



# DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

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## Romans Lesson 1: Not Ashamed

Romans 1:1-17

### DAY 1

**Introduction:** Welcome to a new season of Discipleship Groups at The Story! This fall, our groups will take a closer look at one of the most important books in the Bible: Paul's letter to the Romans. The Apostle from Tarsus wrote many letters to the early Christian churches, thirteen of which we have in the New Testament, but Romans stands out among them. It is by far his longest, most thorough letter; in Romans, unlike his other New Testament correspondence, Paul is writing to people he'd never met and to churches he didn't start. In his other letters, he is a pastor picking up where he left off with his congregation, but in Romans, he's starting from scratch. This gives us a fuller picture of who Paul is and what he believed.

Reading *Romans* has been a turning point for many Christians – including great influencers like St. Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Wesley. The pastors and discipleship leaders of The Story are all praying that this season will be a major turning point for you as well.

**Questions:** The major theme of Romans is that we are saved when we receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ by faith. What do you find most challenging or difficult to accept about this premise?

### DAY 2

Read Romans 1:1-6

- 1) Who wrote this letter?

- 2) What elements of the gospel are outlined in verses 2-6?
- 3) Why is the resurrection so important? See also 1 Corinthians 15:1-19
- 4) What hurdles do you have, if any, regarding the belief in a real, physical resurrection of Jesus?
- 5) In verse 5, describe the relationship between grace and obedience.

### **DAY 3**

#### **Read Romans 1:7-15**

- 1) Why does Paul want to get together with other believers in these verses?
- 2) Why do you most often want to get together with your friends?
- 3) If your reasons are different than Paul's, why do you think they are different?

### **DAY 4**

#### **Read Romans 1:16-17**

- 1) What is the gospel's result for everyone who believes?
- 2) What does the gospel reveal about God?
- 3) How are believers supposed to receive the gospel?

4) How are you receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ?

## **DAY 5**

### **Read 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:1-5**

- 1) Would your life look any different if you truly believed in the resurrection of Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) Are you relying on your faith in Jesus to transform your life? Or are you entertained by church community and its service offerings?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) How can you better live by the power of God?

## **DAY 6**

### **Read Romans 1:1-17**

- 1) What do you learn about God from these verses?



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## Romans Lesson 2: Not OK

Romans 1:18-3:20

### DAY 1

#### **Introduction:**

*In a room where  
people unanimously maintain  
a conspiracy of silence,  
one word of truth  
sounds like a pistol shot.*

- Lithuanian poet Czeslaw Milosz

The human capacity for self-deception is both amazing and terrifying. The infamous Bernie Madoff has said, "There's nothing for me to change from; it's not like I ever considered myself a bad person." But it's not just guys like Madoff who are self-deceived; it's all of us. We blatantly justify our bad choices on a daily basis.

*"I'm just doing my job."*

*"What my husband doesn't know won't hurt him."*

*"Drinking (or porn or shopping or whatever) makes me a better person."*

*"If God didn't want me to \_\_\_\_\_, He wouldn't have given me the appetite for it."*

In this week's reading, Paul calls us out when we are crystal-clear about other people's sins but self-deluded about our own. In a stroke of pastoral genius, Paul simultaneously illustrates the gravity of our depravity and the power of God's grace because he knows (from his own experience) that as long as we are deceiving ourselves about our sin, we are unable to receive the forgiveness that saves us.

The truth hurts, but in this case, it hurts so good.

## Questions:

How have you personally witnessed – either in yourself or someone else – the amazing, terrifying human capacity for self-deception?

Have you ever witnessed a breakthrough from self-deception about sin to self-awareness and repentance? What happened?

## DAY 2

### Read Romans 1:18-32

- 1) These verses are talking about “men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness”. In verses 19-23, what truth are they suppressing?
- 2) What was the result of those that suppress God’s truth? See verses 24-25.
- 3) How are you worshiping and serving (i) the created (ii) the Creator?
- 4) God allows us to follow the lusts of our heart and then lists several results of “not acknowledging God any longer”. See verses 26-32. Compare this list to the “fruits of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-24.
- 5) What truth about God are you exchanging for a lie, so you can follow your own heart?

## DAY 3

### Read Romans 2:1-29

- 1) What is the primary issue with our judgements of others according to verses 1-3?
- 2) What causes us to fall under the wrath of God? See verse 5.
- 3) In verses 6-11, (i) how can one come to eternal life? (ii) how can one come into indignation?
- 4) Does it matter what nationality, race, etc. you are before God? What makes someone a "Jew"? See verse 29.

## DAY 4

### Read Romans 3:1-18

- 1) Who is considered to be under sin's grasp?
- 2) Think about all the people you know, even the best, most righteous people. Now consider Aaron and Moses, faithful servants and priests/prophets of God. Read Leviticus 16:2 and Exodus 40:34-35. What would happen to them if they entered into God's presence (the holy place inside the veil in the Old Testament)?
- 3) Why do you think they are considered unworthy to be in the presence of God?
- 4) Are you worthy or unworthy, on your own merits, to be in the presence of God? Why?

## DAY 5

### Read Romans 3:19-20

- 1) What purpose did the Law serve?
- 2) How does this help you to understand that a Savior is necessary for you to be in right relationship with God?
- 3) Who is your Savior? How does your time and your service reflect this truth?

## DAY 6

### Read Romans 1:18-3:20

- 1) What do you learn about God from these verses?



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## Romans Lesson 3: Not Special

Romans 3:21-5:21

### DAY 1

**Introduction:** It's been said that what a person *does* is more important than what he *believes*, but more often than not, our actions flow from our convictions. We stand up for what we believe in, we pledge our allegiance to it...we may even lay down our lives for it.

What – or who – do you believe in?

In this week's readings from Romans, Paul breaks down the stigmas separating insiders (Jewish Christians) from outsiders (Gentile Christians) in the Church. The two groups had become hotly divided on some key issues; for some (namely the Jewish Christians), it seemed clear that followers of Jesus should obey Old Testament kosher laws. For others (the Gentile believers), reliance on the Old Testament appeared to miss the point of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Paul's response was to call out both groups on their short-sightedness: some of the Jewish Christians put too much faith in religious rules, while some of the Gentile believers may have struggled with self-righteousness and pride. The apostle reminds the Roman churches that all Christians – whether Jews or Gentiles – are saved when we choose to believe and trust in Jesus.

**Questions:** What are some of your most basic, core beliefs? (Don't overcomplicate this – just keep it simple)

How do your core convictions effect your daily life?



## DAY 2

### Read Romans 3:21-31

- 1) Read verse 23. Do you believe this to be true? Why?
- 2) How does grace relate to how we are to be justified? See verse 24.
- 3) How does faith relate to how we are to be justified?
- 4) Why then does this make our boasting about our justification, empty and without value?

## DAY 3

### Read Romans 4:1-25

- 1) What promise did God make to Abram? See also, Genesis 15:1-6
- 2) Why would this promise be so hard to believe; what fact about Abraham and Sarah required their faith in God to accomplish God's promise?
- 3) How did Abram respond to God's promise?

- 4) How was Abraham justified, declared righteous before God?
- 5) What does God require of us to have faith in so that we may be “credited with righteousness”?
- 6) How does the method of God’s salvation differ from the times before Jesus, in Abram’s day to God’s method of salvation after Jesus?
- 7) How are you responding to God’s promise today?

#### **DAY 4**

##### **Read Romans 5:1-11**

- 1) What are the many results of being justified by faith?
- 2) Read verse 5. What does this verse say about the Holy Spirit? Why is this important?
- 3) Do you believe this promise? Where do you place your hope?
- 4) In verses 6-11, How are we reconciled to God?
- 5) What does this demonstrate about God?

## **DAY 5**

### **Read Romans 5:12-21**

- 1) What was the result of Adam's actions?
- 2) What was the result of Jesus' actions?
- 3) How can you show the Lord your gratitude for what He has done for us?

## **DAY 6**

### **Read Romans 3:21-5:21**

- 1) What do you learn about God from these verses?



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## Romans Lesson 4: Not Condemned

Romans 6:1-8:39

### DAY 1

**Introduction:** The first Christians believed baptism symbolized a person's actual rebirth; for this reason, many first-century believers were baptized in their birthday suits. It's true – churches held separate baptism ceremonies for men and women to protect the innocence of their eyes from all the opposite-sex nudity. We don't do that anymore for two reasons: first, because even if you love Jesus, naked baptism is probably a deal-breaker for you. Secondly, even if it's not a deal-breaker for you, baptizing you *au naturel* is not in my job description. Put some clothes on, then we'll talk!

What's important to note here is that the first Jesus-followers so fully believed that baptism meant *new life* that they were willing to “put it all out there” to proclaim to the world: “I am no longer the person I was before. The old ‘me’ is dead. I have been born again!” (See *John 3:1-21*)

**Questions:** Being “born again” in Christ requires us to first allow the old self to die. In what ways have you experienced the death of who you *were* and the rebirth of your life in Christ? In other words, what, specifically, has changed since you began following Jesus?

### DAY 2

Read Romans 6:1-23

- 1) In verses 1-7, when you believe in Jesus, how does Paul describe what happens to your old self?

- 2) All of us obey something. What happens when we let sin reign in our lives? Who do we end up obeying? Use a verse of Scripture to support your answer.
- 3) Where does obedience to righteousness come from? See verse 17
- 4) What is the result of being “enslaved to God”?
- 5) What do we receive when we sin? What does God offer as a free gift? See verse 23
- 6) Read Genesis 4:7, where are you letting sin crouch at your door?

### **DAY 3**

#### **Read Romans 7:1-25**

- 1) What causes someone to bear fruit for God? What causes someone to bear fruit for death? See verses 1-6.
- 2) Personal question, you don't have to answer out loud if you don't want. Read verses 14-20, what does your flesh desire for you that you know is not good for you?
- 3) In verse 18, what is your immediate reaction to the phrase “nothing good dwells in me”?

How does the remainder of the phrase “that is, in my flesh” change things?

- 4) How do verses 21-25 help you understand the conflict of our two natures?

- 5) How are you letting (i) the desires of your flesh or (ii) the desires of your renewed spirit drive your actions?

## **DAY 4**

### **Read Romans 8:1-11**

- 1) Try to memorize verse 8:1
- 2) Describe some characteristics of those who walk according to the flesh?
- 3) In verse 9, what distinguishes those who belong to Jesus?
- 4) Verse 11 says that the same Spirit that rose Jesus from the dead lives in those that belong to Jesus. Do you believe this?

How would your life change if you not only believed this truth but lived this truth?

## **DAY 5**

### **Read Romans 8:12-39**

- 1) What are the people called who are being led by the Spirit of God? See verse 14
- 2) Read verses 26 and 27. What does this mean for you in your life?
- 3) Verse 28 can easily bring hope to those that love God. But this verse can easily be misunderstood and cause doubt in God's promises. Read this verse carefully. What does God promise to those who love

Him?

Does this promise include lack of suffering? Also, see verses 31-39.

- 4) When we are suffering distress, persecution etc., what gives you hope about the situation? See verses 31-39.

## **DAY 6**

### **Read Romans 6:1-8:39**

- 1) What do you learn about God from these verses?



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## Romans Lesson 5: Not Entitled

Romans 9:1-11:36

### DAY 1

**Introduction:** "It's important to note that we adopt not because we are rescuers. No. We adopt because we are rescued." – David Platt

Adoption is a recurring theme throughout the Bible. Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's family in Egypt. After the death of her parents, Esther was adopted by her relative, Mordecai. Even Jesus was technically adopted by Joseph. The act of adoption – choosing to receive and love a child as your own, without the obligation of blood relations – reveals the heart of God in a powerful way. In this week's readings from Romans, Paul claims that, while the Jewish people were God's chosen ones, God has now made His intentions clear. In Christ, He seeks to welcome *all* people – including Gentiles through "adoption" – as His beloved sons and daughters.

**Questions:** Have you ever witnessed firsthand the power of adoption? What do you think adoptive parents reveal about the heart of God?

### DAY 2

Read Romans 9:1-33

- 1) According to verses 1-5, what belongs to the Israelites ?



- 2) In verses 1-8, who are the children of God?
  
- 3) What is the significance of the phrase "adopted sons"?
  
- 4) A lot can be said in these verses about predestination / free will and how we are to interact in this world with a sovereign God. We won't be able to settle this discussion anytime soon as there are Christians who have differing beliefs on the subject. That said, we are given clear instructions of how to proceed no matter how we understand predestination / free will. In verses, 30-33, how are we to pursue righteousness and become adopted sons of God?
  
- 5) Do you feel as though you are entitled to the designation "child of God" just by being born? Why?

### **DAY 3**

#### **Read Romans 10:1-21**

- 1) Try to memorize verse 9.

What about this verse gives you hope?

What about this verse gives you rest? See Hebrews 4:9-10

- 2) Read verses 14 and 15 along with Matthew 28:19-20. How do you understand your role in this world as a follower of Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) How can you both be at rest as believers in Jesus and work to let the world know about the good news of Jesus? See Ephesians 2:8-9 for some help.

#### **DAY 4**

##### **Read Romans 11:1-36**

- 1) What is the olive tree?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) Why were some of the branches broken off? See verse 20.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What does it mean to be grafted into the olive tree?

- 4) The branches that broke off can still be grafted in, see verse 23 and God's desire is to show mercy to all, see verse 32. How has God shown you mercy in your life?

Does this leave you with a feeling of gratitude towards God or discontentment?

## **DAY 5**

- 1) What is your response to God's gift of salvation for you?
- 2) How does being grafted into God's family as a child of God change your life?
- 3) How are you using your spiritual gifts for God's purposes?

## **DAY 6**

### **Read Romans 9:1-11:36**

- 1) What do you learn about God from these verses?



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## Romans Lesson 6: Not Conformed

Romans 12:1-13:14

### DAY 1

**Introduction:** Do you ever remember a time in high school or college when, after spending countless hours hearing lectures on a subject – and spending even more time reading books assigned by your professor – you thought to yourself, “So what? What difference is any of this information supposed to make? How will it change my life at all?”

After spending several chapters weaving several super-heady themes together – sin and forgiveness, law and grace, religion and gospel, suffering and hope, etc. – Paul pivots hard in chapter twelve. He knows his readers need more than information; they need life application, too. Knowing the truth about God and His plans for creation is great, but how should that change us, here and now?

Sometimes churches make it sound like salvation is all about going to church. If we can get you to church every Sunday, then it’s mission accomplished. You’re all set. But when we read the New Testament, we people’s lives being radically changed by the Holy Spirit. They didn’t just wait around until they got to heaven one day; they started showing the whole world what heaven can look like here and now.

What difference should believing in Jesus make in your life today? In his book, *After You Believe*, NT Wright put it this way. “It’s as though we are standing on one side of a deep, wide river, looking across to the further bank. On *this* bank you declare your faith. On the *opposite* bank is the ultimate result – final salvation in heaven. But what are people supposed to do in the meantime? Simply stand around and wait? Is there no bridge between the two?”

In this week’s readings from Romans 12, Paul reveals the bridge.

## Questions:

How has following Jesus actually changed the quality, content, or your appreciation of your daily life in the "real world"?

### DAY 2

#### Read Romans 12:1-8

- 1) What does it mean to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to God? See also Hebrews 13:15-16.
- 2) Verse 2, how are we "not to be conformed to this world"? See also Ephesians 4:22-24
- 3) How are you living your life:
  - a. in conformity to this world?
  - b. transformed by the renewing of your mind in Christ Jesus?
- 4) God has given us all spiritual gifts that "differ according to the grace given us".
  - a. What spiritual gifts has God given you?
  - b. How are you using those gifts for His glory?

### DAY 3

#### Read Romans 12:9-21

- 1) What are some of the characteristics of love outlined in these verses?
- 2) When are we permitted to pay back evil with evil or to take revenge on others?
- 3) How are we to interact with our enemies or those that persecute us?
- 4) Why do you think this is so difficult for us?
- 5) How does our interaction with our enemies reflect our faith in God?

## DAY 4

Read Romans 13:1-7 (please, let's not make specific comments about any particular leader that one may disagree with, see Ephesians 4:29.)

- 1) These verses give clear instruction on our posture to governing authorities. What does it mean to be in subjection to our governing authorities?
- 2) Verse 7 says we are to "render all that is due them...honor to whom honor."
  - a. How would you describe how you talk about our governing authorities?
  - b. How does this compare to Ephesians 4:29?
- 3) How often do you pray for our government leaders? Why?

## DAY 5

Read Romans 13:8-14

- 1) How are we to fulfill the law?
- 2) What are we to lay aside in order to follow Jesus more closely?
- 3) In verse 14, what does "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" mean to you?
- 4) How can you be more conformed to Jesus and less conformed to the world?

## DAY 6

Read Romans 12:1-13:14

- 1) What do you learn about God from these verses?



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## Romans Lesson 7: Not Our Own

### Romans 14:1-15:13

#### DAY 1

**Introduction:** Self-centeredness and the Christian life are mutually exclusive ideas. You can't earnestly follow Jesus while you remain the center of your own universe. This is one of the highest hurdles standing between us and the life Jesus wants to give us. I suppose it's pride. We think we know as much as (or more than) God, and that attitude surfaces in our interpersonal relationships. If we know more than God does, we're definitely smarter than the people He's put around us. So we might judge people who aren't like us; we may develop a silent sense of superiority. We may even become proud of our humility, which is, of course, a contradiction in terms. None of this is what God intends for us in Christ. Jesus came to show us how to be servants, not stars.

In this week's readings from Romans 14 and 15, Paul will challenge us to stay humble and to be sincere in our love of others – especially those who aren't like us.

#### Questions:

What words come to mind when you think of a "good servant"? How does your life reflect (or not) your description of a good servant?

#### DAY 2

Read Romans 14:1-9

- 1) Verse 2 reads as follows, "One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only." If you were to read verse 2 without the context of other verses surrounding this verse, how would you answer this question. What do you think it means when you read "people who only eat vegetables are weak"?
  
- 2) Now, read verses 1-9 and also see Acts 10:13-16. How would you answer the same question.
  - a. What do you think it means when you read "people who only eat vegetables are weak"?
  
  - b. What general message is Paul trying convey in these verses?
  
- 3) According to verse 8, to whom do we belong?
  
- 4) Remember, believers now belong to Jesus not our definition of a proper faith. How might you be judging other Christians as less than worthy?

### DAY 3

#### Read Romans 14:10-21

- 1) It is easy to come up with additional requirements or "false tests" that someone needs to pass in order to fit your judgement of a Christian. These "false tests" are not salvation issues but rather secondary or even lesser issues of preference. What does verse 13 say about how we are to engage others?
  
- 2) What "false test" have you made up for yourself that you need to do in order to judge yourself as a proper Christian?



- 3) What "false tests" have you put on others so that you might consider them a proper Christian?
  
- 4) How can we prepare ourselves to walk in "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit", (verse 17) so that we may not be a stumbling block to others?

## **DAY 4**

### **Read Romans 14:10-21**

- 1) Verse 19 says we are to pursue things which build others up and encourages them. How are your actions encouraging to other brothers and sisters in Christ?
  
- 2) Where may your activities, even if they are not unclean, be causing others to stumble?
  
- 3) Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, especially on verse 13. What activities would you be willing to avoid in order to build a brother or sister up?

## **DAY 5**

### **Read Romans 15:1-13**

1) What is the main point of verses 1-12?

2) Read verse 13. How does this verse give you encouragement to be able live a life for the benefit of others and not for ourselves?

3) How awesome is our God?

## **DAY 6**

### **Read Romans 14:1-15:13**

1) What do you learn about God from these verses?



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## Romans Lesson 8: Not Done

Romans 15:14-16:27

### DAY 1

**Introduction:** Congratulations! You've made it through all the heaviest parts of the heaviest theological treatise in the Bible. You memorized Paul's personal mantra in 1:16-17 – "I am not ashamed of the gospel!" You survived his gut-punch hit-list of sins that left no one standing in 1:18-30, which led to his groundbreaking conclusion in 3:23: "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." In Chapter 4, you learned that God called Abraham righteous because of his faith – not his religion – and so it is with us. Chapters 5 and 6 taught us that we are now under grace, not the Law, but that doesn't mean the rules no longer apply. We just follow them because we *want to*, not because we have to!

After that, you learned that Paul was just as messed up as the rest of us (Ch. 7), but that's okay because our strength to overcome is not our own, but the power of Christ (Ch. 8). Paul's explanation (Chs.9-11) of God's roundabout plan to save everyone by allowing everyone to be disobedient may have sounded strange by today's standards. By the time you got to 12:1-2, though, something clicked: the point of following Jesus isn't to conform to the world around you, but to be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

Even as we rebel against secular conformity, Christians are to be good citizens (Ch 13) who put up with all kinds of different people, even when their lifestyles are off-putting (Ch 14) because Jesus took the cross for us (Ch 15). This week, as we wrap up this season of Discipleship Groups, we'll read through the final section of Paul's magnum opus. At times, these final verses may seem to be little more than throw-in salutations, but there is so much there when you let the Spirit guide you.

Thank you so much for your participation this fall; now let's finish strong!

### Questions:

What major themes (or sections) in Romans have been the most impactful for you throughout this

study? Why?

How would you describe the state of your relationship to Jesus now, as opposed to before this study began? How about your relationship to the Bible?

## DAY 2

### Read Romans 15:14-16:27

- 1) What ministry was left for Paul and others to do?
- 2) To whom did Paul give the credit for the success of his ministry?
- 3) What ministry is God calling you to be a part of?

## DAY 3

### Read Romans 16:1-27

- 1) What warning was given in verses 17 and 18?
- 2) How are we to be prepared so that we do not turn away from Christ towards "smooth and flattering" speech? See Colossians 2:8, Hebrews 5:14
- 3) Who wrote Romans? See verse 16:22 and compare to your answer to the first question on Lesson 1.

## **DAY 4**

### **Review the Discipleship Lessons 1-2**

- 1) What have you learned about God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) How are you applying what you learned?

## **DAY 5**

### **Review the Discipleship Lessons 3-5**

- 1) What have you learned about God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) How are you applying what you learned?

## **DAY 6**

### **Review the Discipleship Lessons 6-7**

- 1) What have you learned about God?

2) How are you applying what you learned?