

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Small Group Bible Study

Romans 12 to 15

SERIES INTRODUCTION

Christians should respond to God's mercy by living a transformed life – offering our bodies as “living sacrifices”. What does this mean in practice? What are the marks of true believers? How can we live as citizens of God's Kingdom while at the same time being subject to the earthly governments and authorities that God has placed over us? What if there are disagreements with other believers over disputable matters? How should Christians respond?

These are all issues that are as relevant today as they were in the time when Paul was writing to the church in Rome. His timeless instructions give clear and practical guidelines as to how we can be faithful followers of Christ. The Christian life is not abstract theology. Our new life in Christ has practical implications for how we choose to behave each day. It is not enough to know the Gospel, we must let it transform every aspect of our lives!

5 Mar

Marks Of True Believers
Romans 12:9–21

12 Mar

Being Good Citizens
Romans 13:1–14

19 Mar

Let God Be The Judge
Romans 14:1–23

26 Mar

Following In Christ's Footsteps
Romans 15:1–13

- b. These commands have much in common with Paul's well-known illustration of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. What makes it possible for a believer to demonstrate all of these characteristics of love? (Consider Galatians 5:22-24)
- 3 In verses 17-21, Paul specifically addresses what believers are to do and don't do to people who are hostile to them. These are often the most difficult people to love.
- a. According to Paul, what should we do (and not do) to those who are hostile to us?
- b. What should be our motives for loving those who do evil to us? Consider Romans 2:4 and Matthew 5:43-45.
- c. How can we sincerely love people who seem impossible to love? Consider Mark 10:18 and Romans 12:2.

Discipleship Pointers

- Love must be sincere, but it should also be in accordance with God's Will.
 - Love must not be hypocritical – it is not just about being “nice”, showing outward love.
 - Genuine love is doing for people what God considers good for them – We must not conform to the world's definition of “love”: doing only what the world considers good. Rather, we must love by discerning and carrying out God's good and perfect will.
- Love is not about our own efforts in following a list of do's and don'ts, but flows from our love for God. We must be transformed through the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2) – We must let the Spirit work within us to change the inclination of our hearts. The fruit of the Spirit will be evident in our lives when we submit fully to Jesus Christ as Lord.
- If we love someone the way Christ loves us, we will be willing to forgive. Grace is undeserved favour. By giving an enemy a drink, we are not excusing his evil deeds but we are forgiving him and loving him in spite of his sins – just as Christ did for us. We do this so that they too may know the love of Christ and repent of their ways.

Family/Group Moments

Share specific examples where you are currently struggling to show sincere love to any person. Pray together specifically for each other's struggles.

Being Good Citizens

ROMANS 13:1-14

GENERAL SURVEY

TOPIC

KEY VERSE

MAIN PERSON/S

KEY IDEAS & QUESTIONS

Introduction

In this passage, Paul turns his attention to governing authorities because they are God's servants and agents of wrath. Believers are a redeemed people living in a fallen world. While we are committed to Christ as Lord, we must recognize the place of government in God's providential ordering of the world. What does it mean to be good citizens of the world? Paul again emphasizes the key Christian virtue of love and puts our lives in perspective: the night is nearly over, the day is almost here. How would we live today if we knew for certain that Jesus is coming again tomorrow?

For Study and Discussion

- 1 Read verses 1-7, concerning our obligations to governing authorities:
 - a. As believers committed to Christ as Lord, we may be tempted to ignore or even stand against secular rulers. What are the reasons given by Paul for submitting ourselves to all authorities?

 - b. What are we to give to these authorities? Why is it sometimes difficult for us to submit to governing authorities?

 - c. Submitting to authorities usually means obeying them as well. Can you think of examples in which believers should not obey earthly authorities? If we are compelled to disagree and disobey, is there a way for us to do so while still being submissive to governing authorities? (Consider Acts 5:29, 1 Peter 2:13-17)

- 2 Read verses 8-10, concerning our obligations to our fellow citizens:
 - a. Why does Paul say that love is the fulfilment of the law?

 - b. Who are the neighbours whom we are to love? Consider Luke 10:25-37. Share some practical ways in which you can love your neighbours, colleagues, and fellow citizens as yourself. How can we also love the migrant workers and refugees in our midst?

- 3 Read verse 11-14
 - a. What does Paul mean when he says that the “night” is nearly over, the “day” is almost here? Why should this affect how we live our lives today? 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8.

 - b. How can we not be sleeping but instead “wake up” so that we will live purposefully with the expectation of Christ’s coming? Consider also Ephesians 6:10-18. What does this mean practically in our daily living? Consider if there may be changes that are required in your life today.

Discipleship Pointers

- Christians are citizens of God’s Kingdom but we are also subject to earthly governments and authorities that God has established for our good and His purposes.
- As God’s children, we are obligated to submit to our earthly governing authorities and to love/respect our fellow citizens. These are our civil and moral responsibility – and in doing so, we honour our sovereign God who established all earthly authorities.
- God knows everything we do and Christ will judge all of us when He comes again. Let us commit ourselves daily to following Christ, putting off our old sinful self and pursuing Christ-likeness. We do this by seeking to do what is righteous and pleasing to God.

Family/Group Moments

- How can you be a responsible citizen as well as a responsible Christian?
- Are there opportunities for loving your neighbours which you may have missed or have been ignoring?

Pray that God will give you the opportunities to show His love to others!

- d. If each of us will give an account of ourselves to God, what must we do before forming opinions and convictions about “disputable matters”? How can we investigate different Biblical viewpoints thoroughly and not just follow what the “experts” say?

 - e. We belong to Lord (v8). Why does Paul remind the church of this fact when addressing a theological dispute?
- 2 Read vv13-23. Putting the spiritual needs of our brothers before our own freedom is an expression of our unity in the church for which Christ is the head.
- a. How are we affecting our brother if they are distressed by what we eat? (v15)

 - b. As citizens of the Kingdom of God, how do we love our fellow believers?

 - c. What are examples of “disputable matters” in the church today? How can we address these issues without causing fellow believers to stumble?

 - d. How is mutual edification practiced in the church? What is the purpose of maintaining peace and harmony in the church?

Discipleship Pointers

- We have rights and responsibilities as believers. Even if we have the right to do some things, we have a responsibility to God and our fellow believers which may compel us to give up certain rights in order to avoid creating spiritual problems for other believers.
- We should discern what is biblical and what is not, and then act as our conscience dictates. We should not be too quick to judge fellow believers on issues that are not central to the faith.

Family/Group Moments

Are there any “disputable matters” which you are struggling with? Pray for these matters as a group and consider how you may encourage and build up each other in the faith.

2 Read vv7-13. Accept one another.

a. What is Paul's purpose in quoting the series of passages from the Old Testament (vv9-12)? What common idea do these passages emphasize?

b. Discuss how we can be more accepting of other believers, particularly those who are from other races and different social or economic backgrounds. Are there practical steps that you can take as a worshiper and small group member to accomplish this?

c. After urging Jewish and Gentile Christians to accept one another as Christ has accepted them, Paul prays for them in verse 13. What does Paul pray for and how does this help in building up a spirit of unity in the Roman church?

Discipleship Pointers

- Christians are not to be people-pleasers solely for the sake of pleasing others. However, we are to set aside self-pleasing actions for the purpose of building others up. We should not use our Christian convictions as an excuse to treat fellow believers poorly.
- The knowledge of scripture (the Bible) affects how we live as Christian disciples. Our discipleship walk must be guided by what God teaches us through His Word.
- Harmony and fellowship among Christians is essential if we are to glorify God. Unnecessary dissension prevents us from honouring God effectively as His church.

Family/Group Moments

- Consider what you or the group can do to help grow a spirit of unity in ORPC.
- How can you walk closer to Christ in your discipleship journey this year? Pray that God will help you to work on these areas.

Daily Prayer Guide

Sunday: The Church

Church members & families
Visitors
Pastor & church leaders
Sunday School teachers
Worship leaders
Small group leaders
Other churches
Outreach efforts

Monday: The Workplace

Supervisor
Co-workers
Subordinates
Customers & suppliers
Difficult situations
Work attitude
Work performance

Tuesday: Acquaintances

Mentors & mentorees
Accountability partners
Friends
Neighbours
Merchants
Public servants
Teachers & other school Workers
Children's friends & their families

Wednesday: My Country

Public officials - executive, legislative,
& judicial
Armed forces
Public morality
The media
The economy

Thursday: The World

International peace & understanding
Missions and missionaries
Persecuted churches
Hunger, sickness, & disaster relief

Friday: My Spiritual Growth

Maturity
Understanding
Faith
Love toward God
Love toward others
Servanthood

Saturday: My Family

Spouse
Children
Grandchildren
Parents
Brothers & sisters
Extended family
Unsaved loved ones

*"Call to me and I will answer you and
tell you great and unsearchable things
you do not know."-Jeremiah 33:3*

Little Steps To Great Learning!

Preparation:

- Attempt all questions in the relevant Bible study before your group meeting.
- Expect spiritual growth by thoughtfully working on the Bible study questions (and the suggested reading, if any) throughout the week.
- Seek the Holy Spirit's insight and guidance by praying daily in reflection of what you have learned through the Bible study.

Group Time:

- On the following Sunday, take notes during sermon to assist in focusing your thoughts.
- Be punctual for your group meeting.
- Share the insight gained through the sermon with your group.
- Be frank in sharing your response to the questions in the discipleship pointers.
- Encourage others by attesting to God's goodness and reality by sharing to the group (and others) how the Word has changed your thinking and action in response to your study in the past week.
- Using the front sheet, summarise how the lessons have helped you to understand God's revelation in the Bible through Jesus Christ, and your response to the revelation.

THE BIBLE is to be...

Read through...

Reflected in...

Lived out...

Given away...