

Romans



NOT ASHAMED

(15 BIBLE STUDIES)

EXAMINAPPLICATION

BIBLE STUDIES

CONTENTS

Contents	page 02
Getting the most out of these studies	page 03
Introducing Romans	pages 04-05
Study 01: Romans 1 – Not ashamed of the Gospel	pages 06-07
Study 02: Romans 2 – Religious Hypocrisy	pages 08-09
Study 03: Romans 3 – Justification by faith	pages 10-11
Study 04: Romans 4 – Righteousness by faith	pages 12-13
Study 05: Romans 5 – The Blessings of faith	pages 14-15
Study 06: Romans 6 – Transformed by Grace	pages 16-17
Study 07: Romans 7 – Struggling with Sin	pages 18-19
Study 08: Romans 8:1-17 – Life in the Spirit	pages 20-21
Study 09: Romans 8:18-39 – Future Glory	pages 22-23
Study 10: Romans 9:1-29 – God is Sovereign	pages 24-25
Study 11: Romans 9:30-11:36 – God’s Salvation Plan	pages 26-27
Study 12: Romans 12 – Responding to God’s Mercy	pages 28-29
Study 13: Romans 13 – Love and Authority	pages 30-31
Study 14: Romans 14:1-15:13 – Disputable Matters	pages 32-33
Study 15: Romans 15:14-16:27 – Working in Community	pages 34-35
Memory Verses	page 36

THE SMALL PRINT

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Co

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. "New International Version" and "NIV" are registered trademarks of Biblica, Inc.™ Used with permission under fair usage.

Studies © Steve McClure 2020

Front Cover Graphic © Stephen Hartwell 2020 and (image: alex-holyoake-pNv5MzMSqLc-unsplash)

Not to be copied for commercial purposes. Permission is granted to use unaltered and attributed for non-commercial purposes.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THESE STUDIES

Your Commitment

I would encourage you to make a commitment to attending your group regularly. I realise that sometimes there are things that get in the way, but do prioritise studying the Bible with other. This will involve sacrifice, and effective use of your time, but I really believe that in doing so you will get the most out of studying the Bible and praying together in your small group.

Your Contribution

What you put into the group is going to determine what you get out of the group. I encourage you to contribute honestly to the discussion and workings of the group. I understand people come from different backgrounds with unique personalities & life experiences. But, we all have a big part to play, so I encourage you to be fully present and take ownership of your group.

Your Preparation

These materials are primarily for use in preparing and/or leading group discussions, but they will also be useful in keeping your thoughts together in one place. The materials provide you with the passage so that you can identify and highlight recurring themes and note down your own thoughts and questions. Also, the materials include questions designed to provoke thought, and help you reflect on what the passage meant, both at the time it was written, and also what it means for us now.

I would encourage you to make good use of these materials, as doing so will help you contribute and get the most out of the group discussions. The materials are, however, only “tools” – they are there to help you, and not to restrict you, or force you to think in a certain manner. I want to see God speaking to you through these passages, and if the questions or notes don't help you, simply don't use them!

I have also included within these materials an introduction to the book. Make of this what you will, but I hope that it is helpful in getting you started with these studies!

Your Leadership

Here are some useful pointers in how to lead your Bible study group. Be aware that included in this study guide are more questions than you can possibly ask and/or answer in one session. They are not designed to be used rigidly, and there will rarely be a need to ask every question! Make sure that you spend some time praying at the start and ensure you read & re-read the passages as much as possible. In relation to the passages, then consider the suggested questions with an open mind. There is rarely “a single right answer” and I would encourage you to share your thoughts with your group.

I have also included a number of quotations from relevant Christian literature, most of which are readily available online if you want to do further thinking or study. My prayer is that as you study together you would grow to love Jesus and experience Him more deeply.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to make these materials even better!

*Steve McClure
Spring 2019*

INTRODUCING ROMANS

The task of introducing Paul's incredible letter to the church in Rome is no small feat! It's the longest of Paul's letters and was probably written from Corinth during his 3rd missionary journey (around 57AD). At the time Rome was the centre of the influential and powerful Roman Empire and was strategically a great place to develop for the gospel. Rome was not a place that Paul had visited (though he clearly had many contacts there), but it seemed that he wanted to use it as a base for operations on route to Spain (15:23-29). As we would expect Paul has some knowledge of the situation in Rome and wrote to address some of those things.

The Roman church was made up of both Jews and Gentiles and Paul writes primarily to unite them in the gospel. This becomes clear in the first seven verses as Paul summarises his core message regarding the good news about Jesus Christ. This is the major theme of the letter and Paul will spend much time fleshing it out. Below is something of a whistle stop overview of this great letter:

Chapters 1-3: In chapter 1 Paul expresses his desire to see them in order to share with them the gospel of God which he says is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. We read about the wrath of God and how it was revealed against sinful humanity who he says are without excuse. Then in chapter 2 the focus moves from wrath to judgement and Paul is clear that none of us have an excuse for judging others. Paul is showing why everyone needs the gospel. In chapter 3 Paul continues to develop his argument as he makes clear that God's judgement is righteous and that no-one is righteous in and of themselves. The law rather than making us righteous actually helps us become conscious of our sin. Even though we all fall short, God's grace is freely given to us and brings us justification through all that Christ achieved on our behalf.

Chapters 4-5: If chapter 3 was about how we can be justified by faith alone then chapter 4 is a worked example of how this worked for Abraham in the Old Testament. Abraham was facing a pretty hopeless situation but he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Having spent 4 chapters spelling out both our need for Christ (all have sinned) and how Christ meets that need (making us right with God), in chapter 5 Paul begins to spell out some of the differences this makes in our lives.

Chapters 6-7: Paul's premise for chapter 6 is that if grace is this good, then it will be open to misunderstanding. Verses 1 and 15 include two similar questions that are met with the same answer, *by no means*. Experiencing grace means we see things differently: dead to sin and alive in Christ. Paul then begins chapter 7 with another example of how in becoming dead to the law we have been released from it. Paul wrestles with the nature and purpose of the law in our lives before spending some time focusing on the nature of his own sinful heart.

Chapter 8: If chapter 7 focused on the place of the law, Romans 8 focuses on the work of the Spirit and specifically the contrast between the weakness of the law and the power of the Spirit. In these verses Paul is summing up his whole argument about salvation which is ours in Christ. In the second part of the chapter Paul says that sharing in Christ's suffering was the path to sharing in His glory. Paul continues to develop this theme as He compares our current struggles with the glory that will one day be revealed. In the final verses Paul turns to the love of God and specifically how nothing can separate us from God's love. For many Romans 8 is the real high point of the whole letter and of Paul's elaborate argument that he has been making from the very start.

Chapters 9-11: Having detailed our need for Christ and God's glorious provision through Christ, Paul now comes to the thorny question of Israel. Had God rejected them? Had they missed out on the purposes of God? What do our answers to those questions say about our own assurance of salvation? Paul spends some time talking about this thorny (and often very difficult to understand) question of Israel and their unbelief. Paul helps us to understand why God's salvation plan involves both their unbelief and their future restoration.

Chapters 12-13: In Romans 1-11 Paul elaborated on our need of a Saviour and God's glorious provision of grace and mercy in Christ. Chapter 12 begins with the word *therefore* and in it Paul begins to elaborate on our response to God's grace and mercy. Paul encourages the Romans to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, to love in action and to use the gifts that God has given them. Then in chapter 13 Paul continues to explain how we should respond to God's grace and mercy in relation to submission to the authorities.

Chapters 14-16: In chapters 14-15 Paul turns his focus towards loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. To this end Paul identifies two groups: those who are weak (14:1) and those who are strong (15:1). Chapter 16 finishes with some greetings and practicalities. It's an inspiring list of people who Paul worked with and who he sought to address in the church at Rome. Here we get a glimpse of how he worked in community with a team of people committed to the gospel.

If we were to try and identify key themes in the book of Romans I think we would have to begin with the fact that we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 1-3). This is the foundational truth upon which Paul then builds his theology of justification by faith. This, says Paul, is the basis upon which even Abraham was made right with God. Crucially though, justification for everyone (before and after Christ) was accomplished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This makes a huge difference for all who believe. For such people there is now *no condemnation* (8:1) and there is certain hope of future glory. All this is true for both Jew and Gentile. Paul wrestles with both our responsibility (our need to believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths) and the Sovereignty of God (God's choice and initiative). In the case of Israel this is one of the most complex aspects of the letter. The letter to the Romans makes clear that God does not cast aside His promises and particularly in the case of Israel, there would be a remnant of grace and one day there would be restoration. The final theme of the letter is about how we should respond to the glorious gospel truths contained within the first 11 chapters. Paul says that we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, respect the authorities and love both our neighbours and enemies alike. Paul says that special care should be taken to ensure that living out our own freedom in Christ, does not impact upon the faith of another (the so called weaker brother). This is mind-blowing material and so my prayer for you is that you will find this letter as inspirational as so many others have found it over the centuries.

"This Epistle [Romans] is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes." Martin Luther

To Him be the Glory,

Steve McClure

INTRODUCTION: Paul begins his letter to the Romans with a summary of the good news of the gospel about Jesus Christ. This is the subject of the letter and Paul will spend much time fleshing it out. Here in chapter 1 Paul expresses his desire to see them in order to share with them the gospel of God which he says is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.

SETTING THE SCENE: How would you describe good news: what characteristics make it good? If you had to write a summary of the gospel of God what things would you include? Paul says that he is not ashamed of the gospel (v16) but what might others find to be ashamed of?

.....

.....

THE GOSPEL IN A NUTSHELL (v1-5): What do we learn about Paul (v1 & 5) and the people that he was writing to in Rome (v6-7)? What can we learn from Paul's summary of the gospel of God (literally good news) in v2-5? How does this compare with your answer from the previous question?

.....

.....

.....

VISITING ROME (v8-14): Why does Paul say that he is so eager to thank God for them (v8) and remember them in his prayers (v10)? What reasons does Paul lay out as to why he wants to visit them in Rome (see v11-15)? In what sense is Paul a debtor (v14) and compelled to preach the gospel to all?

.....

.....

.....

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD (v15-17): What is your experience of the gospel as the power of God and when might you have felt ashamed? How does the gospel reveal the righteousness of God? Why is this righteousness *by faith* (17a), and what does it look like to *live by faith* (v17b)?

.....

.....

THE WRATH OF GOD (v18-32): What reasons does Paul give in this section as to why the wrath of God (v18) is *being* revealed? How do you respond to the idea of God's wrath?

.....

.....

.....

PLAIN SINCE CREATION OF THE WORLD (v18b-20): Paul says God's invisible qualities have been clearly seen: if true why do you think that people have suppressed the truth? To what extent do you agree with Paul that people are therefore without excuse (v20)?

.....

.....

WORSHIPPING CREATED THINGS (v21-25): Paul paints a bleak picture here of how people have failed to worship or glorify God: why do people prefer to worship created things (v23 & 26)? How do you understand Paul's phrase "Therefore God gave them over..." (v24a)? Why do people appear to prefer to *exchange the truth about God for a lie*? In what ways have you experienced this?

.....

.....

.....

EVERY KIND OF WICKEDNESS (v26-31): Paul continues to detail humanities downward spiral: what are the key characteristics of this spiral? What shocks or surprises you about what is included here?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER (v32): Despite knowledge of God's righteous decree Paul says people not only continue to sin but approve of others also: what do you think motivates such flagrant disobedience? How do you think that we can respond to a chapter like this both in terms of our own sinfulness and in terms of reach out to those who as yet do not love God for themselves?

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for the good news of the gospel and ask God to help you to never be ashamed of it. Pray together for your friends and for our society that in His mercy God would draw people to Himself and stop the vicious downward spiral into depravity.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 1:16

STUDY 2 – ROMANS 2 – RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

INTRODUCTION: In chapter 1 Paul explains how the wrath of God is being poured out against the wickedness of humanity. In chapter 2 the focus moves from wrath to judgement and Paul is clear that none of us have an excuse for judging others. Paul is showing why everyone needs the gospel.

SETTING THE SCENE: How would you define religious hypocrisy and why is it still such a big issue? Try to think of a time when you were on the receiving end of religious hypocrisy: what made it so clear that their words and actions did not stack up?

.....

.....

“The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, then walk out the door and deny him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.” DC Talk

THE MORAL PERSON (v1-3): If in chapter 1 Paul was addressing the morally bankrupt, what kind of person is he addressing here? Why is it such a natural inclination to pass judgement on others (v1)? In doing so how do we condemn ourselves and leave us with no excuse? To what extent can you identify with the hypocrisy that even though we judge others we find ourselves doing the same things (v3)?

.....

.....

.....

SHOWING CONTEMPT (v4-5): How might we show contempt, stubbornness and an unrepentant heart by presuming upon God's kindness, forbearance and patience? In doing so Paul says we store up wrath against ourselves: how instead should this lead to repentance?

.....

.....

.....

FACING JUDGEMENT (6-10): Paul says that everyone will be judgement *according to what they have done*: how do you understand his distinction between those who persist in doing good (v7) and the self-seeking (v8)? What awaits those in each category?

.....

.....

.....

NO FAVOURITISM (11-13): How does Paul justify his claim that God does not show favouritism? Specifically what is similar and what is different between those under the law (the Jews) and those not under the law (the Gentiles)? Why then does Paul say that it is not critical whether we have the law but whether we obey it? What does Paul mean by those who have the law written on their hearts (v15)?

.....

.....

.....

THE HYPOCRITICAL JEW (v17-24): Why might a Jew boast because of their possession and reliance of God's law (v18-20)? What then is the implication of the rhetorical questions Paul asks of the Jews regarding some of their own law? Why could their failure to respond in obedience cause the Gentiles to blaspheme against God?

.....

.....

.....

CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART (v25-29): What was the significance of circumcision (see Genesis 17) and why does Paul say that it is only of value if there is obedience to the law? In what ways do you understand Paul's comment that circumcision is not merely physical and outward (v27)?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: This is not an easy chapter which cuts through much of the religious hypocrisy exercised by both Jew and Gentile: how do you understand the big picture of what Paul has been trying to say here? How does such hypocrisy continue to hinder the cause of the gospel?

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Acknowledge before God that we all need the gospel. Thank Him for Jesus and His sacrifice. Ask God to help you rest in His grace and mercy rather than face His judgement.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 2:13

STUDY 3 – ROMANS 3 – JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

INTRODUCTION: Paul continues to develop his argument as he makes clear that God's judgement is righteous and that no-one is righteous in and of themselves. The law rather than making us righteous actually helps us become conscious of our sin. Even though we all fall short, God's grace is freely given to us and brings us justification through all that Christ achieved on our behalf.

SETTING THE SCENE: Imagine that you are serving as a judge or part of a jury and one of your good friends is brought before you for trial: how would you prioritise the need for both love and justice? What is your understanding of how God does that for us through the death of His Son?

.....

.....

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS (v1-8): Following what Paul said in 2:11 about God not showing partiality, he now asks what advantage there is from being a Jew: how does he answer this question? In what ways does our unfaithfulness impact God's faithfulness to us? How does Paul deal with the accusation that this might render God unjust (v5)?

.....

.....

.....

UNIVERSAL GUILT (v9-18): Why is Paul so eager to make clear that everyone is under the power of sin (v9)? In what ways do the quotations from the Psalms (v10-18) support this argument? How might you (or your friends) respond to these strong statements which make clear our universal guilt?

.....

.....

.....

ROLE OF THE LAW (v19-20): In these verses what does Paul say about the role of the law? What makes Paul so adamant that the law cannot declare anyone righteous (v20)? What kind of role has God's law played in your life and journey to faith? How do these verses summarise Paul's argument from the beginning of the letter up until this point?

.....

.....

.....

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (v21-22a): In Paul's writings the word 'but' is often a major turning point: how has the *righteousness of God* been made known? Why does this righteousness come through faith Christ and why is this so different to righteousness that comes from the law (see 2:13)?

.....

.....

.....

JUSTIFIED FREELY (v22b-26): There are some pretty heavy words in these verses: how would you explain the use of *justified* (v24, a legal term), *redemption* (v24, a phrase from the slave market) and *sacrifice of atonement* (v26, propitiation see Leviticus 16)? How do these verses combine to present a picture of the manner in which God turns our hopeless situation around?

.....

.....

.....

APART FROM THE LAW (v27-31): In what sense is boasting completely incompatible with our Salvation (v27)? How do you respond to all that Paul says is true for those who believe apart from the law (v28-30)? How does Paul answer the charge that this teaching nullifies the law (v31)?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What can we learn from the way that Paul spends so much time talking about God's judgement (1:1-3:20) before only then introducing the grace of God (3:21 onwards)?

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Praise God for the fact that without His incredible grace none of us would be righteous before God. Thank God for the gift of His grace and all that He achieved through the death of His Son at the cross. Ask God to help you to communicate better the good news about Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 3:23

STUDY 4 – ROMANS 4 – RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH

INTRODUCTION: If chapter 3 was about demonstrating that we can be justified by faith alone then chapter 4 is a worked example of how this worked for Abraham in the Old Testament. Abraham was facing a pretty hopeless situation but he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

SETTING THE SCENE: Why do you think we people it so hard to accept that we can contribute nothing towards our Salvation? Having believed, way why do we also find it so hard to believe that we are justified by faith alone and not by something we do?

.....

.....

ABRAHAM – FAITH OR WORKS (v1-5): Following on from 3:31 Paul now poses a question about Abraham: does Paul's emphasis on justification nullify what happened in the Old Testament? How do you understand Paul's quotation from Genesis 15:6 (v3 & v22)? How does Paul distinguish here the difference between justification by works and by faith (v4-5)?

.....

.....

.....

DAVID – BLESSEDNESS (v6-8): How do you understand Paul's comment about David saying the *same thing* as v1-5 (i.e. was he saved by grace or works)? What was David's experience of the forgiveness and grace of God (see quote from Psalm 32:1-2)?

.....

.....

.....

QUESTION OF CIRCUMCISION (v9-12): Circumcision was a big deal in the Old Covenant: why was Paul so eager to make clear that faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness (Gen 15) before he was circumcised (Gen 17)? In what sense does Paul see Abraham as the Father of the circumcised and the uncircumcised (v12)? What things do people falsely think is required for Salvation today?

.....

.....

.....

GOD'S PROMISE AND FAITH (v13-17): What's the difference between receiving God's promise through the law (v13-15) and through faith (v16-17)? Why might dependence on the law (if that made people heirs) leave the promise worthless? What does it mean for you to be Abraham's offspring?

.....

.....

.....

AGAINST ALL HOPE (v18-25): Paul says that God *gives life to the dead* (v17): how is this worked out in v18-22? Why does Paul say that Abraham against all hope, in hope believed (v18)? How would you define hope itself and the hope that Abraham demonstrates here?

.....

.....

.....

In what sense were Abraham's words (*it was credited to him as righteousness*) written for us? How is Abraham's example a pattern for us also to follow as we believe that God raised Jesus from the dead? In other words how is the gospel not a contradiction but a fulfilment of the Old Testament?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Reflect back over this chapter as a whole: to what extent do you agree that Paul is saying that righteousness for everyone (past, present and future) is through faith in Christ? When have you had to believe God for something that seemed impossible? How has that situation strengthened your faith and caused you to glorify God?

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for the blessing of being woven into God's promises to Abraham. Ask God to help you to be people of faith and hope with an unshakable confidence that God has the power to do all He has promised. Pray for opportunities to demonstrate such faith and hope.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 4:18a

STUDY 5 – ROMANS 5 – THE BLESSINGS OF FAITH

INTRODUCTION: Paul has spent 4 chapters spelling out both our need for Christ (all have sinned) and how Christ meets that need. Because of all that Christ has done for us we can be made right with God (justified). Now in chapter 5 Paul begins to spell out some of the differences this makes in our lives.

SETTING THE SCENE: Think of a time when you have experienced a significant change of status: what changed and what were the consequences of this change? In terms of faith what have been the consequences of the significant steps of faith that you have taken?

.....

.....

PEACE WITH GOD (v1-2): What difference does justification (see Rom 1-4) make to our relationship with God? What does it mean to have *peace with God* (v1, Eph 2:14)? How do you understand this *access into the grace in which we now stand* (v2)? Why boast in the *hope of the glory of God* (v2b)?

.....

.....

HOPE AND GLORY (v3-5): What might it look like to glory in suffering (v3a) and how do you see this producing the kind of character change described here? What is your experience of this pathway to maturity at work in your lives? What is Biblical *hope* and why does it not put us to shame (v5a)? In what ways is the Holy Spirit (*poured out into our hearts*) an evidence of this hope (v5b)?

.....

.....

.....

THE LOVE OF GOD (v6-8): What does the world around us cherish as great acts of love? How do these verses describe the love of God and why is it so amazing (nb: for the powerless, ungodly & sinners)? How would you describe God's love to you? What would (or what should) be your response?

.....

.....

SAVED FROM WRATH (v9-11): Why are Paul's words *how much more* so significant as we consider not only *justification* but *salvation*? What do you understand by *reconciliation* (v10-11) and why is this even more amazing than enemies being saved from wrath?

.....

.....

.....

SIN AND DEATH (v12-14): What is your reaction to the idea that sin (and therefore death) entered the world through one man? Do you agree that *all mankind* sinned through Adam? How do you see the difference that the law makes (too late to prevent sin and death and too weak to save us from it)?

.....

.....

.....

GIFT VS TRESPASS (v15-19): How do you understand Paul's terms here: Christ's gift and Adam's trespass (offence)? In what ways are these things different (see use of the term *how much more*)? What is your experience of receiving God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness (v17)? How do v18-19 help summarise what Paul has been saying about Adam and Christ?

.....

.....

.....

LAW AND GRACE (v20-21): How do you respond to what Paul say here about the purpose of the law (v20a)? Why is it so incredible that where sin increased (abounded) grace increased (abounded) all the more (v20b-21)? What is your experience of grace reigning in your life (see Titus 2:11-12)?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: The words of this chapter are incredible and take a lot to get our heads around: what difference will (or should) this passage make to your life? What one thing can you share with your not-yet Christian friend about why it is so great to follow Jesus?

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Praise God together for some of the huge blessings of being a follower of Jesus (peace, hope, glory, love). Thank God for His gift of grace which He lavishes on us abundantly and which reigns in us through righteousness to being eternal life through Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 5:8

STUDY 6 – ROMANS 6 – TRANSFORMED BY GRACE

INTRODUCTION: Paul's premise for chapter 6 is that if grace is this good, then it will be open to misunderstanding. Verses 1 and 15 include two similar questions that are met with the same answer, *by no means*. Experiencing grace means we see things differently: dead to sin and alive in Christ.

SETTING THE SCENE: How would you respond to receiving an unimaginable gift that was total unmerited and the complete opposite of what you deserved? Even if there were no strings attached, how would receiving such a gift impact your relationship with the giver?

.....

.....

SIN SO THAT GRACE INCREASES? (v1-5): Why might Paul want to address this question about whether we should go on sinning (continuing a lifestyle of sin) so that grace might increase (v1, 5:20-21, Lloyd-Jones quote)? How does Paul see the change in our relationship with sin (v2)?

.....

.....

How does Paul describe baptism in v3-4? In what ways does the example of baptism illustrate the change in our lives before/after we became Christians? How is baptism an outward picture of what happened when we identified (or became immersed) with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13)?

.....

.....

DEATH AND RESURRECTION IN CHRIST (v5-10): Why does death to self, offer such hope of our resurrection life (v5-6a)? How do you understand what Paul says about being set free from sin (v6b-7)? If our old self was crucified with Christ, why then do we still struggle with sin?

.....

.....

In being *united* (v5) with Christ in both His death and His resurrection, how has our relationship with both life and death been transformed? What might it mean for us to live with Christ (v8 & 10)?

.....

.....

WALKING IN FREEDOM (v11-14): What do you think it means to *count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ* (v11, building on v8-10)? How should such a new perspective work out in

practice (v12-14)? How do you experience daily the contrasting pull of both sin and righteousness? How do understand Paul's comment here about *mastery* (v14) because we are under grace not law?

.....

.....

SIN BECAUSE WE ARE UNDER GRACE? (v15-18): What is the difference between this question and the one in v1? In what ways are we slaves to the one that we obey (v16-17)? How do you understand the transformation being slaves to sin to being slaves to righteousness (v18, see below)?

.....

.....

"A slave is (1) One born into a condition of slavery, (2) One whose will is swallowed up in the will of another, (3) One who is bound to the master with bonds only death can break and (4) One who serves his master to the disregard of his own interests. Kenneth Wuest (Greek Scholar)

HOW TO LIVE OUT OUR FREEDOM (v19-23): Paul continues with this illustration of slavery: how does he see the consequences of each form of slavery? What are these human limitations he mentions (v19)? What practical steps can we take to offer ourselves as slaves to righteousness?

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: How does the distinction between gifts and wages help us to understand transforming grace? What steps do you need to take to live for Jesus as slaves of righteousness?

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for His incredible gift of grace. Praise Him that it really is this good that we should question how we are to respond. Ask God to help you respond appropriately to Paul's questions in a way that leads to holiness not impurity.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 6:23

"The true preaching of the gospel of salvation by grace alone always leads to the possibility of this charge being brought against it. There is no better test as to whether a man is really preaching the New Testament gospel of salvation than this, that some people might misunderstand it and misinterpret it to mean that it really amounts to this, that because you are saved by grace alone it does not matter at all what you do; you can go on sinning as much as you like because it will redound all the more to the glory of grace. This is a very good test of gospel preaching. If my preaching and presentation of the gospel of salvation does not expose it to that misunderstanding, then it is not the gospel." Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The New Man, pg 8

STUDY 7 – ROMANS 7 – STRUGGLING WITH SIN

INTRODUCTION: Paul begins this chapter with another example of how in becoming dead to the law we have been released from it. Paul wrestles with the nature and purpose of the law in our lives before spending some time wrestling with the nature of his own sinful heart.

SETTING THE SCENE: Think of an example of when you have done something especially wrong: what made you conscious that it was wrong and what motivated you to do it? How in your own life do you see the dynamics of the relationship between law (standards) and sin (rebellion)?

.....

.....

DEAD TO THE LAW (v1-6): How do you understand Paul's statement in v1 that the law has authority over someone only as long as they live? How is this demonstrated by the example of marriage (v2-3)? How does Paul apply this principle to our relationship to the law and to Christ (v4-6)? In what ways might *death to the law* allow us to *bear fruit for God* (v4) and *serve in the new way of the Spirit* (v6)?

.....

.....

.....

IS THE LAW SINFUL? (v7-12): Why might someone ask whether the law was sinful (v7a)? How does Paul answer this question and in particular how does he see the role that the law has to play in regard to sin (v7b-8)? Why does Paul say that the law caused sin to spring to life (v9-10, Augustine quote) and cause him to die? How does v12 show us that the problem is not with the law but with us?

.....

.....

.....

DOES THE LAW BRING DEATH? (v13-14): Paul now asks a question about whether the law has become *death* to him: how do you understand Paul's response to this in terms of the purpose of the law in our lives (e.g. exposing our utter sinfulness)? Why in v14 is the law (which is spiritual) of no help to us (who are unspiritual)?

.....

.....

.....

WAR AGAINST SIN (v15-23): To what extent can you identify with Paul's description of inner conflict between what he wants to do and what he actually finds himself doing? Where in your life do you see the clash between the old self (*sinful nature*, v18) and his new self (delighting in God's law, v22)?

.....
.....

Do you think Paul is talking here about life as a Christian or life before he became a Christian? What has been your experience of trying to live a life of obedience in your own strength? How do you reconcile what Paul says in v23 about the slavery of sin with what he said previously in 6:14?

.....
.....

VICTORY IN CHRIST (v24-25): How do you get your head around Paul's description of himself as wretched (literally wretched through exhaustion of hard labour)? Why is it so important to recognise that we cannot find victory over sin in ourselves? What is your experience of God's delivery from sin?

.....
.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: These are not easy words and they reflect something of the inner battle that rages inside all of us: what aspects of this chapter challenge and/or encourage you amidst your ongoing battle against sin? The word law is mentioned over 20 times here while the spirit is barely mentioned at all: what do you make of this striking contrast?

.....
.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for the gift of His grace and that it is always enough for us. Acknowledge before God that while the Spirit is willing our flesh is weak. Ask God to help you to become a slave to God's law and not to the law of sin.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 7:21

"There was a pear tree near our vineyard, laden with fruit. One stormy night we rascally youths set out to rob it and carry our spoils away. We took off a huge load of pears – not to feast upon ourselves, but to throw them to the pigs, though we ate just enough to have the pleasure of forbidden fruit. They were nice pears, but it was not the pears that my wretched soul coveted, for I had plenty better at home. I picked them simply in order to become a thief. The only feast I got was a feast of iniquity, and that I enjoyed to the full. What was it that I loved in the theft? Was it the pleasure of acting against the law? The desire to steal was awakened simply by the prohibition of stealing." Augustine, Confessions

STUDY 8 – ROMANS 8:1-17 – LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION: While chapter 7 focused on the place of the law, Romans 8 now turns to the work of the Spirit and specifically the contrast between the weakness of the law and the power of the Spirit. In these verses Paul is summing up his whole argument about salvation which is ours in Christ.

SETTING THE SCENE: Around half of the references to the Holy Spirit in Paul's letter to the Romans occur in this chapter: who is the Holy Spirit and how would you describe His ministry amongst us? How would you describe your own experience of Him and His ministry?

.....

.....

.....

NO CONDEMNATION (v1-4): Paul begins with the word *therefore*: on what basis is Paul able to say that there is *no condemnation* for those who are in Christ? What do you think Paul means by the *law of sin and death* (v2) and what was it powerless to do (v3a)? How do you respond to God's action to condemn sin through Jesus so that the righteous requirement of law might be met in us (v3b-4)?

.....

.....

.....

FLESH VS. THE SPIRIT (v5-8): How do you understand the conflict that Paul describes between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit (See also Galatians 5:16-26)? What are the consequences of our minds being governed by each one (see esp. the black and white language of v7-8)? In what ways do you see this worked out in your own daily lives?

.....

.....

.....

THE SPIRIT LIVES IN US (v9-13): Paul seems to be saying here that the hallmark that we belong to Christ is having the Spirit of God living with us (v9-10): what are the implications of this (v11-13)? How does this work in practice and how conscious are you that the Holy Spirit is living in you?

.....

.....

.....

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SPIRIT (v14-17): What do you think it means to be led by Spirit (v14) and in what ways is that an indicator that we are children of God? What is the difference between slaves and sons (v15)? What does the idea of God as Father mean to you?

.....

.....

.....

In what ways have you experienced the Spirit's testimony that we are *children of God, heirs of God* and *co-heirs with Christ* (v16-17a)? How does that idea that suffering is the path to glory (v17b) resonate or jar with you? To what extent should this be our expectation as followers of Christ?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: How would you summarise the teaching of this chapter and specifically what it has to teach us about life in the Spirit? What steps do you think that you need to take in order to experience the work of the Spirit more in your daily lives?

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God that He comes to live in us through His Spirit when we believe in Jesus. Pray for one another as you seek to set your minds not on the flesh but on the Spirit. Ask God to make you more sensitive to the leading and ministry of the Spirit in our lives.

MEMORY VERSES: ROMANS 8:16-17

STUDY 9 – ROMANS 8:18-39 – FUTURE GLORY

INTRODUCTION: In chapter 8:1-17 Paul described the life of the Spirit and right at the end Paul said that sharing in Christ's suffering was the path to sharing in His glory. Paul continues to develop this theme as He compares our current struggles with the glory that will one day be revealed. Finally Paul focuses on the love of God and how nothing can separate us from His love.

SETTING THE SCENE: Contrast how you and your friends deal with life when the going gets tough: to what extent is the tendency to look to ourselves, to others or to the future? What are you like at waiting for things? When you are waiting what kind of things do you find helpful or unhelpful?

.....

.....

.....

WAITING IN EAGER EXPECTATION (v18-25): What does Paul consider to be the relationship between suffering and glory (v18)? What visible evidence do we see that creation is *under bondage, groaning* and waiting in *eager expectation* for freedom and the 'children of God to be revealed' (v19-23)? To what extent would you describe yourself as having eager expectation for the glory to come?

.....

.....

.....

Paul says that *in this hope we were saved* (v24, indicating a past action); why is this a saving hope? To what extent would you say that this is your hope for the future? How do these verses encourage you to wait patiently (v25)?

.....

.....

.....

IN OUR WEAKNESS (v26-27): What does Paul say here about what the Spirit does to help us in our prayers? In what sense is it in the same way (v26a)? How do you understand His work of interceding for us with what he calls *wordless groans*?

.....

.....

.....

GOD WORKS FOR OUR GOOD (v28-30): What is your immediate response to v28: what does it and doesn't it mean? How do the next verses (v29-30) help us understand what Paul has in mind when he speaks of 'good' in v28? In what ways is Joseph's story a good example of this (Genesis 50:19-21)? In v29-30 Paul uses a number of complex words – how would you define and distinguish between them?

.....

.....

.....

MORE THAN CONQUERORS (v31-39): How does Paul's continuing argument teach us about the various aspects of God's love? What do you imagine causes Paul to be so confident in the truths that he mentions here? How would you describe your own level of confidence in these truths and what steps could you take to grow in that confidence?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What from these verses really speaks to where you are at and how do they help us start to make sense of the pressures, challenges and pain that we are experiencing in our lives? What practically do you think are the next steps for you to move forward with Christ?

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God together for the incredible truths contained in this passage: ask Him to help you believe them not just in your heads but in your hearts. Share together times when you feel your confidence in these things is being stretched and ask God to help you to trust Him more.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 8:28

"We are to wait neither so eagerly that we lose our patience, nor so patiently that we lose our expectation, but eagerly and patiently together." John Stott

STUDY 10 – ROMANS 9:1-29 – GOD IS SOVEREIGN

INTRODUCTION: Having detailed our need for Christ and God's glorious provision through Christ, Paul now comes to the thorny question of Israel. Has God rejected them? Have they missed out on the purposes of God? What do our answers say about our own assurance of salvation?

SETTING THE SCENE: How would you summarise the story of the people of God in the Old Testament (esp. promises to Abraham and his descendants)? Why did (and didn't) God choose the nation of Israel (see Deuteronomy 7:6-9) and why is this significant?

.....

PAUL'S ANGUISH FOR ISRAEL (v1-5): How do you respond to the sorrow and anguish that Paul says he has over his people Israel (v2)? Why would he say that he would rather be cut off from Christ for their sake (v3, contrast with v1)? In what ways does Paul say that they have been blessed by God?

.....

.....

FAILED PROMISES? (v6-13): How would you answer the question about whether God's promises to Israel had failed? What does Paul mean by saying that *not all who are descended from Israel are Israel* (v6)? Who does Paul say are the true children of the promise (v8-9)?

.....

.....

How does the example Paul gives of Jacob & Esau illustrate this same thing (v10-13)? What does Paul mean by *God's purpose in election* (v11)? What do you make of God *loving* Jacob but *hating* Esau?

.....

.....

GOD IS SOVEREIGN (v14-21): How do you understand Paul's question whether God is unjust (v14)? To what extent do you agree with Paul that it is God's right to have compassion and mercy on those He chooses to show compassion and mercy (v15 & 18)?

.....

.....

How does the example of God hardening Pharaoh's heart (v17-18) help to flesh out this idea? Consider whether you think this means that God dictated Pharaoh's response or simply allowed him to pursue his natural inclination? At what time do we also harden our own hearts towards God?

.....

.....
In v19-21 Paul throws out the question 'then why does God still blame us?': how does the example of the potter and the clay help us to see that this is not the right response to what Paul is saying? How do you understand how God's Sovereignty sits alongside our responsibility (E.g. Philippians 2:12-13)?
.....
.....

RIGHT TO CHOOSE (v22-29): How has God shown great patience with His people (v22)? How might He make His glory known (v23) by allowing His people to go their own way and experience His wrath?
.....
.....

God told Hosea to name his children *not my people* and *not loved* (v25-26) but this did not last forever: how does this example help us to understand how God demonstrates His mercy to His people? How do the Isaiah quotes (v27-29) help us understand the importance of a remnant in God's purposes?
.....
.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: This is a hard section of the letter but does of speaks profound truths: how would you summarise what you have learned about us and the nature of God? What impact should the truths contained in this passage have on your own convictions about God and how you live them out?
.....
.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God together that if we follow Christ then we are children of the promise. Pray for God to grow your understanding of His Sovereignty and the importance of us taking responsibility. Pray for those you know who have hardened their hearts against God.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 9:21

"We might be tempted to walk away from the idea of the Sovereignty of God. We might be tempted to try and diminish God, tempted to try and get Him off the hook for the awkward and nasty things in our lives. Here is a great lesson in life for us. It is precisely at those moments when life seems most uncertain and most fragile that we need to cling hardest to the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God...What do you want really, when life is tough? Do you want a mighty God even though you can't understand Him or do you want a cut down little God who can't really help and who is no bigger than your own capacity to imagine? I want the mighty God, the Sovereign God. This is the bedrock for our souls. This is our comfort and the source of our strength...the Sovereignty of God."

John Risbridger, Sermon at Above Bar Church 2015 on Daniel 2,

<https://abovebarchurch.org.uk/resources/sermons-and-talks/app/series/daniel-faith-under-pressure/page/2>

STUDY 11 – ROMANS 9:30-11:36 – GOD’S SALVATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION: Paul continues to talk about the thorny (and often very difficult to understand) question of the nation of Israel and their unbelief. In this passage Paul helps us to understand why God’s salvation plan involves both their unbelief and their future restoration.

SETTING THE SCENE: How do you understand the significance of Israel being God’s chosen people? At the outset how do you understand the people of Israel in God’s ongoing Salvation plan?

.....

.....

ISRAEL’S UNBELIEF (9:30-31): Paul summarises here the unbelief of his fellow Jews: why did the *unlikely* Gentiles find righteousness, when the *more likely* Jews did not? In what sense was Jesus a stumbling block to the Jews (see Isaiah quote in v33 and 1 Corinthians 1:22-23)?

.....

.....

.....

SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST (10:1-8a): What do we learn in v1-2 about the Israelites and Paul’s heart’s desire and prayer for them? In what ways had they had sought to establish their own righteousness? How in contrast does Paul describe the means of finding God’s righteousness (v4-8)?

.....

.....

.....

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH (10:8b-15): Why is it so important that the Word of God is in our mouths (Jesus is Lord) and in our hearts? Why does Paul say in v12 that there is no difference between Jew & Gentile and what does Paul say needs to happen in order for anyone to believe? How do you understand the thrust of v14-15 alongside the Sovereignty of God?

.....

.....

.....

ISRAEL’S PREDICTED UNBELIEF (10:16-21): What does Paul say here about why the Jews had not simply accepted the good news? How do the Old Testament quotes Paul uses here help paint a picture of how the prophets foretold Israel’s rejection of the gospel?

.....

.....

DID GOD REJECT HIS PEOPLE? (11:1-10): Why does Paul's question v1a make sense in terms of what he has said in chapters 9-10? What reasons does Paul give for why God had not given up on Israel (v1b-5)? What is a remnant and what can we learn from this idea of a remnant (example of Elijah)? To what extent do you agree that it is God's right to choose a remnant by grace (v6-10)?

.....

.....

.....

JEWS AND GENTILES (11:11-24): How might the Gentiles coming to faith make Israel envious and bring some to faith (v11-14)? What do you understand from Paul's illustration of the tree and the branches (v17-18)? Why shouldn't either the natural branches or those grafted in, feel complacent (v19-21)? How does Paul apply the outworking of God's plan for both Jews and Gentiles (v22-24)?

.....

.....

.....

ISRAEL'S RESTORATION (11:25-32): What do you think Paul means when he says that Israel's hardening is temporary until the *full number of Gentiles has come in* and *in this way all Israel will be saved* (v25-26)? What does Paul have to say to the Gentiles about God's ongoing love for Israel (v27-28) and their own story of receiving mercy (v30-32)?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER (v33-36): Paul finishes the section with a doxology: how does this reflect Paul's understanding and reaction to God's Salvation plan? How does this passage encourage you to respond to God in worship and adoration at your own opportunity to be a part of that plan?

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Without getting drawn again into specifics respond together to God regarding the thrust of this passage. Ask God to help you ensure that your friends get to hear the gospel.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 11:33

STUDY 12 – ROMANS 12 – RESPONDING TO GOD’S MERCY

INTRODUCTION: In Romans 1-11 Paul has elaborated on our need of a Saviour and God’s glorious provision of grace and mercy in Christ. This chapter begins with the word *therefore* and in it Paul begins to elaborate on our response to God’s grace and mercy.

SETTING THE SCENE (v1a): Imagine that someone sets you free from captivity or saves your life: what would be a proper (and by contrast an improper) response to such an act of service on your behalf? Thinking of such sacrifice, what have we seen of God’s mercy and salvation in chapters 1-11?

.....

.....

.....

LIVING SACRIFICES (v1b): Why do you think that Paul’s first comment on this matter is to *offer our bodies as living sacrifices* and what might doing so look like? How would this be *holy and pleasing to God* and a demonstration of our true and proper worship?

.....

.....

TRANSFORMATION NOT CONFORMITY (v2): Paul’s 2nd instruction contrasts transformation with conformity: how do you understand the difference? Why might the *renewing of our minds* help us to *test & approve God’s will*? What is your experience of discerning God’s *good, pleasing & perfect will*?

.....

.....

HUMBLE SERVICE (v3-5): Why causes people to think highly of themselves? What in contrast might it look like to think of ourselves with sober judgement (v3)? In what ways might the faith God has given us (v3) and the fact that we are part of a body (v4-5) help us to respond in humility? If we truly understood and believed that we belonged to one another (v5b) what difference would it make?

.....

.....

GIFTS FOR SERVICE (v6-8): What does Paul say here about the source and nature of spiritual gifts (literally grace gifts)? What does Paul mean by his instruction to use our gifts *in proportion to our faith*? What relationship do you think the use of our gifts has with how we regard ourselves (v3-5)?

.....

.....

How do the gifts Paul mentions here contrast with those in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31, 1 Peter 4:10-11 and Ephesians 4:11? How can we discern what our gifts are? Do you have any idea what spiritual gifts God has given to you (or failing that to each other)?

.....

.....

LOVE IN ACTION (v9-13): How would you describe the quality of love that Paul speaks of in these verses? How can we tell that love is sincere (v9), devoted to others (v10), not lacking in zeal (v11), fervently in serving the Lord (v11) and helping / being hospitable to others (v13)?

.....

.....

To what extent would people describe you as *joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer* (v12)? Who would you describe this way and what steps might you take to become more like them?

.....

.....

LOVING OUR ENEMIES (v14-21): These final verses also focus on love but this time towards our enemies: what kind of steps do you think Paul envisages us taking in order to live at peace with everyone? What do you find most challenging about these verses?

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What steps do you need to take to live more sacrificially off the back of the incredibly practical things Paul has to say in this chapter?

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for the mercy He has shown to you and ask Him to help you to respond accordingly. Pray for one another as you try to use the gifts God has given you to serve Christ with humility, sincerity, faithfulness and sacrificial love.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 12:1

STUDY 13 – ROMANS 13 – LOVE AND AUTHORITY

INTRODUCTION: Paul continues to explain how we should respond to the mercy of God. We now move from not taking revenge (end of chapter 12), to the subject of authority and in particular authority established by God. Secondly Paul turns to how we relate to our neighbours in love.

SETTING THE SCENE: In what areas of your lives have you experienced a challenge to authority (either as the one under or in authority)? Why do you think it is so natural to not respond well to authority? What feelings does the word evoke for you?

.....

.....

SUBJECT TO AUTHORITY (v1-2): How do you respond to the idea that we should be subject to our governing authorities and failure to do so is to rebel against God and be subject to judgement? To what extent do you think this would have been surprising for the Roman Christians to hear?

.....

.....

.....

ROLE OF AUTHORITY (v3-4): How does Paul distinguish between our attitude towards authority when we *do right* and when we *do wrong*? Why does Paul describe authorities as *God's servants* both for our good and as *agents of wrath*? What is your typical attitude to those in authority over you?

.....

.....

.....

SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY (v5-7): Paul then says it's necessary to submit as a matter of conscience: what ways does he suggest that this be worked out in practice? What changes might we need to make in order to give everyone what we owe them: taxes, revenue, respect and/or honour?

.....

.....

Have you experienced, or can you envisage a scenario where this submission might not be the right response (see Acts 4:18-20)? To what extent should we as believers seek to participate in Gov't?

.....

.....

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR (v8-10): In our society being indebted to others in some way is often unavoidable (e.g. mortgage, loans etc): does Paul prohibit this in what he says here (v8, see also Matt 5:42 and Proverbs 22:7)? How is love a debt which is impossible for us to discharge?

.....

.....

.....

Verses 9-10 echo Jesus' words in Matthew 22:36-40: how do you understand the way that love fulfils the law? What does it look like to love our neighbours as ourselves? What impact would living in this manner have on the way that we treat others?

.....

.....

THE URGENCY OF THE HOUR (v11-14): In what ways do Paul's images of slumber, night and day or light and darkness help you to understand the *present time*? Why is the hour so urgent? What do you think Paul is envisaging when he tells us to put on the armour of Christ (v12) and to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (v14)?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What is the relationship between these three distinct sections: can you follow Paul's train of thought? What lessons do we need to learn from this passage about how we respond to the grace and mercy that are ours through Christ?

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Pray for those in responsibility over you within your church, workplace and local/national Government. Ask God to help you to respond to authority with submission, honour and respect. Pray for one another as you seek to love your neighbours as yourselves.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 13:1

STUDY 14 – ROMANS 14:1-15:13 – DISPUTABLE MATTERS

INTRODUCTION: In chapters 12 & 13 Paul has emphasised loving both our neighbours and our enemies. Now in this section Paul turns his focus towards loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. To this end he identifies two groups: those who are weak (14:1) and those who are strong (15:1).

SETTING THE SCENE: In our passage Paul describes those whose faith is weak and strong (see 15:1). Who do you think he might be talking about here: e.g. new converts, the sick (from legalism) or the malnourished (from poor teaching)? As you read the section, to what extent do you think the root issue here is about a lack of strength / self-control or a lack of freedom of conscience?

.....

.....

ACCEPTING THOSE WHO ARE WEAK IN FAITH (v1-4): Paul's first example of a *disputable matter* is the question of what to eat. How do you understand what Paul says about how we should accept those whose faith is weak and without quarrelling?

.....

.....

.....

In what ways might both groups fall into the trap of judging another or treating one another with contempt? Why does Paul say that it is not our place to judge? How can we rise above such issues and make sure that they do not become divisive amongst our Christian communities?

.....

.....

.....

LIVING FOR THE LORD (v5-9): Paul's second example of a *disputable matter* is the question of sacred days: what do you think this issue was about and further principles does Paul introduce here? What things contribute to us being fully convinced in our own minds about such things?

.....

.....

What bearing do v7-9 have on how we relate to our brothers and sisters in Christ? How negatively might it be possible to impinge upon someone's relationship with God? How positively can we determine God's attitude towards people and let that frame how we see them?

.....
.....
DO NOT JUDGE (v10-13a): Why do you think we so often judge others (v10)? Jesus tells us not to judge (Matthew 7:1-5) but He also tells us to watch out for false prophets (7:15-20): how do you understand the distinction between these verses? Why is Paul so clear that we must not *treat with contempt* (v10) or *pass judgment* on one another?

.....
.....

ACTING IN LOVE (14:13b-18): How might embracing our own freedom (i.e. taking to heart that nothing is unclean) create a stumbling block for others? What is your response to the strong language Paul uses about leaving people *distressed* or even *destroying* their faith (v15)? How can we ensure that we have God's Kingdom perspective in mind and ensure that we please God (v16-18)?

.....
.....
.....

MUTUAL EDIFICATION (v19-23): In what ways do you see yourself needing to live less freely in order to build others up rather than tear them down? What would you say are some of the modern day equivalents of what we eat and how we observe sacred days?

.....
.....
.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER (15:1-13): In what ways is Jesus the perfect example of all that Paul has been saying in chapter 14 and summarised here in v1-2? In order to put this into practice why will we need endurance, encouragement and hope (v4-6)?

.....
.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for His loving concern for our communities and His desire that they will be places of mutual edification. Ask God to help each of you to accept one another as Jesus has accepted them (15:7) and act in love for those who might be weaker / less free in the faith.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 15:7

STUDY 15 – ROMANS 15:14-16:27 – WORKING IN COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION: Paul finishes his letter with some greetings and practicalities. It's an inspiring list of people who Paul worked with and people he sought to address in the church at Rome. What we get here is a glimpse into how Paul worked in community with a team of people committed to the gospel.

SETTING THE SCENE: What is your experience (positively and negatively) of being part of the body of Christ? Specifically how have you enjoyed the blessing of being involved with others in the various ministry forms that you have been involved with?

.....

.....

MINISTRY (15:14-21): What does Paul say in v14-16 was his reason for writing this letter? How does Paul understand his role to be a minister of Christ to the Gentiles? Why do you think Paul was so driven to speak only of what Christ had accomplished in him (v18) and preach the gospel where Christ was not known (v20)? What's wrong with building on someone else's foundation (v20)?

.....

.....

.....

VISITING ROME (15:22-24): How had Paul's call to pioneer kept him from visiting and why has that now changed? Paul seemed to want to develop a sending base in Rome for the West (akin to Antioch in the East): what do you think he is hoping they will do in assisting on his onward journey?

.....

.....

.....

PLANS & PRAYER (15:25-33): What principles does Paul draw out about how God's people are to share God's material and spiritual blessings (v25-29)? How practically can we also serve the poor? In what ways does Paul want them to partner with him in prayer (v30-33)?

.....

.....

.....

GREETINGS #1 (16:1-5a): Why did Paul need to commend Phoebe to the Romans (v1-2)? In what ways to you imagine she might have been a helper/benefactor to many? What do we know about

Pricilla & Aquila from elsewhere (Acts 18, 1 Cor 16:19, 2 Tim 4:19)? How can the everyday ministry of ordinary working people like them (who opened their homes) be so significant?

.....

.....

GREETINGS #2 (16:5b-16): This section contains 24 more names (most unique to Romans except Rufus in Mark 15:21): which people stand out for you and why? What reasons does Paul give as to why these people (inc. 7 women & those who laboured in the Lord) were so extraordinary? Up to 13 may have had connections to Caesar's household (Phil 4:22): why was this so strategic?

.....

.....

THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE (16:17-20): What does Paul say motivates those who want to create division and put obstacles in the way of sound teaching? How can we be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil (v19)? How conscious are you about the schemes of Satan (v20)?

.....

.....

.....

GRACE BE WITH YOU (v21-24): Paul includes greetings from his co-workers including Timothy, Tertius (who wrote the letter), Gaius (Acts 19:29, 20:4 & 1 Cor 1:14) & Erastus (city's director of public works): why is Paul so keen to operate as part of a team? Why were these people so significant?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER (v25-27): How do these final verses bring a conclusion to the letter and summarise the scope of God incredible gospel? How has this grown your confidence in the gospel and helped you to see that God is able to establish you and bring the obedience that comes from faith?

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for all who have been involved in ministering to you and ask God to help you commit to a lifelong labour with the Lord. Ask God to grow your confidence in the gospel.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 15:20

MEMORY VERSES

STUDY 01: ROMANS 1 – NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” **Romans 1:16**

STUDY 02: ROMANS 2 – RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

“For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.” **Romans 2:13**

STUDY 03: ROMANS 3 – JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” **Romans 3:23**

STUDY 04: ROMANS 4 – RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

“Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations...” **Rom 4:18a**

STUDY 05: ROMANS 5 – THE BLESSINGS OF FAITH

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
Romans 5:8

STUDY 06: ROMANS 6 – TRANSFORMED BY GRACE

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” **Romans 6:23**

STUDY 07: ROMANS 7 – STRUGGLING WITH SIN

“So I find this law at work: although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.” **Romans 7:21**

STUDY 08: ROMANS – LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” **Romans 8:16**

STUDY 09: ROMANS – FUTURE GLORY

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” **Romans 8:28**

STUDY 10: ROMANS 9:1-29 – GOD IS SOVEREIGN

“Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?” **Romans 9:21**

STUDY 11: ROMANS 9:30-11:36 – GOD’S SALVATION PLAN

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” **Romans 11:33**

STUDY 12: ROMANS 12 – RESPONDING TO GOD’S MERCY

“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.” **Romans 12:1**

STUDY 13: ROMANS 13 – LOVE AND AUTHORITY

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.” **Romans 13:1**

STUDY 14: ROMANS 14:1-15:13 – DISPUTABLE MATTERS

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” **Romans 15:7**

STUDY 15: ROMANS 15:14-16:27 – WORKING IN COMMUNITY

“It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.” **Romans 15:20**