

RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

A Study of Romans

Small Group
Leader's Guide

SESSION ONE

Paul's Masterpiece

Lesson Summary

The apostle Paul is perhaps the greatest theologian in Christian history, and the book of Romans is his masterpiece—the clearest and most comprehensive summary of his understanding of the gospel and of its revolutionary implications. But for as grand and influential as Romans is, it is not at the end of the day a theological treatise or a religious manifesto or a manual of ethical living, but rather an earnest and urgent personal letter from an apostle to average, everyday Christians who want to know how to know God and follow Jesus. In this first session of our study on Romans, we'll discuss the purpose of this letter and its main thesis statement about the power of the gospel and the “righteousness of God.”

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 1:1-17** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Have you ever read Romans before? If so, what did you find most compelling about it? What was most difficult? What are you hoping to get out of studying it now?
3. Name one book (or film or lecture, etc.) that made a significant impact on you when you read or watched or heard it. Why was it so impactful? How did it affect you? Why do you think Romans has made such a lasting impact on so many people over the years?
4. What difference does it make to think of Romans as a “personal letter” from God to his beloved children? How can you keep this in mind as you read it?
5. In Romans 1:16-17, Paul talks about the “righteousness of God” being revealed. What comes to your mind when you hear words like “righteous” or “righteousness” or “justice”? Why might the “righteousness of God” be a matter of good news and a cause for celebration? What could make it good?
6. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 1**.

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SESSION TWO

The Bad News

Lesson Summary

Author and preacher Frederick Buechner says that we cannot hear the good news of the gospel until we first hear the bad news, and it seems that the apostle Paul thinks the same. In the first chapter of Romans, before he expounds the good news of Jesus Christ, Paul begins by discussing the bad news of the sinful corruption of humanity. In this session, we'll discuss what Paul has to say about this corruption, both where it comes from and how it distorts us.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 1:18-32** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Why does Paul begin his discussion of the gospel by focusing on the bad news of human sin? Why is it important for us to hear this bad news?
3. In Romans 1:21-22, Paul diagnoses the cause of human sin and foolishness by saying that it comes from not "honoring" or "giving thanks" to God. In other words, the root cause of the tragedy and folly of our lives is that we forget God. What are some ways that we forget God in our daily lives? How can we be more intentional in remembering God and giving thanks?
4. Paul's description of homosexuality as "unnatural" in 1:26-27 is meant to illustrate something fundamental about not just sexual immorality, but human sin in general. What does Paul mean when he talks about it being "unnatural"? What does that reveal about sin in general? How are others sins—such as envy and rivalry among siblings, anger and slander among friends, or deception and competition among coworkers—also "unnatural"?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 2**.

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SESSION THREE

The Line through Good and Evil

Lesson Summary

We live during a very divided time, and it is very easy and very instinctual for many of us to divide our world into the “good” and the “bad,” the “righteous” and the “wicked.” It’s also very easy to think that our right opinions make us better than those who disagree with us. But according to Paul, that is simply misguided. In Romans chapter 2, he makes it clear that there are none who escape the judgment of God and that the line between good and evil runs not through parties or classes, but through every human heart.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 2:1-11** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week’s teaching that stood out to you?
2. Why are we so tempted to divide up the world into the “good” and the “bad”? Where do you see examples of this tendency today? How can we avoid the mistake of thinking that those who disagree with us are morally inferior, or that we are somehow more righteous simply for having right opinions?
3. Read Romans 2:17-24. What exactly is Paul criticizing when it comes to Jewish hypocrisy? Why do you think he is so bothered by this hypocrisy? What can we, as Christians, learn from this example of hypocrisy?
4. The Book of Common Prayer instructs us to confess our sins, not only once every Sunday, but every single day in both Morning and Evening Prayer. Why do you think it is important for us to confess our sins on a daily basis? How might this practice of confession keep us from developing the kind of hypocrisy and self-righteousness that Paul is talking about in Romans 2?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 3**.

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SESSION FOUR

Just and Justifier

Lesson Summary

By the time we arrive in the third chapter of Romans, the central dilemma animating Paul's gospel is clear. On the one hand, humanity has fallen into sin and corruption and has provoked the righteous indignation of God. On the other hand, God created humanity out of love and does not wish to abandon his creation to destruction. In Romans 3, Paul announces the solution to this dilemma, a solution which enables God to be "both just and the justifier." In this session, we explore just what that solution is.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 3:1-26** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Discuss the following quote from Richard Dawkins: "If God wanted to forgive our sins, why not just forgive them, without having himself tortured and executed in payment?" Why doesn't God "just forgive" sin? How might Paul respond to Dawkins?
3. According to John Stott, the "propitiation" that Paul mentions in Romans 3:25 is an atoning sacrifice that bears the wrath of God against sin. What do you think about the Bible's description of God's anger toward sin? How is God's anger different from human anger? Do you agree with Miroslav Volf when he says that "If God were not angry at injustice...that God would not be worthy of worship"?
4. One stanza of Horatio Spafford's famous hymn, "It Is Well With My Soul," states: *My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought!/My sin, not in part but the whole,/Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,/Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!* How would you relate this stanza to what Paul says here in Romans 3? Do you, like Spafford, think of the good news of Jesus' propitiation as a blissful thought and reason for praise? Why or why not?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 4**.

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SESSION FIVE

Justification by Faith

Lesson Summary

Justification by faith is, according to the Protestant reformer John Calvin, the “hinge upon which religion turns.” Others say it is the doctrine upon which “the church stands or falls.” One of the clearest explanations of this doctrine can be found in Romans chapter 4, where Paul unpacks it through a discussion of two major characters from the Old Testament. In this session, we look at what Paul has to say and how it is well summarized by the two Latin phrases: *sola fide* and *sola gratia*.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 4:1-12** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. John Calvin says that justification by faith is the “hinge upon which religion turns.” Why do you think he placed so much importance on this teaching? How does Paul's discussion of it in Romans 4 help explain its importance?
3. What can we learn from the lives of David and Abraham? How can their stories help you understand your own relationship with God?
4. The video teaching equated justification by faith with two theological phrases: “by faith alone” and “by grace alone.” How would you summarize the meaning of these two phrases? What would you say if someone who was not a Christian asked you what it means to be saved “by grace.”
5. Paul contrasts faith with achievement (“works”) and grace with merit. Where do you see the influence of achievement and merit in our culture in North Texas? What do you think Paul might say to this culture?
6. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 5**.

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SESSION SIX

Peace Like Abigail

Lesson Summary

In Romans 5, Paul moves from talking about the basis and nature of the justification that Christian believers receive to the effects of that justification. In particular, he talks about the peace, hope, and joy that arise in response to being made right with God. In this session, we explore what that might mean in the context of an individual life by thinking about how the joy and peace that Paul describes are reflected in the life of an 18th-century young woman by the name of Abigail Hutchinson.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 5:1-5** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Talk about the story of Abigail Hutchinson. What stands out to you about her conversion experience? To which parts of her experience can you relate? How do you think her experience compares to what Paul talks about in the beginning of Romans 5?
3. One of the effects of being made right with God, according to Paul, is joy. Even in the midst of hardship. "We rejoice in our sufferings," he says. What do you make of this? Why would justification/being made right with God bring joy? How might this joy differ from happiness as we often think of it? How can we rejoice even in our suffering?
4. What do you make of the "hope of glory" that Paul refers to in Romans 5:2? What does this glory include? Why should we eagerly hope for it? And if it is not something for which we currently hope, if this glory is not something we long for, how can we learn to desire it?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 6**.

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SESSION SEVEN

You Gotta Serve Somebody

Lesson Summary

“Well it may be the Devil / Or it may be the Lord / But you’re gonna have to serve somebody.” Those are the lyrics of a song that Bob Dylan wrote in 1979, but Dylan wasn’t the first one to make this claim. Nearly two millennia before Dylan recorded “Gotta Serve Somebody,” the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome in which he said something very similar. But Paul’s claim in Romans 6 goes further than Dylan’s. Dylan says that we need to make a choice between whom to serve. Paul says that, for those who have been joined to Christ through faith, this choice has already been made. They have already been freed from one master and made servant to another. Their only choice is to live accordingly.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 6:1-14** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week’s teaching that stood out to you?
2. What do you think of Paul’s portrayal of Sin as a tyrannical power in Romans 6? What would it mean for Sin to “reign” over a person and keep them captive?
3. Talk about what Paul says in Romans 6:22: “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God ...” What does it mean to be a “slave of God” (or a “slave of righteousness,” as Paul puts it in 6:18)? Why is this good news?
4. Paul talks about freedom multiple times in this chapter. What does he say we have been freed *from*? What does he think we have been freed *for*? How would you compare his understanding of freedom to contemporary understandings of freedom?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 7**.

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SESSION EIGHT

Life in the Flesh

Lesson Summary

Romans chapter 7 is, according to the NT scholar Dale Bruner, the single most difficult chapter to interpret in the entire book of Romans. Not because the words or syntax that Paul uses are hard to understand, but because the claims that he makes seem so puzzling. For instance, why does he speak so negatively about the Mosaic law? And why does he seem to suggest that he is still held captive by sin and unable to resist its influence, when he seemed to say the opposite just a chapter before? Those are the questions we'll explore in this session.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 7:14-25** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Discuss the following quote from Robert Jenson: "[The gospel] does not say: 'Do ... , because otherwise you won't get into heaven.' Or: 'Do ... , because, although of course God will accept you anyway, that is what good Christians do.' ... The moral discourse of the gospel says only: 'You may do ... , because Jesus lives.'" How do you think this might relate to what Paul says about being no longer under the law? Why does it make a difference to say "You may do ... , because Jesus lives" rather than "You must do ... , because it is the law"?
3. Discuss what Paul says in Romans 7:15, 19: "*For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate ... For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.*" Can you relate to this description of moral struggle? How can this passage help us better understand our need for God's intervention in our lives?
4. The lesson suggested that Paul's description of psychological and moral struggle in 7:14-25 refers to a person who is in bondage to sin and has yet to experience the liberation of Christ. But many Christians throughout history have read it as a witness to the experience of ongoing Christian struggle with sin. What do you think are the benefits of these two ways of reading this passage? Why do you think Christians have identified so strongly with what Paul says here?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 8**.

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SESSION NINE

Life in the Spirit

Lesson Summary

In Romans chapter 8, Paul describes the new life which those who have died and been raised with Christ now inhabit, a life that he says is lived no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit. In this session, we explore what is this new “life in the Spirit” which we experience as Christians, focusing especially on how this life revolves around the three virtues of faith, hope, and love.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 8:1-17** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. In order to live in the Spirit, according to Paul, we must be people of faith. More specifically, we must believe what God's word tells us about our current condition—that we have been entirely freed from condemnation, that we have been given new life, and that we are adopted children of God. Which of these three is the most difficult for you to believe on a daily basis? How would your life change if you fully embraced these three truths about yourself?
3. In Romans 8:18-25, Paul focuses his attention on the hope that animates those who live in the Spirit. What stands out to you about the way Paul describes Christian hope in this passage? How would you compare this hope with other hopes/aspirations in your life? How can we help one another focus attention on this future hope?
4. Discuss Romans 8:38-39. What strikes you about this description of God's love? Do you believe what Paul is saying or do you sometimes find yourself doubting God's love for you? How has the book of Romans affected your understanding of God's love?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 9**.

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SESSION TEN

God's Unfailing Love

Lesson Summary

Paul's discussion of God's sovereign election of his people in Romans 9 has generated numerous and heated debates over the course of Christian history. It's pitted African bishops against British monks, French Jansenists against French Jesuits, and American Baptists against American Baptists. And amidst all these debates, Christians have often lost sight of why Paul was addressing this topic in the first place. For, as we discuss in this session, what is at stake here is nothing less than the security of God's love. Is it really true, as Paul says at the end of Romans 8, that nothing can separate us from the love of God? What if we are no longer lovable? In Romans 9, Paul provides an answer to those questions by pointing to the unshakable and unfailing love of God.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 9:1-16** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. The video teaching mentions an economist named Robert Frank and the research that he did into people's firm conviction that what they have achieved and what they have are simply the products of their own effort and hard work. We are, he says, very resistant to the suggestion that we have benefited from unearned gifts. Where do you see evidence of this attitude in the culture of North Texas? Where do you see evidence of it in your own mind and heart?
3. How does Paul's emphasis on the free choice of God in Romans 9 speak to our culture's emphasis on merit? How does it affect your own understanding of God's love for you? How should we respond to God's free choice to set his love upon us?
4. Discuss the following quote from C.S. Lewis: "God loved us not because we were lovable, but because He is love." What do you make of that quote? How would you compare it with what Paul says in Romans 9?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 10**.

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SESSION ELEVEN

Moses and Paul Agree

Lesson Summary

Is the gospel of Jesus Christ a radical departure from, or rather a fulfilment and continuation of, Israel's experience of salvation and their relationship with God? That question has been asked and answered time and time again over the course of Christian history, and that question is central to the concerns of Romans 10. In this chapter, Paul argues that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of Israel's law and that the Christian experience salvation by grace through faith is not a departure from, but is rather in harmony with, God's dealings with the people of Israel.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 10:1-13** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. The video mentions the 2nd-century heretic, Marcion of Sinope, who taught that the God of the Old Testament is a radically different deity from the God of the New Testament and that the religion of salvation by grace that we find in the New Testament is entirely different from the religion of salvation by works that we find in the Old Testament. How would you respond to Marcion's claims? How would you compare his attitude with the way people think of the Old and New Testaments today?
3. Discuss Romans 10:3: "*For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*" What does Paul mean when he says that Jewish unbelievers were "ignorant of the righteousness of God"? How has this study changed your understanding of the "righteousness of God"? What might it mean for us to "submit" to God's righteousness?
4. Read and discuss Romans 10:14-15. These verses have often been used to encourage Christians to evangelize and share the gospel with others. Why is the activity of preaching the gospel so important? What opportunities may God be giving you to share the gospel with those around you?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 11**.

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SESSION TWELVE

Overwhelming Glory

Lesson Summary

Paul concludes his dense, scripturally rich meditation on the people of Israel and the purposes of God in Romans 11 by making the announcement that God has not, in fact, abandoned his chosen people and that he still has plans for Israel. What, precisely, the unfolding of that plan within history looks like Paul does not make clear. He calls it a mystery. But as he meditates on it, he is overwhelmed by the glory of God and is reduced to astonishment at the wisdom and ways of God.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 11:25-36** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. The video lesson begins by acknowledging that Paul's writing in this chapter (and elsewhere) is difficult to understand. What has been the most challenging thing for you to understand as you've read through Romans and this chapter in particular? What do you now understand better than you did before?
3. One of the lessons that John Calvin draws out of Paul's insistence that God is still at work within Israel is that we should be hopeful and not "lightly assign to the devil all those whose godliness we do not see." How might we apply this lesson in our own lives?
4. Paul tells non-Jewish Christians that they should be careful not to become proud or presumptuous in their status as Christians, but should instead be continually humbled and thankful that God has grafted them into his people. How can we follow Paul's advice and cultivate a continual sense of gratitude and humility?
5. The video lesson mentions a theologian who summarized the Christian experience of salvation by saying: "Salvation is a matter of being overwhelmed by the glory of God. Sin is being underwhelmed by that glory." What do you think of this definition? How have you been "overwhelmed" by the glory of God?
6. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 12**.

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SESSION THIRTEEN

Responding to the Gift

Lesson Summary

Contemporary philosophers and anthropologists have written extensively on the subject of “the gift,” by which they mean the phenomenon of giving and receiving gifts that plays such a strong role in human society. The apostle Paul is likewise fascinated by “the Gift,” but in his mind, that gift is more specific. It is the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. The question is, how does a person rightly receive that gift? And how is he or she meant to respond? Those are the questions that we take up in this study of Romans chapter 12.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 12:1-8** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week’s teaching that stood out to you?
2. Contemporary philosophers like Jacques Derrida have argued that the only true gift is one that is given with no strings attached, no expectations of any response. How would you compare Derrida’s notion of a “pure” gift to the gift of salvation in Christ? Does Paul think that there are “strings” attached to this gift? Would Paul agree that this gift is given with no expectation of response on our behalf?
3. Read and discuss Romans 12:1. What does it mean to offer our “bodies” as a living sacrifice to God? Why do you think Paul refers to this gift of ourselves to God as a reasonable act of worship? What part of your life is most difficult to offer up to God?
4. Paul gives numerous exhortations in Romans 12:9-21. How do you think these exhortations are a direct response to the good news of salvation that he has been talking about throughout the book of Romans? Which of these exhortations most stands out to you?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 13**.

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SESSION FOURTEEN

A Community of Justice and Love

Lesson Summary

How ought we to live together in light of the gospel of Christ? That is the question that Paul begins to answer in Romans 12 and continues in Romans 13. In this chapter, Paul focuses his attention on how Christians ought to be a community that is marked by both justice and love, a community that gives to people what they are owed but does so not because of obligation, but because of love.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 13:1-10** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Discuss the following quote from Stanley Hauerwas: "[Christians'] most important social task is to be a community capable of hearing the story of God we find in the scripture and living in a manner that is faithful to that story." How can we as a church community be "capable of hearing the story of God we find in the scripture?" What obstacles keep us from hearing scripture well? What might it mean to live our lives in a manner "faithful to that story?"
3. What do you make of Paul's admonition to obey authorities? Can you think of any authorities, other than political rulers, to whom this might apply? How would you respond to someone who said that Romans 13:1-2 means that Christians should never resist or disobey the laws or authorities of the society in which they live?
4. In Romans 13:8, Paul says to "owe no one anything, except to love each other." What does Paul mean when he speaks of loving each other? How is acting in love toward one another different from acting out of obligation or indebtedness?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 14**.



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SESSION FIFTEEN

Rights and Responsibilities

Lesson Summary

In modern America, we are well acquainted with the language of “rights.” In fact, as legal scholar Mary Ann Glendon observes, claims and competitions over individual rights dominate our public conversations over right and wrong. In Romans chapter 14, however, the apostle Paul challenges the way that Christians think about rights and instructs us to think not on our own rights, but on our responsibilities toward one another.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 14:13-23** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week’s teaching that stood out to you?
2. Mary Ann Glendon says that the language of individual “rights” is what Americans most often appeal to in our cultural conflicts and public discussions of right and wrong. What are some examples of people appealing to individual rights? What are the benefits of prioritizing rights? What are the downsides? How might this emphasis on rights influence the way we approach conflicts within the church?
3. Paul tells the Roman Christians to be charitable to one another in their disagreements over food and allow each person to follow their own conscience. This is very different from other situations (such as 1 Cor 5:1-3) when Paul makes hard and firm moral judgments. This suggests that there are some matters upon which Christians can agree to disagree and some upon which we cannot. How can we tell the difference? And how should we treat each other when we do disagree?
4. In Romans 14:19, Paul says, “So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up-building.” How might the Roman Christians have applied this principle in their disagreements? How can you apply this principle in your own behavior toward and disagreement with other Christians?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 15**.

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SESSION SIXTEEN

As Christ Welcomed You

Lesson Summary

Paul's exhortation in Romans 15:7—"welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you"—is in many ways a fitting summary of the fundamental ethic of his gospel. For in this one exhortation, we discover three central claims: (1) though we have made ourselves unworthy and unwelcome, God in Christ has welcomed us and brought us near, (2) in thankful response, we must welcome and show hospitality toward one another, and (3) as we do so, we bear visible witness to the beauty and goodness of God's own nature.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 15:1-7** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. Describe a time when someone made you feel unexpectedly welcome or showed surprising hospitality to you. What stands out to you about that experience? How would you compare it to Paul's exhortation to show hospitality?
3. One of the most common ways that Jesus demonstrated the kingdom of God and the salvation which he brought was through meals: sitting down and eating with those who were unwanted and unwelcome by others. How does Jesus's habit of eating with sinners affect the way you think about his gospel? What does it mean to you that Jesus welcomes you to sit at his table?
4. What obstacles have kept you from extending welcome or hospitality to people whom others might avoid? How does Jesus's welcome of you affect your own attitude toward the people around you? What are some practical opportunities that you have to welcome and show hospitality to others over the next couple weeks?
5. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer. Encourage your group members to spend the next week reading and reflecting on **Romans 16**.

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A Study of Romans

Small Group
Leader's Guide

SESSION SEVENTEEN

Bound to One Another

Lesson Summary

Throughout our study of the book of Romans, we have encountered profound theological concepts, rigorous logical arguments, and sophisticated readings of Jewish scripture. This is quite clearly a book of ideas. For this reason, it is especially notable that Paul concludes his letter not by talking about abstract ideas, but by speaking very plainly and personally to specific people. And this is fitting, because Paul's gospel isn't just about ideas. It's about how God binds people to himself and binds us to one another in love.

Appointed Scripture

This week, read and discuss **Romans 16:1-16** as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What was one point from this week's teaching that stood out to you?
2. The video mentioned a character in the story *The Brothers Karamazov* who confessed that, while it was easy for him to love humanity in general, he found it incredibly difficult to love specific, individual people. How can you relate to this character's confession? Why do we sometimes find it so difficult to love specific people?
3. One of the things we learn from Paul's concluding greetings is just how much the gospel has changed the way that he evaluates other people's worth. What are some of the normal, natural ways that we judge the worth of those around us? How does Paul's gospel challenge the way that we think about one another?
4. Non-Christians in Paul's day would undoubtedly be very surprised by the people that he chose to honor and associate with. Is there anything about our relationships with other people in our church that would surprise non-Christians? How might we better imitate Paul in the way we treat one another?
5. Paul's final greetings make it clear that being a Christian involves being dependent on other people. How do you depend on other Christians? Is there any reason why you hesitate to depend on others? How do others in the church depend on you?
6. What do you think is the greatest challenge to you living out this teaching? What is one practical step that you can take in the coming week to overcome this challenge?

Pray

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with one another and end in prayer.