



WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY 2018 - 2019

# PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY - 2018-2019

**WELCOME!** I'm so glad you're joining us as we read through Romans this semester. Inside this packet you will find a guide to take you through the reading.

## THE BASIC STRUCTURE LOOKS THE SAME EVERY WEEK:

**MEMORIZE** – This year we will work together to memorize Romans 8: 1-11 a little bit at a time. I encourage you to write your weekly verse on an index card and keep it somewhere you can read over it constantly. (The dash of your car, taped to your mirror, etc)

*"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*  
*Joshua 1:8*

**READ** – You will find the reading for the week to be an average of 1 chapter a week, broken up into 5 chunks. Ideally you would find 5 days to read in the week. If you have a week that doesn't allow for that, combine the reading as needed to try to get through the whole section by the next meeting.

**JOURNAL** – After each daily reading you will find some prompts for journaling. The daily journaling is meant to be quick and observational. You may have more time for it on certain days than others and that's fine. You don't need to go through the questions one by one or answer them all, they're meant to direct your thinking. Jot down what you are noticing/wondering/concluding. It's a comprehension tool, use it as a way to bullet point the main events of the passage you just read so you can go back and remind yourself of what has happened from time to time.

**DEEPER REFLECTION** – One day a week (ideally towards the end of the week when you've read most of the section) we are asking you to block out time to dive in a little deeper. You will find some questions and direction to guide you into a certain section of text. Use this if it helps, or feel free to explore a different passage you're feeling drawn to. The goal is to find yourself in the story, unpack the heart behind what is going on in a certain text and honestly evaluate where you are at today, in relation to it. Give God time to speak to you, challenge you, encourage you. Give yourself time to figure out how you will respond.

*\*\*We will spend the majority of our small group time each week talking and sharing from our journaling and deeper reflection sections, as well as lifting each other up in prayer.*

**ANCHOR & APPLY** - About once a month we will pause from our reading of Romans for the week and instead focus on a Psalm. [You will see this format change in your Homework for that week]

Often in the midst of our passion to study the Word of God, we can forget to passionately enjoy an intimate relationship WITH God. These weeks we will focus both on anchoring ourselves to some contemplative practices as well as practically applying wisdom and understanding to the way God has made us as human beings and what that means for our relationships with Him, ourselves and each other.

*"You keep her in perfect peace; whose mind is stayed on you, because she trusts in you."* -  
*Isaiah 26:3-4*

# **FALL SEMESTER SCHEDULE**

**EVENT ROOM // THURSDAY MORNINGS 9-11AM**

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## **WEEK 1 – 9/13**

First Meeting! Come meet your groups and hear what we'll be doing this year!  
Breakfast by Leaders  
Homework : Week 1 // Romans 1: 1-15 (to be discussed on 9/20)

## **WEEK 2 – 9/20**

Breakfast by:  
Homework : Week 2 // Romans 1: 16-32 (to be discussed 9/27)

## **WEEK 3 - 9/27**

Breakfast by:  
Homework : Week 3 // Romans 2 (to be discussed 10/4)

## **WEEK 4 - 10/4**

Breakfast by:  
Homework : Week 4 // Romans 3 (to be discussed 10/11)

## **WEEK 5 - 10/11**

Breakfast by:  
Homework : Week 5 // Anchor & Apply (to be discussed 10/18)

## **WEEK 6 - 10/18**

Breakfast by:  
Homework : Week 6 // Romans 4 (to be discussed 10/25)

## **WEEK 7 - 10/25**

Breakfast by:  
Homework : Week 7 // Romans 5 (to be discussed 11/1)

## **WEEK 8 - 11/1**

Breakfast by:  
Homework : Week 8 // Romans 6 (to be discussed 11/8)

## **WEEK 9 - 11/8**

Breakfast by:  
Homework : Week 9 // Anchor & Apply (to be discussed 11/15)

**WEEK 10 - 11/15**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 10 // Romans 7 (to be discussed 11/29)

**NO MEETING 11/22 - HAPPY THANKSGIVING!****WEEK 11 - 11/29**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 11 // Romans 8: 1-21 (to be discussed 1/17)

**SEMESTER BREAK!! WE WILL SEE YOU IN THE NEW YEAR!!**

*\*Remember if you did not register/pay for the whole year in September to re-register now!*

# **SPRING SEMESTER SCHEDULE**

EVENT ROOM // THURSDAY MORNINGS 9-11AM



## **WEEK 12 - 1/17**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 12 // Romans 8: 22-39 (to be discussed 1/24)

## **WEEK 13 - 1/24**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 13 // Anchor & Apply (to be discussed 1/31)

## **WEEK 14 - 1/31**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 14 // Romans 9 (to be discussed 2/7)

## **WEEK 15 - 2/7**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 15 // Romans 10 (to be discussed 2/14)

## **WEEK 16 - 2/14**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 16 // Anchor & Apply (to be discussed 2/21)

## **WEEK 17 - 2/21**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 17 // Romans 11 (to be discussed 2/28)

## **WEEK 18 - 2/28**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 18 // Romans 12 (to be discussed 3/7)

## **WEEK 19 - 3/7**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 19 // Romans 13 (to be discussed 3/14)

## **WEEK 20 - 3/14**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 20 // Anchor & Apply (to be discussed 3/21)

**WEEK 21 - 3/21**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 21 // Romans 14 (to be discussed 3/28)

**WEEK 22 - 3/28**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 22 // Romans 15 (to be discussed 4/4)

**WEEK 23 - 4/4**

Breakfast by:

Homework : Week 23 // Romans 16 (to be discussed 4/11)

**WEEK 24 - 4/11**

Last Meeting!! Let's celebrate! Come ready to share what God has done in your heart over the course of this study and what you are going to do about it!

# WEEK 1 // SEPTEMBER 13-19

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED ON 9/20

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:1 “*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

## READ:

- 1- *Romans 1:1-1:4*
- 2- *Romans 1:5-1:7*
- 3- *Romans 1:8-10*
- 4- *Romans 1:11-12*
- 5- *Romans 1:13-15*

**JOURNAL:** Everyday after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

### 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

### 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

### 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

### 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## DEEPER REFLECTION:

As we begin our look at this letter that Paul wrote to a growing group of Christians in Rome, let's make sure we have a basic understanding of what was going on at the time, where Paul is writing from and why. If you aren't familiar with the way in which Paul became a follower of Jesus, take some time and read the story of his conversion in **Acts 9:1-26**.

After years of zealously pursuing and imprisoning Christians, Paul is now an apostle of Jesus Christ. He travels around preaching about the risen Jesus, as people come to faith he helps establish churches in the area. As he travels he writes letters to the churches to encourage, instruct and correct them as they grow. Here he is writing to the church in Rome most likely from Corinth while he is staying with the church there for the winter. This is taking place about 25 years after Jesus has been crucified.

Read Paul's introduction to his letter in verses 1-7. Sometimes in these long, run-on sentences from Paul we can get a little lost on the point he is trying to make. It can be helpful to write these sentences out by beginning a new indented paragraph each time he qualifies a phrase or statement. Often you will be able to see one main sentence pull away from all the rest of the details.

### **Paul**

- A servant of Christ Jesus.
- Called to be an apostle.
- *Set apart for the gospel of God,*
  - which he (God) promised beforehand [through his prophets] in the holy scriptures,
- *concerning His Son,*
  - who was descended from David [according to the flesh]
  - and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.
- *Jesus Christ our Lord*
  - through whom we have received grace and apostleship
  - *to bring about the obedience of faith*
    - for the sake of his name among all the nations*
      - including you
      - who are called to belong to Jesus Christ

*I then like to take all the truths that Paul is stating and make a bullet list to reflect on:*

- Paul is a servant of Jesus and an apostle.
- He has been set apart for the gospel of God.
- This Gospel message was promised ahead of time and concerns God's Son Jesus Christ.
- We know Jesus was descended from David's lineage and was also proven to be God when by the power of the Spirit He rose from the dead.
- This Jesus, gives us grace and apostleship in order to bring about obedience of faith.
- That obedience of faith is for the sake of God's name being glorified among the nations, and that includes the -Romans he's writing to then and you and me today.
- All who read this he is declaring 'called to belong to Jesus Christ'.

*As you reflect on the list of statements Paul is making in his introduction, what stands out to you? Surprises or confuses you? Write down any questions or comments you have.*

After Paul introduces himself and his purpose he begins to thank the Christians in Rome because he has been hearing such great things about their faith. He wants them to know that he is longing to come be with them. And that when he comes his goal will be to encourage them and strengthen them, and that he anticipates that he will also be encouraged by being with them. One of the ways he says he is eager to do that is by preaching the gospel to them.

Considering Paul says he is ‘set apart’ for the gospel, and that he is ‘eager to preach the gospel’ among the church of believers he is writing to it feels important that we begin by making sure we have an understanding of what this ‘gospel’ is.

- What do you think the gospel is?

Sometimes I think I fall in to a rut of thinking about the gospel as a one time set of information that we hear once and then ‘know’ forever. Or as a statement I believe or ascribe to. But Paul is writing to a bunch of believers in Rome. In fact he already comments on their faith as strong and worthy of being proclaimed around the world. If the gospel is information to hear and believe, they already knew and believed it.

- So why does Paul even need to come to them and preach it?

The word gospel means ‘*good news*’ in the sense that someone would roll into town with a loudspeaker and declare that the war is over, or slavery has ended, or an election has been won! History has been altered, life as you know it will change. So when Paul preaches the ‘Gospel of God concerning Jesus’ he is talking about the message that God has sent Jesus to alter history and fling wide open the gates to His Kingdom where He intends to reign and make right all that has gone wrong. Because of Jesus all are welcome to participate in and experience Life as He originally intended. His rescue and reconciliation mission has begun and is being accomplished, first through Jesus and now through His people. The good news of the gospel is a constant invitation to participate in that new Kingdom, under the reign of that new King and participating in that new mission, to bring about reconciliation of all that has been broken. This is a message that continually impacts us; each time we hear it the invitation holds new and further meaning.

Take some time to consider the way you think about the ‘gospel’ in your life. In what ways is or isn’t it something on going and active? If you have never heard this gospel message do you have questions? If you have heard and believed it what are some ways you have seen different aspects of the gospel message impact you over different seasons of your life?

Spend some time praying to close. Ask God what He would like to say to you over the course of this year as you read His message. Ask Him to preach the ongoing good news of the gospel to you this year through Paul’s words to the Christians in Rome, but meant just as much for you.

# WEEK 2 // SEPTEMBER 20-26

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 9/27

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:2 “*For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 1:16-17*
- 2- *Romans 1:18-23*
- 3- *Romans 1:24-25*
- 4- *Romans 1:26-27*
- 5- *Romans 1:28-32*

**JOURNAL:** Everyday after or during your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?

What is your response?

## DEEPER REFLECTION:

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

To be ashamed is to be humiliated, embarrassed, mortified. Shame is defined as a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior.

*When have you felt ashamed of the gospel? Think about situations where you perhaps could have shared the good news but didn't. What stopped you? When has your shame gotten in the way of you allowing yourself access to the Gospel?*

Paul was addressing the people of a very sophisticated society, perhaps the most sophisticated (Rome). The Gospel, being formed around a crucified Jewish Savior, was at this time beloved the most by a very low-class group of people. But Paul stands proud. Imagine how intimidating that could be, how easily you could imagine being scoffed at. Paul knows that the Good News of Jesus Christ has power on its own. It is God's power. Interestingly enough, one of the biggest points of pride for Rome was its power. It may have been considered the most powerful place of its time. What Paul is laying down right here is huge, right from the get go. He is boldly proclaiming that it is only by God's power and God's own righteousness which is given to us, not earned, that we have salvation.

- How does it make you feel to know that we, like the Romans, are powerless before God in our salvation?

The Gospel brings salvation to everyone who believes. There are no other qualifiers, the only requirement is faith.

- Why is this truth hard for you to believe or not believe?

**17.** *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

Righteousness is the quality of being moral or justifiable. Merriam Webster defines righteous as the 'quality of acting in accord with divine or moral law, free from guilt or sin'. God's definition takes it further. Theologian William Barclay describes that the word righteousness in Greek is 'dikaioon', which has the root of 'dikaioo', which means 'I justify'. All verbs in Greek which end in 'oo' mean to treat or account a person as something. He says, "If God justifies a sinner, it means that God treats the sinner as if he had not been a sinner at all". God gives His believers His righteousness. There is no mention of works, just faith, which is the start of our new life as a child of God and the basis of our lives thereafter.

Starting in verse 18 we enter into the more grim and harder to read part of Paul's letter. He mentions God's wrath, which we must not confuse or compare with human wrath that is typically motivated by selfishness, irrational, uncontrollable and desires revenge. Instead, God's wrath is completely just and righteous. Theologian John Scott describes God's wrath as not a punishment of sin, but rather, God's "holy hostility to evil". Further, sin prevents us from experiencing life and relationships the way God intended us to experience them. Our priorities become twisted and we lose sight of our true identities in Christ.

Paul goes on to describe why we desperately need salvation- being saved from- the wrath of God- which we do in fact deserve. It's easy to read Paul's descriptions and examples and feel as though it doesn't apply to you or that you can't relate. But the truth is, what Paul goes

on to describe is the very nature that is within ALL OF US. A picture is presented of absolute depravity and rejection of God. This is a picture of human beings who have turned away from God and fallen into sin.

- *They suppressed the truth (v18)*
- *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him (v21)*
- *They became fools (v22)*
- *They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images... (v23)*

*Describe how you are starting to see how perhaps we aren't so different than those who Paul addresses here after all.*

- What happens when we neglect to glorify God or be grateful for His nature?

Contemplate how the answer can be summarized by referring to Matthew 5: 13-16:

**13.** *You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*

**14.** *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

Describe your thoughts after reading the above passage from Matthew.

We fail to be the salt and light of the earth. The futile thinking and darkened hearts (v21) are an example of God's righteous wrath against those who have rejected Him. We so often can't help ourselves but to create our own version of who God is. We shape and mold the truth into an image of one that we are comfortable with and inevitably, we begin to serve the god that we have created. The result of humans rejection of God is a tragedy. It is evident all around us today in current human conditions.

From verses 24-32, Paul uses the term "God delivered them over" (or "God gave them up") three different times. He leaves us to the consequences of our sins.

- Why is this so important that Paul repeats it three times?

God's wrath allows us to go on destroying ourselves. We become filled with greed, envy, and depravity (v29), we are gossips, arrogant and boastful (v30). God directs his wrath towards the destruction brought about by our sin because He is loving and just. But we know that God intervenes.

- Have you ever been in a position where someone you love dearly, perhaps a child, sibling or parent, has been overcome by sin? How did it make you feel?

Apart from the grace of God, humans, every single one of us, would inevitably choose death. Our sin leads us to destroy ourselves. The Good News of the Gospel is incomplete without our need for salvation. This passage reveals our desperate need from being saved from our own nature. Spend some time thinking about what this means to you and take some time throughout the week to come before the Lord with repentance and praise. What a loving Father that by His grace and His grace alone, we live freely!

# WEEK 3 // SEPT 27- OCT 3

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 10/4

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:3a “*For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 2:1-5*
- 2- *Romans 2:6-11*
- 3- *Romans 2:12-16*
- 4- *Romans 2:17-24*
- 5- *Romans 2:25-29*

**JOURNAL:** Everyday after or during your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## **DEEPER REFLECTION:**

Look back over your observations from the reading this week. Paul is writing this letter to the followers of Christ that are in Rome. The Gospel message of Christ had brought together different groups of people who otherwise would not have been together – in this case, Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah, and Gentiles (non-Jews) who had been converted to Christianity. One of Paul's purposes in writing this letter was to try and bridge the gap between the “Us” (the Jews) and “Them” (the Gentiles) attitude in the church at the time. Understanding who Paul is writing to and why will help us understand the points he is making in this section.

In this chapter, Paul starts off by reminding the Roman church about hypocrisy. He tells them not to judge others, and then do the very same thing themselves (2:1 / 2:3). The issue of self-righteousness was a problem because the Jewish believers were judging others, but not using their knowledge of the law (The Ten Commandments given to Moses) to check themselves (2:17-23). Then Paul goes on to talk about our hearts. Paul addresses the Jews who claim to rely on the law and are circumcised, but break the law (2:25).

1. Look at Romans 2:13-15. It might seem that Paul is teaching here that we are justified by our deeds (by being doers of the law) but we clearly know from elsewhere in scripture (Romans 3:28) that we are justified by faith apart from works. So what point do you think Paul is making here?
2. Read through Paul's comparison in Romans 2:25-29 of the circumcised people who break the law vs. the uncircumcised people who keep the law. Given what we know about who Paul's audience is in the letter to the Romans, why do you think this is so important?

You see, circumcision was intended to be an outward physical sign for the Jews that they were God's covenant people, the descendants of Abraham, through Isaac. However, Paul is addressing their hearts. It is not just about showing faith through outward signs (i.e. circumcision in this case), but it is about the inward attitude of our hearts! External obedience doesn't mean anything if it is not coming from the heart. A circumcised Jew can't just be a follower of God on the outside. The outward sign means nothing without the inward reality of faith. An uncircumcised Gentile who has faith, doesn't need to be circumcised physically to be accepted by God. Paul is leveling the playing field here and teaching us that salvation is not a result of following rules, but that it is about our heart and by the Spirit!

- Where is your heart at as you read this chapter? Paul is making a clear case for the importance of our hearts, over just simply following rules. Yet sometimes, if we are honest, it can be easier for us to actually focus on the “rules.” What outward credentials are you looking at to justify you in your walk with God? Are you building up your spiritual resume by saying “I do this and this for God.” Or “I go to church. I was baptized. I tithe.” But your heart is actually far from Him? How do Paul's words in this section speak to your life in that struggle?

- Or maybe you are focused on requiring other people to check off certain boxes before considering them a follower of Christ? What internal prejudices might you be struggling with in this? For example, do you ever find yourself saying “She can’t really be a follower of Christ UNTIL she stops doing this... or starts doing this...” in the same way that the Jewish followers of Christ felt that the Gentile followers of Christ HAD to be physically circumcised too. How do Paul’s words speak to you?
- Perhaps your struggle is with yourself. Do you ever find yourself thinking, “I can’t actually be a follower of Christ until I...” (Read my Bible every morning. Be willing to pray out loud. Join a Bible study.) What things are holding you back by making you feel “I can’t be close to God until I...??” While these are all good things that often result from our faith, they are NOT what determines our faith in God!

# WEEK 4 // OCTOBER 4-10

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 10/11

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:3b “*By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 3:1-8*
- 2- *Romans 3:9-18*
- 3- *Romans 3:19-20*
- 4- *Romans 3:21-26*
- 5- *Romans 3:27-31*

**JOURNAL:** Everyday after or during your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

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## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## **DEEPER REFLECTION:**

As you reflect on your observations from this past week, stop to think about what it means when Paul says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (3:23) Sit with those words for a moment and soak them in. Think back over the context of this letter that Paul is writing. He is writing to the church in Rome, which is made up of both Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah, and Gentiles who had been converted to Christianity. Think about what it means for Paul to tell them, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.” (3:23-25) The word propitiation means to appease God, and it refers to the fact that we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

- How do you think the Jews or Gentiles in the Roman church might have felt to hear these words: all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God? How does it make you feel to hear these words today?
- Why do you think this was important that Paul states this so clearly in his letter to the church in Rome? How do you think this “levels the playing field” so to speak?

There are a few foundational truths that Paul is teaching to the church in Rome in this section that are so important for us to understand:

- We cannot be justified by the law (3:20)
- The law shows us what sin is (3:20)
- ALL have sinned and fall short of God’s glory (3:23)
- Our righteousness is through our faith in Jesus (3:22 & 3:24)
- Jesus Christ IS our redemption and propitiation. It is by HIS blood on the cross that we are made right with God. This is a free gift of grace for us (3:24-26)

Take a moment and think about your sin. Yes, it’s true that there is good that you do in your life, but what Paul is making clear here is that compared to the standards of a holy and perfect God, none of us can match up. We ALL fall short.

No matter the emotions this statement might stir up in each one of us individually, it is made clear in this section that there is nothing any one of us can do to be justified before God based on our own righteousness. We will all fall short. This can either be freeing to us, or it can feel like a burden. We cannot save ourselves. We can only be saved by our faith in Jesus. He is our only hope. This is God’s grace to us and gift to us (3:24)

- How does it make you feel to hear that you are a sinner? That you sin and fall short of God’s glory. What emotions does that statement evoke in you?
- How does it make you feel to know that God’s grace is a free gift to you? Even though your sin separates you from God, you “...are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forth as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

# WEEK 5 // OCTOBER 11-17

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 10/18

## SUFFERING

I've heard people say, '*God won't give you more than you can handle*' but it sure seems like I've exceeded my capacity. If God is truly good, then why does he allow so much suffering throughout the world? You may have heard or felt similar sentiments regarding the problem of suffering. Thankfully, God doesn't ask his daughters to exercise blind faith. Join me as we reflect upon the miracle of '*affliction eclipsed by glory*'.

### LISTEN:

- ♪ *How He Loves* by David Crowder;
- ♪ *Thy Will* by Hillary Scott;
- ♪ *It is Well* by Kristene DiMarco

### KEY VERSE:

**Psalm 30:11-12** “*You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent.*”

**READ:** Psalm 30

### PROCESS:

1. Think back to a time of suffering. How did God reveal himself?
2. How might considering Christ's suffering increase your hope moving forward?
3. What (if anything) have you not yet said to God about your experience?
4. Choose a verse that will remind you of the power of God's love to penetrate suffering.

**PRACTICE** (*Note: We'll discuss this acronym during this week's teaching*):

- L – Listen
- I – Invite
- F – Friendship
- T – Time
- E – Encourage
- R – Remember

# WEEK 6 // OCTOBER 18-24

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 10/25

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:4a “*in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us,*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 4:1-3*
- 2- *Romans 4:4-8*
- 3- *Romans 4:9-12*
- 4- *Romans 4:13-22*
- 5- *Romans 4:23-25*

**JOURNAL:** Everyday after or during your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## **DEEPER REFLECTION:**

Read through your observations from this past week and think about what we know about Abraham. What descriptions are given about him in this section? Think about why he is so important in what Paul is teaching the believers here in this letter. We know that Abraham is a forefather of the Hebrew people (4:1). We know that He believed God (4:3) and that his faith was counted to him as righteousness (4:9). We see that his faith was counted to him as righteousness BEFORE he was circumcised (4:10) and that circumcision was given to him as a sign and seal of his faith AFTER his faith was already counted to him as righteousness (4:11).

1. Look at Romans 4:13 and 4:18-19. What is the promise that God made to Abraham? Why did it require faith on Abraham's part to believe God's promise to him? How is Abraham described here?
2. Put yourself in Abraham's shoes. He was 100 years old, his wife was barren, they had no children... and yet God promised him that he would be the father of many nations (Romans 4:18; Genesis 15:5). How does Abraham respond?
3. Romans 4:20-22 gives a beautiful description of Abraham's faith. Read through these verses slowly, reflecting on what each part means. It says here that "no distrust made him waver" and that he "grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God." It says he was "fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised." And it says his faith was counted to him as righteousness. What does it mean that it was "counted" to him as righteousness? It means that he didn't earn righteousness from God by doing good works. He simply believed God. He believed God could and would do what He said.
4. Verses 23-24 state that the words "it was counted to him" were also written for our sake, not just for Abraham's sake. Why might that be important to the church in Rome that Paul was writing to? Why is that important to us today?
5. Abraham believed God's promise that he would be the father of many nations, and his faith in God was credit to him as righteousness. What is it that we are charged to believe in order to have this same righteousness credited to us?? (Romans 4:24-25)

The story and example of Abraham is critical not just in the Old Testament, but to the New Testament writers as well. He believed God's promise to him, and as we know, the promise came true. God gave Abraham a son, Isaac, and they are the fathers of the Hebrew people, the Jews. He did indeed become the father of many nations, just as God had promised him. His story and his example is not just important in Biblical history, but it is also incredibly powerful as an example of faith. He hoped against all hope. He believed God in the impossible. He did not waver. He did not doubt, even when the promise was impossible from a human standpoint. He believed God. And it was credited to him as righteousness. He did not do "good works" to earn God's favor. God simply wanted him to believe Him.

Today we are also charged to believe God. Paul makes it clear in Romans 4 that these things were written about Abraham to help us believe as well. And what is it that God wants us to believe? He wants us to believe that He raised Jesus from the dead, delivered Him up for our sins, and that we are justified, or counted as righteous before God, because of Him! (Romans 4:24-25) We do not have to work to earn our favor with God.

We simply need to believe that Jesus is Lord, just as God has said.

- Where is your heart at right now? Do you find it hard to believe God? Do you ever struggle to believe that God will do what He promises?
- Do you believe that you don't have to earn your favor with God by doing good works? Do you believe that God sees you as righteous, not because of anything you have done, but because Jesus took the punishment you deserved for your sin, nailed it to the cross, and gives you grace as a free gift?
- Spend a few moments today reflecting on the promises God has made to us and the fact that He simply wants us to believe Him the way Abraham did.

# WEEK 7 // OCTOBER 25-31

HOMWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 11/1

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:4b “*who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 5: 1-5*
- 2- *Romans 5: 6-11*
- 3- *Romans 5: 12-14*
- 4- *Romans 5: 15-17*
- 5- *Romans 5: 18-21*

**JOURNAL:** Every day after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## DEEPER REFLECTION:

If you have ever struggled with your worth as a child of God, I pray that this chapter of Romans speaks directly to your heart. How wonderful to have a friendship with God!

We have read in the earlier chapters of Roman, that the ENTIRE world is guilty before God, and NO ONE can be saved by religious deeds. The way of God's salvation has always been "by grace through faith." (He used Abraham as an illustration.)  
Romans chapter 4.

Paul begins in the 5th chapter of Romans, with the blessings of our justification. Our justification is not simply a guarantee to heaven, as marvelous as that is, but it is also a source of incredible blessings that we enjoy here and now.

Because the price was paid in full by the work of Jesus on the cross, we who believe, can have:

- **Peace with God.** This is not the peace of God. This is peace WITH God; the battle between God and our self is finished – and He won. (Look up Isaiah 48:22 and Isaiah 32:17) We were once enemies of God, but being justified by faith we are declared righteous, so we become friends with God.
- **We have a place of undeserved privilege.** A standing in grace does not mean we have received grace and now we must go on in perfection by keeping the law, so that we are accepted and loved by God. But standing in grace means that:
  - We don't have to prove that we are worthy of God's love. Christ died for us when we were still sinners. It is His blood that makes us worthy in God's eyes.
  - We are free from the "score sheet" – the account is settled in Jesus.
- **We have access to God.** When Jesus died, he tore down the veil (Luke 23:45) and broke down the wall (Eph. 2:14). In Christ, we all have access to God! The word access here means "entrance to the king through the favor of another." Here and now, 24/7, we have access to our King!
- **We have glorious hope.** In Christ we can confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing in God's glory. Read Romans 8:18-30.
- **We can rejoice too, when we run into problems and trials...** WAIT... WHAT?! Everything was going along so nicely ... and then this?! Yes, this. Justification is no escape from the trials of life. "In the world YOU WILL have tribulation." (John 16:33) Paul once again reminds us that it is in the here and now that we can experience joy through suffering. Paul knew the truth of this better than almost anyone. It is through suffering that we truly realize the depth of our peace with God, our standing of grace, our 24/7 access to God, and our glorious hope! It is through these that we develop endurance which then builds and strengthens our character and gives us hope. And that hope does not disappoint!
- **WE KNOW HOW DEARLY GOD LOVES US**, because He gave us the Holy Spirit who pours His love into our hearts, filling us with his love.
- **We have reconciliation with God.** If God showed such dramatic love for us while we were His enemies, think of the blessing we will enjoy once we are reconciled to God. This isn't only helpful when we die, but as believers we experience this in the here and now.

We have a salvation, apart from the law, and purely by grace, this salvation takes care of our past, our present and our future. Jesus died for us, He lives for us, and Christ is coming for us! Hallelujah what a Savior!

Ps. (personal story)

I recently have been struggling with some trials of my own. As I opened my bible to this portion of Romans, God used these scriptures to speak to my heart. I quickly sat down and jotted them down in my own words. A practice I like to do when I uncover an unexpected nugget of truth.

- I have worth in God's eyes. . . *right here and right now*.
- I get to walk in peace with God. . . *right here and right now*.
- I can talk with Him and tell him anything 24/7. *Right here and right now*.
- I can rejoice and be happy when I run into problems and trials, *right here, right now*, because they develop my character, which gives me hope.
- I know God loves me dearly because He has given me the Holy Spirit to fill me up with His love. *Right here, right now*.
- I am helpless.
- Christ came to die for me.
- Because of the blood He shed I am saved from being condemned, *right now*.
- I now have a friendship with God. . . *right here and right now*.
- I rejoice in this relationship . . . *right here and right now*.
- Hallelujah what a Savior!

Do these scriptures resonate with you? Are you going through the fire of trial, or a season of doubt and unworthiness? Perhaps you have felt as if you could only experience this abundant life in heaven? How does it make you feel to have God want to do life with your right here and right now?

# WEEK 8 // NOVEMBER 1-7

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 11/8

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:5a “*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 6: 1-4*
- 2- *Romans 6: 5-11*
- 3- *Romans 6: 12-14*
- 4- *Romans 6: 15-18*
- 5- *Romans 6: 19-23*

**JOURNAL:** Every day after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## DEEPER REFLECTION:

We ended Chapter five with the verse, “*But as people sinned more and more, God’s wonderful grace became more abundant. So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God’s wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

Now we begin chapter six with Paul addressing this question: “Should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?”

Of course not! We have died to sin; how can we continue to live in it?

As we have been joined with Jesus Christ through our baptism of the Holy Spirit, we joined him in his death. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Our sinful selves were crucified with Christ! We no longer are slaves to sin! We are set free in Christ! Set free from the bondage of sin!

- What does it mean to you, “to live a new life? To be free from sin?”

**Galatians 2:20** says, “*My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*”

This scripture helps take away the false concept of “we must” live a certain way to have God’s grace or earn favor. No, there is nothing we can do to merit this kind of grace. Jesus death brought justification for sinners, this justification in Christ brings about a living relationship with him. It is Christ living in us that brings the new life. Just stop for a moment and reflect on that truth. “Christ living in us.”

- Is there something in your life that has you in bondage, keeping you captive, unable to experience freedom in a living relationship with Christ? Does the truth of Christ living in you inspire you? In what ways?

In Colossians 3 we read, (short paraphrased version, but look up the long version, it is so worth it) “*Since you have been raised to “new life” with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven. . . think about the things of heaven. . . put to death the sinful ways inside of you . . . Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life . . . Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.*”

We have been given a new life! It is through this new life that we can serve from a place of freedom. It is Christ that motivates us to “love and good works. It is Him living in us, that compels us to not live in sin. Grace upon grace!

- When you read these words, “Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.” How does it affect you in your current situation? How does it affect your day to day life?

We deserve death, but Jesus give us life! We bind ourselves in chains, but Jesus came to break those chains. My friends, learn to *know your Creator!* Know that you have been crucified with Christ, know it to be really true in your life and in knowing it, yield your body to be used for His glory!

# WEEK 9 // NOVEMBER 8-14

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 11/15

## STRESS & SIN

The Holiday season can be one of high stress and tension. The pace is busy, calendars fill quickly and there never seems to be enough time for everything on the to-do list. Expectations and hopes build up to unrealistic heights and inevitably disappointment follows, bringing a cloud of discouragement or feelings of failure. Seeking to nurture our relationship with ourselves includes knowing ourselves. Understanding our tendencies, capacities and needs in increasing measure. Where do we turn in stress, can we identify where we are most prone to struggle? Do we know how to care for ourselves? Can we look to the unique ways God made us and let them guide us to find rest in ways specifically life giving to us? This can be a sweet way of drawing nearer to the God who designed you and loves you as you are.

### LISTEN:

♪ *Broken Vessels (Amazing Grace)* by Hillsong United

### KEY VERSE:

**Psalm 40:2** “He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.”

### READ: Psalm 40

### PROCESS:

1. This week we are defining sin as any act of turning towards a person or behavior instead of turning towards God. Given this definition, what are your ‘go-to’ sins when you’re stressed. These things we will term – unhealthy coping strategies.
2. How do you anticipate your stress level increasing this holiday season?
3. Do you see a connection between stress and unhealthy coping strategies? Describe. What holds you back from turning towards God in those times. (Note: your answer may be something simple such as ‘habit’ or more complex like ‘fear, doubt, or pride’)
4. Part of leaning into God involves accessing healthy tools (coping strategies). Underline any strategies that have worked for you in the past. Jot down additional tools that come to mind.

### PRACTICE

- Listen to worship music
- Close your eyes and breathe
- Check your feelings for truth
- Pray
- Journal
- Go for a walk
- Re-read a favorite verse
- Touch a soft blanket, sweater, or animal
- Talk to a safe person
- Light a favorite candle
- Rub lotion into your hands
- Say ‘no’ to something on your calendar

# WEEK 10 // NOVEMBER 15 - 21

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 11/29

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:5b “but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- Romans 7: 1-6
- 2- Romans 7: 1-6
- 3- Romans 7: 13
- 4- Romans 7: 14-20
- 5- Romans 7: 21-25

**JOURNAL:** Every day after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## DEEPER REFLECTION:

We humans want to go to the extremes at times. In the previous chapter of Romans Paul addresses team Freedom “*God gives grace, so we are free to live as we please,*” people. In this chapter we will see Paul coaching team Legalism, “*we are saved by grace, but we must keep the law to please God,*” people.

When we begin our growth as a Christian, when we know that we have been crucified with Christ and are dead to sin and we yield our body to the Lord to be used for his glory, we begin to experience victory over our flesh and the habits of the flesh. We become more spiritual. And many times, that’s when things fall apart, before we know it everything we do is based on obeying laws. We think that by obeying rules, and laws we can become holy and please God. We begin to measure our spirituality, (and everyone else’s) by a list of dos and don’ts. We become rigid, and extremely hard on other people, critical, unloving and unforgiving. This is called legalism.

Paul starts out this chapter by using the illustration of husband and wife to show that the believer has a new relationship with Jesus Christ. When a man and woman marries they are united for life, only to be separated by a physical cause, such as death. (Paul is not discussing marriage and divorce here, he is using marriage to illustrate a point.) As long as they live they are under the authority of the law of marriage. But in this case if the husband dies, the wife is free to remarry because she is no longer a wife. It is death that has broken the marriage relationship and set her free. So, Paul makes a point in verse 4: When we trusted Christ, we died to the law, but in Christ, we rose from the dead and now are united to Christ to live a new kind of life.

The law did not die. We died to the law, and it no longer has dominion over us. As a result of being raised from the dead with Christ we can produce fruit for God. It is through death that we are delivered, so we might serve Christ. The Christian life does not mean a life of rebellion and independence from God. We died to the law to be “married” to Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that motivates us to love and good works. Under grace, God’s Word is written in our hearts. Romans 6:4 We walk in newness of life.

Paul may be getting a bit frustrated at this point, “*Am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? (hmmm wonder how many times he was asked this question) Of course not! It was the law that showed me my sin.*” The problem is not the law, the problem is with our sinful nature.

Paul continues to explain that the law cannot change us (v. 14). The law cannot make us do good (v. 15-21). And the law cannot set us free (v. 21-25).

*“So, who can change us, inspire us to do good and to set us free? Of course, Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

- How does Jesus change you, inspire you to do good, and how does he set you free today from the bondage of legalism?
- How has legalism affected your own life?
- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in your life today?

# WEEK 11 // NOV 29- JAN 16

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 1/17

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:6a “*For to set the mind on the flesh is death,*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 8: 1-4*
- 2- *Romans 8: 5-8*
- 3- *Romans 8: 9-11*
- 4- *Romans 8: 12-17*
- 5- *Romans 8:18-21*

**JOURNAL:** Every day after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## DEEPER REFLECTION:

“For everything that **lives** is holy, **life delights in life.**” - William Blake

**Romans 5:17** ‘Reign in Life’

**Romans 8:11** ‘And the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you’

You might see a heading for Romans 8 in your Bible that reads ‘Life through the Spirit.’ Let’s reflect a little deeper on what ‘life’ the scripture is referring to. Certainly this ‘life’ starts with freedom from our sin (aka ‘death’) through the grace and forgiveness offered by Jesus. But then what? What kind of ‘life’ does God want for us? What does it look like? Are we living THAT life? Romans 8:11 is a powerful statement...as believers, we literally have the same Spirit living in us that raised Jesus from the dead. Think about that for a minute...the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. That’s power. That’s freedom. Let’s unpack that by taking a look at the life of Jesus.

What words/scenes/descriptions first come up in your mind? I’ll start you out with a couple of mine and then you add yours:

Present ('with me')	_____	_____
Kind	_____	_____
Compassionate	_____	_____
Witty	_____	_____
The Woman at the Well	_____	_____

This certainly isn’t an exhaustive list, but even this short list gives a picture of a full and well-lived ‘life.’ So this is it, **THIS** list (and more) is the life the Father desires for His children. Will there be suffering? Yes. Will there be discouragement and depression and injustice (and a long list of sad adjectives)? Yes. ‘We share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory’ (Romans 8:17). ‘His glory’ - the life of Christ, that’s the life He wants for you. Now, I know you don’t feel like this every moment of every day (me either). But we can learn to ‘lean into’ THIS life more deeply and more often. The process can be complicated and messy, but it can also start simply...noticing and recognizing the ‘life of Christ.’ It’s in a landscape (Job 12:7-10) it’s in forgiveness (Colossians 3:13) it’s in restrained anger (Ephesians 4:26) it’s in a kiss (Song of Solomon 5:16). Let’s practice ‘seeing it’ (I’m not talking about **BEING** it, working harder or cleaning up our behavior - that’s a whole different reflection). It’s kind of amazing, but when we practice ‘seeing it,’ our desire to offer it increases.

Sometimes I start my day (even before I open my eyes) with this simple prayer..’Good morning Lord, help me bring ‘life’ today.’ This is our calling, this is our purpose...bring **LIFE**. Bring the life of Christ into that conversation, bring the life of Christ into that hardship, bring the life of Christ into that vacation, or loss or happiness. The Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, bring that. Pause here and read Romans 5:17 and Romans 8:15-17.

Closing prayer. ‘ABBA, Father – thank you for the life of Christ. Pour all that He is into me this day...**HIS love, HIS courage, HIS** (fill in your own words here). Spirit, as Jesus did, let me bring ‘life’ to those around me, reigning in Life with you. Jesus, remind my heart that no matter what, nothing will me able to separate us. I am yours and you are mine.’ Amen

# WEEK 12 // JANUARY 17-23

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED ON 1/24

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:6b “but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace.”

**READ:** Daily reading

- 1- *Romans 8: 22-25*
- 2- *Romans 8: 26-27*
- 3- *Romans 8: 28-30*
- 4- *Romans 8: 31-36*
- 5- *Romans 8: 37-39*

**JOURNAL:** Everyday after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

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Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## DEEPER REFLECTION:

### I am His, and He is mine

**Romans 8:38-39:** *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

A couple days ago I was watching a news story about whales and was thinking about the passage in Revelations which says ‘*and the sea will be no more.*’ I love the sea - the sound, the rhythm, the animals that dwell in it (except for sharks). What will heaven be like without the ocean? Without the beauty and the ‘life’ of the sea? Some bible scholars interpret this passage literally, others say it is imagery for the new heaven and the new earth. One thing that is for certain is that as they are now, the oceans ‘separate.’ They separate land from land, nations, countries, peoples, families. The seas must be crossed, ‘bridged’ to get to the other side, to reach that which we want to see or those which we long to be with. Separation can be painful. Whether this passage in Revelations is literal or metaphorical, there will be a time when there will be no more ‘separation.’ No ‘sea’ to cross - no loss, no longing, no heartbreak - fellowship unbroken - **always.**

Paul talks about ‘present sufferings’ - troubles, hardships, hurts, misunderstandings, offenses, difficulties. Even if you are enjoying a season of blessing...you worry, right? You have fears, anxieties, disappointments. There are memories or situations or relationships that ‘circle back’ into our thoughts that we can’t seem to let go of - there are ‘separations.’ *‘In this world, you will have trouble.’ John 16:33. ‘For the creation was subjected to frustration...’ Romans 8:20-21.* Take a moment and write about your ‘present sufferings.’

The title of this reflection is ‘I am His and He is mine.’ I’ve spent a lot of time on the first part of that phrase ‘I am His - I belong to the Father. I have been adopted into His family.. my life is not my own. Lately I’ve been thinking more about ‘He is Mine.’

### God is yours, did you know that?

‘*I will be their God*’ shows up more than 40 times in scripture (Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 37:27; Isaiah 54:13 - and in 40 other passages). The ‘belonging’ goes both ways. You belong to Him, He belongs to you. I love that.

*‘The Grace of God means something like: HERE IS YOUR LIFE. You might never have been, but you are because the party wouldn’t have been complete without you. HERE IS THE WORLD. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don’t be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us.’*

*‘Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don’t be afraid. [GOD is] with you.’*

- Frederick Buechner

He is yours. The God of the universe, the creator of the seas, all that He is **is yours.** All that He is is with you. We don’t always feel that, but it’s true - the love of this great big beautiful and powerful God can not be taken away from us. Not by angels (beauty) or demons (terrible), not by the present or the future, not by any power...or depth...or anything else. We can not be separated. What a profound and simple promise.

# WEEK 13 // JANUARY 24-30

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 1/31

## FEAR

I love January for the fresh energy and optimism it brings. Having survived the stress-inducing nature of our holiday season, we are often all-too eager to push up our sleeves and implement strategies for change. Stepping out with new (or renewed) vision can be an exciting exercise of the freedom we've received through Christ. However, our excitement is often met with a backlash of fear. Fear which threatens to stunt growth before growth ever happens. Let us work together to combat this fear.

### LISTEN:

- ♪ *Oceans* by Hillsong United
- ♪ *In Over My Head* by Jenn Johnson

### KEY VERSE:

***Psalm 77:14a*** “You are the God who performs miracles.”

### READ: Psalm 77

### PROCESS:

1. Remember an instance when God parted the waters for you.
2. How did he provide the faith you needed to take that first step? How about the step after that?
3. Write a prayer of thanksgiving:

# WEEK 14 // JAN 31 - FEB 6

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 2/7

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:7 “*For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 9:1-5*
- 2- *Romans 9:6-13*
- 3- *Romans 9: 14-18*
- 4- *Romans 9:19-29*
- 5- *Romans 9: 30-33*

**JOURNAL:** Everyday after or during your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## **DEEPER REFLECTION:**

This week's reading is hard for me. If I'm honest it pulls hard at my desire for fairness and my belief that God is completely loving and good all the time. I want everything in the bible to make perfect sense even from my very limited vantage point and perspective. And chapter 9 of Romans just does not.

It might be helpful, if you have the time to re-read Chapter 8 as we take a look at some of the harder parts of Chapter 9. Remember that when originally written we did not have the breaks of Chapter numbers to separate out our reading. Paul is writing in Chapter 8 and earlier, all about God's overarching plan to redeem and rescue humanity through Jesus who He has called the second Adam. We don't want to lose sight of the main message Paul is communicating throughout his letter.

In Ch. 8, Paul has assured his readers that "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (8:14) that they have received a spirit of Sonship and are now heirs with Christ. (8:15-17) Paul is describing to them a new human race indwelt with the Spirit of God who will now live in and through them as they carry out the heart of God on earth. And he tells them, that they were chosen for this role from the very beginning, so they do not have to fear, because God loves them, and is for them and because of Jesus, there is nothing they can do to change that. (8:30-39) THIS is good news.

But in the very next breath (which happens to begin Chapter 9) Paul begins addressing a problem. For some, this DOESN'T sound like very good news and it breaks his heart.

*v.2-5 "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever."*

### ***Who is Paul talking about? Why is he so filled with sorrow for them?***

In the fulfillment of His plan to graft in ALL who long to be called sons of God, God has moved beyond offering that special status to the people of Israel ONLY. He has taken that role away from them and now offers it to any and all who come to him through the lineage of faith.

Paul gives some great explanations in Romans 9:6-12 for why it has been His predetermined plan all along to offer salvation to people not through the genetic bloodline of the Jewish people but rather through a person's faith. Record in your journal some of the things Paul mentions. If you have time, look them up and read the fuller accounts of these stories. (Genesis 15:5-6, 18:10-14, 21:12 & 25:23)

Genesis 15:5-6 says Abraham's belief in God's promise was credited to him as righteousness, before he did anything else. Take a minute to consider how this might actually feel unfair to you if you had spent your whole life pursuing righteousness based on your works and effort.

### ***Turn to Matthew 20:1-16. Read the parable Jesus tells to the crowds as he is explaining the way that inclusion in God's kingdom or family will work.***

Now compare that to Paul's language in Romans 9:14-29 as he begins to address the problem the Jewish people have with God's mercy.

- What new perspective or insight does it give you? What questions do you still have?
- What do you think Paul is mainly trying to articulate in this section? When he defends God's right to do whatever He pleases..do you think this means He has done all the things described or is he talking hypothetically? (v.22)
- What stirs in your own heart as you read a verse like 9:15-16, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then, it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy."?
- In what ways does this feel like Good news, in what ways does it feel like unfair or 'bad news'? Why?

***Finally. Read Romans 9:30-33***

- What IS the stumbling block for the Jews, for people in general, for YOU, when it comes to God's mercy?

Paul calls this plan of lavish grace a 'rock of offense' to those who have pursued righteousness as though it were based on works. How does this give new meaning to Paul's claim at the beginning of Romans that he is 'not ashamed (or offended) of the gospel'?

Romans 9 is one of the most confusing chapters in all of the bible. Scholars and theologians debate and disagree on its meaning and implications. As we move into the rest of the letter of Romans remember it's okay to hold questions out unanswered. Write down any lingering thoughts or questions here and spend some time asking God to speak to you through the rest of His word to reveal His character and heart to you.

# WEEK 15 // FEBRUARY 7-14

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 2/15

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:8 “*Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 10:1-4*
- 2- *Romans 10: 5-9*
- 3- *Romans 10: 10-15*
- 4- *Romans 10: 16-17*
- 5- *Romans 10:18-21*

**JOURNAL:** Everyday after or during your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## DEEPER REFLECTION:

Look over some of your thoughts on the weeks reading. This passage describes the way that we have obtained salvation through Jesus and the call that rests on us because of that.

It is easy to focus ourselves on consuming Jesus today. We show up to church to fill up on Jesus to help get us through the week, and we look for personal spiritual experiences in the venues of conferences, retreats, or podcasts. The spiritual disciplines we seek to implement in our lives tend to be consumption-based devotions and a more consistent prayer life that can easily have a consumer focus as we ask the Lord for help in what we are lacking in. Individually none of these things are bad, but when this becomes the total sum in our spiritual experience of Jesus, we find ourselves empty. When we feel as though our lives lack substance or significance, it is a good indicator we have become consumers of Jesus. When we feel as though the freedom of Christ is something that is talked about and not experienced, this is also a good indicator that we are becoming consumers of Jesus. Jesus never invited us into a relationship with Him for mere experience and consumption, but we have been invited to something of deeper purpose and fulfillment that Paul talks about in these verses.

Paul talks about an alternative approach to experiencing Jesus. He shows us there is a new responsibility for a believer to not only live internally for their own growth and relationship with God, but also a calling extended to partner with God in expanding His kingdom. Continued consumption of Jesus is important and essential to the Christian life based on our daily dependence upon Him. But just as if we were to in our lives consume food for the essentially of it, but never do anything else in our experience of life, mere consumption of Jesus will simply leave our experience of Him flat and unhealthy. Though it is a chore to exercise and take care of ourselves and do something with our energy, we in the same ways have a responsibility to do something when we are filled with Jesus. We cannot justify continuing to fuel ourselves by teachings, reading scripture and going to bible study, but we need to use what we have consumed to partner with Christ. Partnership with Christ is an essential aspect of the gospel, Jesus' invitation to us, and our daily lives.

If we think back to the garden of Eden, God's initial design for us was to partner in continued creating as bearers of the image of God. As humans we were intended to continue creating out of the knowledge of what God has said was good, to bring our creator glory and to fulfill what we were designed to do. This is part of what is meant when God says in Genesis to "rule and subdue the earth". This partnership didn't initially get much time to develop in the garden due to the fall of man. But our opportunity to partner with God hasn't ended with just creating being stained by evil. We are now invited to partner in a never-ending expansion project for the Kingdom of God, and just like partnering in creating alongside God the ultimate purpose of it is to bring God glory. We bring glory to God when we partner with Him in doing this. There are different ways we are able to partner with Christ in expanding His kingdom. Each of us have been involved in different groups of people that God has intentionally placed around us that we are called to reach. He has a purpose in partnering with us to reach people within our relational circles that they may know and also be in relationship with Him. It seems daunting to be reaching people in our friend group, but it isn't hard to be an influencer in our relationships because Jesus is already in pursuit of the people we do life with. When we partner with Him, we are agreeing to pursue the people that He is pursuing alongside Him.

Paul will also talk about how we also partner with God in preaching (vs. 15). This piece works similarly to God's invitation to partnership in prayer, which most of us might be more familiar with. God has set his will in motion in such a way so that we could be involved as partners. This isn't because he needs us in this capacity but has invited us to

ask, plea, and speak his will into existence. In the same way God has invited us into the salvation process through the medium of preaching. God does not need us for the process of salvation and does not always use the medium of preaching but has promised us a role in partnership through preaching. As we preach God's word as partners in the expansion of his kingdom he will unleash his Spirit to quicken hearts so that people would meet him and be saved through the venue of the preaching and teaching of his Word, and this is for the sake of allowing his people to partner in the salvation process. This should press the importance of the regular meeting of believers with outsiders in attendance so that all could be brought near to the feet of Jesus. This isn't telling others how it is in the bible, but by living out the gospel in our lives, and by pursuing them the way that Jesus is. God expands His kingdom by using His people in prayer and preaching. We have a greater purpose and mission in this work now that we have consumed Christ. We are God's partners on earth and He uses us to reach others. We are now responsible to live this purpose and calling through our relationships and our world God has placed us in.

*Think about the ways you have partnered with Jesus in his Kingdom building.  
In thinking about your calling as a believer and the world God has intentionally placed around you, in what ways have you/ can you partner with God?  
What is currently preventing you from fully partnering with Christ in his work?*

Spend some time asking the Lord and praying over places and opportunities you can partner with Him. Ask the Spirit for boldness to preach His word and make His Good News known.

# WEEK 16 // FEBRUARY 14-20

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 2/20

## TRUST

It can be helpful to remember the character of God especially when we read challenging verses such as those contained in Romans 9 & 10. Anchoring into His character keeps our feet grounded upon a firm foundation of trust; one which can withstand strain and tremors.

How Great Thou Art was published in 1891 by Swedish pastor and editor Carl Gustaf Boberg. Tradition indicates that Mr Boberg was enjoying a leisurely walk when a thunderstorm suddenly appeared. As the storm subsided, he looked out over the clear bay and heard a church bell. We can picture the storm and the calm when we read his opening words: *O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds Thy hands hath made...*

That storm reminds me of another God-encounter. In 1 Kings 19 we find the prophet Elijah at his wit's end. Tired of being tired, Elijah is disenchanted with God and disappointed with mankind. Jesus meets Elijah in his mistrust and gives him the strength to travel to Mount Horeb (Sinai), the same mountain on which God revealed himself to Moses. In both stories, we see an invitation to trust God's character and remember his deeds of love and deliverance.

### LISTEN:

♪ *How Great Thou Art* by Lauren Daigle

### KEY VERSE:

**Psalm 78:4b** “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.”

### READ: Psalm 78

### PROCESS:

1. Recount an instance of God's work in your life.
2. Recount an instance of God's work in the life of someone you love.
3. What do those memories tell you about His character?

# WEEK 17 // FEBRUARY 21-27

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 2/28

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:9a “*You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit,*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 11:1-5*
- 2- *Romans 11:7-10*
- 3- *Romans 11:11-16*
- 4- *Romans 11:17-24*
- 5- *Romans 11:25-36*

**JOURNAL:** Every day after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

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## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## DEEPER REFLECTION:

Begin your time by reflecting on your takeaways from the reading in Chapter 11. As you do so, consider the relationship that Paul describes between Israel and Christ reaching back through Chapters 9-10. We know that in part, this relationship is ridden with the people of Israel seeking after “the law of righteousness” through works (9:30-33), and a rejection of the gospel through a lack of faith and belief (10:8-10). We also see that through Israel’s rejection of the gospel, Christ makes a way for the Gentiles to know Him and declare His name -- making them the righteousness of God! (11:11).

However, the Lord’s redemption plan doesn’t stop here. Paul illustrates that it is through the Gentiles being “grafted in” to God’s family tree, that the reconciliation of the Jewish people to the Lord will occur. With the above in mind, analyze the following scriptures in Chapter 11, reflecting specifically on Paul’s exhortations to the Gentiles in the audience:

1. Read Romans 11:1-6. What does Paul infer about God’s stance towards Israel in this passage? Why is Paul’s background significant to this message?
2. In Romans 11:11 Paul suggests that “salvation has come to the Gentiles” through the “fall” of the Jews. Is their “fall” the end of the story? How does Paul describe the role of jealousy in v.11-15?
3. In Romans 11:17-24, Paul uses an olive tree as an analogy -- if the broken branches represent the Jewish people, and the wild olive shoot represents the Gentiles, what exhortations does Paul want the Gentiles to receive about their attitude towards Israel and the Lord’s relationship with them?
4. Read Romans 11:30-33. What does Paul want those who have been disobedient to consider? What does Paul highlight about God’s character for us in this section?

In Chapter 11 of Romans, Paul points out that Israel’s rejection of God is not total, or final -- God preserves a remnant, and Paul himself is part of that remnant. Even as some of the Jews were blinded, hardened, and calloused to the gospel, the Lord made a way, raising up the Gentiles, and grafting those who believed into His family tree.

*And so it is with us...*

Where do you find yourself in this passage? Do you identify as a broken branch, raised with a faith heritage, riding on the waves of works and righteousness? Or perhaps an olive shoot, transplanted from nothing to known, and basking fully in a pool of grace?

*Let us not be blind to the state of our hearts*, bragging in what we think we know, or boasting in our being found, but without mercy for those who are searching. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any blind-spots, and to soften any heart calluses, making it fully flesh.

**Romans 11:33-36:** *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

*“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”*

*“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”*

*For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.*

*Amen.*

# WEEK 18 // FEB 28 - MARCH 6

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 3/7

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:9b “*if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 12:1-2*
- 2- *Romans 12: 3-8*
- 3- *Romans 12: 9-13*
- 4- *Romans 12: 14-18*
- 5- *Romans 12: 19-21*

**JOURNAL:** Every day after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

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## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## **DEEPER REFLECTION:**

Have you ever felt as if you could never measure up to the standards that someone has placed upon you? Reading Romans 12 can kind of feel that way, depending on how you look at it. There is charge after charge after charge on how to respond to the actions of others that it can almost seem exhausting and just not possible. Paul tells us in Romans 12:2 to not conform to the patterns of this world, but to be transformed by the renewal of our mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

But is it really that easy? Of course not! The pressures of this world can oftentimes seem so heavy that many of us can find ourselves conforming to things and people that we never thought we would. Before long, we begin to blend in and not reflect back to the world who God really is. What are some things/behaviors you find yourself engaging in that do not reflect Christ, i.e. gossip, pride, arrogance, stubbornness etc.

The word transformation means an act, process, or instance of transforming or being transformed. When speaking on the verse above, the transformation that Paul is referring to involves a continual process of allowing God to renew our minds, over and over again. The responsibility that we have been given as followers of Christ doesn't start with our actions towards others, but with our thoughts towards others, which is only something that God can help us with.

I love how the Message Bible writes this verse as it says, "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, developing maturity in you."

As followers of Christ we are not exempt to the test and trials that come our way, but we are responsible for how we respond to it. We must daily center our thoughts around Jesus and allow him to guide us in how we should act. Romans 8:5-6 says that those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

***Choose today to set your mind on things above.***

Write a prayer below asking God to help you with the areas you identified earlier.

# WEEK 19 // MARCH 7 - 13

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 3/14

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:9c “*Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

1- *Romans 13: 1-4*

2- *Romans 13: 5-7*

3- *Romans 13: 8-10*

4- *Romans 13: 11-12*

5- *Romans 13:13-14*

**JOURNAL:** Every day after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## **DEEPER REFLECTION:**

The second part of chapter 13 talks about how we, as followers of Christ, live out the law through love, and no longer through the old law.

Although the old Testament law is not to be disregarded, love covers the don'ts of the old testament. And now our only debt to owe is to love one another.

Love is a permanent obligation and is never finished until the day we meet our Lord and Savior, and even then, it is only completed as we enter an eternal culture of love. Verses 9-10 talk about how love covers all and is fulfilling the law that was in place before Christ came. The love that Christ came and demonstrated when He was on earth overcame our track records of right and wrong, and broke the religious mindset we so often conform to. In verses 11-13, Paul explains that the time to awaken from sleep is now. This use of the word "time" is meaning of "definite and critical season".

There is an urgency to love wherever we are in any moment. This is our calling. Love is the root of each of our actions. If there is an urgency to love, then there must also be an urgency for us to first move past our focus on religious mediocrity as we count our wins and losses and live in comparison with those around us. Then we will be free to love the people around us urgently. Let us not mistake living in an urgent state of love for religious mediocrity again though, our worth, value, and competency is not found in how we are doing comparatively to the people around us, or the quantity of people we love in a given day. Urgent love is all about choosing to continue to give our best as it will undoubtedly get hard, be disappointing, and leave us feeling unaccomplished. But it will be in the continued pushing to love our best that God will be glorified. It is not a mustering up of finding strength, energy and love to share with the people around us. Yet the presence of love is the presence of the Holy Spirit doing a work on our hearts and renewing us.

Take some time to reflect on the questions below.

- What does it look like for us to put on Jesus practically?
- What is our focus on when we wake up in the morning?
- How can we choose to put on the characteristics of the Lord daily?
- How can we let love be our measure instead of the track record of what we do and don't do in a day?

*Close in prayer. Ask the Holy spirit to renew your hearts today. Ask Him for his Love to overflow into the lives of people that are around you all day today.*

# WEEK 20 // MARCH 14 - 20

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 3/21

## WALK WELL

On the home stretch of this study, the open plains of summer loom near. When we transition away from the structure of weekly study it can be easy to also step away from the things we've learned. Instead, let us continue the practices of 'anchor' and 'application'.

### LISTEN:

- ♪ *Not Afraid* by Red Rocks Worship
- ♪ *100 Billion X* by Hillsong United

### KEY VERSE:

**Psalm 91:4** “*He will cover you with his feathers and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and your rampart.*”

### READ: Psalm 91

### PRACTICE YOUR POSTURE:

1. Feet firmly planted on the Rock. Who is Jesus?
2. Head lifted high. Who does he say you are?
3. Arms outstretched wide. What evidence do you have that he is trustworthy?
4. What might it look like to continue walking in the truth of the things you've learned during this study?

# WEEK 21 // MARCH 21 - 27

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 3/28

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:11a “*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 14: 1-4*
- 2- *Romans 14: 5-9*
- 3- *Romans 14: 10-13*
- 4- *Romans 14: 14-19*
- 5- *Romans 14: 20-23*

**JOURNAL:** Every day after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

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## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## **DEEPER REFLECTION:**

In Chapter 14, Paul is warning the church about the dangers of criticism towards those in the church. Oftentimes this can be subtle, and sometimes blatantly expressed. The truth about criticism is that it not only tears others down, but it makes them believe truths that we have spoken over them rather than the truths that God has said about them. Think about that for a moment. What is there to gain?

And yet, Paul knew that this would be an area that the church would struggle with INSIDE the church. We cannot be so concerned about being right or wrong, that we miss the opportunity to extend grace and in turn, change the whole trajectory of one's walk with God. If we could see the effects that our criticism has on the behavior and actions of others, I wonder how many of us would think twice before parting our lips or our hearts in criticizing their actions. Romans 14:13 tells us to not only stop condemning each other, but to decide to live in such a way that we will not cause another believer to stumble and fall. The impact of criticism and how it can change one's attitude or belief of the church can have lasting effects.

In Romans 14:1 Paul tells us to accept believers who are weak in the faith and to not argue with them about what is right or wrong. Is he saying that we condone sin? Of course not, but there are things that we should not allow to cause division among us. What we eat, what we drink, what we wear, how we pray etc.

While Paul's focus in speaking on this area was our interaction with others in the church, I want us to also think about our everyday interactions with those around us.

***What does this look like and who are you being critical of?***

*(Jot down their first names below, i.e. spouse, kids, co-worker, friend, family member, the lady in the grocery store this morning etc.):*

The problem with criticism is that it blinds us from seeing the sinful parts of our hearts that we need God to invade. Romans 5:10 tells us that, “*...we will all stand before the judgment of God.*” He is the ultimate judge, not us. You see, who we deem as not satisfactory, God sees as satisfactory, who we see as not enough, He is saying they are more than enough, who we see as broken, God sees as a work of art. When we begin to see people the way God sees them we open the door for Him to do a great work in us and in them. Our outward expression towards them will be a reflection of the inward work of the Father in us.

*Jot down the names again of the people that you mentioned earlier and write one way in which you can extend grace to them this week in a way in which you've never done before. Pray over them and your heart towards them.*

# WEEK 22 // MARCH 28 - APRIL 3

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 4/4

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:11b "*he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies*"

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 15:1-7*
- 2- *Romans 15:8-13*
- 3- *Romans 15:14-16*
- 4- *Romans 15:17-21*
- 5- *Romans 15:22-33*

**JOURNAL:** Every day after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these four questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You're not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what's being said for comprehension sake.

## 2) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT GOD?

How does this change or confirm your current view of God?

## 3) WHAT IS THIS SAYING IS TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE?

Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## DEEPER REFLECTION:

### *Bearing with One Another (v.1-6)*

While you're rolling out your yoga mat on the lawn for a backyard evening session, you hear the all too familiar cries of the Starks and Lannisters drifting out of the screen slider from the neighboring living room TV.

"Game of Thrones, again," you mutter to yourself, "how terribly inappropriate."

A moment later you get a text from the new girl at church who you asked to join you for yoga. She can't come. You pause in response as you reread the message to yourself, *You've got to be kidding me -- she's not coming because she doesn't feel comfortable practicing yoga?! Looks like I won't be seeing her again.*

We can rosé all day, over who is living in the "right" manner when it comes to practicing yoga, selecting appropriate television shows, and drinking wine, *or not* doing any of the above. However, Paul urges us to look in a different direction -- back to the example Christ left us when we have differences with those around us in the body of Christ.

- Read Romans 15:1-2. How are those who are "strong" to respond to those who are "weak"? What does it mean to "edify" those around us?
- Look at Romans 15:3 and Psalm 69:9 -- then discuss the meaning of: "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."
- Read 15:4-6. What does it mean to be "patient" and "like-minded" toward one another for the glory of Christ?

### *Glorifying God Together (v. 7-13)*

Romans 15:7-13 reminds us that God's plan divinely places us with people who are different than us; unity in His gospel message is the goal. We are called to "*receive one another, just as Christ also received us to the glory of God*" (v.7). We are not entitled to grace more than the next person (even if they drink wine, and we don't, or vice-versa). Such differences are illustrated between the Jews and the Gentiles -- both of whom play key roles in Christ's redemption story. Christ modeled this kind of acceptance as He came to be Savior of both Jew and Gentile. At the end of the day, we are called to bear with one another too, remembering that Jesus is the main event, not us.

When you reflect on Romans 15:1-13, are there specific people that come to mind who are hard to "bear with"? What areas of friction arise in these relationships? How might you practice being like-minded towards the unity of Christ in these relationships?

Spend some time this week intentionally praising God; practice thanksgiving. Turn on some worship music, write a list of the attributes you appreciate about these specific people, praise God for them. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you identify ways that you can "bear with one another" for His glory.

***Romans 15:13:*** Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

# WEEK 23 // APRIL 4 - 10

HOMEWORK TO BE DISCUSSED 4/11

**MEMORIZE:** Romans 8:11c “*through his Spirit who dwells in you.*”

**READ:** Daily Reading

- 1- *Romans 16: 1-4*
- 2- *Romans 16: 5-16*
- 3- *Romans 16: 17-18*
- 4- *Romans 16: 19-23*
- 5- *Romans 16: 25-27*

**JOURNAL:** Every day after your reading, jot down your observations. Use these questions if it helps.

## 1) WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PART OF THE LETTER?

Who are the main people being talked about? What are the events that he is addressing? Can you restate in your own words what is being said? You’re not drawing conclusions at this point, you are simply recounting what’s being said for comprehension sake.

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Where do you see this in your relationships today? There are patterns between God and His people and we can see them pop up a lot throughout scripture: Where have you seen something similar be described in previous scripture or stories you have read? In your real life today?

## 4) WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If what Paul is saying here is true then what are the implications for you?  
What is your response?

## **DEEPER REFLECTION:**

You've come to the end of the book of Romans! Take some time to journal and reflect on the main themes and message you have heard God speaking through Paul this year.

Now go back and read Paul's closing prayer over the believers in Rome as he concludes his letter to them.

### ***Romans 9:25-27***

*"Now to him who is able to strengthen you..."*

Paul is about to list a number of things that God uses to strengthen his children and his church. Take some time to meditate on each one and consider how they do or do not line up with your experience.

*"...according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ..."*

How have you been strengthened by the gospel over this year? It's interesting that Paul talks of God strengthening us according to the preaching of Jesus Christ. What do you think this means? What's the difference in being strengthened according to the preaching of Jesus as opposed to strengthened according to something else?

*"...according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but has now been disclosed, and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations..."*

We read a lot in Romans of this mystery. What is it? What has God revealed now to all the nations, even though as Paul shows, it had been prophesied from the beginning. (Look at Chapters 9, 10 & 11) In what ways does the revealing of God's plan serve to strengthen you? The church? In your honest experience and reflection, does it actually strengthen you? Why or why not?

*"... according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith..."*

Whenever something is repeated in scripture we should pay attention. Paul begins his letter AND ends it with this very same phrase and purpose.

In Romans Ch. 1:5 Paul is telling them that Jesus Christ gives them grace and apostleship "to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among the nations." And now here He says that this command given by God to do so is something that God will use to strengthen them.

*What does it mean to 'bring about the obedience of faith'?*

Paul spends a lot of time in Romans talking about how righteousness comes from faith and NOT from works. How do these two statements work together?

*Is this a command to bring it about in yourself or in others or both? Why do you think what you think? Either way, as you look at your life, is the obedience of faith being brought about in you? In others?*

Paul says God is able to strengthen us BY HIS COMMAND TO US to bring about this obedience of faith. *What does this look like for you? Does the knowledge that Jesus Christ GIVES you grace and apostleship to then fulfill this command from God help in any way? How or how not?*

*“...to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.”*

What a beautiful way to end such a completely fascinating and complex letter. To the ONLY WISE GOD.

Let's close our Romans study with a quote by A.W. Tozer in his book 'The Pursuit of God'.

*“I would yet warn against a too-great preoccupation with the thought. It is a sure road to sterile passivity. God will not hold us responsible to understand the mysteries of election, predestination and the divine sovereignty. The best and safest way to deal with these truths is to raise our eyes to God and in deepest reverence say, ‘O Lord, Thou knowest.’ Those things belong to the deep and mysterious profound of God’s omniscience. Prying into them may make theologians, but it will never make saints.”*

Spend some time praying. Thanking God for what in His grace He has revealed to you this year, and perhaps surrendering or trusting Him with what remains hidden and unclear. This also, might just be His grace.

Praise God and Amen.

## NOTES

**NURTURE  
NIGHT  
9/21**

**PARK DAY**

09/28  
9am - 11am

**NURTURE  
NIGHT  
10/19**

**PARK DAY**

10/26  
9am - 11am

**NURTURE  
NIGHT  
11/16**

**PARK DAY**

11/30  
9am - 11am

**CHRISTMAS  
LIGHT WALK  
12/07  
6:30pm**

**NURTURE  
NIGHT  
01/18**

**PARK DAY**

01/25  
9am - 11am

**NURTURE  
NIGHT  
02/08**

**PARK DAY**

02/22  
9am - 11am

**NURTURE  
NIGHT  
03/15**

**PARK DAY**

03/29  
9am - 11am

**FAMILY  
EGG HUNT  
04/19  
10am - 12pm**

**TEA &  
TESTIMONY  
05/11**

**PARK DAY**

05/24  
9am - 11am

## **NURTURE SOCIAL MEDIA:**

 Creekside.nurture

 Nurture - Creekside Womens Church Ministry