



WEEK 2

STUDY GUIDE

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Monday July 11, 2022

Read: Romans 12:2-8

Scripture Verse: *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.” Romans 12:2*

Today’s Thought:

As a recap of last week in Romans 12:1-2, Paul instructed the church in Rome to fully lay their lives down at the feet of Jesus in repentance and for the forgiveness of sin as a voluntary act of spiritual worship. This setting of us apart in service of God becomes the foundation for the on-going work of the Holy Spirit that continually transforms our spiritual life. However, this initial devotion to God is only the first essential step in our spiritual journey, culminating in perfection in heaven. When we present ourselves as living sacrifices in response to the mercy of God, He gives even more grace to become transformed in this world. As living sacrifices, we must be careful as some have, to not crawl off the altar. We will continue to face opposing forces on this side of heaven that will seek to make our living a devoted life difficult. Paul acknowledges this reality and urges us "to no longer conform to the patterns of this world."

Christians back then, like today, were plagued by their past lifestyles and under constant attack by society. As Paul wrote to the first-generation believers, they lived in a culture much like the one we live in today. It was a culture uninfluenced by Christian values. Even though our culture is a mess, we can at least be grateful to have benefitted from more of a Christian influence than those in Rome. Seeking to present ourselves as "living sacrifices," in such a culture will require us to be as wise as serpents as we encounter the threats of this world. The world whose patterns we seek to avoid is not the same world that "God so loved," because it is not His original creation. This world, corrupted by the fall, has become an age of forces directly opposing our life in the Spirit. Although there are many beautiful things in this world, Paul warns believers not to allow themselves to prevail in the world view that opposes God to shape our thinking and behavior. Despite the many positive influences still available, Paul’s warning applies to us today. A spirit of this age remains alien to the gospel of righteousness and continues to shape our economy, politics, and sadly, our churches. We must remain alert to those areas of our lives where we unwittingly allow a different set of values and

priorities to dictate how we behave.

The criteria for what become authoritative in our minds happens through our ability to reason and by personal experience. Our ability to think logically, combined with being sensitive to God's still, small voice, allows a believer to test and approve what God's good, pleasing, and perfect will is for their life. You will know it is God's good, pleasing, and perfect will because it will vehemently clash with the contrasting patterns of this world. Through the constant renewing of our minds, we can be transformed and fight off these opposing world views. In his book, *Core 52*, Mark Moore writes, "if you are a spirit-filled follower of Jesus Christ and you align your life with His priorities, the more Scripture you consume, the more potential you have to access the thoughts of God. When we obey the commands of God the results will be the revelation of His will. It is not enough to just know the Word; we must align our lives up with it." God's will is clarified for us through obedience but can become blurred by disobedience. If we continue to disobey, it will eventually cause us to be no longer able to hear God regardless of how loud He speaks.

- What continues transform our lives after we repent and are saved?
- What is our initial step in beginning the spiritual journey?
- What becomes the danger for some living sacrifices?
- What makes living a devoted life to God difficult?
- What does Paul warn about concerning living in this world?
- What sets us apart for knowing God's will for our lives?
- What becomes the danger of disobedience to God's will?

Further Reading: I Corinthians 2:14; Isaiah 6:8-10

Tuesday July 12, 2022

Read: Romans 12:3-8

Scripture Verse: *“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”*
Romans 12:3

Today's Thought:

Now that Paul has prepared us with the basic features of salvation, he is ready to share with us the details and instructions for Christian living. Thus far, Paul has shared that all fall short of God's righteousness and are condemned by His standard. Any attempts on our part to save ourselves are a mere waste of time. Our right standing with God only happens by faith in His promise of grace offered through Jesus. Upon being justified by that faith, we experience a relational change providing peace with God. And it's a real change that gives new life in Christ. Our old self is gone, and being made new, we can experience the reality of God's Spirit in us. As new believers, we must continue to show progress in our spiritual development by daily counting ourselves dead to sin and alive in Christ. In our devotion to God and in presenting ourselves as living sacrifices, we can develop a mindset that resists the patterns of this world and shapes our thinking according to God's will.

With these powerful truths in mind and the ability to grasp their significance, the other specifics for living a Christian life should fall right into place. However, there will be many situations in this life where no explicit instruction or solution may present itself within the Scriptures. The lack of instruction or explanation is where being "transformed by the renewing of your mind," comes into play. Renewing our mind in God's Word enables us to remember and apply the great principles of the gospel to any appropriate life situation. In verse three, we notice the differences in the measure of faith amongst believers. Dealing with life problems can sometimes get dicey due to the diversity of the body. We sometimes find ourselves wasting time debating who is more qualified, talented, or gifted when trying to solve an issue. When we find ourselves in this kind of disagreement, we find ourselves caught up in the "patterns of this world," while our focus and devotion should be upon the things of God. Paul instructs believers that find themselves in a diversely gifted community not to think of themselves more highly than they should but be

honest about the measure of faith God has given them. When we allow ourselves to get caught up over petty, irrelevant differences in giftedness, it becomes not only a distraction but will be counterproductive to our work for the kingdom. Let us learn not to have inflated views of ourselves but be willing to place others above ourselves to work together to accomplish God's will.

- What do you think Paul means to say to us by his opening words in verse 3, "for the grace given me.....?"
- Why is it important for Paul to remind us of the features of our salvation?
- How does remembering those features help us live out our Christian lives?
- How does the measure of our faith help us conform within the diversity of the body of Christ?
- What happens when we allow our differences to affect our faith, function, and gifts within the body?
- What lesson is Paul teaching us in verse three when it comes to living out our faith?

Further Reading: I Corinthians 12:1-11

Wednesday July 13, 2022

Read: Romans 12:3-8

Scripture Verse: *"Each of us has one body with many parts. And the parts do not all have the same purpose." Romans 12:4*

Today's Thought:

God has given believers the blessing and gift of banding together as a community. Within this community of Christ Followers, we learn and experience new aspects of God's goodness and beauty. In these last five chapters of Romans, Paul describes the attitudes and actions that bond this community in love, creating a relational climate that will promote maximum personal spiritual growth. The job becomes for us to take these instructions to heart, to make them the guiding principles as we learn to live together as part of God's holy and loving family of faith.

One of the fundamental principles for having a genuinely Christian relationship with others within such a community starts with being fully committed to God. Only when we are fully surrendered to Christ will the patterns of this world be powerless to squeeze us into its mold. The constant renewing of our minds in God's Word will bring the transformation, enabling us to live out God's will for our lives. Part of living out God's will within a Christ-like community (church) is understanding the diversity of our gifts. This world is about competition, picking winners and losers, and measuring people against people. Unfortunately, this competitive nature shows up in everything, but that perspective changes regarding the church.

God views those who follow Him as a member of one body. Although the community has many features, it forms one body, with all the pieces having different functions. As with our physical bodies, they wouldn't correctly function if all the elements that made up the whole were the same. Each member brings something to the entire body that contributes and fulfills a specific function. Each member doing their part belongs to the other members working in unison. In a body relationship, the essence of competition cannot peacefully exist; within a body community, we learn to cooperate with the many different parts. We must focus on using our gift to serve others as a vital body part. We will not find contentment in comparing ourselves to the other parts, but only in being ourselves and using God's gift for ministry. No longer must we worry about being better or worse than our brother; we are equally

important in and of ourselves. This concept becomes one of the keys to building a cooperative and loving community.

- How might our physical bodies help Paul make his point to us in verse 4?
- What are some of the aspects that characterize the Christian community?
- What is one of the fundamental principles that the community is built on?
- What would be the result if such a community were built strictly on a worldly view of competition?
- What must the “body” be built on to function properly?

Further Reading: Galatians 6:3; Colosians 2:18; Psalm 131:1-2

Thursday July 14, 2022

Read: Romans 12:3-8

Scripture Verse: *"So also, we are many persons. But in Christ we are one body. And each part of the body belongs to all the other parts. We all have gifts. They differ in keeping with the grace that God has given each of us." Romans 12:5-6*

Today's Thought:

Continuing his writing to the Roman churches, Paul relates the relationship of its membership in terms of the parts of a body. Many members, with many unique gifts, comprise one body, the church. One essential feature that makes this one body different from other groups of people is its union with Christ. The Greek word for union is 'henotes,' meaning "one or oneness." Paul uses 'henotes' in Ephesians 4:3 and 4:13 in describing the "unity" of the Spirit and the "unity" of the faith. He taught that the "unity or oneness," among believers comes from sharing the same Spirit. Oneness already exists in all who are born-again. Our duty as a body is to keep or observe that oneness recognizing it as authentic and acting upon it.

The concept of "oneness" within the body of believers is expressed in Jesus' final prayer recorded in John 17 when He asked the Father for this same unity or oneness for the disciples. He prayed that the Father would bring his disciples into "oneness" by Jesus being in the triune God and the triune God being in them. We now get a clearer picture of the unity Paul speaks of by observing the relationship of the Father and Son, who from eternity have enjoyed equal glory and are inherently "one." The oneness among the disciples becomes the result of their oneness with God.

Not only did Jesus pray this for his disciples, but He also prayed it for all who would believe in Him through their teaching. The New Testament, mainly comprised of the apostles' words, has become the foundation of our faith. Paul explains it this way in Ephesians 2:19-22, "So you are no longer strangers and outsiders. You are citizens together with God's people. You are members of God's family. You are a building that is built on the apostles and prophets. They are the foundation. Christ Jesus himself is the most important stone in the building. The whole building is held together by him. It rises to become a holy temple because it belongs to the Lord. And because you belong to him, you too are

being built together. You are being made into a house where God lives through his Spirit." In His prayer, Jesus was praying for all believers that would ever be, including you, me, and every genuine believer. And it feels pretty good to know that Jesus prayed for me!

Jesus' petition is universal and encompasses all of history. Jesus' prayer request to the Father included three things. He requested that all who make up the church or the body of believers be "one" as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one. He asked that all who would believe would be "one" with the Trinity and that the world would believe that the Father sent His Son to save them. And in that prayer, Jesus prayed for a "oneness" that would be the foundation of his church. The oneness of believers with other believers is only realized by the mutual indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the triune God, much like branches grafted and abiding in the vine, which is Christ. Paul is illustrating for us the incredible interconnectedness we have with Jesus. And it is He who sustains us and gives us the strength to help others based solely and ideally on the oneness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

- Why do you think Paul uses the illustration of a body to describe the members of the church?
- What makes the church body different from other groups of people?
- What kind of "oneness" was Jesus asking the Father to provide for the disciples and us?
- How is oneness of believers with other believers realized?
- How is that oneness of the body sustained?

Further Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6

Friday July 15, 2022

Read: Romans 12:3-8

Scripture Verse: *“Do you have the gift of prophecy? Then use it in keeping with the faith you have. Is it your gift to serve? Then serve. Is it teaching? Then teach. Is it telling others how they should live? Then tell them. Is it giving to those who are in need? Then give freely. Is it being a leader? Then work hard at it. Is it showing mercy? Then do it cheerfully.” Romans 12:6-8*

Today's Thought:

I believe we are all born into this world with talents and skills on a massive scale and variety. As we grew up through elementary school and progressed into secondary school, we discovered things we were good at while at the same time finding we were not so good at others. Maybe we discover a talent for athletics or academics, or perhaps a gift for music and the arts. Every person has some level of raw talent to be used somewhere in the world. Although all people have these gifts or talents to compete in the secular world, not all have the spiritual gifts that Paul speaks of in Romans 12:6-8.

Spiritual gifts are only bestowed to genuine believers who are part of the church body. Each believer receives a different gift or gift mix that allows for balanced service and growth within the local body. However, for this to happen, each Christ Follower must exercise their gift by faith. When a member of that local body chooses not to exercise their skill, something within the body typically breaks down or doesn't get accomplished. It is just like when we get sick or when a part of our body isn't working or functioning correctly; it negatively affects the whole. Every gift that God bestows on his people is of the same importance. Regardless of the gift we are given, it must be dedicated to God and used for the good of His entire church. Our Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with or over. May we all use our spiritual gifts to build the kingdom and for the glory of our God.

- What gifts or talents were you born with?
- What are your spiritual gifts and how do they differ from your inherent talents?
- What is the prerequisite for receiving spiritual gifts?
- What becomes the danger when “members” of the body do not use their gifts?
- How are you using your gifts to serve and benefit the body of believers in your church?

Further Reading: 1 Corinthians 13

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