



**FLOURISH  
BIBLE STUDY**

# ROMANS

LEADER'S GUIDE



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## INTRODUCTION: GETTING INTO ROMANS

I'm so glad you've chosen to study Romans! This powerful epistle shows us, like no other, why the gospel of Jesus Christ is such very good news. As we seek to better know this gospel, we'll learn about God's immense grace, our desperate need for a savior, and how we live in light of the redemption that comes through Christ. Since Romans is heavy on Christian doctrine, a good way to kick off your study is by making a case for why doctrine isn't something to fear—and why it isn't dry and boring. Knowing the doctrines of the Christian faith actually enhances our capacity for joy-filled living. At your first gathering, you can talk through the information in the introduction to set a foundation for the weeks ahead. Be sure to look at the “Bible Reading Plan” on page xvii. Point out to your group that the Scripture passages in the supplemental column are optional reading. Of course, as group leader, you can make them required reading if you wish, or you can decide on a week-to-week basis.

## WEEK 1: RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED

ROMANS 1:1–17

The gospel is the primary focus this week, especially as it's presented in 1:16–17. You'll want to focus a good bit of your discussion time reviewing the questions and answers in section 3. Be sure to point out Paul's passion for the gospel and talk in your group about why the gospel motivated him so powerfully. The goal in talking about Paul's passion is to spark our own passion in turn. We want to be like Paul, who was so captivated by salvation in Christ that he lived for it.

### 1. SET APART (1:1–7)

- ✦ What three things do we learn about Paul in verse 1?

**Answer:** We learn that Paul was (1) a servant of Jesus Christ, (2) an apostle, and (3) set apart to preach the gospel.

- ✦ It is through the resurrected Lord Jesus that grace comes to believers and transforms their lives, what Paul calls “the obedience of faith” in verse 5. What does Paul say here is the ultimate reason for why we receive this grace?

**Answer:** As new creations in Christ we have the ability to obey, and our obedience glorifies Christ among all the nations, not just Israel.

- ✦ The Roman Christians, and all of us too, are called to be saints. This isn't about trying to make ourselves perfect. Paul isn't lecturing us to be do-gooders to earn God's favor.

Saints in the New Testament means “set apart” or “different.” In light of everything Paul has said in these opening verses what makes a Christian set apart or different?

**Answer:** Christians are loved by God, called by God, belong to Jesus Christ, have received grace unto salvation, and are called to obedience.

## 2. THE PASSION OF PAUL’S HEART (1:8-15)

- ✦ What do we learn about the blessings of in-person fellowship from Paul’s desire to visit Rome?

**Answer:** Paul wants to strengthen God’s people but also recognizes that meeting in-person allows for mutual edification and encouragement among the body of Christ.

- ✦ Given all he’s said so far, how would you define the “harvest” Paul hopes to reap in Rome?

**Answer:** Paul hopes for believers to grow in obedience and produce fruit, and this comes from the continual preaching of the gospel.

- ✦ Why do you think Paul says he is “under obligation” to preach the gospel?

**Answer:** Paul was commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel. Additionally, his gratitude for being saved compels him.

## 3. WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT (1:16-17)

- ✦ He builds his case for the gospel, using the word *for*, or “for this reason,” four times in these two verses. As you consider how these *fors* are linked, answer the following questions:

- Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel? **Answer:** For it is the power of God for everyone who believes.
- Why is the gospel God’s power for salvation? **Answer:** For in the gospel, God’s righteousness is revealed.
- What does the gospel bring to light? **Answer:** God’s righteousness and our unrighteousness.
- How is the gospel received? **Answer:** The gospel is received by faith in Christ alone.

- ✦ Why do you think people might ever feel ashamed of this gospel?

**Answer:** Embracing the gospel is humbling because it involves acknowledging human weakness, sin, and inability to save ourselves. And in aligning ourselves with Jesus Christ publicly, we risk scorn and rejection from those who refuse him.

## WEEK 2: ROCK BOTTOM

ROMANS 1:18–3:20

In Week 1 we defined gospel and, hopefully, found ourselves wowed by the benefits it brings to those who embrace it by faith. This week we see why we are in desperate need of this gospel. Romans 1:18–25 is a really dark portion of the New Testament. You can start out your discussion by emphasizing that only by looking at the ugliness of sin and depravity, and the reality of God’s wrath, are we able to get why the gospel is such good news. In other words, we won’t love and embrace the gospel if we don’t see our need of it. You likely won’t have time to talk through every question and answer from this week’s lesson. If time is a factor, I suggest focusing your discussion on section 1 and then cover a few questions from sections 2–4—enough to make sure your group understands the gist of each section.

### 1. NO EXCUSE! (1:18–32)

- ✦ What particular act of unrighteousness does Paul identify in verse 18?

**Answer:** The act of unrighteousness is suppressing the truth.

- ✦ From this passage, what can be known about God from created things?

**Answer:** God’s eternal power and divine nature are seen in the created world. The beauty found in nature or the fierceness of storms reveal attributes of God. He is clearly perceived in all things that he has made. This is also known as God’s “general revelation.”

- ✦ Why do human beings have no excuse for this unrighteousness?

**Answer:** From the beginning of time God has clearly revealed himself in creation. Mankind is without excuse because as Paul says, they know God but refuse to worship and honor him as God.

- ✦ What sins does Paul name in verse 21, and what happens to the minds and hearts of those who commit these sins?

**Answer:** The primary sin is idolatry. Those he writes about have chosen to worship the creation rather than the creator. Their foolish thinking leads to darkened hearts. A refusal to worship God will always lead to frustration and foolishness.

- ✦ Identify each instance of “God gave them up” in this passage. What is that people are given up *to*, and in each case, how does this *giving up* work out in their lives?

**Answer: vv. 24–25:** God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts and this led to sexual impurity and the dishonoring of their bodies. **vv. 26–27:** God gave them

up to dishonorable passions and this led to homosexuality among men and women. Paul describes the men as consumed with passion for one another and then committing shameless acts with other men. The progression of lust is in view and leads to actions “against nature” and the due penalty for acting in this way will be evident in their lives (i.e. disease for violating God’s natural order). vv. 28–32: God gave them up to a debased mind, and they committed a myriad of sins as listed in verses 29–31. Mankind knows God and knows right from wrong. A debased mind not only tolerates sin but celebrates it.

## 2. SELF-DECEIVED (2:1–16)

- ✦ In 1:20 Paul declares that human beings are “without excuse.” He makes the same accusation here in 2:1. What reason is given in each case?

**Answer:** 1:20: All men know God because he has revealed himself in creation. 2:1: If you judge others for their sin, then you assume there is a standard of morality. You know there is a law giver, a Judge, because of your sense of morality, and yet you are guilty of the same vile practices of the Gentiles. The Jews are without excuse because while they know the law of God, they fail to keep it.

- ✦ Those who point a judgmental finger at others are hypocrites because they “practice the very same things” (v. 1). What “same things” does Paul have in mind here?

**Answer:** They practice all the sins mentioned in 1:29–31. Paul wants his readers to understand that they are being deceived by their own sin when they do not see themselves as sinners. They see themselves as superior and judge others, but Paul is putting them in the same group of sinners.

- ✦ Paul asks these hypocrites a rhetorical question: Do you suppose . . . that you will escape the judgment of God?” (v. 3). That’s indeed exactly what many of the Jews thought. Because they were God’s special chosen people of the old covenant, they presumed that they were safe from judgment. Oh, how wrong they were! For what will they be judged?

**Answer:** They will be judged for judging others, while their own hearts remain hard.

- ✦ Knowing the true God changes us. How is that shown in verse 4?

**Answer:** We recognize that it is the kindness, forbearance, and patience of God that leads us to repentance.

- ✦ Every one of us—Jew and Gentile alike—will be judged by God for what we do. How are the righteous contrasted with the unrighteous in verses 6–11?



**Answer (in chart provided):** Our works prove our salvation, such that those who are truly saved will seek the things of God, and those who are not saved will remain determinedly self-seeking.

- ✦ It's clear that the Jews thought that simply knowing the law was sufficient. How does Paul blow up this wrong thinking in verses 23–24?

**Answer:** The Jews boast in their knowledge of the law, but they dishonor God by not obeying it.

### 3. WHAT COUNTS—AND WHAT DOESN'T (2:25–3:8)

- ✦ How does Paul debunk the Jews' wrong thinking in this passage?

**Answer:** Circumcision was an outward sign of belonging to the covenant community of God in the Old Testament. Paul is explaining that the sign of circumcision pointed to the reality of a new heart given by the Spirit in Jesus Christ.

- ✦ Why were the Gentiles *not* at a spiritual disadvantage by virtue of being uncircumcised?

**Answer:** The Jews who had the law of God and were circumcised put their hope in their history of belonging to these old-covenant symbols, but their works were not salvific. The true covenant people of God are those who obey his law and whose hearts have been transformed (circumcised) by the Spirit.

### 4. WHY WE NEED SALVATION (3:9–20)

- ✦ What more do these quotes from the Psalms and other parts of the Old Testament reveal about the way human beings naturally relate to God?

**Answer:** Human beings are totally depraved, and their sin leads to all sorts of unrighteousness. They know God but they do not love him or seek him.

- ✦ We get insight in verses 19–20 about why God gave his law in the first place. First, it was given to reveal much about *God*—what a holy and just God requires of people. Second, it was given to reveal much about *human beings*. According to Paul's summary remarks here, what is this revelation?

**Answer:** The law exposes our sin against God's holy standards. The revelation is that no one can be justified by the law because no one can fulfill the law of God.

## WEEK 3: BY FAITH FROM BEGINNING TO END

ROMANS 3:21–4:25

You might want to begin group time by emphasizing these words from the introduction: “The heart of the gospel is found in this week’s passage. Here we see that since we have no righteousness of our own, God provided it for us by sending his very own Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for our sins through his death on the cross. And the way we receive it is simply by faith.” You’ll want to work your way through sections 1 and 2. Before moving on from here, make sure group members understand the “Gospel Terms” chart. You’ll be directed back to this chart later at other points during the study, so taking time to nail down the definitions is pretty important. If you, as leader, aren’t completely sure of the meaning of any of the terms, take time to get clarity from your pastor or another trusted source. I recommend Ligonier.org. At least touch on one or two questions from section 3, and allow a bit more time to discuss section 4.

### 1. A GRACIOUS GIFT (3:21–26)

- ✝ To be “justified” by God is to be declared righteous in his eyes. According to verse 24, how does this justified status come to us?

**Answer:** We are justified by grace; it is a gift of God.

- ✝ In verse 3:24, God’s righteousness is something he *gives*, but in 3:25 it’s what God *demand*s. And because this is true, unrighteousness must be punished. God would be untrue to himself if he merely excused sin or swept it under the rug. It has to be paid for. According to verse 25, how was this payment made, and who initiated the payment?

**Answer:** As sinners, we have nothing to offer God and cannot merit his favor. Our sin enslaves us and separates us from God. God’s grace was shown to us when he sent his son, Jesus Christ, to earth. Jesus obeyed the law and fulfilled all of its demands, and then died in order to pay for (atone) for the sins of his people. Jesus’s blood was the redemption price. God initiated salvation for his people and accomplished it for us; it is all a gift.

- ✝ Considering all we’ve uncovered in verses 21–26, explain why Paul says that God is both “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (v. 26).

**Answer:** God is just because he punishes sin. He is the justifier because he not only planned our redemption from sin, but he accomplished it and applied it to us! Jesus came to fulfill the law of God, died for the sin of his people (he was our propitiation), and bore God’s wrath on the cross. He atoned for our sin. He lived

and died for us; his righteousness belongs to us now. We are justified before God because we have been clothed with Christ's righteousness.

## **2. FAITH ALONE (3:27-31)**

- ✦ Paul's words in verses 27–31 are meant to uncover attitudes of the heart. What heart posture do you think is necessary to embrace the truth that faith is the only grounds for salvation?

**Answer:** A humble and submissive heart is necessary to embrace the truth that we cannot save ourselves. Faith is given to us by God, so we cannot work for it or boast in it. It, too, is a gift from God.

- ✦ In these verses Paul seeks to break down barriers between Jews and Gentiles and create unity between them. What does this convey to us about God's plan for his people, the church?

**Answer:** God's plan includes people from all tribes, nations, people, and tongues!

## **3. ALWAYS AND FOR EVERYONE (4:1-12)**

- ✦ Consider all the accounting terms Paul uses in Romans 4:1–8. He makes the point that workers are owed a paycheck: "To the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due." According to Paul, how is God's economy radically different?

**Answer:** An employee deserves to be paid for his work. We could never work to earn salvation or favor from God. In God's economy, salvation is a gift, and it must be received apart from any attempt to earn it.

- ✦ How does Abraham's story provide the answer to Paul's question in verse 9: "Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised?"

**Answer:** Abraham's circumcision pointed back to his justification, which happened before he was circumcised. In other words, Abraham was justified apart from circumcision. This gives hope to all people! God justifies the ungodly apart from works, including circumcision.

- ✦ According to what Paul writes in verses 11–12, in what way was God's promise to Abraham fulfilled? Once again, here is the promise: "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them. . . . 'So shall your offspring be' (Genesis 15:5).

**Answer:** Abraham is the father of the nation of Israel and the father of all the people who belong to God. Jesus is the promised offspring of Abraham (Galatians 3:16).



#### 4. GRACE-DEPENDENT (4:13-25)

- ✦ What had the potential to turn Abraham's faith toward unbelief?

**Answer:** Abraham's age and the barrenness of Sarah's womb could have caused him to doubt God's promises.

- ✦ How did Abraham strengthen his faith as he waited (fourteen years!) for God to keep his promise?

**Answer:** Abraham grew strong in faith as he glorified God by choosing to believe his promise. Glorifying God—trusting him to keep his promises—reveals our dependence and faith.

### WEEK 4: A BRAND-NEW REALITY

ROMANS 5:1-21

This week we begin to see how to live in light of all we've learned so far. The emphasis in this portion of Romans is on gospel blessings: in Christ we get peace, access to God, grace upon grace, and hope that doesn't fade under disappointment. As you work through sections 1 and 2, be sure to keep an eye on the clock to save time for the last part, section 4. When you review section 3, if you're running short on time, simply summarize the Inheritance chart on page 41 rather than review it verse by verse.

#### 1. REASONS TO REJOICE (5:1-5)

- ✦ Note what we learn in this passage about these blessings:

**Answer: Peace:** Our peace with God refers to our reconciliation. Our sin separated us and we were his enemies, but now we have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. **Grace:** We have obtained access by faith into God's grace. Our standing before God was condemnation, but now through faith in Christ we are held securely in God's undeserved favor and kindness toward his people. **Hope:** Hope refers to the confident assurance we have in God today and for eternity.

- ✦ How does each person of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—carry out a distinctive role in conveying these blessings to us?

**Answer: God the Father:** God pours out his love on us. **Christ the Son:** Jesus's life, death, and resurrection enable us to have peace with God. In our union with Christ, we are able to receive God's love and all of the benefits of Christ. **The Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit resides within us and unites us to Christ and God's love.

- ✦ Why does Paul say that we can actually rejoice in our sufferings?

**Answer:** Our suffering is productive; it produces endurance, character, and hope.

## 2. TRUE LOVE (5:6-11)

- ✦ List all the words you see in this passage about the nature of human beings. What do these characteristics about humans reveal about God's love?

**Answer:** *Weak, ungodly, sinner, and enemies of God.* God's love is not in response to anything good in us. His love is merciful, graceful, and undeserved.

- ✦ We understand that Christ's death on the cross paid the debt we owe to God for our sin, but our guilty *status* isn't the only change. What other change does Paul emphasize in this passage?

**Answer:** We are justified, saved from God's wrath and our sin, and reconciled to God. We are no longer enemies of God!

- ✦ As we get to the end of the passage, we see where all these blessings are meant to reorient our hearts. How is that revealed in verse 11?

**Answer:** Reconciliation brings us back into a relationship with God, and the benefits and joys of that relationship are realized here and now and for all eternity.

## 3. THE BETTER ADAM (5:12-19)

- ✦ Verse 12 is a succinct summary of what happened in Genesis 3:1-19. Review those verses in Genesis and jot down a sentence or two about how sin resulted in death, both spiritual and physical.

**Answer:** Eve was deceived by the serpent and the lust of her own heart and ate the fruit and then gave it to Adam. Their fall and failure to obey God led to the curse of sin and death on the whole creation. As our federal or covenantal head, Adam represents all humanity. Consequently, all men are born with sinful natures—enemies of God and children of wrath.

- ✦ What words does Paul use repeatedly in verses 15-17 to indicate how we receive the gospel?

**Answer:** Free gift.

- ✦ In verses 15-19 Paul makes comparisons between what we inherit from the first Adam and what we inherit from the second Adam, Jesus Christ. Draw out these comparisons in the Inheritance chart on page 41.

**Answer:** *Answers contained in the passages in the chart.*

#### 4. GRACE ABOUNDING (5:20-21)

- ✦ With that [the law being given to expose our lawlessness so we'll turn to Christ] in mind, what do you think Paul means when he writes that “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more”?

**Answer:** Because the law increases knowledge of sin, we become more aware of our sin. The good news is that God's grace doesn't just keep pace with our sinning; it outpaces our sin. Where sin increased, grace increased even more. We can never run out of God's grace.

### WEEK 5: SET FREE!

ROMANS 6:1-7:25

Grace will be the focus this week. The vital takeaway is that the grace we are given in Jesus sets us free, not to sin but to say no to sin. That's made clear by the end of the lesson. In order to get through the entire lesson, you won't be able to linger long in any one section. Before the group meets, circle one or two questions from each section that you think would be especially helpful to discuss. Covering the first and third Let's Talk questions is a good way to wrap up Paul's teaching about grace and Christian growth, and discussing them provides group members one more opportunity to ask (or ask again!) questions about this very rich portion of Romans.

#### 1. FROM DEATH TO LIFE (6:1-11)

- ✦ Once we've been united to Christ by faith, everything about us changes. What has happened to us to bring about this change?

**Answer:** We died to sin, were buried with Christ in baptism, and were raised to new life with Christ.

- ✦ What do you think it means to “walk in newness of life” (6:4)?

**Answer:** When we are united to Christ, we are given a new nature. We are no longer compelled to obey sin and its passions; instead, our new inner default loves to obey Christ and pursue righteousness. We also have the hope of being resurrected after death.

- ✦ How does our relationship with sin change when we come to Christ?

**Answer:** Sin remains but it no longer reigns over us—we have been set free from its power.

- ✦ Paul instructs us in verse 11 to see ourselves through the lens of our new position in Christ: “Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God.” How can such a viewpoint shape the way we live and the choices we make?

**Answer:** Those who are in Christ are free from the tyranny of sin. Sin will remain until glory, but in Christ we have the power to overcome sin. We cannot identify ourselves with our sin; our identity is found in Christ alone. His righteousness is ours, and our sin has been defeated. In keeping with our new nature, we should fight against sin and pursue holiness.

## 2. KICK IT OUT! (6:12-14)

- ✦ Paul gives a four-part command in verses 12 and 13 to keep us from sinning. Identify each of the four parts.

**Answer:** (1) Do not let sin reign in your bodies. (2) Do not obey sinful passions. (3) Do not present your body to be used as an instrument in sin. (4) Present your body to God, and seek righteousness.

- ✦ According to verse 12, what happens if we are careless about dealing with our sins?

**Answer:** If we’re careless with our sin, we give it fresh power over us, and we will obey its passions.

- ✦ What promise are we given in verse 14 that obedience to God is always possible?

**Answer:** This is a declarative statement of truth: sin will have no dominion over you. Sin cannot make demands of you because you are no longer under its rule. A slave who has been freed by his master no longer follows orders from him. This is why Paul is adamant that we know who we are and who we belong to. If we believe we’re still under sin’s reign, we’ll believe that obedience to Christ is impossible. Once we realize that sin has no dominion and no hold on us, obedience is always possible. Being united to Christ and indwelt by his Spirit enables us to obey God.

## 3. SLAVES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (6:15-23)

- ✦ How, according to Paul, does someone become enslaved, whether to sin or to righteousness?

**Answer:** Whichever one we offer ourselves to, we’ll find ourselves obeying.

- ✦ Slavery is defined as “submission to a dominating influence.” What does this slave imagery teach us about the choices we make?

**Answer:** In Adam, we were born as slaves to sin and made sinful choices. To die to sin and to be raised in Christ means that we have a new “dominating influ-

ence.” We are now slaves to Christ and act according to our new nature; we obey Christ and make righteous choices.

- ✦ Paul reminds believers that they were “once slaves of sin” but have “become obedient from the heart” and “slaves of righteousness” (vv. 17–18). As you think back on all Paul has written so far in the letter, note again here what produces this change.

**Answer:** While we are personally responsible for our actions and lifestyle, our salvation is all of grace. God’s grace saved us, and God’s grace will sustain us. We can rest in God’s grace and trust him to bring us all the way home to glory.

- ✦ Notice the words Paul uses for what sin is and does and how he contrasts sin with Christ’s righteousness. Note the distinctions in the Fruit of Sin, Fruit of Salvation chart.

**Answer:** *Answers contained in the passages provided in the chart.* Now summarize this passage by completing these sentences: Slavery to sin leads to: **death**. Slavery to God leads to: **eternal life in Christ**.

#### 4. RELEASED (7:1–6)

- ✦ The demands of the law itself haven’t changed—God requires the death penalty for those who fail to obey it perfectly. But Christians are no longer governed by these requirements. Why is the penalty for lawbreakers no longer “binding” for Christians?

**Answer:** Christ obeyed the law perfectly and died on our behalf, in our place. Therefore, being united to him means that his perfect obedience is reckoned to our account, and his death paid the penalty we deserved.

- ✦ What does Paul’s illustration reveal about the nature of a believer’s relationship with Christ?

**Answer:** It is personal, intimate, covenantal, and permanent.

- ✦ Freedom from the law doesn’t mean freedom from serving. How does Paul make this distinction in verse 6?

**Answer:** We are always bearing fruit. In the flesh, the law arouses sinful passions and we bear fruit for death. In Christ, we no longer look to the “written code” (the law) to try to *earn* God’s favor, but rather we *serve* in the power of the Spirit and produce righteous fruit.

#### 5. THE CRUX OF THE PROBLEM (7:7–13)

- ✦ Before his conversion to Christ, Paul had been a well-regarded Pharisee. Pharisees were devout Jews who prided themselves on knowing and keeping God’s law. They



trusted in their personal righteousness for salvation, and they looked down on those who didn't. This is what Paul is remembering when he writes, "I was once alive apart from the law." But the Spirit used the law to penetrate Paul's heart. How did this happen for Paul?

**Answer:** Without the law, we can live in blissful ignorance, thinking we're good people and that God is pleased with us. Paul recognized that he was sinning and breaking the law, the very law that promised him life. The Spirit used the law to expose the hidden sin—covetousness—in Paul's heart.

## 6. DOING WHAT WE HATE (7:14-25)

✦ What picture do verses 14–21 paint of the normal Christian life?

**Answer:** The Christian life exists within the tension of the "already" and "not yet." Our salvation is sure and secure for eternity, but the fullness of it won't be complete until we are home in heaven. So, although we are free from sin's power, we are not yet free from its bothersome presence. Paul acknowledged this by saying that he has the desire to do what is right, but he can't carry it out.

✦ According to verse 17, what is the reason for the conflict we face as we grow up in our faith?

**Answer:** Sin still dwells in us.

✦ Before we are saved, we don't care about pleasing God. What in us changes when we are united to Christ?

**Answer:** Once we are united to Christ, we delight in God's law and we desire to please him.

✦ When our struggle with sin feels especially difficult, why can we be confident that sin won't have the last word?

**Answer:** Jesus defeated sin and death on the cross, and his works have been applied to us!

## WEEK 6: YOUR BEST LIFE NOW—AND ALWAYS

ROMANS 8:1-39

Romans 8 is considered by many to be the greatest chapter in the Bible. An important component of this chapter is the work of the Holy Spirit, which comes front and center this week. When you get to section 4, you might want to point out that verse 28—"For

those who love God all things work together for good”—is often misunderstood and misapplied. The way to understand verse 28 is by considering it in the context of the entire passage, especially verses 29–30. In order to get through the lesson in the allotted time frame, you might find it helpful again this week, before your group meeting, to select just one or two questions from each section to discuss, being sure to include one or two of the Let’s Talk questions in the mix.

### 1. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (8:1–11)

- ✦ What does this passage tell us about unbelievers?

**Answer:** Unbelievers are hostile toward God, they cannot submit to God’s law, and they cannot please God.

- ✦ We play no part in our justification, but our participation is vital in sanctification. The Spirit works, and we cooperate with what he’s doing. How is that shown in verses 5–8?

**Answer:** Believers set their mind on the things of the Spirit; they think about the things the Spirit thinks about, and this leads to peace and life.

- ✦ No matter how much we grow spiritually in this life, our bodies will one day die unless Christ returns before then to take us home to heaven (v. 10). Despite this inevitable end, why is there reason for hope rather than despair?

**Answer:** We can look forward to a future bodily resurrection. The Spirit who raised Christ from the dead will also raise our bodies from the dead.

- ✦ It’s so clear here in these verses that all three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are involved in our salvation and ongoing transformation. Note what is said here about each person.

**Answer: Father:** the Spirit of the Father dwells in the believer. The Father raised Christ from the dead. **Son:** the Son accomplished our salvation by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The Spirit of the Son dwells in us. **Holy Spirit:** the Spirit unites us to Christ and applies to us all the benefits of his death and resurrection.

### 2. HEIRS OF LIFE (8:12–17)

- ✦ Once again, the Spirit is front and center in the work of sanctification. What do you learn about the Spirit’s sanctifying work in each of the following verses?

**Answer: v. 13:** By the Spirit, we can put to death the deeds of the body. **v. 14:** We are led by the Spirit. **v. 15:** Through the work of the Spirit, we know and relate

to God as our Father. v. 16: The Spirit lets us know—he testifies with our spirit—that we are the children of God.

- ✦ What do you think it means practically to live according to the Spirit rather than the flesh? (You might want to take a look at Galatians 5:16–26.)

**Answer:** As we immerse ourselves in the Word and prayer, as we fellowship with other believers, the Spirit transforms and strengthens us to fight against sinful, selfish desires and pursue holiness in thought, word, and deed. The Spirit produces fruit in the lives of believers: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

- ✦ As God’s children, we inherit all the promises that God’s firstborn Son, our Lord Jesus, has inherited. What does verse 17 mark out as an indicator of our right to inherit?

**Answer:** We are coheirs with Christ.

### 3. THE BEST IS YET TO COME (8:18–25)

- ✦ How can Paul’s mindset in verse 18 shape our view of suffering and encourage perseverance?

**Answer:** Our suffering pales in comparison to the glory that exists in heaven for us. We, along with all of creation, await the end of this earthly kingdom, when we will be made new and live forever with our Lord.

- ✦ Before Adam and Eve sinned, life in the garden of Eden was perfect. Everything God made flourished in harmony. When sin entered, all that changed. Plants and animals and all creation were negatively affected by human sin. God told Adam, “Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you” (Genesis 3:17–18). Paul reflects on sin’s mar-  
ring of creation here in Romans 8. How do the following passages help us understand the hope Paul anticipates?

**Answer:** **Isaiah 11:6–9:** Predator and prey will coexist peacefully. Young children and nursing babies will interact peacefully with once dangerous creatures. There will be no death or fear of any of God’s creatures. **1 Corinthians 15:19–26, 42–49, 51–58:** God will destroy all his enemies, including death. We will be made like Christ with resurrected bodies. All in Christ will rise with Christ and death will be no more. **Revelation 22:1–5:** We will once again dwell with God in paradise. We will see God and will reign with him forever!

#### 4. ALL FOR GOOD (8:26–30)

- ✦ The Spirit is intimately involved in our prayers. How can verses 26–27 shape or re-shape the way we pray?

**Answer:** Our weaknesses can keep us from praying or offering right prayers, but the Spirit intercedes for us, even when we don't know how to pray. We don't have to worry about using the right words because the Spirit perfects our prayers and conforms them to the perfect will of the Father.

- ✦ In verse 28 Paul assures believers that all things work together for their good. According to verses 29–30, how are we meant to under this wonderful promise?

**Answer:** God had a plan from the beginning, and that plan results in his children being conformed into the image of Christ. Nothing that happens to us is pointless or wasted, but is purposeful and for our ultimate good.

- ✦ The blessings of salvation named in verses 29–30 are sometimes called “the golden chain” of salvation. (If you aren't sure of the meaning of the terms used here, see The Golden Chain chart on p. 63.) The order in which these blessings appear isn't random—it's very purposeful. List these blessings in the order they appear:

**Answer:** (1) God has known, from before time began, all his children. (2) God determined ahead of time that we would be conformed to be like Jesus. (3) God calls his children into the faith. (4) God justifies—declares righteous—those whom he calls. (5) God glorifies (perfects) all those whom he justifies.

- ✦ What do you learn from the golden chain about your own salvation?

**Answer:** We learn that we did not choose God, but he chooses us to receive the blessings of salvation.

- ✦ According to verse 29, what is God's overarching purpose for bringing us to himself?

**Answer:** To make us like Jesus so that we are his “siblings” in every sense of the word.

#### 5. GOD'S OVER-THE-TOP LOVE (8:31–39)

- ✦ After meditating on verses 31–39, write down in your own words the answers to the questions Paul asks.

- Who can be against us? (v. 31) **Answer:** People in our lives; bosses, coworkers, family, and, of course, the enemy of our soul, Satan.
- What can we count on God to give us? (v. 32) **Answer:** If God gave us his only Son, he will give us everything we need for life and godliness.

• Who can condemn us for sin? (vv. 33–34) **Answer:** No one can condemn us because the only one with the power to do so has justified us. And the one who made our justification possible is seated at the right hand of God and is praying for us.

• What can negatively affect Christ’s love for us? (vv. 35–39) **Answer:** Nothing.

✦ What is the ultimate guarantee that we will make it home to heaven?

**Answer:** The love of God toward us in Christ Jesus.

## WEEK 7: ALL HEARTS IN GOD’S HANDS

ROMANS 9:1–33

Given the primary theme this week—election—there are fewer questions to work through. You’ll want to help your group see election as a great blessing. First, we don’t ever have to worry whether our faith is strong enough to warrant salvation. All genuine faith, whether weak or strong, is God’s gift to us, not something we muster up. And understanding election eliminates the fear of our imperfect evangelism efforts. The doctrine of election reveals that salvation, both our own and that of others, isn’t up to us. You’ll also want to clarify that Paul isn’t trying to be exclusive—a “We’re in, and they’re out” sort of thinking. His overarching point in chapter 9 is to show that God always keeps his promises. Before the group meets, you might find it helpful to check out the Ligonier Ministries website ([ligonier.org](http://ligonier.org)), which has some short, easy-to-follow articles related to the doctrine of election.

### 1. DOES GOD KEEP HIS PROMISES? (9:1–13)

✦ The majority of Jews in Paul’s day rejected Christ as the long-promised Messiah. What makes this rejection particularly tragic?

**Answer:** The Jews were God’s chosen people. They experienced his power, protection, and glory. God had lived among them. He had given them the law and made promises to them, and they lived in a covenantal relationship with him. And Jesus himself was born into this Jewish heritage!

✦ What truth about God is Paul emphasizing through this look back at Israel’s history?

**Answer:** Abraham’s story reveals that just being born an Israelite doesn’t automatically guarantee a share in God’s covenant promises. Abraham had two sons: one of promise, Isaac, and one of flesh, Ishmael. Rebekah had two children, and God



chose the younger to inherit his promises, going against cultural tradition. God's promises have been fulfilled to his covenantal people—those who have real faith—which isn't the same as simply being from the nation of Israel.

## 2. IS GOD UNFAIR? (9:14-18)

- ✦ How is the justice question answered through God's words to Moses here?

**Answer:** Justice would be giving all of us what we deserve—death. God's mercy and compassion are offered to whomever he chooses, and it is not based on works or performance.

- ✦ First, what two reasons does the Lord give for why Pharaoh came to rule?

**Answer:** (1) So that God would show his power in Pharaoh's life. (2) So that God's name would be proclaimed in all the earth.

- ✦ Pharaoh played a huge part in Israel's history, so it makes sense that Paul illustrates his point with what happened to Pharaoh during the ten plagues God sent on Egypt. Study the Pharaoh's Heart chart and then summarize how Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

**Answer:** As an unbeliever, Pharaoh's heart was hardened against the Lord to begin with. The Lord hardening his heart is another way of stating that the Lord began to remove his common grace or his hand from Pharaoh's life, which entrenched the hardness of Pharaoh's heart.

## 3. WHO'S AT FAULT? (9:19-29)

- ✦ In Paul's argument, the "honorable" are those God has redeemed, and the "dishonorable" are those being hardened. What is Paul teaching about God in this illustration?

**Answer:** The creator has every right to do whatever he wants with his creation; like the potter with the clay. All humanity can be seen as one lump of clay destined for dishonorable use because all are born into sin and condemned. The fact that God chooses some out of the lump for honorable use demonstrates God's mercy and grace.

- ✦ What do these words from Isaiah clarify about God's promise to save the Jewish people, Israel?

**Answer:** God saves a remnant of people out of Israel, but not all Israel in general. God saves his people, but not in the way they expected him to.

#### 4. GOD'S WAY, OR NO WAY AT ALL (9:30-33)

✝ What is God's way of keeping his promise to save?

**Answer:** He fulfilled his promises in his own way and in his timing: righteousness by faith and not by the law.

✝ For whom is Jesus Christ “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense”?

**Answer:** Jews (and anyone else) who want to become righteous by obeying the law.

### WEEK 8: MYSTERY MADE KNOWN

ROMANS 10:1-11:36

Reading through Romans 10–11 is basically like listening in while Paul calls out his Jewish friends on wrong thinking and seeks to correct them. Your goal this week is to get your group into what's going on here, past the Jew-Gentile particulars to the big picture about God himself, that he's always at work to accomplish his plans. A major takeaway and point of application from this week's lesson is that evangelism matters. Our sharing of the gospel matters a lot. Rather than trying to work through all the questions in each section, you might want to pick just a few, and then summarize the main points of Romans 10–11 and address specific questions the group has. You can rely on the three Let's Talk questions to guide your discussion.

#### 1. BEING “RELIGIOUS” DOESN'T COUNT (10:1-4)

✝ Why does Paul say that the Jews are shut out from salvation?

**Answer:** The Jews did not submit to God's righteousness; they wanted to establish their own righteousness.

#### 2. LOOKING FOR LOOPHOLES (10:5-21)

✝ According to verses 9–10, how is saving faith evidenced?

**Answer:** Saving faith is evidenced in our confession that Jesus is Lord, and with our heart (belief) that God raised him from the dead.

✝ How should Paul's words here help unify the Jewish and Gentile Christians in the Roman church?

**Answer:** There is no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile. The Lord is Lord of all people and anyone who calls on his name will be saved.

✦ Look at the questions Paul poses in verses 14–15 and answer the following questions.

- What enables someone to *call on* God? **Answer:** They have to believe in God.
- What enables someone to *believe* the gospel? **Answer:** Hearing the gospel preached.
- What enables someone to *hear* the gospel? **Answer:** Preachers need to preach the gospel.
- What enables someone to *preach* the gospel? **Answer:** God sends preachers to the people.

✦ What does verse 17 teach us about our efforts to share the gospel with the lost?

**Answer:** The gospel carries the power of salvation to the lost, so they need to hear it! Saving faith comes from hearing the gospel.

✦ According to Paul's quote from Isaiah in Romans 10:20, how did the Gentiles find the Lord?

**Answer:** The Lord revealed himself to the Gentiles.

✦ God's plan was never either-or (Israel or Gentiles) but always both-and. At a time when the church at Rome was made up mostly of believing Gentiles, what would Paul's final Isaiah quote in verse 21 have communicated to both Jews and Gentiles?

**Answer:** The Jews were given the privilege of knowing God, but they disobeyed in unbelief. The Gentiles were brought in because of God's mercy, not because of anything they did. This should have been a warning to the Gentiles too. God requires faith and the obedience that arises from it.

### 3. A REMNANT (11:1–12)

✦ Why would Paul's reminder of his Jewish background prove his point that God hasn't rejected Israel?

**Answer:** Paul is a Jew, and his salvation is through faith by the grace of God.

✦ In the midst of Israel's full-scale rejection of God, a select number—a remnant—will turn back. What word is applied repeatedly in 11:5–6 to this remnant?

**Answer:** Grace—no one deserves salvation, but a remnant will be saved by grace.

✦ According to verse 6, what is the Elijah episode meant to illustrate?

**Answer:** God always saves a remnant of his people. He did it in Elijah's day, he did it in Paul's day, and he will continue to preserve his people until the very end.

- ✦ How do these quotes from the Old Testament remind you of what happened to Pharaoh back in Egypt? Look back at the Pharaoh's Heart chart on pages 75–76 if you need a reminder.

**Answer:** God hardened Pharaoh's heart in the Exodus, and now, for the same unbelief, the hearts of his people Israel are likewise hardened.

- ✦ What good does God plan to bring from Israel's rejection of Christ?

**Answer:** The riches of God, including salvation, come to the Gentiles because of Israel's rejection of Christ.

#### **4. FIRSTFRUITS AND GRAFTED BRANCHES (11:13–24)**

- ✦ Paul had been set apart by God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and he seeks to steward his ministry well. What motivation for his Gentile ministry does he reveal here?

**Answer:** He hopes to make the Jews jealous in order that they might be saved.

- ✦ How does this plan and the way it unfolds over centuries enrich your knowledge of how God accomplishes his purposes?

**Answer:** God's ways are beyond our comprehension, but we can be sure that he has a plan in and through everything that happens.

- ✦ What does Paul's warning to the Gentiles seem to indicate about what was happening in the Roman church?

**Answer:** It seems that the Gentiles were gloating over their inclusion and looking down on the Jews. They might have forgotten that their salvation is of grace and completely undeserved.

- ✦ What does Paul tell the Gentiles to keep them humble?

**Answer:** Gentiles have no cause for boasting because salvation is all of grace. Prideful boasting is what led to the hardening of the Jews' hearts.

#### **5. MYSTERY MADE KNOWN (11:25–32)**

- ✦ The "mystery" isn't a perplexing puzzle of some sort. It's about something that was hidden but is now revealed. What is uncovered in verse 25?

**Answer:** A partial hardening of the Jewish people's hearts will occur until the fullness of the Gentiles have been converted.

- ✦ Paul has written already about Israel being made jealous through God's extending his grace to Gentiles. Where do you detect indicators of that jealousy in this passage?

**Answer:** The indicator is that the Gentiles have received mercy. By God's design, this provokes Israel's jealousy, which we know because God knows the exact best way to accomplish his plans and has the power to ensure that they are accomplished.

#### 6. A FITTING CONCLUSION (11:33–36)

- ✦ What do you think Paul means when he writes that God's ways are "unsearchable" and "inscrutable"?

**Answer:** Even though God has chosen to reveal himself through creation, his written word, and Jesus, we cannot comprehend him fully and completely. His ways and his wisdom are far beyond our ability to understand.

- ✦ How would you answer the questions Paul asks in verses 34–35, words he borrows from Isaiah 40:13?

**Answer:** No man or woman can comprehend the mind of the Lord, let alone counsel him!

- ✦ Write a summary of verse 36 in your own words.

**Answers (varied):** God existed before creation, all of creation was made through him, and all things are for his glory. He alone deserves all the glory.

### WEEK 9: BE WHAT YOU ARE

ROMANS 12:1–15:13

This is the "practical application" week, as Paul explains how believers are to live in light of the gospel truths he's set out in the first eleven chapters of Romans. Your biggest challenge this week will be narrowing down what to focus on, which you might want to determine before the group gathers. If you decide to review all the sections, perhaps choose one question from each to discuss. Definitely set up the discussion from Romans 12:1–2. Everything in these chapters flows from these first two verses.

#### 1. LIVING SACRIFICES (12:1–2)

- ✦ In the Mosaic covenant of the Old Testament, God's people offered sacrifices of grain and animals. In the new covenant established in Christ's blood, people offer themselves. How does Paul view this offering in verse 1?



**Answer:** The fitting response to the good news of the gospel is to offer every part of ourselves and our lives to God as living sacrifices.

- ✦ Verse 2 contains a positive command and a negative one. They are both necessary and, in fact, work together to grow us in holiness. On a practical level, how do we keep from being conformed to worldly ways and at the same time renew our minds?

**Answer:** Our minds are transformed and renewed by God's word and the power of the Spirit. This leads to discernment, which teaches us how to act in a godly way in all our various circumstances.

## **2. ALL FOR ONE, AND ONE FOR ALL (12:3–21)**

- ✦ Why do you think humility is an important component of unity among believers?

**Answer:** Humility is willingness to consider others' needs, thoughts, and feelings and thereby build them up, which results in the health and good of the whole body. God gives us gifts, so we cannot take credit for them.

- ✦ Paul instructs Christians in no uncertain terms to put their spiritual gifts to use. How does his metaphor of a body demonstrate how the gifts are meant to function?

**Answer:** All of our bodily systems have to work together in order for us to remain healthy. Likewise, we need to work together in the church to edify one another and glorify God.

- ✦ What does it mean to “abhor” evil?

**Answer:** To abhor evil is to repudiate it, giving it no room in our hearts, minds, and lives.

- ✦ Paul showcases a holy enthusiasm within the church. Why do you think this is important?

**Answer:** Joyful enthusiasm is contagious, and it results when individual Christians see themselves as belonging to all other Christians as a family.

- ✦ Disagreements, misunderstandings, and sins mar human relationships, even within the church. Paul cites Jesus as well as the Old Testament to instruct us in how to handle these relational breaches. Note from verses 18–21 the Christ-honoring way to deal with relational breaches.

**Answer:** As Christians, we are to do everything we can to live peaceably with everyone. We aren't to seek our own advantage or get even when wronged, but, instead, we leave justice to God. When we trust him to take care of us, we find freedom to love and care for others, even our enemies.

### 3. SERVING ALL GOD'S SERVANTS (13:1-14)

- ✦ What spiritual reason does Paul give in verses 1–2 for why we must submit to our government?

**Answer:** All authority, including civic authority, comes from God and is appointed by God. If we resist governing authorities, then we resist what God has appointed.

- ✦ In what way are governing authorities God's servants?

**Answer:** God sets up governments to enforce laws in order to protect the innocent and restrain evil.

- ✦ What might tempt you to compromise paying money, respect, or honor as Paul instructs in 13:7?

**Answer:** When we don't agree with our leaders and don't approve of how and where they spend our money, we might be tempted to skirt our responsibility to them. It is challenging to respect and honor people we don't agree with.

- ✦ What has always been the overarching purpose for all the various commandments in God's law?

**Answer:** To show us the way to love the Lord and love our neighbor.

- ✦ Christ could return at any time, and when he does, we want to be ready. The “night” is everything that's wrapped up with worldly sinfulness, and we are to cast off the attitudes and activities that tempt us as we'd toss away filthy clothes. How do verses 13 and 14 show us how to cast off dark works and put on “the armor of light”?

**Answer:** We need to turn away from sin and instead practice holiness. We do this by “putting on” Christ, in other words, actively engaging in prayer, worship, Bible reading, and Christian fellowship.

### 4. DON'T JUDGE! (14:1-14)

- ✦ How does Paul urge each side to respond to the other side?

**Answer: The weak in faith:** We are to accept those who think differently from us and not fight over opinions. **Those who eat freely:** We are not to despise or judge the one who is weak in their faith.

- ✦ What is the basis for Paul's instructions to both sides?

**Answer:** The Lord is the only rightful judge; we are not. We are not to pass judgment on people whose views differ from ours on secondary matters, that is, matters that don't contradict the truths of the gospel.

- ✦ What is Paul's primary point in verses 5–12?

**Answer:** God alone has the right to judge his people, and we will give an account of our behavior.

- ✦ How can those whose conscience allows them to enjoy all food demonstrate love to those whose consciences aren't free?

**Answer:** We can set aside our freedom for the good of our neighbor. We show love to our brothers and sisters when we safeguard their conscience, even at the expense of our personal liberties and enjoyments.

- ✦ According to 14:23, what is the godly way to respond to a bothered conscience?

**Answer:** If we have doubts about a particular practice, we should refuse to participate in it. If we violate our conscience, we sin. When we become aware that we have sinned, we must confess and repent to prevent our conscience from becoming insensitive to the Spirit's nudges.

## 5. WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE (15:1–13)

- ✦ If our conscience is free to enjoy something, how can we demonstrate Christlike love to those who don't feel free?

**Answer:** We have addressed this already, but it's good to review it here for emphasis. We can choose to please our neighbor and not ourselves. We can give up our selfish desires and build up our weaker brother.

- ✦ What is the overarching reason that Jews and Gentiles—all believers—should strive for unity, even when (maybe especially when) it necessitates personal sacrifice?

**Answer:** Christ is the ultimate example of denying himself for the benefit of his people. We should follow his example and love one another, live in harmony, and glorify God with one unified voice.

## WEEK 10: A PORTRAIT OF FAITHFULNESS

ROMANS 15:14–16:27

In this wrap-up week, be sure to note that Paul practices what he preaches. You should be able to get through each section if you keep the discussion moving along, but if you start to run short, be sure to save time for section 5, "A Final Warning," and for the third and final Let's Talk question.

### 1. A FAITHFUL PASTOR (15:14–21)

- ✦ How does Paul encourage the believers in the church at Rome?

**Answer:** Paul is convinced that the believers in Rome are demonstrating spiritual maturity. Paul sees their goodness and is satisfied in knowing that they are filled with knowledge and have the ability to teach one another.

- ✦ To what does Paul attribute the success of his ministry?

**Answer:** He attributes his ministry success to Christ's working in and through him.

### 2. A FAITHFUL PLANNER (15:22–29)

- ✦ Paul has yet to visit the believers in Rome. What is the reason for the hindrance he alludes to in verse 22? (Hint: look back at verses 18–21).

**Answer:** Paul was delayed through desiring to fulfill his ministry from Jerusalem to Illyricum by preaching the gospel to those who had not heard it.

- ✦ What do we learn in this passage about the way in which the body of Christ thrives?

**Answer:** The body thrives on togetherness and mutual care.

### 3. PRAYER PARTNERS (15:30–33)

- ✦ Paul's concern about the Jerusalem church is that troublemakers had spread false reports about him, and these reports had reached Jerusalem and poisoned the minds of the believers there. According to Acts 21:17, how was this prayer answered?

**Answer:** The brothers in Jerusalem received him gladly. Clearly, by God's gracious working, their minds had not been poisoned.

### 4. THE BOND OF BELIEVERS (16:1–16)

- ✦ What do we learn about Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila in verses 4–5? (To get a sense of the couple's history with Paul, you'll find it in Acts 18:1–28.)

**Answer:** They risked their lives for Paul.

- ✦ On this list we see Gentiles and Jewish converts (Paul's kinsmen), rich and poor, men and women. What stands out to you in these greetings about the Christians in Rome and about Paul himself?

**Answer:** *varied.*

## 5. A FINAL WARNING (16:17–20)

- ✦ What does Paul reveal about false teachers in these verses that can help us be discerning?

**Answer:** False teachers cause divisions and create obstacles to following the truths set forth in the gospel. They use smooth talk and flattery to try to deceive God's people.

- ✦ We are told in verse 17 that false teachers are to be avoided. Why do you think Paul urges such a radical approach?

**Answer:** False teachers can tear a church apart, wreck relationships, and cause division, which brings dishonor to the name of Christ. False teachers serve themselves rather than Christ.

- ✦ Paul links false teaching to Satan—a powerful enemy—yet his words in verse 20 point back to Christ's victory over Satan on the cross and give us hope to persevere. How does Genesis 3:14–15 show us this connection?

**Answer:** God promised that Christ would crush the serpent's [Satan's] head.

## 6. GLORY FOREVERMORE (16:21–27)

- ✦ Make a list of God's attributes that are praised in Paul's closing doxology.

**Answer:** God is mighty to save. God reveals himself and his redemptive plans. God transforms sinners into faithful men and women. God is wise. God is glorious.