

ROMANS

Week 7: Romans 8:1-11

Written by Leah Nestor



DAY 1: DO NOT FEEL CONDEMNED

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

There's a lot to learn when going to another country, such as traffic laws and dress code. A person could travel from a very strict culture to one much more relaxed, or vice-versa.

Becoming a Christian is like traveling to a new country. We're just conditioned to follow the rules of the old country. What happens when we break those rules? The rules that no longer apply to us?

If there is no condemnation in Christ, why is it that we sometimes feel condemned or shamed?

Habits, or culture, are hard to break. Romans 8:1 mentions two *different* ways of existing. Most people spent years living under the law of sin and death (and condemnation) before they were saved. Many Christians have spent much of their post-saved lives also under the law of sin and death (and condemnation). So where does condemnation come from? Simply put, the enemy. We have been set free from that law to live under the law of the Spirit of life. And those are two different ways of thinking, feeling, believing and existing: dead or alive.

DAY 2: LIVING IN GOD'S COUNTRY

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

We, as Americans, don't want to eat fish for breakfast. We, as Americans, don't have to try to get frustrated over spilled milk. While these kinds of decisions seem natural, culture is taught.

Other peoples, like the Japanese, don't have to try to like fish for breakfast. And the Inuit don't have to try not to get frustrated over spilled milk. For them these decisions seem natural. But like ours, their culture is taught.

The first way to assume a new culture is to realize how it's different from our own even in subtle ways. Culture, as evidenced by the world, is both teachable and learnable. We can choose to learn a new culture, one that is life-giving.

People in other cultures think differently, feel differently and act differently - even when confronted with similar circumstances. Walking into the Kingdom of Heaven could be compared to going to France, Ecuador or Holland. Live in it and you'll learn the differences. Start talking to the natives and you'll understand their way of thinking. Compare their ways to your own, and decide what are more life-giving ways you can think, feel and act.

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:1-2

What do you consider to be the law of sin and death? What do you consider to be the law of the Spirit of life?

When you became a Christian, do you feel that you moved from a strict country to a free country or vice versa? Why do you think that is?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You for who You are, and thank You for who You are not. Remind me whenever I feel condemned that it is not You, that it is never You. Condemnation will only take me away from You, and I ask that You would show me how to be freed from any thoughts that are more life-draining than life-giving. Continue to help me see myself in the same way You see me. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers).

Read: Matthew 3 & 4 (Week 32, Day 1)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:5-6, MATTHEW 9:17

What are some of the big (and subtle) ways the culture of the Spirit is different than our own?

How would you start to integrate into another culture, such as French or Dutch? How will these strategies help you to pursue a Spirit culture?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, Thank you for a new country and a new culture. Show me what my culture is currently in my day-to-day life. Help me to notice my reactions, thoughts and feelings to the mundane things and to the serious things. I'm asking You to teach me your culture and give me the peace to let mine go. In Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 5 (Week 32, Day 2)

DAY 3: CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Romans 8:7-8 reads, *For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.*

Let's make this a little more understandable. 'A mind that is set on Nigerian culture is hostile to other cultures/countries for it does not submit to their laws; indeed, it cannot. Those who are part of another culture cannot please his or her countrymen. We, however, do not belong to the culture we once lived in. We belong to a life-giving culture.'

Culture is all-encompassing, inescapable and part of every thought, emotion and decision. God wants His children to be encompassed by His culture so much so that it would automatically and reflexively affect every thought, emotion and decision. Becoming accustomed to a culture is trial-and-error, understanding your old perspective, and realizing a new perspective - it's generally not easy. But for those people who live and learn that culture, pleasing God becomes easy, automatic and thoughtless - because that's what culture is.

DAY 4: IT'S NOT ABOUT 'RIGHT' AND 'WRONG'

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

We are conditioned to think in terms of right and wrong, correct or incorrect. Changing our culture means noticing the way we think - and changing it. Instead of right and wrong, let's talk about life and death. What are you doing and believing that's bringing life to you, to your relationship with the Holy Spirit and to your friends and family? What are you doing and believing that is harming you, your relationship with Holy Spirit and your friends and family?

In the culture of the Kingdom of God, it's not only about using biblical terminology but truly understanding the meaning of these words. One word in particular is, *righteousness*. In the Bible, the first example of righteousness is Abraham. When the Bible says that Abraham was considered righteous because of his faith, we need to remember that he was not following the law. There was no law to follow. He was following, and trying to follow, the Spirit. He did some life-giving things and he did some things that did not bring life. Nonetheless, he was considered righteous not because of what he did but because of the One he believed in, and the One he chose to follow.

DAY 5: JOURNALING

How regularly do you think about the fact that you now live in another culture, the Kingdom of God? How do you think your relationship with God would change if you more fully understood God's culture? Be specific.

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 8 (Week 32, Day 5)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:7-9, ROMANS 12:2

Are you resistant to the idea that pleasing God could be easy? Do you see God as difficult to please?

What aspects of your culture - way of thinking, feeling and behaving - would you want to change for a better way of thinking, feeling and behaving?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You for coming to earth to usher us into a new Kingdom and a new culture. Please help me to better understand what You think, and how and why it's life-giving. I want to desire Your culture to be mine. As I pursue it, I ask that You would bless the pursuit and that this pursuit would be pleasing to God, with all the ups and downs it will undoubtedly bring. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 6 (Week 32, Day 3)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:10, GENESIS 15:6

What actions have you been doing that you've considered arbitrarily "wrong"? How do your feelings and thoughts change if you label those actions as "not life-giving" instead?

What did Abraham believe that made him righteous? Be specific.

PRAYER:

Today, write out your own prayer to God. Share with Him any thoughts, feelings, or opinions you may have.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 7 (Week 32, Day 4)



ROMANS

Week 8: Romans 8:12-17



DAY 1: GIVE UP TO GROW UP

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

When is the last time you took the opportunity to sit back and observe a child? Maybe you watched as she jumped into a large puddle of water, splashing it all over herself and giggling in delight. Or perhaps you observed the 100 percent contented look on his face as he fell asleep knowing he was safe and secure in your arms.

For many, childhood is a season of personal growth that is unrivaled in adulthood. We grow into a high level of self-sufficiency and personal motivation, but we do so in the safety and security of those who love and want the best for us.

But then something strange happens. The further we get into adulthood the more difficult it becomes to experience the the same level of growth that came more naturally in childhood. We may even think to ourselves, *Why is this so difficult?*

The Biblical answer, while true, grates against our very nature. The Scriptures invite us not to be self-sufficient, but to rest in Christ's sufficiency. We're invited to give up our own interests, and instead rest in the safety and security of the One who wants the very best for us.

DAY 2: YOU ARE UNIQUELY CREATED

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

The more you take opportunity to study out the Scriptures in detail, the more you'll begin to identify some interesting dualities. For example, yesterday we read that the Scriptures invite us not to be self-sufficient, but Christ sufficient. Not to be self-motivated, but Spirit-motivated. These biblical principles are absolutely essential to our spiritual growth. But there's another principle which is equally important.

For those who have made a decision to trust in Christ, God has given you a wonderful personality, specific gifts, and talents to creatively fulfill the purpose He has for you. Laying aside your self-sufficiency doesn't mean you lay aside your entire self. Instead, by trusting Christ and following the leading of the Holy Spirit, you'll continually discover how to use your personality, gifts, and talents in unique ways that build up the Kingdom of God.

After today's Scripture reading, take a full 3-5 minutes (or longer) to reflect on this question: In this current season in your life, how has God uniquely suited you to be a light to yourself, your family, your neighbors, and others?

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:12-17, LUKE 10:38-42

Personal growth happens when we rest in the safety and security of the One who loves and wants what's best for us. Today, what is one thing that is *most* getting in the way of you experiencing personal growth?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that my spiritual and emotional growth hinges on me resting in You. Today, I choose to not only acknowledge Your presence, but to rest in it. In Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers).

Read: Luke 9:10-62 (Week 33, Day 1)

READING & JOURNALING:

PHILIPPIANS 1:20-30

In this current season in your life, how has God uniquely suited you to be a light to yourself, your family, your neighbors, and others?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, today I'm thankful for the reminder that following You doesn't mean I give up my whole self, but instead helps me to identify my true self, the very person You have made me to be. May I continue to grow into the person You have made me to be. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Mark 9 & 10 (Week 33, Day 2)

DAY 3: THE PRIVILEGE OF FOLLOWING GOD

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

If you were to write down every thought you have throughout a day, you would likely discover that you have *a lot* of things on your mind. The challenge is to discern which of those thoughts are healthy and lead to a fruitful life, and which of those thoughts are unhealthy and lead to stress, anxiety, or incorrect thoughts about God, yourself, or others.

One false narrative you may struggle with is this: *It is a struggle (or a burden) to be led by the Spirit of God.* At the root of this way of thinking is the belief that every hardship you experience in life is the result of being a Christian. So what do you do? You may choose to go your own way, or cling to the ‘rights’ or ‘privileges’ of being human. Or you may choose to follow God when you think it suits you, but forge your own path at other times.

But in Romans 8:15, Paul reminds us that we have been fully adopted as God’s own children. This means we have given up the rights and privileges of being human, and instead receive the full rights and privileges of being in God’s family. Paul tells us it is not a burden, but a privilege to be led by the Spirit.

DAY 4: STRANGERS AND ALIENS

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Romans 8:12-17 provides us with several important reminders, one of which is to focus on the truth that we are children of God, and because we are His children, we are His heirs. This truth is something that ought to provide tremendous hope, knowing that whatever we may experience in this life is temporary.

We see this truth communicated elsewhere in the New Testament as well. For example, 1 Peter 2:11 says that we are “strangers and aliens” in this world. It’s a reminder that our *real* home is with God in heaven, not here. Similarly, Colossians 3:3 notes that our “real life” is hidden with Christ in God.

Difficulties will come our way, there’s no getting around that. But when difficulties do come our way, they provide us with an opportunity to remember that life’s challenges do not *define* us, they *refine* us. And the more we are refined, the better we’re able to see that our real life is not here but is in the arms of a loving Father.

DAY 5: JOURNALING

How regularly do you think about the fact that you are a child of God? How do you think your relationship with God would change if you more fully understood what it means to be His child and His heir? Be specific.

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Luke 14 (Week 33, Day 5)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:12-17

In ancient Rome, an adopted child had all rights and privileges of their former family cancelled, and instead received the full rights and privileges of their new family. What full rights and privileges do you think come from being adopted into God’s family?

In what ways is it a privilege to be led by the Spirit?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that it ought not be a struggle, but is instead a tremendous privilege to have the opportunity to be led by Your Spirit. May Your Spirit lead me today into better understanding what it means that I am your child. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Luke 12 (Week 33, Day 3)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:12-17, 1 PETER 2:11, COLOSSIANS 3:3

In what ways is God inviting you to more fully discover your “real life” or your true self?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, today I’m grateful for the reminder that the challenges I experience in this life do not *define* me, but they do *refine* me. Continue to refine all of the impurities out of me so that I continue to grow into the person You have made me to be. And help me to remember that this life is temporary, and that my *real life* is with You. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: John 3 & 4 (Week 33, Day 4)



ROMANS

Week 9: Romans 8:18-39



DAY 1: OUR FUTURE GLORY

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

We live in a world in which we will do almost anything to escape from suffering. Pastor and author Peter Scazzero writes in *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, “In our culture, addiction has become the most common way to deal with pain. We watch television incessantly. We keep busy, running from one activity to another. We work seventy hours a week, indulge in pornography, overeat, drink, take pills — anything to avoid the pain...Sadly, the result of denying and minimizing our wounds over many years is that we become less and less human, empty Christian shells with painted smily faces.”

Similarly, Jesus says in John 16:33, “Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows.” There’s just no getting around it. Each of us will experience trials and sorrow. However, Jesus continues by saying, “But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

The apostle Paul echoes Jesus’ statement, writing in Romans 8:18, *Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.*

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:18-25, 2 CORINTHIANS 4:17

What are at least three things we can look forward to in our future glory? (Read today’s passages carefully, and consider utilizing the cross-references in your study bible to discover other helpful passages.)

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I know there is much to look forward to when it comes to my future glory. However, I confess that I am prone to sometimes escape or or numb the realities of this world. Continue to help me be fully present with the realities of this life, knowing that You have overcome them all. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers).

Read: John 6 (Week 34, Day 1)

DAY 2: THE HOLY SPIRIT PRAYS FOR US

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Have you ever been in a situation in which you just didn’t know what to pray? You may have had some close friends or family asking if there’s anything they can do for you, or any specific prayer requests you may have, but you were experiencing such sorrow or confusion that you didn’t even know what to ask for.

Fortunately, we have a God who helps us. Romans 8:26-27 reads, *...we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.*

The Life Application Study Bible offers some wonderful encouragement on this passage. It reads, “With God helping you pray, you don’t need to be afraid to come before him. Ask the Holy Spirit to intercede for you ‘in harmony with God’s own will.’ Then, when you bring your requests to God, trust that he will always do what is best.”

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:26-30

What is at least one situation in your life right now in which you’re really not sure what to pray for?

PRAYER:

Today, write out your own prayer to God. Come to Him without any fear, but in confidence knowing that the Holy Spirit will also be offering prayer for you. And His prayers are in harmony with God’s own will.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 19:16-30 (Week 34, Day 2)

DAY 3: GOD WORKS IN ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

It's one thing to experience the occasional *trial*, such as traffic jams, your car breaking down, or having the flu. It's another to experience something much more sorrowful. In these moments it's easy to wonder, *Can anything good come from this?*

The biblical answer, as difficult as it may be to accept, is that God works in all things for our good.

The NLT Life Application Study Bible notes on Romans 8:28, "God works in 'everything'—not just isolated incidents—for our good. This does not mean that all that happens to us is good. Evil is prevalent in our fallen world, but God is able to turn every circumstance around for our long-range good. Note that God is not working to make us happy but to fulfill his purpose."

As you read today, consider this: What is one extremely difficult situation you've experienced? In what way(s) did you eventually discover that God worked through this situation for good?

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:26-34

What is one extremely difficult situation you've experienced? In what way(s) did you eventually discover that God worked through this situation for good?

How may God be inviting you to share your experience with others who are currently experiencing a significant life challenge?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I realize there's a difference between simple *trials* of life and severe difficulties that will forever change me. Nevertheless, I believe that deep down You have worked and will continue to work for good in *every* situation I experience. May I rest in this truth today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Luke 15 & 16 (Week 34, Day 3)

DAY 4: NOTHING STANDS BETWEEN US BUT LOVE

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Romans 8 ends with two verses (38-39) which are well worth memorizing: *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It's certainly one thing to read these words from the Apostle Paul and breathe them in to soothe your anxious soul. Music artist John Mark McMillan, however, writes this verse as if God Himself is singing it over you. Imagine for moment that God Himself is singing, and you're simply listening to His voice:

Nothing stands between us

Nothing stands between us, but love now

Nothing stands between us

Nothing stands between us but love

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:35-39

In what ways is God inviting you to rest in the promises of Romans 8:35-39 today?

Consider taking the opportunity to write out this passage and memorize it over the next week.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, this passage is the ultimate reminder that absolutely nothing stands between You and me, except for the love you continually offer. Today, may I give up any self-centered desire to *earn* Your love, but instead rest in the truth that You offer it to me freely. May I rest in Your loving presence each day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

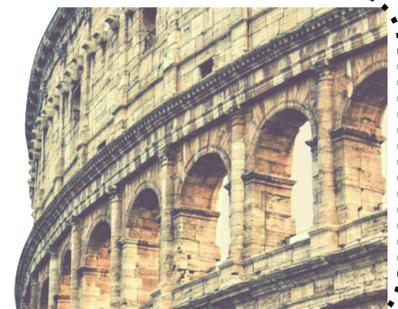
Read: Luke 17:11-37 & 18 (Week 34, Day 4)

DAY 5: JOURNALING

Take the opportunity to look up and write out two or three other passages that align with Romans 8:38-39. You may find it helpful to utilize the cross-references in your study bible.

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Mark 10 (Week 34, Day 5)



ROMANS

Week 10: Romans 9:1 – 11:36



DAY 1: SACRIFICING FOR OTHERS

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Think for just a moment about those you know who have not made a personal commitment to Christ. How much would you be willing to sacrifice for them in order for them to experience salvation? Now, think about the countless others you may not know who have never made a personal commitment to Christ. How much would you be willing to sacrifice for them?

In Romans 9:2-3, Paul makes a startling statement. He writes, *My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them.*

Surely, there would be other Jewish descendants Paul knew and loved deeply. But there would also be countless others he didn't know. Yet Paul still says he would be willing to be forever cursed - cut off from Christ - if that would save them.

The Life Application Study Bible notes, "How concerned are you for those who don't know Christ? Are you willing to sacrifice your time, money, energy, comfort, and safety to see them come to faith in Jesus?"

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 9:1-33

How concerned are you for those who don't know Christ? Are you willing to sacrifice your time, money, energy, comfort, and safety to see them come to faith in Jesus?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I know I would be willing to give *something* of myself for the salvation of others, but I don't know if I would be like Paul - willing to be forever cursed - for the salvation of others. Help me to grow in my ability to think of myself less and to think of the eternal salvation of others more. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers).

Read: John 11 & Matthew 21:1-13 (Week 35, Day 1)

DAY 2: BELIEVE IN CHRIST

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

In the Book of Romans, Chapters 9-11 seem to break from the flow of the rest of the letter. While scholars may debate the specific purpose of some portions from these chapters, others are quite clear.

One of the most clear passages is in Romans 10:9-11 which reads, *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced."*

The NLT Study Bible notes that the Greek word for heart in Romans 10:9 is *kardia*. The heart is "... the inner person. It is closely related to soul, mind, and spirit. In some contexts there is an emphasis on thinking and understanding; in others the emphasis is on feeling and desiring; in still others the focus is on making choices."

Believing in Christ, therefore, impacts our thinking and understanding, our feelings, desires, and our choices.

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 10:1-21

How would you explain to somebody what it means to believe in Christ, and the holistic impact that decision would make in their life?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, today I recognize that the *heart* of my belief in Christ is all encompassing, and I pray that You would continue to break my heart for what breaks Yours, to love myself in the same way You love me, and to love others as You love them. May others know that I believe in Christ by my love for them. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: John 13 (Week 35, Day 2)

DAY 3: THE GRACE OF GOD

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Imagine what life would be like without the grace of God. It would be devastating.

While Romans 11 has some complexity to it, the theme of the grace of God in verse 6 is quite clear - God's grace is free and undeserved.

Paul writes about the endless grace of God elsewhere:

- The grace of God is the totality by which men and women are made righteous (see Romans 3:24; Titus 3:7).
- Grace is a state or condition in which we stand (see Romans 5:2).
- Grace extends to more and more people (see 2 Cor 4:15).
- To hold to the law is to nullify grace (see Galatians 2:21)
- The Christian is not under the law but under grace (see Romans 6:14.)
- Grace is opposed to what is owed (see Romans 4:4).
- The gospel itself, which is the good news of grace, can be called grace (see Acts 20:24) or the word of His grace (see Acts 14:3; 20:32).

DAY 4: GOD IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Romans 11 ends with a profound truth: *You were made for God's glory.* While Paul doesn't use the word *you* here, he instead uses a much bigger word - *everything*.

Romans 11:36 reads, *For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory.*

The NLT Life Application Study Bible notes, "In the final analysis, all of us are absolutely dependent on God. He is the source of all things, including ourselves. He is the power that sustains and rules the world that we live in. And God works out all things to bring glory to himself. The all-powerful God deserves our praise."

Additionally, the NIV Zondervan Study Bible notes that if *everything* is intended for God's glory, this means the ultimate goal of all things must be God. It says, "God is the source, means, and goal of all things."

As you read today, consider this: What goals do you currently have in life? Is knowing and understanding God the ultimate goal of your life?

DAY 5: JOURNALING

What have you learned about the grace of God this week? What have you learned about yourself?

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 24:1-31 (Week 35, Day 5)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 11:1-10

With the help of a good Study Bible, write out your own definition of *Grace*. Also, write out three verses about the grace of God that stand out most to you.

Who is somebody you can share one (or all) of these verses with today, or sometime in the near future?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, today I'm grateful for the reminder that Your grace is endless, and that the gospel message is ultimately a gospel of grace. Today, I simply want to thank You and praise You for your grace, and I ask for confidence to share passages about Your grace with others. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: John 14 & 15 (Week 35, Day 3)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 11:33-36

What goals do you currently have in life? Is knowing and understanding God the ultimate goal of your life?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, there are times in my life when I have a clear goal I'm looking to accomplish, but there are other times when I feel helpless and lacking in direction. Today, I simply thank You for the reminder that the ultimate goal is to fulfill the Greatest Commandment, to love the Lord my God with my heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love my neighbor as myself. May I know you more and more each day. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: John 16 (Week 35, Day 4)



ROMANS

Week 11: Romans 12:1-21



DAY 1: A LIVING SACRIFICE

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Romans 12 begins with the word, *therefore*. This is the author's way of saying, "Here comes a summary of everything I've written up until now."

The NIV translation of Romans 12:1 reads, *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.* The ESV Study Bible notes that "we give ourselves entirely to God because of His saving grace (God's mercy), as shown from Romans 3:21-11:36." This mercy from God may be best understood as *undeserved kindness*, a prominent theme throughout the book of Romans.

As you begin this week, take the opportunity to reflect on the truth that God sacrificed *everything* for you. You may occasionally feel unworthy, unloveable, or not enough. But God says, "I gave my life for you because you *are* worth it to Me. You are my beloved child!" As this truth takes root deep within you, you will not only accept the invitation to be a living sacrifice, you'll be transformed into somebody who *wants* to be a living sacrifice.

DAY 2: CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

In Jesus' very first sermon, He begins by saying, *Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand (Matthew 3:2).* The Greek word translated as *repent* in your English Bible is *metanoia*. In

Greek, the word is best understood as a changing of the mind. In other words, Jesus taught that in order to really get to know God and to experience life transformation, you need to change the way you think.

This truth is repeated in Romans 12:2, which reads, *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

This verse can be applied in countless ways. But one of the best ways to think through it is by answering these questions:

- What am I *most* seeking in life right now? (Peace, contentment, love, acceptance, other...?)
- Where am I *most* looking for it? (In which behaviors and customs of this world am I looking for it?)
- What steps must I take to change the way I think about this?

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 12:1-2

How would you explain to others what it means to be a living sacrifice? Using your study bible, are there other passages you can point to as to what it means to be a living sacrifice?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I confess that when I think about being a *living sacrifice* I sometimes have the thought that it would be easier not to do so. Help me to better understand that You have given me *life* and are inviting me to live it to the full. You're not asking me to sacrifice myself so that I die, you're inviting me to sacrifice of myself because You have already made me fully alive. May this truth help me to live fully and freely. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers).

Read: Mathew 24:32-51 (Week 36, Day 1)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 12:1-2

Read Romans 12:1-2 with the aid of a good study bible, then walk through this exercise:

- What am I *most* seeking in life right now? (Peace, contentment, love, acceptance, other...?)
- Where am I *most* looking for it? (In which behaviors and customs of this world am I looking for it? From what other people say or think about me? From what I buy or have? Elsewhere?)
- What steps must I take to change the way I think about this?

PRAYER:

Today, write out your own prayer to God, inviting Him to help you change the way you think and to discover what you're seeking in Him.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: John 17 (Week 36, Day 2)

DAY 3: MUTUAL SERVICE

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

What is one gift or talent you don't currently have but would like to? For some, it may be the ability to sing or play a musical instrument. For others, it may be the ability to teach. Others still may desire to have more so they could give more.

In Romans 12:3-8, Paul notes that it's important to properly evaluate ourselves so that we may best serve one another. Some may think they don't have anything to offer, but this isn't true, we all have something to contribute. Others may want to contribute more than they're able, but their real desire may be to do so for success or achievement.

What's the solution? Paul says the solution is to properly evaluate ourselves, recognizing that we all have something to contribute, but not to be overly proud about what we contribute, nor to be overly negative in thinking that it isn't enough. Instead, we should see one another as parts of the same *body*. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:25-26, *This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.*

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 12:3-8, 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-26

What do you believe you are most able to contribute to the body of Christ? In what ways does your contribution help bring harmony to the church?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, today I'm grateful for the reminder that I have something to contribute to the church body, but that I ought not be proud of my contribution. Continue to help me grow in humility so that I can mutually serve others, and help me to receive the service others gladly offer me. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 26:35 - 27:31 (Week 36, Day 3)

DAY 4: REALLY LOVE THEM

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

In Romans 12:9 we read, *Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them.* This verse ought to make each of us pause and reflect, prayerfully considering how we may be *pretending* to love others instead of *really* loving them.

The NLT Life Application Study Bible notes, "Most of us have learned how to be courteous to others—how to speak kindly, avoid hurting their feelings, and appear to take an interest in them. We may even be skilled in pretending to show compassion when we hear of others' needs, or to become indignant when we learn of injustice. But God calls us to real and genuine love that goes far beyond being hypocritical and polite. Genuine love requires concentration and effort. It means helping others become better people. It demands our time, money, and personal involvement. No individual has the capacity to express love to a whole community, but the body of Christ in your town does. Look for people who need your love, and look for ways you and your fellow believers can love your community for Christ."

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 12:9-21

Is there anybody in your life you may be *pretending* to love instead of *really* loving them?

Think (and pray) about one way you can *really* love them today, and then do it.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I confess I don't like to think about the likelihood that I *pretend* to love others instead of *really* loving them. Help me to not only be polite, but to use real concentration, prayer, effort, time, and money to really love others in the way You have loved me. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 27:32-66 & Luke 23:26-56 (Week 36, Day 4)

DAY 5: JOURNALING

In what ways are you growing in changing the way you think? How is this impacting your life, and the lives of those you interact with on a regular basis?

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: John 19 (Week 36, Day 5)



ROMANS

Week 12: Romans 13:1 – 16:27



DAY 1: LIVE FOR ALL TO SEE

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Romans 13:13-14 reads, *Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.*

There's a strong biblical principle that says, "We are to live *in* the world, but not *of* the world." In this world, we may hear about or be invited to participate in wild parties, drunkenness, or sexual promiscuity. We may also participate in negative behaviors that aren't as visible, such as quarreling, jealousy, envy, greed, and more.

But like Christ, Paul appeals that we live decent lives for all to see. In John 13:35 Jesus says, *"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."* In other words, living good lives for all to see isn't about adhering to a list of right's and wrong's, do's and don'ts. It's simply about loving others in the same way Christ loved us.

DAY 2: DON'T CAUSE OTHERS TO STUMBLE

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

We all have a tendency to determine what is right and wrong in our own minds. When it comes to clear topics in the Scriptures - like the command to love God and love others - we would all say that's a *good* and *right* thing to do. But sometimes we determine other things are *wrong* even if they may not be.

Paul deals with this tension in Romans 14. As he wrestles with this tension, he's sure to say that the one *wrong* thing we can do is to condemn or look down on another Christian for something they've done that may not actually be *wrong*.

Some of the examples he uses include (1) Eating anything vs. eating only vegetables, (2) Thinking one day is holier than another day, (3) Drinking wine verses not drinking wine.

What's the solution presented? The NLT Life Application Study Bible notes, "Everything we do affects others, and we have to think of them constantly. God created us to be interdependent, not independent. We who are strong in our faith must, without pride or condescension, treat others with love, patience, and self-restraint."

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 13

Take some time to write out your own definition of the word *love*. What does it mean to truly *love* others?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I know there are times when I may say or think that my actions towards others are loving. But when I take opportunities to fully reflect on these actions I recognize that my desire isn't always to truly love them. Instead, I discover some self-centered tendencies within my actions; "loving" others in order to get something in return. As Your Word says, Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. (Psalm 139:23-24)

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers).

Read: Mark 16 (Week 37, Day 1)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 14

How regularly do you find yourself condemning or judging other Christians for things that may go against your personal convictions, but may not be considered *wrong* by God?

What sticks out to you most from Romans 14?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I confess that it's sometimes easy for me to look at others' actions or behaviors and have judgmental thoughts towards them, even when their actions aren't necessarily *wrong*. Help me to remember that others may have a personal perspective or conviction a little different from my own, but that I can be united with them simply due to our faith in You. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Luke 24 (Week 37, Day 2)

DAY 3: ACCEPT OTHERS AS CHRIST ACCEPTED YOU

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Ancient Rome had a lot of diversity. As the Roman Empire spread, people from many different backgrounds, cultures, education, and status moved into this major city. With so much diversity and so many different perspectives within the city, there was sure to be some level of tension. Paul did not want to see the Christians in Rome experience this tension.

Romans 15:5 reads, *May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus.*

The NLT Life Application Study Bible notes, "The Roman church was a diverse community. It was made up of Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, rich and poor, strong and weak. So it was difficult for them to accept one another. Accepting means taking people into our homes as well as into our hearts, sharing meals and activities, avoiding racial and economic discrimination, and going out of our way to avoid favoritism. How can you accept others as Christ has accepted you?"

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 15

Not everybody lives in a city or community as diverse as ancient Rome. How regularly do you find yourself avoiding others who look, think, vote, spend, worship, or live differently than you?

How can you more intentionally accept others from different backgrounds and cultures in the same way Christ has accepted you?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I confess there are a lot of thoughts that come to mind when I think of the word *diversity*. Generally speaking, I find that I prefer to be with others who look, think, vote, worship, and live similarly to myself. But this isn't the full life You've called me to live, as You've invited me to live in harmony with all other Christians. Help me see all others as You do. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: John 20 & 21 (Week 37, Day 3)

DAY 4: AVOID THOSE WHO SEEK DIVISION

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Romans is a pretty lengthy letter, and it's clear Paul took a tremendous amount of time crafting it, ensuring he communicated everything he wanted to communicate to this young church. Toward the end of the letter, he makes one final appeal in Romans 16:17, *And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them.*

Unity is something worth striving for. For example, there may be some you interact with who regularly share their opinions or perspectives on things, but not be domineering about it. However, there may be others who share their opinions or perspectives on things, and be overly condescending towards you or others who adhere to a different way of thinking. Paul's response? Stay away from those who seek division.

As Paul writes in Philippians 2:2, *...make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.*

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 16

Think of a time when you may have created division instead of seeking unity. What life-lessons did you learn as a result?

Think about it, what are some specific ways that avoiding those who seek division will actually strengthen the unity among Christians?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, I know there are some who may claim to seek unity but are actually teaching or saying things that go against some of the teachings of Christ. Continue to provide me with wisdom and discernment so that I may live out Your purpose for my life well. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 28 (Week 37, Day 4)

DAY 5: JOURNALING

Take some time to review the questions and topics presented throughout this study on the Book of Romans. What was most memorable about this study throughout the book of Romans?

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Acts 1 (Week 37, Day 5)

