

Living for God

TEACHING NOTES

KEY VERSES

Romans 14:1-9, 15:1-7

KEY THEMES

God's grace
Unity in the body
Life in the Spirit



The danger of criticism (Romans 14:1-9)

What does criticism produce?



Living to please God (Romans 14:7-8, 15:1)



God is our owner – we are told to live for Him



Discipleship directive (Romans 15:2)

What does God's grace produce?

Unity in the body (Romans 15:5-7)

How does God help us love and serve each other?

Life in the Spirit

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. – Romans 8:5-6

We are supplied with...

Lesson objective: *To understand and pursue a life that is lived for God and not for ourselves*

PERSONAL STUDY**Study 1****Prepare your heart and mind**

Open your time with God by asking Him to help you focus on what He has for you. Ask Him to help you see more clearly your position in Christ.

Love one another

In Romans 13:8, we are reminded of the commandment to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. As we move into chapter 14 we will see some of the things that keep us from obeying this command.

**Read Romans 14:1-3**

What does Paul instruct believers to do in verse 1?

What does it mean to be weak in faith?

What does it mean to be strong in faith?

Take a minute to evaluate yourself. Where are you weak in faith? Where are you strong in faith?

**Life in the Spirit**

Each of us is on a faith journey and we all began at the same place – believing Jesus for our salvation. At that time we received the Holy Spirit and He now lives in us.

As a review, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

The Holy Spirit is the guarantee that we belong to God. He lives in us so that we might be transformed as we surrender to His leading in our lives. Each of our relationships with Jesus grows in different ways because we were uniquely made and have had our own experiences.

Much like a caring doctor, God knows what we need to make us Christ-like. Of course our willingness to surrender to the work of the Spirit within us has a significant effect on that plan. God, being the perfect physician, makes necessary adjustments along the way.

We need to accept the fact that believers have the Holy Spirit living in them, and He is doing in them what He is doing in you. Does this make it easier for you to accept others when they are weak in their faith? Do you hope that other believers will accept you where you are in your faith journey?

Unity in the body

In Romans 14:2-3, we see an example of what it is to be weak in faith. This passage refers to religious and cultural food differences. There are many contemporary examples of strong and weak faith. Take for instance, Sunday service dress.

One person believes it's all right to [wear jeans]. But another believer with a sensitive conscience [believes that it's disrespectful to God]. Those who feel free to [dress casually] must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't [wear jeans] must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them.

What are differences you struggle with that might keep you from accepting a fellow believer?

Read 1 John 4:9-10

This passage helps us in accepting all believers no matter their level of faith or their understanding of God's Word. Here are some steps we can take to apply this passage:

Be reminded of God's unconditional acceptance.

Meditate on God's Word, considering how God wants to use us in the lives of others, accepting and loving our fellow believers as we love ourselves.

Submit to the Holy Spirit in order to keep from relying on our own strength.

Key verse

Put to memory Romans 15:5. Place the provided scripture card somewhere you can see it throughout the day.

Prayer time

Pray that each believer will understand their own weak faith and their need to surrender to the Spirit living in them. Pray for unity in the body of Christ in our town, nation, and world.

Study 2**Prepare your heart and mind**

Begin this time of study in prayer. Ask God to help you focus on Him as He teaches you from His Word.

**Read Romans 14:10-13**

So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For the Scriptures say, "As surely as I live," says the LORD, "every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to God." Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.

Paul asks a tough but obvious question: why do we condemn and look down on other believers? It's obvious because we all know we've judged and been judged. It's tough because we also know we are really good at judging and condemning others while not being very good at accepting others.

The passage goes on to say, "*so let's stop condemning each other.*" Imagine for a moment what life would look like if we stopped looking down on one another. Write down any thoughts or feelings that come to mind when you think of the freedom we would find in that.

Verse 13 starts with, "*decide instead.*" This solidifies what we know: this is a choice. We have to make the choice to stop judging and start accepting. We have to make the choice to stop thinking only of ourselves and start living with others in mind.

So, are you willing to make that choice? What would living out that choice look like in your life? How is God leading you to change your thoughts and actions as you relate to others?

**Read Romans 15:1-2, 5-7**

We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord... May

God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.

Paul writes that we must build one another up in the Lord and accept each other just as Christ accepted us. How have other believers done this for you?

How are you helping build up other believers in the Lord and accepting them as Christ accepted you?

Verse five says that it is God who will help this happen as He gives patience and encouragement. How do you need God to support and guide you as you work toward harmony with other Christ followers?

Pray over the need you just wrote down. Ask God to transform the way you see others and give you the means to live in harmony with them.

Verse six tells us that this unifying work takes place so that we can praise and glorify God together. So take a moment to write down some praises to Him for the way that you've been built up by fellow believers and for the way you've seen God work to unify the Body of Christ.

Key verse

Continue working to memorize Romans 15:5. Attempt to write it out from memory.

Prayer time

Close this time of study in prayer. Thank God for what He's taught you during this year's focus on Romans. Ask Him to continue to guide and direct you as you seek Him. Ask Him to stretch and equip you as you strive for unity with your fellow believers.

PARENT GUIDE

We have learned some incredible truths during our journey through the book of Romans. It is so important to recognize the importance of *knowing* God's truth, *considering* it for ourselves, and then *surrendering* to God's plan for our lives. As parents this is a critical truth and process to pass on to our children. It can apply to every area of our lives.

This week you can practice this with your children by looking at a passage that deals with human relationships. Be sure that you have completed the Personal Study prior to sharing this with your children. Wrestling with these truths on a personal level will help you in communicating it clearly. Here are some questions to help get the conversation started.

What do you think it means to accept someone?

(A simple way of understanding the idea of accepting people is liking them.)

Who are some people in your life that you like?

(Visual aid: take a blank piece of paper and fold it in half. On one side of the fold make a list of the names your child shares with you. If your children struggle to answer, you can help them by directing their thoughts to school and who they typically hang out with at recess or during free time.)

Who are some people that you don't really like?

(If you are using the visual aid you can write these names on the other side of the fold line. Again, if your children struggle to answer you can direct them to the context of school and situations where they must deal with other students they typical don't choose to be around.)

As you think about the two groups of people you just listed, why is one group easier to get along with and the other more difficult to get along with?

(If you are using the visual aid, this is a perfect moment to hold it up and discuss the two lists.)

Read aloud Romans 14:1 & John 13:34-35.

What do you think these verses are trying to tell us?

(You are looking for a simple reaction to the verse here. Allow your child to think for themselves and tell you what they are hearing before you correct any misconceptions.)

How could these verses apply to the lists we have talked about?

(Be sure to draw attention to the word "accept" at the beginning of this verse. You may also want to clarify that Paul is talking about life choices when he says "don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong." This may not apply to educational situations where they are looking for the correct answer.)

Why is it hard for us to accept people? What are some ways you could try to be nicer to the people that you don't like very much?

(This is an awesome teaching moment. Allow your child to share what they think and why they struggle with this truth. This is also a great moment for you to share with them how you struggle with this truth and how dealing with people is a part of life. God wants us to accept and care for one another. That is not always an easy job, but we need to do our best.)

Finish this conversation by asking your child how you could pray for one another about these situations where acceptance is a difficult thing. Then take a moment to pray together.

Follow-Up: Be sure to check-in with your child throughout the week to see how these situations are progressing. Take advantage of these conversations and spend time praying with your child about both the good and bad of these situations.