

SMALL GROUP

SPRING 2019

Dear Students,

Congratulations! Do you know how rare it is for a high school student to find and commit to a Small Group like this one? The fact that you're holding this booklet represents the reality that God has given you an incredible gift. In this group, you have a community of Christian friends who want to help you grow in your faith. You also have one or more adult leaders who care about you and want to guide you through their teaching and example. You also have this study guide as a tool to help you grow in your understanding and application of God's Word!

As you journey through Small Group this semester, here are three points of advice to help you get the most out of your time:

Be consistent – Make a commitment to yourself and the group to attend as consistently as possible. If you have to miss a meeting, do the lesson on your own and try to catch up with what you missed by checking in with a leader or a friend from group.

Be real – High school can be hard. Be as honest as possible with God, with your leaders, and with your group about what's going on in your life. Don't bury your hurts, failures, questions, or doubts. Pretending everything is always amazing is not the path to growth.

Be open – Your small group might not always meet your expectations. Group members might be shallow, hypocritical, annoying, awkward, or fake. New people might join in the middle of the year and change the dynamic of the room. Remind yourself regularly that God is in control and that He can use anything to produce a positive result. Everyone deserves the gift of Small Group and God desires to bless each person in wonderful and unique ways.

Have a great semester studying the book of Romans!

In Christ,



David Penuel



Jermaine Harrison



Cassidy Dahlsten

Watermark High School Ministry Staff

Small Group Spring 2019 Schedule

January 2	Romans 1
January 9	Romans 2
January 16	Romans 3
January 23	Shoreline
January 30	Romans 4
February 6	Romans 5
February 13	Romans 6
February 20	Romans 7
February 27	Shoreline
March 6	Romans 8
March 13	Romans 9 (Spring Break)
March 20	Romans 10
March 27	Shoreline
April 3	Romans 11
April 10	Romans 12
April 17	Romans 13
April 24	Shoreline
May 1	Romans 14
May 8	Romans 15
May 15	Romans 16

Special Events

February 1-3	DTown
May 5	Senior Dessert
June 21-28	Camp Barnabas
July 20-27	Haiti

The Structure of a Small Group Meeting

Hang time (15 minutes)

Enjoys snacks, conversation, and games (football, basketball, video games, etc.) to connect and catch up as people arrive for Small Group.

Bible study time (30 minutes)

Teaching and discussion of the curriculum in this book. A student will open in prayer and then everyone will open their Bibles and focus on the lesson and discussion. During this time, a student will share a testimony, a student will share the gospel, and a student will help lead the lesson and discussion.

Community time (45 minutes)

Split up into smaller sub-groups for a time of sharing, accountability, and prayer. Sub-groups are to be formed at the leaders discretion, using feedback from students about who they trust and are comfortable with. Sub-groupings should generally be consistent week to week. This time should be devoted to Watermark's 6 core values of Biblical community and should focus on the goals and discussion prompts outlined on the following pages. Leaders should weekly offer a brief definition of Biblical community and remind the group of the calling and expectations for this time.

Six Core Values of Biblical Community:

As your Small Group matures, a bulk of your time should be allotted to the practice of Biblical community. This time should be informed and shaped by the following six core values of Biblical community.

1. Devote Daily

Healthy Small Groups consist of members who are devoted to an ongoing, personal relationship with God. Each member should be consistently taught and challenged to spend daily time with God through prayer, reading God's Word, and other spiritual disciplines. If we are not being transformed by a personal relationship with God, we have little to offer to the group.

(Six Core Values of Biblical Community Continued)

John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

2. Pursue Relationally

Healthy Small Groups are focused on intentionally building relationships with each other. Each member should be consistently challenged to cultivate each and every relationship in the group. Connectedness to the body of Christ is essential for spiritual growth and maturity. This includes placing a high priority on participation in weekly Small Group gatherings during the school year.

Romans 12:10

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, give preference to one another in honor.

3. Live Authentically

Healthy Small Groups create a safe environment where each member can be completely real and free from condemnation because of Christ. Each member should be consistently reminded of the gospel and challenged to openly share their highs and lows, victories and defeats, strengths and weakness, and even sins and secrets. The goal is to develop a deep level of trust and unity as a result of living authentically with one another.

1 John 1:7

If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

4. Counsel Biblically

Healthy Small Groups are marked by members who humbly seek and give advice that is grounded in the wisdom and truth of God's word. Each member should be consistently challenged to ask for input and guidance from the group. The group should be challenged to always find and share scripture to back up advice, encouragement, or correction.

Proverbs 15:22

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

(Six Core Values of Biblical Community Continued)

5. Admonish Faithfully

Healthy Small Groups are not afraid to lovingly sharpen one another (Proverbs 27:17) when they see sin in each other's lives. Each group member should be consistently challenged to speak up when they notice areas where others obviously need to grow in Christ-likeness. It is kind and godly for us to point out faults and to help each other grow through gentle rebuke and correction.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

6. Engage Missionally

Healthy Small Groups remind one another that God has commissioned us to share His love with all people. Jesus calls His followers to also be "fishers of men." Each group member should be consistently challenged to live a life on mission by initiating spiritual conversations and loving others for the purpose of making disciples and serving the church.

Matthew 28:19-20

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.

Weekly Questions for Community Time

1. How has your time with God been this week? What have you learned?
2. What has inspired or encouraged you this week?
What was your "high" this week?
3. What has been weighing on you this week?
What was your "low" this week?
4. How have you struggled with sin or temptation this week?
5. How have you shared Christ with and/or shown God's love to others this week?
6. How can we pray for you or serve you (advice, encouragement, support) this week?
7. What are your hopes or goals for next week?

Follow Up Questions

1. What does God's word say about that?
2. What do you think God is trying to teach you through that?
3. What do you think God wants you to do next?

Before you begin...

What is the Gospel?

The gospel is the epicenter of the Christian faith, the theme of the whole Bible, and the only hope of every human soul. Understanding and being able to share the gospel are foundational skills for every follower of Jesus Christ. “What is the gospel?” This is a question that will be asked at the start of each and every Small Group meeting, so be prepared. To learn more, Google “Sharing Your Faith 101” from Billy Graham, “One Verse Evangelism” from the Navigators, or “Romans Road to Salvation” from GotQuestions.org.

Suggested Resources

Many Christians fall away from faith because of difficult questions. This is a tragedy because, for most of these challenging questions, there are helpful and clear answers just a few clicks away! Young Christians should familiarize themselves with the following resources so they can be ready for the difficult questions that are sure to come.

www.gotquestions.org

Here you can find discussions and explanations relating to almost any question you may have in mind. Just type in a question and get ready to learn!

www.openbible.info/topics

This website is perfect for finding Bible verses related to almost any topic you can think of. What does the bible say about _____? This website has the answer!

www.lumina.bible.org

This is your go-to online Bible study resource complete with commentary notes, articles, sermons, maps, and name explanations. Perfect for going deeper.

www.realtruthrealquick.com

A series of short videos from Watermark’s Senior Pastor, Todd Wagner, that addresses common questions with direct answers from God’s Word.

February 1-3, 2019

DTown

DTown19.com

Fourth Wednesdays

SHORELINE

MoreShoreline.com

Why Study Romans?

If God is so good, why is there so much evil, pain, and suffering in our world? Why do we continue to do wrong things even after our faith is placed in Christ? Why do we really even need to accept Christ? Why can't it be enough to just live good and honest lives? Isn't the God of Bible just a cosmic bully who doesn't care about what's happening in our world?

At some point or another, you have heard and maybe even asked some of these questions or similar ones. The book of Romans (the letter written by Paul to Roman Christians) is a great place to start when seeking answers to these questions. In fact, Romans is best described as a summarization of the Christian faith or an orderly explanation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This book examines the core of what Christians should believe; providing a well-reasoned and logical defense throughout each chapter. Paul breaks down issues like the total sinfulness of all humans, God's incredible grace and kindness to replace our unrighteousness with the righteousness of Christ, God's sovereignty (He is keenly aware of and in complete control of all that goes on in His world), and the life of service God calls those who claim to be followers of Jesus to live.

The book of Romans is for high schoolers who want to know what to believe, why they should believe it, and the way to live a life pleasing to God and attractive to others. At the end of this study, students will also be more equipped to share the greatest message ever told. The message that God did for us what we could not do for ourselves: He replaces our unrighteousness with the righteousness of His Son, Jesus, so we can live full lives now and experience eternal life with God forever! There is power in that message!

Suggested Memory Verses

Romans 1:16

Romans 3:23

Romans 5:8

Romans 6:23

Romans 10:9

Romans 12:1-2

Romans 13:13-14

Romans 1

Key Points

(vv. 1-7) Paul begins his letter to the Roman believers by talking about the foundational truth behind the gospel. The truth that Jesus was prophesied about in the Old Testament, became a man, then died and rose again making Him victorious over the power of sin. Paul says that because of this victory, Jesus offers all people a reconciled relationship with God. The resurrection of Christ is the foundational truth of the Christian faith. In fact, Paul says in I Corinthians 15:12-20 that if Christ didn't rise from the dead, all who have placed their faith in Christ would still be lost and heading for destruction. Here, Paul makes the point that Christ's resurrection from the dead proved the doubters that He was indeed the Son of God and not just a man. Christ's resurrection still makes the same point today: Jesus was and is the Son of God.

(vv. 8-17) The Roman Christians live differently due to their faith in Christ's resurrection. So much so that word about their transformation spread all over the known world. What a great reminder that faith in Christ should lead us to live differently than those who don't claim faith in Jesus. What kind of message is your life proclaiming to your friends, classmates, family, small group and even total strangers? Paul was so encouraged by this group of Christians that he longed to meet them in person. Be encouraged by their faith and follow their example by sharing the message of the good news with others so they may also experience new life in Christ. Whose faith is currently encouraging you?

(vv. 18-32) Sin is a rejection of and rebellion against God's clear revelation of Himself. We are all created in the image of God, which includes a deep longing for Him. But in our brokenness and sin, we try to fill the void in our lives with everything but God. Filling the void leads to destruction, pain, death and ultimately judgment. One of the more immediate consequences for our rebellion against God is His allowance of us to continue in our rebellion. In other words, sin is its own consequence. No one is less guilty than the next person. All of us have seen God and decided He wasn't enough. All of us are totally depraved. All of us are essentially and unchangeably bad apart from God's divine grace.

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

In your opinion, what's the most important idea that you will take away from this chapter?

How does this chapter move you to action? After reading this chapter, what would God have you start doing, stop doing, or keep doing?

Romans 2

Key Points

(vv. 1-11) Have you ever thought justice needs to be served for a mass murderer or sexual abuser of children according to their crimes? In that very thought, you are acknowledging that there is an existing standard of morality. Where does that standard come from? Who determines it? Paul makes the point here that our natural desire for justice comes from the fact that we are made in God's image. However, we typically fail to acknowledge the same moral standard written on our hearts that says mass murder is wrong also says lying, stealing, cheating, selfishness and sexual impurity are wrong as well. In our brokenness, we assume we are better than a mass murderer, but we really aren't. We have all fallen short of the moral standard. Let that sink in.

(vv. 12-16) Gentiles had their consciences telling them right from wrong, but consistently chose what was wrong. Jews had both conscience and the Law telling them right from wrong and even they continually chose what was wrong. Like the Jews and Gentiles, we know what the right thing to do is, but fall short daily. Paul's point is when humans are given the option to choose between good and evil, they will always choose evil. Thus, we need some outside help to choose good. The Law was given to show Jews that they could never measure up to God's standard by their own efforts. Gentiles were given their conscience to make the same point. Even when we think we are good and moral people, nothing could be further from the truth.

(vv. 17-29) Paul anticipated the Jews would assume the condemnation for sin only applied to those who were NOT among God's chosen nation Israel. So, he made sure to tell the Jews that they were not exempt from God's moral standard and the judgment of not living up to it because of their ethnicity. They are just as guilty as everyone else. He even goes on to make the case that a true Jew isn't determined by birth, but by a heart and life transformed by the Spirit. A relationship with God is so much more than external adherence to rules and regulations. How have you been coasting and doing the "right" things without truly seeking a relationship with God?

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

In your opinion, what's the most important idea that you will take away from this chapter?

How does this chapter move you to action? After reading this chapter, what would God have you start doing, stop doing, or keep doing?

Romans 3

Key Points

(vv. 1-4) The church in Rome, consisting of many Jewish Christians, had just read that being a Jew by birth doesn't resolve the impending judgement for their sin. So, what benefit is there to being a Jew then? Paul anticipates this question. He reminds Jewish Christians that their ancestors were the first ones entrusted with the very words of God and now they have the privilege and honor of sharing the good news with everyone else.

(vv. 5-8) We are not sinners because of WHAT we do. Rather, we are sinners because of WHO we are. Our actions flow from who we are naturally. Since we are sinners by nature, we do what any good sinner would do—sin! If there were infinitely less acts of sin in our world, we would still be sinners, guilty before a righteous God. We don't elevate God's righteousness by sinning more to make the difference between us and God glaringly obvious. Instead, we prove how essentially and unchangeably bad we are apart from God's divine grace.

(vv. 9-20) No matter how "good" a person you may be, it is impossible to build a strong enough case to escape the God's judgement of humanity for sin. Any good deed you have ever done in your life is a result of God's divine intervention. Left to ourselves, we would **never** choose good. Understanding how sinful and hopeless we are to do good and please God is essential to grasping our need for God.

(vv. 21-31) Instead of being judged as we should be, God looks at hopeless humanity and in the greatest expression of love and mercy, gives us what we least deserve: another chance. Justification is Christ replacing our unrighteousness with His righteousness through His death, burial and resurrection, as well as God withholding from us the well-deserved judgment for our sin. We cannot be good enough on our own to escape God's judgment. Our only hope is faith in Jesus! He did for us what we could never do for ourselves: stand righteously in a holy God's sight on our behalf. This is the gospel!

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

In your opinion, what's the most important idea that you will take away from this chapter?

How does this chapter move you to action? After reading this chapter, what would God have you start doing, stop doing, or keep doing?

Romans 4

Key Points

(vv. 1-8) Salvation has ALWAYS been by grace through faith. There was never a point in time when a person could be seen as righteous in God's eyes apart from faith in Him. This looked different at certain points in history as God strategically revealed His plan for Christ to be our ultimate perfect sacrifice, but it was NEVER the case that God saw people as righteous because they were good or did enough good things.

(vv. 9-17) Those who are Abraham's true descendants and members of God's family are those who share Abraham's faith, not those who perform some external act. Abraham was declared righteous long before he was circumcised. Circumcision was a sign of being a part God's community, but it was really an outward expression of an inward faith and trust in God. In other words, circumcision didn't make anyone a part of God's family. Properly understood, it represented faith in and devotion to God. Thus, anyone who shares the faith of Abraham can be declared righteous; Jews and Gentiles alike. Some people argue that believing in God by faith is still "doing" something, so salvation involves some level of "working". However, apart from divine grace, we would never choose faith in God. God's grace is a gift to us, but the faith we have is also a gift. God created the opportunity and gives us the ability to place our trust in the work of Christ. At no point can we take any credit for our salvation. See also Ephesians 2:8-9.

(vv. 18-25) We can learn something from Abraham's perseverance. He didn't do it perfectly, but for the most part Abraham held tightly to the promises and character of God. With the odds seemingly stacked against him, Abraham continued to trust God even when it didn't seem to make sense. How about you? What are you currently going through or waiting on that is making it really hard to trust God? What can you learn from Abraham's example of enduring trust in God? What promises from Scripture do you need to cling to right now?

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

In your opinion, what's the most important idea that you will take away from this chapter?

How does this chapter move you to action? After reading this chapter, what would God have you start doing, stop doing, or keep doing?

Romans 5

Key Points

(vv. 1-2) Those who put their faith in Christ have peace with God, meaning they have the ability have a relationship with Him. They have hope, love, salvation, joy and much more! Before trusting in Christ, the judgment of God loomed large because of our sinfulness. However, through Christ, God's wrath stored up for us has been dealt with. Jesus took the well-deserved wrath destined for us upon himself on the cross.

(vv. 3-5) Suffering should be understood as a normal part of the Christian experience. Because our world has not yet fully experienced its redemption through Christ, suffering is unavoidable (John 16:33). God uses the inevitable suffering we will endure to grow our dependence on Him and our character. Christians don't look out for suffering with excitement, but know when suffering comes, God sees us, is for us, and cares about us.

(vv. 6-8) Christ came and died for our sins because He loves us and wanted to be our way to God when there was no other way. We gave Him every reason to not make this choice because of our addiction to our own desire. There was nothing we did motivating him to want to die in our place, suffer on our behalf, or experience God's wrath for us. But, He did it anyway! This is the unconditional love of God that we should take time to praise Him for and reflect on.

(vv. 9-11) If Jesus died for His enemies (us) while they were still His enemies, how much more will He do for His friends (those who have placed their faith in Him)? Christ came not just to save us from hell, but to offer us a new way to live marked by peace, joy, friendship, perseverance, contentment and service. He intercedes with the Father on our behalf, He is with us every moment of every day. A full life is available to you if you trust in Jesus!

(vv. 12-21) Because of Adam's single act of sin, the whole world descended into death and war with God. Because of Christ's one act of righteousness backed up by a perfect, sinless life, the whole world can experience life and peace with God. Are you experiencing life and peace with God?

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

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Romans 6

Key Points

(vv. 1-7) The fact that God is merciful and forgiving should not lead us to live carelessly because we know that God will forgive our sins anyway. God's mercy should motivate us to reject sin more and more as we grow in our walk with Him. Sin is serious. It cost Jesus His life. Christ died to break sin's power over us and give us the new ability to choose good. In His death, our sin nature is considered dead. In His life, we are alive and connected in relationship with God the Father.

(vv. 8-14) God's work of salvation is made up of three parts: Justification, Sanctification and Glorification. Justification is a one-time event; the replacing of our unrighteousness with the righteousness of Christ when our trust is placed in Him. We are justified, freed from the penalty of sin because of Jesus. Sanctification is the life-long process of becoming more and more like Christ in character, lifestyle, and priorities. We are gradually becoming free from the power of sin through sanctification because Christ gives us the ability to do so. Glorification is God's final and complete removal of sin from the life of a believer. We are freed from the presence of sin in glorification because of Jesus' work on the cross and His resurrection. This whole process, from beginning to end, is the work of God, by grace through faith in Jesus.

(vv. 15-23) Before we place our faith in Christ, we have only one nature that always wants and chooses sin—our sin nature. After we place our faith in Christ we gain a new nature—the Holy Spirit living within us. Now, as believers we are free from the authority of our sin nature. It should be considered dead! We DO NOT have to obey it! We are free to choose righteousness on a daily basis by the power of the Holy Spirit. But since we are still on the journey of sanctification and sin isn't completely eradicated, we can and at times still choose to place ourselves under the authority of our sin nature. Be patient and gracious with one another in the midst of sin, but be diligent to continue weeding out sin's power in your life and the lives of those around you by daily yielding to the Holy Spirit.

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

In your opinion, what's the most important idea that you will take away from this chapter?

How does this chapter move you to action? After reading this chapter, what would God have you start doing, stop doing, or keep doing?

Romans 7

Key Points

(vv. 1-13) The Law is good. Ultimately, it was meant to be a tutor that showed the Jews and all humanity no amount of law giving or keeping can transform sinful hearts. The Law doesn't cause us to sin, it just reveals what is already true about our nature. We need a new law, one made available through Christ. Jesus fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the Law for us and established a higher law of love to live by. We are no longer bound to the requirements of the Law, nor are we under its condemnation. Instead, we are free from condemnation and free to be led by the higher law of love.

(vv. 14-23) Becoming a Christian does not remove all possibility for sin and temptation. While our old selves have been crucified with Christ on the cross, as long as we live in a fallen and broken world with fallen and broken human bodies, the magnetic pull and desire of sin will continue to wage war against our regenerated minds and heart. In fact, Paul argues that the more we grow in our desire to do right, the more we are tempted to choose evil. This is because our sinful nature loves to rebel, the thrill of seeking pleasure, and sells us the lie that we don't need to worry about the consequences.

(vv. 24-25) Self-determination and effort to defeat sin is a plan bound to fail. Sin is powerful and we shouldn't underestimate it. We are not strong enough to overcome it, so we shouldn't overestimate ourselves. Paul says that even when we want to choose to do the right thing, the wrong thing makes itself appealing and our sinful nature craves it. To be sure, we must fight. This fighting looks like daily abiding with Christ in total dependence and trusting His Spirit to gradually transform our thoughts, desires, words and actions. It is normal to wrestle, struggle, and battle with sin. It is natural to fail. However, it is also normal to experience victory because of Christ!

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

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How does this chapter move you to action? After reading this chapter, what would God have you start doing, stop doing, or keep doing?

Romans 8

Key Points

(v. 1) Because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and God's gifts of grace and faith, we stand before God free from condemnation! The guilt from our past, shame from our present, comparison of other's spiritual progress, or our enemy (the devil) may try to feed us lies saying God would never accept us because of our past. However, Romans 8:1 speaks a better word. If we place our faith in Jesus, not only are we free from condemnation, we are known, loved, cherished, and protected by the great God of the universe. That, my friends, is good news!

(vv. 2-17) The greatest evidence of a transformed heart is a transformed life. Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit make a difference in our lives now! We can truly be transformed by the power of the Spirit in our lives. As we progress in our walk with Christ, the Spirit gradually helps us to want to do what's pleasing to God and to hate what displeases him. He affects our minds, our hearts, our thoughts and our actions. And the secret to life transformation is allowing the Spirit to lead you through God's Word, prayer, community, and trusted role models. Is there evidence in your life that you are being transformed by the Holy Spirit?

(vv. 18-39) One of the great comforts for believers is that we are never alone or without hope in the midst of difficulty we experience in life. We have parents, small group friends and leaders, school friends and others to walk with us as we journey along in our faith. We also have the Holy Spirit to help us in our weakest and most challenging situations. He cries out to the Father on our behalf (vs. 26) and Jesus does the same (vs. 34). God the Father sovereignly orchestrates all that we go through (good or bad) so that His will is accomplished and we experience Him in new ways with each passing day. Followers of Jesus can rest in the fact that we are guaranteed a present and future relationship with God that nothing and no one can ever take away!

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

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Romans 9

Key Points

(vv. 1-5) The nation of Israel had all they needed to know and trust Jesus. But they missed the point of it all. Paul is so burdened that he wishes he could trade his own salvation for the wholesale salvation of the nation of Israel. How about you? How burdened are you to see people come to trust Christ?

(vv. 6-18) Israel's rejection of Jesus as Messiah is an objective lesson portraying God's sovereignty. One does not become a part of God's family by just being born into a particular family or nation. Abraham had other children, but only Isaac's descendants were in the line of promise. One does not become part of God's family by doing good or bad. Jacob was chosen over Esau before they were even born. A person becomes a part of God's family by His sovereign choice in giving us the gifts of grace and faith. This choosing is not arbitrary, but with purpose!

(vv. 19-29) Reconciling the belief that God is sovereign (i.e. knows, sees, understands and controls all) is hard to make sense of in light of the fact that human beings are free moral agents. Let's keep in mind that it is impossible for finite beings to totally understand an infinite God and how He works. Paul encourages us to seek to understand as best as we can, but to trust the nature and character of God at the end of the day. What question do you have about God's nature, character or activity? Take time to research the topic!

(vv. 30-33) When the book of Romans was written, Gentiles (those who were not part of the ethnic nation of Israel) were accepting Jesus as the Messiah and receiving his offer of salvation. On the other hand, the nation of Israel, had largely rejected Jesus as the promised Messiah and as the Son of God. Even today, only a small portion of the ethnic nation of Israel really believes that Jesus was the promised Messiah and has accepted his sacrifice on the cross.

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

In your opinion, what's the most important idea that you will take away from this chapter?

How does this chapter move you to action? After reading this chapter, what would God have you start doing, stop doing, or keep doing?

Romans 10

Key Points

(v. 1) Paul's response to realizing that some in his own nation were rejecting the Messiah was met with great concern and prayer. He didn't argue that God was unfair for not just saving them all. Instead, his response to the lost around him was to pray for them and preach the gospel to them. He desperately wanted everyone to know the goodness and freedom found in Christ. When was the last time you had a meaningful conversation with a non-Christian about Jesus?

(vv. 2-13) The Jews wanted to please God, but they wanted to do so on their own terms. As you know, you can be sincere about something and still be very wrong. They wanted to please God by keeping the Law. However, they misunderstood that Jesus was the completion of the Law and that He was the way for Jews and Gentiles to please God. Yet they stuck to their 'good intentions' of trying to work hard enough to please God. How are you trying to please God by your own efforts?

(vv. 9-10) Anyone who becomes a part of God's family does so by believing in the resurrection of Jesus. Believing that Jesus is who He says He is and trusting that He actually lived and died are all important things, but if you don't believe Jesus rose from the dead, you simply can't be a Christian. It's essential to believe that Jesus is alive, because it is only through His life that we can have eternal life and a reconciled relationship with God.

(vv. 14-21) Those who understand that faith comes through hearing, believing and trusting what Jesus has done have a responsibility to share this news with others. Believing the gospel will change your life forever! Why are we so hesitant to share when the opportunity arises? Gentiles who had no interest in God trusted Christ through the faithful preaching of Paul and other Christians, who knows how God can use you if you share the good news you have found? Who can you share the gospel with this week?

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

In your opinion, what's the most important idea that you will take away from this chapter?

How does this chapter move you to action? After reading this chapter, what would God have you start doing, stop doing, or keep doing?

Romans 11

Key Points

(vv. 1-10) Even though Israel as a nation has rejected Jesus as their Messiah, there are still individuals within the nation of Israel who have placed their faith in the One through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed. God is by no means finished with Israel just because so many have rejected His offer of salvation through Jesus. In fact the truth is quite the opposite. God will continue to call Jews to salvation by his grace and mercy for them.

(vv. 2-6) Sometimes it may seem like there is no one standing up for truth and dedicating their life to obedience to Christ. But the truth is that all over the world, even in the darkest areas, there are faithful followers of Christ! Even when you think you are alone, you're not! God always has His remnant of people pursuing righteousness and spreading His message of grace.

(vv. 11-32) Paul wants to remind Christian Gentiles that the origins of their faith rests with the promises and message given to the nation of Israel. The Jews were supposed to be the nation that led all others to Christ, but because of their unbelief, God used other means to carry the message to Gentiles. Thus, Gentiles shouldn't be self-righteous and prideful, but humbled God would choose to include them in His redemption plan. Gentiles should also make it a habit to pray for the nation of Israel. God isn't finished with them and still wants them to be saved. We should pray that the eyes of ethnic Jews would be opened to the person and work of Christ.

(vv. 33-36) We can never fully understand God. His activity or apparent lack thereof can sometimes confuse and frustrate us. But our goal should not be to try to get all of our questions answered but to trust in His goodness and in the reality that God can rule the world way better than any of us ever could. Is there a situation in your life that you are not surrendering to God? This is your chance to believe that He has your best interest at heart because He does! You can trust Him even when you don't understand!

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Romans 12

Key Points

(V. 1-2) Paul has spent the past 11 chapters discussing God's actions on behalf of humanity. In chapter 12 he begins with what should be our natural response to the work of Christ. He reminds believers that it is only by the mercy of God that we are able to have new life in Christ. Because of all that God has done for us, Paul is encouraging believers to respond by presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice, which means a call to devote ourselves fully to the Lord. All your thoughts, dreams, desires, hopes, words and actions should be informed by God's kindness on your behalf. No longer should we live or look like those who have not placed their faith in Christ. Genuine faith in Christ results in a life that continues to be transformed daily.

(vv. 3-8) One of the greatest evidences of a transformed life is how we use our gifts to serve others. In this section Paul makes the point that we shouldn't be prideful about what we are good at or how God has gifted us, instead we should faithfully use our gifts to bless, encourage and build others up. If you are a Christian, you have at least one gift given to you by God's Holy Spirit. See Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 & 1 Peter 4 to curate an extensive list of gifts. How do you think the Holy Spirit has gifted you? How can you put your gift to good use?

(vv. 9-21) Christians should be the most loving people on the earth. Because we have been extended the greatest form of love through Christ, we have the freedom, ability and opportunity to love other, even people who don't like us. We should be patient, be on each other's team, seek to resolve conflict in a healthy way, celebrate when there is something to celebrate, and grieve when there is something to grieve. In 1 Peter 4:8 it says, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins." As believers, we must look at how our actions and attitudes not only glorify God, but how they build others up. Who in your life needs to experience your sincere love?

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Romans 13

Key Points

(vv. 1-7) Paul turns his attention to one specific way that Christians can live differently from the world: the Christian's relationship with the government. Paul makes the point that the responsibility of citizens is to submit to and respect the government. So what does it mean to submit? Submission to government includes following the law, voting, paying taxes and contributing to the welfare of your city. What does it mean for every citizen to respect government? Respect flows from understanding that God sets up and dethrones leaders. We have no need to be anxious or fearful. Instead, we can rest, trust, and be respectful in ways we talk to and about our leaders. What are some ways you can honor and respect governing authorities that are antagonistic to God's agenda?

(vv. 1-7) On a secondary note, Paul reminds us of the role of government. The role of government is to prosecute evil, promote good, and serve God. When government does its job, evil is held back, peace is plentiful, citizens are joyful, and God is glorified. Unfortunately, that is often not the reality we experience. However, it doesn't remove our responsibility as citizens that Paul has already addressed. A good reminder when struggling with your leadership is that we honor God when we submit to leadership- even bad leadership. When was the last time you prayed for the bad leadership in your life or in your government? Take some time to do that today!

(vv. 8-14) Christian citizens have an extra opportunity to trust God's leadership and seek the good of their city by living for God. They also have the opportunity to make the state better by living righteously. Did you know that one of the most effective ways to contribute to the welfare of your city is in the way you live? Other ways to make the state you live in better include electing Christian or other high principled leaders, serving as an influence for good in society, and sharing the gospel! How can you contribute to the welfare of your city as a high schooler?

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Romans 14

Key Points

How should Christians navigate decisions, activities or perspectives that the Bible isn't clear on? Some Christians are stricter than others, which can result in arguments, condemnation, criticism, hurt, anger, and division. We desperately need principles from God's Word to guide us in these unclear areas. In Romans 14, the Apostle Paul uses a few specific examples to illustrate guiding principles of acceptance, accountability, and assistance to help navigate "gray area" issues:

Acceptance - Romans 14:1-6

There is room for differences in areas that the Bible does not directly or clearly address. We should seek unity even in the midst of differing opinions. Christians should be able to disagree and still have peace. When it comes to these unclear areas, we should aim for acceptance, understanding, humility and connection, rather than accusation and discord.

Accountability - Romans 14:7-12

We should hold each other accountable by reminding ourselves that we will someday give a personal account to God for our choices in areas of personal preference. We should encourage one another to honor the Lord in all things and seek the welfare of others and not just our own delight and comfort.

Assistance - Romans 14:13-23

Something that you have determined to be perfectly fine and appropriate may be determined by another Christian as unhelpful, harmful, or even wrong. We should be willing to sacrifice our personal freedom for the assistance and benefit of others. Our primary focus should be on harmony and building up other believers. If you're engaging in some activity or living in a way that you know is discouraging to people close to you under the guise "the bible is unclear so there is freedom", you may need to rethink your choices.

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Romans 15

Key Points

(vv. 1-3) People pleasing is an unhealthy pattern. It is dangerous for any of us to find our identity and self-worth based on how we think others perceive us or what they say about us. However, when Christians find their identity and self-worth in a relationship with Jesus Christ, a natural by product is the ability to put the needs of others ahead of our own in a way that is glorifying to God. Our goal shouldn't be to please others, rather to please God which sometimes results in others being built up and encouraged.

(vv. 4-13) Spending consistent time in God's Word helps Christians persevere through challenges, be encouraging to one another, and maintain an eternal hopeful perspective. This is because God's word is filled with stories of people whose faith or friendship with others helped them learn, grow, persevere and remain hopeful in spite of life challenges. If you don't have a time, place and plan for spending time in God's word, you are missing out on an immeasurable treasure that greatly impacts your daily life!

(vv. 14-33) Paul knew that his life's work and God's mission for him was to go and make disciples, specifically of non-Jewish people. He made decisions based on his goal of making disciples wherever he went. He also never forgot his Jewish roots and continued in prayer for his people and for their salvation. Do you know that Paul's mission of making disciples is yours as well? See Matthew 28:19-20, where Jesus gives every Christian their marching orders. How are you at being intentional where you spend your time to make disciples? You can be intentional in your classroom, student organization, family, job or anywhere else you find yourself. Making disciples isn't just the responsibility of adults. It's yours, too! Let's go!

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Romans 16

Key Points

(vv. 1-16) While Paul mentions and encourages many men for their faithful service to him and the rest of the early church, there were many influential women who were an integral part of the establishment of the early church. A few Paul Mentions are Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, Persis, Tryphena and Tryphosa. Paul commends them for leaving a legacy of faithful sacrifice and love. The roles that women take in serving their churches, families, communities and places of work should be celebrated! The church should be the first place in our world women are encouraged, equipped and deployed to use their gifts to advance God's kingdom. The church as we know it was built on the faithfulness of women and should continue to build up the church in increasing measure moving forward.

(vv. 17-19) We are to be constantly on the lookout to protect the church from individuals that take pride in causing division or make it a point to spread false teachings. Their teachings may sound appealing to the masses, but our understanding of the truth should cause us to reject their message and motivate us to proclaim the Truth all the more. Of course, it stands to reason if you are going to be able to point out false teaching or divisiveness in the church you need a growing knowledge of the truth through God's word and genuine relationships with people to notice when divisive people are making inroads.

(vv. 20-27) One day Satan's dominion in this world will be over. One day God will say enough is enough. One day God will right every single wrong. This is a promise that we see over and over in Scripture and should offer us hope in the most difficult of times. Until the day God reverses the curse, Christians have the opportunity to faithfully remind and introduce people to the glorious news that Jesus is alive and wants a relationship with us!

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**KNOWN & TAUGHT ABOUT
ACCEPTED JESUS**

CHALLENGED TO GROW



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