Paul mentions three kinds of "groaning" in this passage. For each one, identify the cause of the groaning, the one doing the groaning, and the hoped-for outcome.

**Cause**

**Who or What**

**Hope**

v. 22

v. 23

v. 26

7. How does the Holy Spirit help us in prayer?

8:26-27

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Care of the Earth: Caring for the earth is a way of expressing God's delight in his very good creation. As with every possession we have, we are stewards of God's creation. Christians are to exercise loving dominion over the earth that honors scriptural values and leaves future generations what they will need.

Psalm 24:1-2 The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.

Psalms 95:3-5 For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

For reflection: How does God view the resources you use? Where have you taken for granted God's good gifts in this world? Who goes without these gifts? What is God asking of you in regard to caring for His world?

This week consider one or more of these ideas. Walk or ride your bike where possible rather than drive your car. Recycle. Become conscious of the litter in the places where you work or live. Take a trash bag with you on a walk and pick up the litter along the road where you walk. Find out how you can get involved in your neighborhood or city with planting trees, flowers or other plants that help the environment.

## Lesson 17 - Romans 8:28-39

### Lesson Overview:

Romans 8 makes clear that the Christian life is essentially life in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit breathes new life into, sustains, and directs the follower of Christ. Without the Holy Spirit, true Christian discipleship would be impossible. Romans 8:28-39 is one of the most confident declarations of God's provision for and protection of the believer in the Bible.

1. How does God or the Spirit work all things for good?

Please note that the subject of the verb "works" should be the Spirit from verse 27 so that the translation would be "We know that for those who love God, it (the Spirit) works all things for good to those who have been called according to a purpose." Various versions have translated this verse in different ways, so I have given my own translation of original Greek text to hopefully make it clearer to the English reader.

2. In verse 28, Paul refers to "those who love him" and those "who have been called according to his purpose" as one and the same group. What does this tell us about the nature of the "calling" he is speaking of?

3. In verses 29-30, Paul represents salvation as an unbroken chain, such that those who experience its beginning also experience its completion. In the space below, trace out the chain of events:

For those God _____	And those he _____
he also _____	he also _____
those he _____	those he _____
he also _____	he also _____

4. What do you think Paul meant when he said that God "foreknew" those whom he called? (Compare Ephesians 1:4-6; 1 Peter 1:1-2)

5. Verses 31-36 are composed of a series of rhetorical questions, in which Paul identifies and rejects possible obstacles to God accomplishing his purpose in us. In the space below, identify these questions, and the answer (or implied answer) for each.

**Question**

**Answer**

8:31

8:32

8:33

8:34

8:35

6. How are we more than conquerors? (8:37)
7. In order to emphasize our security in Christ, Paul lists several pairs of things which are unable to separate us from Him. List these below:
8. What is Paul trying to accomplish in this text?
9. You are going through some difficult times, and a friend tells you, "Oh, well, I'm sure everything will turn out all right." Is this encouraging? Why or why not?

What would be a more Biblical response?

10. Of the enemies listed in 8:38-39, which do you think is the most challenging? Why?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Centering Prayer: Centering Prayer is a form of prayer where the person praying seeks to quiet scattered thoughts and desires to focus on God's presence.

Set aside fifteen minutes in a quiet place. Settle into a comfortable position. Choose a word to focus on from Romans 8:28-39 like predestine (choose beforehand), foreknow (know in advance), justified (made right in God's eyes), love, or conqueror. If you find yourself getting distracted, say this word to bring your thoughts back to God. To get this prayer time started, you might even want to read Romans 8:28-39. Rest in the center of God's love. Trust that the Holy Spirit who lives in the depths of your spirit will connect you to God.

## Lesson 18 - Romans 9:1-13

### Lesson Overview:

As you come to Romans 9 you should be reminded that the whole letter of Romans is about the way God is fulfilling ancient promises in and through Jesus, and what this will mean in practice. Paul sets a pattern in 9:5 for what is to come. The Messiah is from the Jewish people "according to the flesh," (NRSV) in his flesh-and-blood identity. But he is the Lord of all: the incarnate God who claims the allegiance of people of every race and nation.

1. What anguished Paul and gave him deep sorrow?

9:2

2. What does Paul affirm about Israel?

9:4-5

3. What qualification does he give to his affirmation?

9:6

4. Why did Paul make the statement: "It is not as though God's word had failed?"

5. How does Paul say a descendant of Abraham is determined?

9:7

6. In 9:8 Paul says that "it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring." What is the promise that he is referring to?

Genesis 12:1-3

7. What does God's foretelling of the birth of Isaac and God foretelling Rebekah that one of her sons would serve the other tell us about God's purpose?
  
8. What is the meaning or implication of verses 1-13?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Journaling: Journaling is a tool for reflecting on God's presence, guidance, and nurture in daily comings and goings. The practice includes keeping a written record of God's work in your life. Journals can include a collection of clippings, drawings, pictures, articles, poems, quotes and so forth. Journals can also record prayers, prayer requests, answers to prayers and God's responses. Some of you are keeping prayer journals this year and others of you have been journaling for years. I encourage you to try this practice. You can begin by simply jotting down in a simple notebook a sentence or two about how God blesses you, challenges you, or guides you through scripture. This practice is easiest to begin and continue on a two or three times a week basis. Some find it helpful to get a notebook with 5 dividers and to label each section something like this: Your Journey with God, Events of the Day, Prayers for the World, Prayers for Those You Love, and Desires of Your Heart. This is a great practice to experiment with to find out what works for you. You might even talk with others who have benefited with this practice. On Sunday in your class ask the question about journaling so that others might share what they have learned.

## Lesson 19 - Romans 9:14-29

### Lesson Overview:

Romans 9:14-29 describes God as Sovereign as he worked through Israel and in spite of Israel to bring his plan of salvation to all human beings. Several Old Testament quotations are used to reinforce this description

1. What is the accusation against God in verse 14?

Why does Paul raise this accusation? (Read the previous verses to find out)

2. How does Paul answer this accusation and "defend" God?

9:15-18

3. Put Paul's suggested objection in verse 19 in your own words.

4. How does Paul answer this objection?

What does Paul mean?

5. What two things does Paul contrast in verses 22-23?

6. What subject does Paul take up in verses 24-26?

What two texts does Paul use to illustrate his point?

7. What subject does Paul address in verses 27-29

What two texts does Paul use to illustrate his point?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

**Service:** Service is a way of offering resources, time, money, influence, and expertise for the care, protection, justice, and nurture of others. Acts of service give hands to the second greatest commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." You can be God's helping, caring, and sharing hands in the world.

A friend of mine who was a camp director used to answer his phone, "How can I serve you today?" or "What can I do for you today?" and I can tell you that he meant it. I believe you can use this type of question to seek, as Jesus did, to serve and not to be served.

I encourage you to set a goal for doing at least one service project per season of the year, Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. Our church family, as well as our community, have numerous opportunities for these kinds of projects. If you can't find one on your own, call the church office and talk to one of us and we will help steer you in the right direction.

## Lesson 20 - Romans 9:30–10:13

### Lesson Overview:

Romans 9:30–10:13 contrasts Israel's attempt to become righteous by the law versus the Gentiles obtaining righteousness by faith.

1. What is the difference between obtaining righteous by faith and obtaining righteousness by law?

9:30-31

2. Why did Israel fail or stumble?

9:32 (Isaiah 8:14, 28:16)

3. Why was Paul so passionate about Israel being saved?

10:1 (9:3-4a)

4. What positive quality did the Jews possess regarding God, and what did they lack according to 10:2-3?

What was the result?

5. What does Paul mean in 10:6-8?

6. How are confession and belief linked to salvation?

10:9-10

7. What are the benefits of one who believes and confesses?

10:11-13

8. What warning and what lesson should you take from the verses we've studied today?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

**Witness:** Witness means revealing the life changing love of Jesus to others. To witness means modeling and telling of the difference Jesus has made in one's life.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Write an account of how you came to know Christ or made a decision to follow Christ. How might God use your story to help others?

And/Or

Write an account of how God has been at work in your life in the past six months. Ask God to make you sensitive and open to an opportunity to share your experience with another person.

## Lesson 21 - Romans 10:14-21

### Lesson Overview:

Romans 10:14-21 details Paul's explanation of Israel's rejection of God's plan of salvation and the Gentiles' acceptance of that plan.

1. What events form the link between the facts of the gospel and the response of faith? (Hint: Look for the action words (verbs) in these verses).

10:13-15

How do we carry out each of these activities?

What is the meaning of each?

2. Read Isaiah 52:1-7. Why would Paul quote Isaiah 52:7 in Romans 10:15?

3. What quotation does Paul use to highlight Israel's unbelief?

What is significant about this text?

4. What two questions does Paul ask to highlight Israel's disbelief?

10:18 and 10:19

5. What two quotations does he use to answer these questions?

6. What is the third possible explanation for Israel's unbelief?

10:20-21

7. How does Romans 10 emphasize the need for evangelism?

This web site might help you to understand some of your feelings about evangelism:

(<http://www.christianitytoday.com/outreach/articles/tenexcuses.html>)

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

The reason we are emphasizing the spiritual disciplines with this study is to encourage you to work on growing spiritually—one of the goals of our 30 minutes three times a week Bible reading/study and fifteen minutes of prayer daily is to promote spiritual growth.

For the next few weeks, instead of sharing additional spiritual disciplines, I want to share some information on the stages of growth. Spiritual transformation includes the following stages: awakening, purgation, illumination, and unison (I will share one stage each week for four weeks).

#### *Awakening*

Awakening is the stage in which you encounter God and yourself. This stage can be gradual or radical, a moment of conversion or a long journey to trusting God. The awakening stage gives you the comfort of belonging to God. An example of the gradual conversion would be Peter. An example of the radical conversion would be Saul/Paul.

What kind of awakening did you have?

## Lesson 22 - Romans 11:1-10

### Lesson Overview:

Paul began chapters 9–11 with the tragic description of Israel’s condition, uniquely privileged by God and yet entrenched in unbelief. This condition is not due to unfaithfulness or injustice on God’s part, but God did use this condition for his own “purpose in election” (9:11). Paul explains that Israel’s failure was due to her stumbling over Christ, and her stubborn rejection of God’s persistent advances (10:21).

Paul now addresses himself to the implications of Israel’s disobedience. He asks two questions and he immediately responds to both with the same indignant reply—by no means!

The theme Romans 11 is the rejection of the Jews was neither total nor final. There is still an Israelite remnant in the present and there is going to be an Israelite recovery in the future. The recovery of this Israelite remnant will lead to a blessing for the whole world.

Have two of your class members read these verses aloud.

1. What is the first question Paul asks and why does he ask this question?
2. What two examples does Paul use in answer to his question?

What is significant about his answers?

3. What is the relationship of grace and works?

11:5-6

4. Who are “the elect” and “the rest” in 11:7?

5. What Old Testaments texts does Paul use to explain Israel's hardening?
  
6. What lessons can you get from today's text?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

The reason we are emphasizing the spiritual disciplines with this study is to encourage you to work on growing spiritually—one of the goals of our 30 minutes three times a week Bible reading/study and fifteen minutes of prayer daily is to promote spiritual growth.

For the next few weeks, instead of sharing additional spiritual disciplines, I want to share some information on the stages of growth. Spiritual transformation includes the following stages: Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, and Unison (I will share one stage each week for four weeks).

#### *Purgation*

Purgation is the stage of growing awareness of sins, blindness, and the life of the false self. In this stage, desire to bring behavior and attitudes into line with Christ's behavior and attitudes calls forth confession. Patterns of willful disobedience, rationalization, denial, blame, addiction, compulsion, and weakness are renounced. Disciples intentionally partner with the Holy Spirit in willing trust and obedience.

What behaviors and attitudes of yours do you need to bring in line with Christ's behavior and attitudes?

## Lesson 23 - Romans 11:11-24

### Lesson Overview:

Paul began chapters 9–11 with the tragic description of Israel's condition, uniquely privileged by God and yet entrenched in unbelief. This condition is not due to unfaithfulness or injustice on God's part, but God did use this condition for his own "purpose in election" (9:11). Paul explains that Israel's failure was due to her stumbling over Christ, and her stubborn rejection of God's persistent advances (10:21).

Paul now addresses himself to the implications of Israel's disobedience. He asks two questions and he immediately responds to both with the same indignant reply—by no means!

The theme of Romans 11 is the rejection of the Jews and their rejection was neither total nor final. There is still an Israelite remnant in the present and there is going to be an Israelite recovery in the future. The recovery of this Israelite remnant will lead to a blessing for the whole world.

1. What additional question does Paul ask about Israel? (11:11)

What surprising answer does he give? (11:11)

2. How does Paul explain his answer? (11:12)
3. What unusual purpose does Paul give for his ministry to the Gentiles? (11:13-14)
4. What kind of blessing would Israel's acceptance of the gospel bring to the Gentiles and the world? (11:15)

5. What is the meaning of 11:16?

6. What does Paul's example of the olive tree teach us? (11:17-24)

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

The reason we are emphasizing the spiritual disciplines with this study is to encourage you to work on growing spiritually—one of the goals of our 30 minutes three times a week Bible reading/study and fifteen minutes of prayer daily is to promote spiritual growth.

This week I continue sharing information on the stages of growth. Spiritual transformation includes the following stages: Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, and Unison.

*Illumination:* Illumination is the stage where being in love with God gives rise to the desire to live totally in and for God's glory. Prayer becomes a way of life. It is the lived and regular rhythm of attending to the presence of the Holy Spirit within. Illumination finds evidence of God in pain and sorrow as well as joy and peace. Social concern and contemplation both become ways of adoring God.

## Lesson 24 - Romans 11:25-36

### Lesson Overview:

The theme of Romans 11 is the rejection of the Jews and their rejection was neither total nor final. There is still an Israelite remnant in the present and there is going to be an Israelite recovery in the future. The recovery of this Israelite remnant will lead to a blessing for the whole world.

Have two of your class members read the verses for the lesson aloud.

1. What is the mystery Paul speaks of in 11:25?
2. What was the hardening that Israel was experiencing?
3. What does the full number of the Gentiles mean?
4. What does Paul mean when he says, "all Israel will be saved"?
5. How is Israel both loved and an enemy?
6. What is the "chain of blessing" that Paul describes in 11:30-32?
7. What does "doxology" mean?

Why would we call 11:33-36 a doxology?

## **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

The reason we are emphasizing the spiritual disciplines with this study is to encourage you to work on growing spiritually. One of the goals of our 30 minutes, three times a week Bible reading/study and fifteen minutes of prayer daily is to promote spiritual growth.

This week I share the last stage of spiritual growth. Spiritual transformation includes the following stages: Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, and Unison.

*Unison:* Unison is stage characterized by receiving God's gift of oneness. "Spiritual Marriage," "transforming union," "ecstasy," "the unitive way," and "contemplation" are all terms that attempt to capture the soul's relationship to God in this stage. The unison stage is a receptive, quiet place where God's agenda, presence and will are embraced. And prayer is a way of entering into wordless communion with the divine. All need for human approval, reinforcement or success is lost in surrender to Christ and abandonment to grace.

## Lesson 25 - Romans 12:1-8

### Lesson Overview:

Paul's argument shifts in Romans 12-15 as he turns his attention to the present situation of the Roman house churches. In Romans 1-4 he has described for the Roman Christians God's merciful redemption of the lost world through the death of Jesus Christ, who, like Abraham before him, trusted in God's righteousness. He has shown, by contrasting Christ and Adam in Romans 5-8, how the death of Jesus Christ is related to the fallen creation and the bondage of humanity to sin and death. We saw in Romans 9-11 that nothing, not even Israel's unbelief and the unexpected flooding of Gentiles into Paul's churches, can separate the whole people of God (the fullness of the Gentiles and all Israel) from God's covenant love and faithfulness, even though Paul, like Abraham, must hope against hope for what he does not yet see. Now, in his concluding chapters, he must show directly and concretely the implications of his argument for the Roman Christians and their life in Christ. He must demonstrate how the story of what God has accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is related to his own story and to the story of his churches, including the congregation at Rome that he hopes will support his work.

In Romans 12:12-21, Paul's argument moves from the work of God in Christ (3:21-31) and the power of baptism of believers into Christ (6:1-14) to conclude that Christians are called to the imitation of Christ. They must grow strong in faithfulness as Abraham did, for they have become part of the seed of Abraham by virtue of their baptism into Jesus Christ. This means they will exhibit his "obedience of faith" by refusing to conform to the ways of the old age and by "walking in newness of life" with minds transformed according to the pattern of Christ, the firstborn of the "many" who are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son (8:29). Paul begins with general exhortations about the nature of the Christ-conformed life and the discernments of God's will to which those whose minds are renewed in Christ are called (12:3-21). (*The Story of Romans* by A. Katherine Grieb, pages 114-115).

1. How does the world try to squeeze you into its mold?
2. In your own words what is the main thing Paul is trying to communicate in this passage?

3. What do you think it means to "offer your bodies as living sacrifices"?

How is this an act of worship, and why are these sacrifices "holy and pleasing to God"?

4. What does it mean to "renew your mind"?

What are some practical ways to do this?

5. In your own words, what is Paul telling us to do in verse 3?

What is he telling us to avoid?

6. What is the point of the "body" illustration in verses 4-8?

7. What's the connection between the command in verse 3 and the illustration in verses 4-8?

8. What does Paul mean when he says, "each member belongs to all the others" in verse 5?

See 1 Corinthians 12:14-27

9. Which of the gifts in verses 6-8 best describe you?

Do you have another gift or different gift(s) that God has blessed you with?

## **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Memorization: Memorization is the process of continually remembering the words, truths and images God uses to shape us. Memorization provides us with a store of learning, which can be accessed anywhere and anytime. When you memorize the Word of God, you carry the life shaping words of God in you at all times and in all places.

What verses have been in your memory for the longest time? Why?

Consider these verses for memory: Psalm 119:97, Psalm 119:11, and 2 Peter 1:13-15 (Add other verses that will help you in your daily walk with God).

## Lesson 26 - Romans 12:9-21

### Lesson Overview:

In Romans 12:12-21, Paul's argument moves from the work of God in Christ (3:21-31) and the power of baptism of believers into Christ (6:1-14) to conclude that Christians are called to the imitation of Christ. They must grow strong in faithfulness as Abraham did, for they have become part of the seed of Abraham by virtue of their baptism into Jesus Christ. This means they will exhibit his "obedience of faith" by refusing to conform to the ways of the old age and by "walking in newness of life" with minds transformed according to the pattern of Christ, the firstborn of the "many" who are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son (8:29). Paul begins with general exhortations about the nature of the Christ-conformed life and the discernments of God's will to which those whose minds are renewed in Christ are called (12:3-21). (*The Story of Romans* by A. Katherine Grieb, pages 114-115).

1. What general principles does Paul share in these verses?

Romans 12:9, 18

2. What is the difference between "sincere" and "insincere" love?

Romans 12:9. See also 1 John 3:16-18

3. What examples does Paul give in this passage of what it means to be "devoted to one another in brotherly love" ?

Romans 12:10

4. How are we to respond to those who mistreat us?

12:14

12:17

12:18

12:19

12:20

12:21

5. What does it mean to "bless those who persecute you" in verse 14?

What kinds of people does this apply to?

6. What knowledge helps us to be "patient in affliction" in verse 12? See also Romans 5:2-5, 8:18, 8:23-25.

7. Why does Paul specify that we are to share with "God's people" who are in need in verse 13?

Shouldn't we share with everyone? See Galatians 6:10.

8. How does the Christian view of hospitality differ from the world's view?

12:13. See also Luke 14:12-14.

9. What knowledge helps to keep us from taking revenge on those who mistreat us?

12:19. See also Luke 6:35-36 and Romans 2:9-11.

10. In your own words, what is Paul saying we should avoid in verse 21?

What should we do instead?

## **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Hospitality: Hospitality creates a safe, open space where a friend or a stranger can enter and experience the welcoming spirit of Christ in another. A hospitable person offers others the grace, shelter, and presence of Jesus. Hospitality is not about impressing others with well-decorated homes and gourmet cooking. It's not simply for the gifted or those with clean homes. Neither is it just for women. Hospitality is a way of loving our neighbor in the same way God has loved us. The early church shaped its life around the practice of hospitality. "They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people" (Acts 2:46-47). Our world desperately needs safe people and safe places. Hospitality is one way we become God's welcoming arms in a big and often hostile world.

Remember a time you have been deeply welcomed and received. Recount the circumstances and the way people reached out to you. Picture where Jesus was in this event. Let God touch you again with his welcome and love.

Ask God in prayer how he might use you to be a safe and inviting person to someone else. Seek out a creative way that you might use your home to show hospitality to others.

## Lesson 27 - Romans 13:1-7

### Lesson Overview:

In Romans 12 Paul has developed our four basic Christian relationships, namely to God (1-2), to ourselves (3-8), to one another (9-16) and to our enemies (17-21). In Romans 13 he develops three more: to the state (conscientious citizenship, 1-7) to the law (neighbor-love as its fulfillment, 8-10), and to the day of the Lord's return (living in the "already" and the "not yet", 11-14).

That church and state have different roles, and that Christians have duties to both God and the state was clearly implied in Jesus' pithy saying, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Now Paul enlarges on the state's God-appointed role and on the role of Christian people in relation to it, although his emphasis is on personal citizenship rather than on any particular theory of church-state relations. What he writes is especially remarkable when we recall that at that time there were no Christian authorities (global, regional, or local). On the contrary, they were Roman or Jewish, and were therefore largely unfriendly and even hostile to the church. Yet Paul regarded them as having been established by God, who required Christians to submit to them and cooperate with them. He had inherited a long-standing tradition from the Old Testament that the Lord God is sovereign over human kingdoms. He gives them to anyone he wishes and by his wisdom kings reign and princes govern. (Daniel 4:17, 25, 32; and Proverbs 8:15-16)

#### 1. How should Christians relate to government?

Verse 1

Verse 3

Verse 5

Verse 7

#### 2. What reasons does Paul give in support of this position?

Verse 1

Verse 2

Verse 4

Verse 5

Verse 6

3. In your own words, what do these passages tell us about the Christian's relationship to human government?

Mark 12:17

Titus 3:1

1 Peter 2:13-17

Acts 5:29

Hebrews 11:31

4. How do verses 4-5 imply a limit on our obedience to human government? (see also Acts 5:29)
5. Why must we pay taxes? (Verse 6)?
6. What else do we "owe" our government officials and civil servants? (Verse 7)

7. Why is rebellion against the government such a serious matter?

What are its consequences?

8. How might these principles be applied by Christians living in a

totalitarian state in which evangelism and Christian church meetings are illegal?

9. How might these principles be applied by Christians living in a democratic political system?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Submission: Submission is the desire to have Jesus as master of my life in absolutely every way. Submission that leads to growth means aligning my will and freedom with God's will and freedom. God's will for you includes freely submitting to others out of love and reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:21)

What submitting experiences have you had? Who is an example of someone who knew how to practice healthy, biblical submission? How has his or her life influenced you? What does it look like for a leader, an activist, or an achiever to be submissive?

Who today do you submit to in the normal events of your life: boss, teachers, parents, colleagues, friends, and/or spouse? What does healthy submission look like in each of these relationships? Pray for grace in these relationships.

## Lesson 28 - Romans 13:8-14

### Lesson Overview:

In Romans 12 Paul has developed our four basic Christian relationships, namely to God (1-2), to ourselves (3-8), to one another (9-16) and to our enemies (17-21). In Romans 13 he develops three more: to the state (conscientious citizenship, 1-7) to the law (neighbor-love as its fulfillment, 8-10), and to the day of the Lord's return (living in the "already" and the "not yet", 11-14).

1. What words or phrases does the term "neighbor" bring to mind for you?
2. According to the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), what makes someone your neighbor?
3. Look up the following Old Testament passages containing the word "neighbor" and write in your own words what they command:  
  
Leviticus 19:13-18  
  
Deuteronomy 5:20-21  
  
Proverbs 3:27-28
4. How does Paul's statement of our obligation to our neighbor compare with these Old Testament passages?
5. What does Paul mean by the phrase "Let no debt remain outstanding"?
6. In what sense is love a fulfillment of the law? (Verses 8-10; see Matthew 22:37-40; Galatians 5:13-14)

7. What does it mean to "understand the present time"? (Verse 11)
8. What reasons does Paul give as to why we should "put aside the deeds of darkness"? (Verses 11-14)
9. What "slumber" is Paul exhorting his readers to awaken from? (Verse 11; see Matthew 24:36-39, 25:1-13)
10. What are the "night" and "day" being referred to in verse 12?
11. What is the "armor of light"? (Verse 12)

Why does a Christian need it? (2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 6:13-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8)

12. What do you think it means to "clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ"?

How would you go about doing this?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

**Prayer Walking:** Prayer Walking is aligning yourself, while walking in particular places, with Christ and his intercession for the kingdom to come. Prayer walking is a way of physically walking with Jesus through places like hospitals, homes, businesses, churches, schools, playgrounds, service agencies, counties, and countries that you are concerned about. In these places, prayers for the kingdom of God to come are offered to God.

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that

we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior. (1 Timothy 2:1-3a)

What does it mean to you that God is in every place? How does this affect how you pray? How does moving or being still affect the way you pray? What most helps you concentrate on God? Is what helps you concentrate on God part of your regular prayer practice? What is it like for you to pray, listening for what God's heart for a particular request might be?

## Lesson 29 - Romans 14:1-23

### Lesson Overview:

In Romans 14, Paul gives an example of what it means to act out of love (14:15). This chapter concerns the relations between two groups in the Christian community: the weak and the strong. The weakness is one of faith (14:1) related to eating certain foods and sacred days. The weak group is probably Jewish believers while the strong group is probably Gentile believers.

1. In this passage, what does it mean to be "weak" in faith? (Verses 1-5)
2. In 14:1-12, Paul describes the typical (wrong) attitudes of the meat-eater and the non-meat-eater toward one another. Paraphrase these attitudes in the form of a dialogue between the two:

What might the meat-eater say to the non-meat-eater?

What might the non-meat-eater say to the meat-eater?

3. Why should the "strong" and "weak" Christians stop judging and condemning one another?

Verse 3

Verse 4

Verses 9-12

4. Under what circumstances should we choose not to exercise our freedom?

What should be the guiding principle in decisions of this kind? (Verses 14:13-21; 15:1-3)

5. What does it mean to "cause your brother to fall"? (Verse 21; see 1 Corinthians 8:9-13)

6. If "all food is clean" (14:20), does that mean everyone should eat meat? (Verses 14:14, 22-23)
7. Are there any circumstances in which we should continue to exercise our freedom, even if it offends others? (see Galatians 4:8-11; 5:1; Colossians 2:16-23)
8. What are some other examples of "disputable matters" which the principles in this passage could be applied to?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

**Control of the Tongue:** Control of the tongue is turning destructive speech into loving and healing speech. Control of the tongue involves an intentional awareness and governing of words as well as tone of voice in all communication.

A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. (Proverbs 16:23-24)

Control of the tongue includes speaking the truth in love, keeping company with Jesus in all your speech, building others up through words, noticing how the words you speak affect others, apologizing and forgiving with words, meaning what you say, letting go of verbal defense mechanisms, and revealing Christ in your use of your tongue.

Divide a piece of paper into four columns headed with the words "Thank You," "I'm Sorry," "I Made a Mistake," and "You Did a Good Job." In each column write all the ways you know to convey each truth. Put this list where you can see it and revisit it. Intentionally use these words and phrases for a week. What do you notice about yourself and your relationships?

Before you jump to conclusions about what somebody means, check out their meaning with a phrase like, "What I hear you saying is . . ." Keep using this phrase until you have their meaning right. What is it like for you to do this?

Choose a habit of speech you wish to break. Consider what new habit you want to replace the old one. Ask one or two people to pray with you in the next three weeks while you attend to this habit. When you sense yourself moving into the speech pattern you wish to change, say "stop" to yourself. Learning to recognize a trigger to a speech pattern and then actually saying "stop" is a huge step in addressing your habit. Ask God to help you put your new habit into practice. When you goof up, confess and begin again.

## Lesson 30 - Romans 15:1-13

### Lesson Overview:

In Romans 15:1-13, Paul draws to a conclusion his discussion of the weak in faith and the strong in faith from chapter 14. Basically, he lays the foundation for how to deal with each other in the family of God and why the unity of all believers is so important.

1. What principle does Paul give for dealing with those who are weak in faith (verse 1)?

What obstacle do you have to overcome to behave as Paul suggests?

What is the purpose of the behavior Paul suggests (verse 2)?

Why should you behave the way Paul suggests (verse 3)?

2. What "Scriptures" was Paul referring to and what two qualities does Scripture possess (verse 4)?

What two things does Scripture do for us (verse 4)?

3. What three qualities does God give to you (verse 5)?

What is the primary result of following Christ (verse 5)?

4. Why is it so important for a spirit of unity to exist among believers (verse 6)?

5. What powerful principle does Paul introduce in verse 7 and what is the result of following this principle?

6. What two reasons does Paul give for Christ becoming a servant to the Jews (verses 8-9)?
7. What is the purpose of the four Old Testament quotations that Paul uses?

Psalm 18:49 & 2 Samuel 22:50 (verse 9)

Deuteronomy 32:43 (verse 10)

Psalm 117:1 (verse 11)

Isaiah 11:10 (verse 12)

8. What important facts do you learn from Paul's benediction in verse 13?

What does this ancient saying from Rupert Meldenius mean?

In essentials unity;

In non-essentials liberty;

In all things charity.

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Unity: Unity is the mark that demonstrates to the world that the body of Christ is one organism, with one faith, one hope, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. Unity lives out the reality that Christ has already reconciled all things to himself. So in him we belong to one another. Unity emphasizes bridge building and peacemaking in the body of Christ.

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! (Psalm 133:1)

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20-21)

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when

you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:3-7)

Read Jesus' prayer in John 17. How does this prayer challenge your thoughts about unity.

Imagine what it will be like when every tribe, tongue and nation gathers to worship God. Consider what might surprise you. Who will be there that you didn't expect?

## Lesson 31 - Romans 15:14-33

### Lesson Overview:

In Romans 15:14–16:27, Paul expresses his anxious feelings about addressing a church he did not found and has never visited. In this section he reassures the Roman Christians. He writes very personally (maintaining an “I–you” directness throughout), affectionately (“my brothers”, 15:14), and candidly. He opens his heart to them about the past, present, and future of his ministry. He asks humbly for their prayers and he sends many greetings. In these ways he gives us insight into the outworking of God’s providence in his life and work.

1. In verses 14-16, Paul clarifies his attitude toward the Roman Christians and defends his writing style. Restate these verses in your own words.
2. From verses 17-22, what desires motivated Paul?

Why do you think he tells the Roman Christians about these desires?

3. In this passage, God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are mentioned as working together in the work of the gospel. In the space below, identify what is true of each.

### ***God***

Verse 15

Verse 16

Verses 30, 32

### ***Jesus Christ***

Verse 16

Verse 18

Verses 19

Verses 29

## ***Holy Spirit***

Verse 16

Verses 19

4. In verses 23-29, Paul outlines his travel plans. What reasons does he give for each stop on his itinerary?

Jerusalem:

Rome:

Spain:

Why do you think Paul included his travel plans in this letter?

5. In verses 30-33, Paul asks prayer for two specific requests. After reading what actually happened to Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-36; 23:12-15), summarize below what Paul's primary concerns might have been as he looked forward to the trip.
6. What in your life has impressed on you the importance of world missions?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

**Examen:** Examen is taking note of God's presence and your God-given desires throughout the day. This practice helps you discern the voice and activity of God within the flow of the day.

Here are some questions that you can use to practice this spiritual discipline.

When today did I have the deepest sense of connection with God, others and myself? When today did I have the least sense of connection?

Where was I aware of living out of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26)? Where was there an absence of the fruit of the Spirit?

When did I give and receive the most love today? When did I give and receive the least love today?

What was the most life-giving part of my day? What was the most life-destroying part of my day?

For what moment today am I most grateful? For what moment today am I least grateful?

Where did I experience "consolation" today? Where did I experience "desolation" today?

## Lesson 32 - Romans 16:1-16

### Lesson Overview:

In Romans 15:14–16:27, Paul expresses his anxious feelings about addressing a church he did not found and has never visited. In this section he reassures the Roman Christians. He writes very personally (maintaining an “I–you” directness throughout), affectionately (“my brothers”, 15:14), and candidly. He opens his heart to them about the past, present, and future of his ministry. He asks humbly for their prayers and he sends many greetings. In these ways he gives us insight into the outworking of God’s providence in his life and work.

1. Who was Phoebe and what was her role in the church?
2. Paul closes Romans with greetings to specific people. What does this tell us about Paul and his ministry?
3. What does the fact that Paul ended his letter in this way tell us about Romans and the purpose for which it was written?
4. How would you characterize Paul’s words of greeting? What do they have in common?
5. What qualities does Paul commend?

## **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

Compassion: Compassion is becoming the healing presence of Christ to others. Compassion means feeling with and for others as well as extending mercy and help to them in practical ways. Compassion includes sharing God's heart for an aching and wounded world.

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man (Mark 1:41).

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:36-37)

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:8-9)

Consider one way you can show compassion to someone this week.

Make a list of the people whose services you receive: teachers, ministers, caregivers and so on. Next to each name write down any needs you know they have (personal, financial, physical, etc.). What is God calling you to do in these situations? Listen and act.

## Lesson 33 - Romans 16:17-27

### Lesson Overview:

In Romans 15:14–16:27, Paul expresses his anxious feelings about addressing a church he did not found and has never visited. In this section he reassures the Roman Christians. He writes very personally (maintaining an “I–you” directness throughout), affectionately (“my brothers”, 15:14), and candidly. He opens his heart to them about the past, present, and future of his ministry. He asks humbly for their prayers and he sends many greetings. In these ways he gives us insight into the outworking of God’s providence in his life and work.

1. Have you ever experienced division in the body of Christ?  
  
Why did it happen?  
  
What was that experience like?
2. What teaching had the Romans learned from Paul about divisiveness?
3. What are the main characteristics of a divisive person?
4. Who are the people most likely to be influenced by divisive people?
5. What are Paul’s suggestions for dealing with divisiveness?
6. What three qualities help a Christ follower to avoid divisiveness?
7. What encouraging word does Paul give for resisting evil and avoiding division even when it might bring us temporary satisfaction?

8. What valuable service did Timothy and Tertius provide for Paul?
9. Who are Gaius, Erastus, and Quartus?
10. What significant ideas does Paul include in his doxology (verses 25-27)?

### **Using the Spiritual Disciplines**

**Detachment:** Detachment is replacing the attachment to idolatrous relationships and self serving goals and agendas for success, money, power, ego, productivity, and image with whole hearted attachment to and trust in God alone.

“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it” (Mark 8:34-35 NLT).

“Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own” (Luke 12:15).

“My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20 NLT).

“All great spirituality is about letting go” (Richard Rohr in *Everything Belongs*)

Take an attachment inventory. Write a list of the defense mechanisms you are attached to (sarcasm, temper tantrums, aloofness, clowning around). Ask God to make you aware of the times you instinctively move into your defensive response. Consider what seems to trigger your response. What response would you like to cultivate instead? Ask God to help you change your attachment to these behavioral patterns.

Practice letting go by giving away something you are attached to (money, time, possessions). Notice the feelings that arise in you when you think

about giving something away. Spend time talking to God about how attached you are to your things.

Where in your life do you need Christ's spirit of detachment? Where do you need grace to pray "Not my will but yours be done"? Talk to God about what it means to pray this sort of prayer. How does praying this prayer make the reality of Jesus' life touch your own?

Ask God to give you an opportunity to become more detached from secondary things. Share your car, your home, your second home, your time, your expertise with someone this week.