THE BOOK OF

ROMANS
SIMPLIFIED

THE GOSPEL OF IDENTITY, FREEDOM,
AND UNSHAKABLE HOPE



SSENTABA RONALD

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The Gospel of Identity, Freedom, and Unshakable Hope

A chapter by chapter study of Paul’s letter

SSENTABA RONALD

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Study edition • Scripture references for reading in the NKJV

Dedication

To my beloved wife, Josephine, to our children and the grandchildren yet to come, and to the next generation of ministers of the Word: I dedicate this study with love and prayer.

May you dedicate yourselves to God day by day. May his Word shape your faith, your service, and your care for others. May we enjoy the life he gives here and, through Jesus Christ, the hope of eternal life beyond this present life.

To every young reader called to teach, preach, and live the gospel: receive the Scriptures with humility and pass them on faithfully.

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How to use this book

Read one chapter opening first. It names the setting, Paul's purpose, and the audience. The two doctrine discussions that follow explain central teachings of that chapter. Then read the assigned passages in your own NKJV Bible before the eight passage studies; you can complete one study each day or move at your own pace.

On every study page, begin with the literal sense: what the words and argument mean in their place in Romans. The interpretation paragraph connects that reading with the letter and other Scripture. The application section asks how the church and the next generation might respond. Write a brief answer to the reflection question. Let the question lead to prayer and a concrete act, not only an opinion.

For a group, let one person read the passage aloud, another summarize Paul's reasoning, and others test the proposed application against the text. When a note marks a disputed interpretation, compare the alternatives fairly before deciding what to teach. Return to the full letter often: a sentence from one chapter should not cancel the argument of the next.

The writing lines are intentional study space. Use them for observations, questions, prayers, or a plan to act. They are part of the book's teaching, not filler.

Introduction to the Letter to the Romans

Romans opens with a servant called to announce the gospel of God and closes with praise to the only wise God. Between those points, Paul leads the church from the universal problem of sin to the gift of righteousness in Christ, the Spirit's new life, the question of Israel, and the ordinary work of loving one another. This study follows that journey across all sixteen chapters. Each chapter has an opening that identifies context, purpose, and audience, followed by eight passage studies with room for reflection. The aim is to help readers read the letter itself, not to replace it.

The gospel announced in Romans concerns Jesus Christ, descended from David and declared Son of God in power by resurrection (1:1–4). The same gospel makes a people from the nations who respond with the obedience of faith (1:5; 16:26). Paul does not divide belief from life. A person justified by grace is invited into peace, a new allegiance, hope amid suffering, and love that can be seen in hospitality, generosity, and patient disagreement.

The letter asks questions that still confront the church. Can religious people judge others while tolerating their own sins? What does it mean for a guilty person to be declared righteous? How does the Holy Spirit help those who cannot overcome sin through resolve alone? Has God abandoned Israel? What should a Christian do when a fellow believer's conscience differs? What does submission to public authority require when an authority fails to do good? Romans invites careful thought and a lived answer.

This book retains the original study's five teaching movements: wrath, righteousness, victorious life, election and mercy, and kingdom living. They are teaching aids. Paul's argument does not stop at every chapter division or fit neatly into only five categories. Read the movements as a

map, then attend to the turns, questions, and quotations in the letter itself.

The subtitle names three threads to watch: identity as children of God by the Spirit (8:14–17), freedom from sin's mastery and condemnation (6:1–23; 8:1–4), and hope grounded in reconciliation and love that endures suffering (5:1–11; 8:18–39). In that sense Romans can serve as a survival guide for a generation facing anxiety, public shaming, comparison, and hopelessness. It gives theological truth, a praying community, and practices of mercy. It does not promise an instant cure or excuse harm; it teaches believers how to live truthfully while holding fast to Christ.

What the reader will find

Chapters 1–3 expose idolatry, hypocrisy, and the shared need of Jew and Gentile. The turning point in 3:21 announces righteousness through Christ. Chapter 4 places Abraham and David beside that announcement to show that faith receives a promise rather than earning wages. Chapter 5 unfolds peace, hope, reconciliation, and the contrast between Adam and Christ. Chapters 6–7 examine union with Christ, baptism, sin's former rule, and the law's inability to rescue a person whom sin has captured.

Chapter 8 is the great account of life in the Spirit: no condemnation in Christ, a mind turned toward life, adoption into God's family, groaning creation, the Spirit's intercession, and a love from which no trial can separate believers. Chapters 9–11 then address Paul's sorrow for Israel, the freedom of God's mercy, the invitation of the gospel, the grafting of Gentiles into an olive tree, and the warning against arrogance. The argument ends in praise, not in a license to despise the Jewish people.

Chapters 12–16 describe what mercy looks like when a church meets, serves, pays its dues, honors conscience, welcomes those who differ, supports mission, and remembers its workers by name. The last chapter is not an appendix of disposable greetings. Phoebe, Prisca, Aquila, Junia,

and many others show that doctrine travels through people and households.

The doctrinal guide that follows gives readers a foundation before the passage studies. It explains major terms and marks questions on which Christians interpret Paul differently. It gives special attention to the Holy Spirit and the church today. The guide should be read as an invitation to examine Scripture. Its brief comparisons with other writers are signposts for further study, not substitutes for the NKJV text.

Author, date, setting, and audience

The ancient author identifies himself as Paul, called as an apostle and set apart for the gospel (1:1). Near the close, Tertius says that he wrote the letter down (16:22), which is best understood as the work of a scribe or secretary, not a second author of the message. Phoebe is commended to the Roman believers (16:1–2) and may have carried the letter; the text does not explicitly state the means of delivery. Ssentaba Ronald is the author of this present study and the original teaching manuscript on which it builds, not the author of Paul's first-century letter.

Romans names its destination (1:7, 15) but gives neither a calendar date nor a place of composition in an ancient title page. Many scholars place it around AD 56–58, often about AD 57, near the close of Paul's work in the eastern Mediterranean. His intended travel toward Jerusalem, Rome, and Spain appears in 15:22–29. The reference to Phoebe of Cenchreae and greetings associated with Gaius and Erastus are often taken to suggest a Corinthian-area setting. These are historical inferences from clues, not a date and address Paul wrote explicitly.

Paul writes to believers in Rome whom he has not yet visited as a community (1:8–15). He addresses both Jews and Gentiles (1:16; 2:17; 11:13), and chapters 14–15 show differing practices over food and days. One cannot reconstruct every Roman house church or every dispute

with certainty. What the letter does reveal is a community called to receive one another as Christ has received them (15:7).

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Key verse, outline, and key terms

KEY VERSE: Romans 1:16–17. Paul announces the gospel as God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, Jew first and also Greek, and connects the revelation of God's righteousness with faith. Read these two verses in the NKJV. They state the thesis, but chapters 1–16 show what the thesis means for human need, the cross, the Spirit, Israel, and a shared life.

OUTLINE: 1:1–17 greeting and thesis; 1:18–3:20 the world's accountability; 3:21–4:25 God's righteousness and Abraham's faith; 5:1–8:39 peace and life in Christ by the Spirit; 9:1–11:36 Israel and God's mercy; 12:1–15:13 transformed communal life; 15:14–16:27 mission, greetings, warning, and praise. The original five teaching movements remain visible inside this fuller literary map.

GOSPEL means the good news concerning God's Son and his saving reign, death, and resurrection (1:1–4; 10:9). RIGHTEOUSNESS speaks of what is right in God's character and action and of the right standing given to believers; the exact force in particular verses must be decided by context. JUSTIFICATION names God's favorable verdict on those who trust Christ (3:24–26; 5:1). FAITH is trusting response to God's promise rather than an achievement that places God in debt (4:1–5).

LAW can mean the Mosaic Torah, a specific command, or a principle at work; compare 3:20, 7:7, and 8:2. FLESH in Romans 8 names a human orientation resistant to God, not a claim that the physical body is evil. GRACE is God's undeserved gift and a realm in which believers stand

(5:2). ADOPTION describes receiving the standing of children and heirs by the Spirit (8:14–17). ISRAEL must be read with attention to context in chapters 9–11; Paul does not use the term as a casual synonym for the church in every verse.

How to interpret Romans

Begin with the literal sense. Ask who speaks, to whom, about what, and why. Trace Paul's connective words such as therefore, but now, so then, and for. Notice the questions he raises and answers. In Romans 6:1, for example, he anticipates the false conclusion that grace invites continued sin. His immediate denial and the baptism argument determine the meaning; a quotation of the question without its answer would reverse his point.

Read the paragraph, the chapter, and the whole letter. The charge against wrongdoing in 1:18–32 is followed by the challenge to the judging person in 2:1. Romans 7's cry for rescue leads into Romans 8. Romans 9's severe language is followed by the invitation of chapter 10 and the warning to Gentiles in chapter 11. Romans 12 begins with therefore because mercy has already been explained. Chapter boundaries help navigation but are later divisions.

Attend to genre. Romans is a real letter containing greeting, thanksgiving, argument, scriptural exposition, exhortation, travel plans, and greetings. It uses dialogue with an imagined questioner, strong contrasts, metaphor, and chains of Old Testament quotations. The speaker's first-person "I" need not have the same rhetorical role in every paragraph. A figure of speech should be interpreted by what it does in the argument before it is pressed into a complete system.

Read Paul's quotations in their earlier setting. Genesis 15, Habakkuk 2, Psalms, Isaiah, Hosea, and Deuteronomy are not isolated phrases invented for Romans. Ask how the earlier passage speaks in its own book and how Paul brings it to bear on Christ and the nations. Compare

Scripture with Scripture while respecting differences in audience and covenant setting. A cross reference is evidence to examine, not a shortcut around the passage at hand.

Interpretive questions and responsible application

After observation comes theological interpretation: what does the passage teach about God, humanity, Christ, the Spirit, salvation, Israel, and the church? Then comes application: what faithful action follows here and now? A modern parallel is helpful when it preserves the original point. It becomes dangerous when a teacher uses Paul's words to answer a modern question he did not raise without explaining the steps between the two.

Some interpretations are debated. In 3:22, interpreters discuss whether a phrase emphasizes faith in Jesus or the faithfulness of Jesus. In 5:12–21, traditions differ on inherited sin and the reach of Christ's gift. In 7:7–25, the identity of the anguished "I" is disputed. In 9–11, Christians differ over election and "all Israel." In 16:7, Junia's description has prompted discussion about the word apostle. The reader should learn what the text clearly says, why more than one reading is offered, and what each reading must still explain.

A responsible interpreter distinguishes observation, inference, doctrine, and illustration. Paul explicitly says that the Spirit helps in weakness (8:26). A teacher may infer ways this assistance appears in prayer, but must not present every private impression as an equally explicit promise. The Trinity is consistent with Paul's naming of God, Christ, and the Spirit (notably 8:9–17), yet Romans is not a later creed laid out in formal terms. Teach the theological synthesis while showing the actual textual steps.

Application must serve love and truth together. Romans 13 does not make an abusive ruler righteous. Romans 12's refusal of revenge does not forbid protection of a victim. Romans 14's tolerance on disputed

food and days does not require silence about exploitation. Read difficult texts with those who might be harmed by a careless use of them, and ask whether a proposed application agrees with the gospel's welcome and the command to love a neighbor.

How earlier readers valued Romans

The images "cathedral," "constitution," "greatest book," "Magna Carta," and "key" can help a teacher invite attention to Romans. They should not be printed as verbatim titles coined by Luther, Hodge, Calvin, or Augustine without evidence. In this study they are teaching metaphors, while the historical claims below are anchored in the writers' surviving texts. Paul's own theme remains the primary guide: in the gospel God's righteousness is revealed, and the message is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16–17).

MARTIN LUTHER AND THE PURE GOSPEL. In his Preface to Romans, Luther described the letter as the chief part of the New Testament and the purest gospel, urging repeated reading as daily nourishment. "Cathedral of Christian faith" may be a memorable image, but it is not a verified Luther quotation. The reliable lesson from his preface is that readers should learn the meanings of law, sin, grace, faith, righteousness, and flesh before lifting out a favorite phrase. Luther's concern was not simply that Romans supplies correct answers; the gospel releases the conscience from the attempt to purchase a righteous standing through works.

For a generation weary of religious performance, Romans 3:21–26 and 4:4–5 teach that justification is gift, not wage. Yet relief from earning must not become refusal to obey. Romans 6 asks how those joined to Christ can continue under sin's mastery, and Romans 12 turns mercy into worship in the body. Luther's gospel emphasis helps us receive grace; Paul's full letter helps us see the life that grace forms.

JOHN CALVIN AND A ROAD INTO SCRIPTURE. In the dedication of his Commentary on Romans, Calvin wrote that understanding this epistle opens a passage toward understanding the whole Scripture. “The greatest book in the New Testament” is a modern summary of esteem, not a verified sentence to put in his mouth. His point invites a disciplined reading of Paul’s argument and its Old Testament quotations. Romans opens Genesis, Psalms, Habakkuk, Isaiah, Hosea, and Deuteronomy to the Christian reader; it does not make those books unnecessary.

For young readers surrounded by competing opinions, this is a method as well as a claim: read context, compare Scripture, distinguish a writer’s words from a later inference, and let a passage challenge one’s preferred slogan. Truth does not become less firm when a teacher admits a disputed interpretation; careful reading makes conviction more accountable.

Doctrine, liberty, and the transforming Word

CHARLES HODGE AND THE ORDER OF DOCTRINE. Hodge wrote a sustained Commentary on Romans and treated justification and sanctification extensively in his Systematic Theology. His reading of Romans 8 insists that a justified person is more than one who has merely received a legal pardon: life in the Spirit also matters. The phrase “constitution of Christianity” is a useful modern metaphor for the letter’s ordered account of sin, salvation, and life, but it is not presented here as Hodge’s own title. Romans is a letter to real churches rather than a legal constitution; its doctrines have a pastoral destination.

A church can use the metaphor well by asking what belongs together: the indictment of sin (1–3), justification by faith (3–5), liberation and Spirit-formed life (6–8), God’s mercy toward Israel and the nations (9–11), and love expressed in worship and welcome (12–16). Identity, purpose, and cultural conflict are not answered by a partisan slogan.

They are examined in light of the one God, the crucified and risen Christ, the Spirit's work, and the neighbor whom one is commanded to love.

THE "MAGNA CARTA" IMAGE. The phrase "Magna Carta of Christian liberty" is often applied to Galatians. This book does not attribute it to unidentified Reformers as an established title for Romans. Nevertheless, Romans 6–8 gives a profound account of freedom: from sin's domination, from condemnation in Christ, from the futile attempt to make the good law itself a savior, and from slavery to fear through the Spirit of adoption. This is freedom for service, not permission to ignore another person.

For younger readers under comparison, performance pressure, and fear of public rejection, the distinction matters. A social verdict can be painful and sometimes unjust; Romans 8:1 speaks specifically of God's verdict in Christ, not a guarantee of universal approval. The Spirit's witness of adoption is a stronger basis for belonging than an audience's changing reaction. The church should also refuse the shaming practices that make its own members feel that one disclosed failure is their whole identity.

A teaching metaphor is fruitful only when it leads back to Paul's words. Put the dramatic label aside after it has opened the door; let chapters 6–8 define the kind of freedom Paul actually proclaims.

Augustine, righteousness, and our generation

AUGUSTINE AND THE TURN TOWARD CHRIST. In Confessions VIII.12, Augustine recounts hearing a childlike call to take up and read, opening Paul's letter, and reading Romans 13:13–14. He describes the end of a long inner struggle and the removal of doubt. "The key to the Bible" is not a verified title Augustine gave Romans. His account does show how a biblical text, read within a long search for God, can confront a divided will and invite a concrete turning toward Christ.

In On the Spirit and the Letter, Augustine reasons that a holy command reveals what should be done but that the Spirit of grace aids the will to do it. This resonates with Romans 7–8: knowledge of the command does not itself free the captive person; God's action in Christ and the Spirit opens a new life. Augustine's story is not a rule that every conversion must be sudden or emotionally identical. It teaches that understanding can become obedience when grace addresses the heart, desire, and action.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED. Paul's thesis in Romans 1:16–17 is more secure than any later nickname. In a world that often feels unjust, the righteousness of God says that evil is neither ignored nor granted the final word. Romans 3:21–26 connects God's justice with the gift in Christ; Romans 5 announces peace and hope; Romans 8 looks toward creation's liberation; Romans 12 calls the church to embody mercy and refuse revenge. Hope in God's righteousness should make a congregation more truthful about injustice now, not less attentive to it.

Theos Transforming Ministries' vision can be taught from this movement: transformation is the Spirit's renewing work in people who belong to Christ, expressed in a renewed mind and a living sacrifice (Romans 8:9–17; 12:1–2). It is more than receiving information and more than presenting an impressive outward image. It includes repentance, changed loyalties, care for the neighbor, and patient hope. The chapter expositions return to these themes where Paul develops them.

Why read and study Romans

Read Romans because it names the human problem honestly without making failure the last word. It reveals the God who acts justly and mercifully in Jesus Christ, calls people to trust a promise, and gives the Spirit for a new way of life. It makes room for sorrow and questions: Paul grieves for Israel, admits the weakness of prayer, and places

present suffering beside future hope. Readers need not pretend that a difficult verse is easy in order to learn from it.

Read it for the church. Romans challenges ethnic pride, religious hypocrisy, leader-centered boasting, careless liberty, and vengeance. It gives language for peace with God, adoption, prayer, hospitality, public responsibility, and mutual welcome. It calls believers to honor the Hebrew Scriptures and to refuse contempt toward Jewish people. Its ending reminds us that a doctrine that cannot recognize co-workers by name has not yet reached its full pastoral shape.

Read it for the coming generation. Young Christians need more than isolated quotations used to win an argument. They need to see how a writer asks a question, reasons with Scripture, answers an objection, admits a mystery, and turns mercy into action. This book offers a path through those steps. The reflection spaces invite readers to record an observation, a question, and a practice that can be tested in community.

Begin now with Romans 1:1–17 in your NKJV Bible. Note who Paul is, whose gospel he announces, whom it reaches, and why he is eager to preach in Rome. Then keep reading. The letter will ask you to relinquish boasting and to receive a gift. It will also ask how the gift will be seen in your treatment of other people.

CHAPTER 1

The gospel and the human condition

Context Paul introduces himself to Christians in Rome, a community he has not yet visited. His opening names Jesus as the promised Son and explains his desire for mutual encouragement and mission. The chapter moves from the righteousness disclosed in the gospel to the wrath revealed against human suppression of truth.

Purpose and audience Paul writes to a mixed Jewish and Gentile audience. He wants the Roman believers to understand his gospel and support his westward mission, while learning to live as one people in Christ.

Read the chapter Romans 1:1–31 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening introduces the whole letter and how its ending prepares chapter 2.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter's teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of the gospel and the human condition serves Paul's gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 1:1-4 A servant before an apostle

Romans 1:5-7 The obedience of faith

Romans 1:8-15 A ready messenger

Romans 1:16-17 The power of the gospel

Romans 1:18-23 Truth exchanged

Romans 1:24-27 Desire and judgment

Romans 1:28-31 A communal catalogue

Romans 1:32–2:1 The turn toward the judge

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The gospel and the righteousness of God

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans begins with good news “concerning His Son” (1:3, NKJV reference), promised beforehand in Scripture. The gospel is an announcement of what God has done in Jesus Christ, not a set of private techniques by which people rescue themselves. Paul is unashamed because the gospel is God’s power for salvation to all who believe (1:16). Its breadth is astonishing: Jew first and also Greek. The order honors the historical place of Israel without restricting God’s mercy to one people.

The phrase “righteousness of God” in 1:17 and 3:21–26 has provoked much study. It may direct attention to God’s own righteous character and saving action, the right standing he gives, or a rich relationship among these ideas. Paul’s argument does not require us to choose a slogan before following him. God is righteous in dealing with sin and in justifying the believer through Christ. The law and prophets witness to the disclosure that comes “but now” (3:21).

Faith is the means of reception. Romans 4 uses Abraham to show that trust in a divine promise precedes circumcision and cannot be converted into wages. Faith is not a heroic work that makes God indebted to us. It receives the crucified and risen Christ. The obedience of faith at the beginning and end of the letter (1:5; 16:26) also shows that

believing is never meant to be a verbal claim without a changed allegiance.

For the church, the doctrine corrects both pride and despair. No culture, rite, ancestry, or ministry record is the foundation of salvation. A person who knows failure can hear an invitation grounded in Christ's work. A congregation that has received that gift should make its teaching intelligible to outsiders and its common life hospitable to people it once kept at a distance.

A helpful reading exercise is to trace the words gospel, salvation, righteousness, and faith from 1:16–17 through 3:21–31 and then to 10:9–17. Write down what each term adds. The point of the exercise is to see an argument grow. Paul's opening thesis is not exhausted by a dictionary definition, and the later call to confess the risen Lord does not replace the earlier explanation of the cross. The gospel's power belongs to God, while its announcement is entrusted to human messengers.

How the gospel shapes mission

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Paul's gospel produces a mission that is humble and public. He owes a debt to people of different cultures (1:14–15), longs for mutual encouragement with believers he has not met (1:11–12), and hopes for support in traveling toward Spain (15:24). Mission is not the display of a superior personality. It is the sharing of a message and of life, prayer, resources, and encouragement. The Roman Christians are participants, not an audience for Paul's achievement.

A teacher can trace the gospel from promise to fulfillment: God spoke through the prophets; the Son came in David's line; resurrection marks his powerful vindication; grace calls people among the nations; faith yields obedience. This movement helps readers avoid reducing Romans to one courtroom image or one conversion formula. Legal language is

significant, but Paul also speaks of family, slavery and freedom, sacrifice, body, and grafting. Each image does particular work.

Douglas Moo's teaching on Romans emphasizes passage-by-passage meaning in ancient and present settings. N. T. Wright's public teaching highlights the Hebrew Scriptures and the story of Israel within Paul's account. These emphases can sharpen questions as we read, but the deciding evidence in this study is the argument of Romans itself. The reader can compare works listed in the references without assuming that any one writer resolves every debated text.

Ask whether a church's evangelism announces Christ's death and resurrection, calls for faith, honors Israel's scriptural story, and makes room for actual discipleship. Let younger believers see that the power belongs to God, while their readiness, truthful speech, and patient service matter. Read Romans 1:1–17 and 15:14–33 together before drafting a mission plan.

The word "first" in "Jew first" must not be converted into a permanent ranking of human worth. Paul later asks whether God is the God of Jews only and answers that God is also God of Gentiles (3:29–30). At the same time, a universal gospel must not erase the particular promises through Israel. Keep both claims before the group. Ask how your church can honor the story through which the gospel came and still speak with equal welcome to every person who hears it.

Study 1 A servant before an apostle

READ • ROMANS 1:1-4 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward the obedience of faith. Read Romans 1:1-4 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's identity begins with belonging to Jesus.

Interpretation in Scripture His calling to apostleship serves the gospel promised in Israel's Scriptures and centered on the risen Son. The title describes a commission, not a ladder of personal prestige. Compare Acts 9:1–22 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 1:1-4.

Apply it today Test whether a ministry title makes service clearer or makes a leader less accountable. Invite younger believers to measure calling by faithfulness to Christ.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a servant before an apostle in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 1:1-4, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 The obedience of faith

READ • ROMANS 1:5-7 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a servant before an apostle toward a ready messenger. Read Romans 1:5-7 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Grace and apostleship have a goal among the nations: the obedience that flows from faith.

Interpretation in Scripture The believers in Rome are loved and called; their holiness is a received vocation rather than a badge of superiority. Compare Genesis 12:1–3 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 1:5-7.

Apply it today Ask how trust in Christ changes a concrete habit this week. Teach the next generation that belonging precedes boasting.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the obedience of faith in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 1:5-7, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 A ready messenger

READ • ROMANS 1:8-15 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the obedience of faith toward the power of the gospel. Read Romans 1:8-15 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul thanks God for the Roman Christians, prays for a visit, and seeks mutual encouragement.

Interpretation in Scripture His language of obligation to Greeks and non-Greeks explains his eagerness to preach, even where he did not plant the church. Compare Philippians 1:3–11 in its own setting. Notice

how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 1:8-15.

Apply it today Pray for a church beyond your own and name one gift you can receive from it. Mission involves listening as well as speaking.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a ready messenger in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 1:8-15, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 4 The power of the gospel

READ • ROMANS 1:16-17 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a ready messenger toward truth exchanged. Read Romans 1:16-17 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The gospel is God's effective announcement of salvation to everyone who believes, Jew first and also Greek.

Interpretation in Scripture The quotation of Habakkuk 2:4 connects righteousness and faith. Paul will spend the letter unfolding that compact thesis. Compare Habakkuk 2:4 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 1:16-17.

Apply it today Speak the good news without shame, while resisting any claim that confidence permits contempt for those who disagree.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the power of the gospel in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 1:16-17, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 5 Truth exchanged

READ • ROMANS 1:18-23 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the power of the gospel toward desire and judgment. Read Romans 1:18-23 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Wrath answers humanity's refusal to honor the Creator despite the witness of creation.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul's argument concerns distorted worship, gratitude, and the exchange of God's glory for images; it begins an indictment that reaches every human group in chapter 3. Compare Psalm 19:1–6 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 1:18-23.

Apply it today Examine what receives the attention and loyalty owed to God. Do not use this passage as permission to humiliate another person.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach truth exchanged in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 1:18-23, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 Desire and judgment

READ • ROMANS 1:24-27 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from truth exchanged toward a communal catalogue. Read Romans 1:24-27 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The repeated phrase that God gave people over depicts judgment as the consequences of rejected worship.

Interpretation in Scripture These verses have been read differently in contemporary sexual ethics; the immediate argument is about idolatry, human desire, and a world disordered by sin. Compare Genesis 1:26–27 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 1:24-27.

Apply it today Discuss contested moral questions with textual care, humility, and the dignity owed to every person. Keep reading through 2:1 before accusing others.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach desire and judgment in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 1:24-27, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 7 A communal catalogue

READ • ROMANS 1:28-31 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from desire and judgment toward the turn toward the judge. Read Romans 1:28-31 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The catalogue includes envy, violence, deceit, gossip, arrogance, and disobedience to parents.

Interpretation in Scripture The breadth prevents readers from isolating one offense while excusing socially familiar sins in their own congregation. Compare James 3:5–12 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 1:28-31.

Apply it today Conduct a truthful community examination: where do gossip and arrogance wound relationships? Create a practice of confession and repair.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a communal catalogue in a congregation with people of different ages and

backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 1:28-31, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 8 The turn toward the judge

READ • ROMANS 1:32–2:1 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a communal catalogue toward the next chapter. Read Romans 1:32–2:1 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The final verse condemns approval of evil, then Paul's therefore turns the charge upon the one who judges.

Interpretation in Scripture The literary movement matters: the reader who applauds the indictment may discover a mirror in the next sentence. Compare Luke 18:9–14 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 1:32–2:1.

Apply it today Before teaching chapter 1 publicly, read chapter 2 aloud. Model moral seriousness joined to self-examination and mercy.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the turn toward the judge in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 1:32–2:1, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 2

Judgment, repentance, and the heart

Context The address to the judging person extends the indictment. God judges impartially, while religious knowledge without obedience does not shield anyone. Paul turns to circumcision to question confidence in outward signs apart from the heart.

Purpose and audience The interlocutor is not merely someone else. Both Jewish and Gentile hearers must face God's truthful judgment and the call to repentance.

Read the chapter Romans 2:1–29 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter's teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of judgment, repentance, and the heart serves Paul's gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 2:1-3 The judging person
Romans 2:4-5 Kindness leads to repentance
Romans 2:6-11 Judgment without favoritism
Romans 2:12-16 Conscience and the law
Romans 2:17-20 The teacher's confidence
Romans 2:21-24 Teach yourself
Romans 2:25-27 The sign and obedience
Romans 2:28-29 The heart and the Spirit

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The doctrine of impartial judgment

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 2 begins with the person who judges another. Paul's "therefore" reaches back to the indictment of chapter 1 and turns it toward the hearer who feels safe while condemning others. His purpose is not to abolish every moral judgment. It is to expose the contradiction of judging another for conduct one also practices. God's judgment is according to truth, not reputation, public position, or membership in a religious community (2:1–3).

God's kindness, patience, and forbearance aim at repentance (2:4). Patience is a real gift of time, not proof that wrongdoing does not matter. The person who hardens the heart stores up judgment rather than receiving the invitation. A church must hold both realities together: God does not ignore harm, and God's goodness calls the wrongdoer to turn. The possibility of repentance must never be used to deny safety or justice to someone already harmed.

Paul says that God shows no partiality (2:11). Those with the law and those without it are accountable in different ways, and conscience can bear witness (2:12–16). The possession of Scripture is valuable but cannot function as immunity from obedience. Read this beside 3:20–26: deeds are taken seriously in divine judgment, while sinners cannot

establish a justifying claim by works. The later announcement of grace is the answer to the need Paul has made visible.

A church can practice impartiality by applying standards consistently to leaders and members, wealthy and poor, old and young. Before inviting a public confession, establish protection for vulnerable people and a fair process of truth-telling. For the next generation, the lesson is that knowledge increases responsibility. No gifted teacher can preach about another person's sin while treating the same conduct in private life as harmless.

The doctrine of inward covenant faithfulness

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 2:17–29 addresses confidence in possessing the law and bearing the sign of circumcision. Paul asks the instructor to teach himself first. When conduct contradicts proclamation, God's name is dishonored among the nations (2:21–24). This does not mean Israel received no gift; chapter 3 begins by affirming the advantage of being entrusted with God's oracles. It means a gift can be mishandled when it becomes a substitute for faithfulness.

Circumcision was a covenant sign in Israel's history. Paul argues that an outward mark cannot cover a disobedient heart. His language of the heart and Spirit echoes Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6 and anticipates the Spirit's work in Romans 8. A Christian should not use this to caricature Judaism as a religion concerned only with externals. Israel's Scriptures themselves call for inward love and obedience.

The church has its own outward signs: baptism, membership, office, and a reputation for spiritual gifts. These are important in their proper place, but none grants permission to deceive, exploit, or neglect a neighbor. Romans 2 asks teachers to compare the public message with ordinary conduct. The divine praise Paul commends is different from applause secured by a visible title.

A practical exercise is to ask a leadership group how accountability operates when a respected person is accused of wrongdoing. Is the process as careful and fair as it would be for an unknown member? Ask younger ministers to practice confession and correction before taking a platform. The doctrine of inward faithfulness calls a person to become in private what they commend in public.

Study 1 The judging person

READ • ROMANS 2:1-3 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward kindness leads to repentance. Read Romans 2:1-3 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's therefore makes the censor of chapter 1 answer for similar conduct.

Interpretation in Scripture He does not forbid discernment; he refuses a double standard. The rhetorical 'you' presses every reader to examine conduct before issuing verdicts. Compare Matthew 7:1–5 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 2:1-3.

Apply it today Where has a church disciplined an outsider for behavior tolerated in its leaders? Make accountability consistent.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the judging person in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 2:1-3, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 Kindness leads to repentance

READ • ROMANS 2:4-5 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the judging person toward judgment without favoritism. Read Romans 2:4-5 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense God's patience is neither indifference nor approval.

Interpretation in Scripture Its purpose is to lead a resistant person to repentance. Hardness of heart turns the gift of time into an occasion for further rebellion. Compare 2 Peter 3:9 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 2:4-5.

Apply it today Offer a concrete path to confession and restoration. Teach young people that grace invites change without being purchased by it.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach kindness leads to repentance in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 2:4-5, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 Judgment without favoritism

READ • ROMANS 2:6-11 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from kindness leads to repentance toward conscience and the law. Read Romans 2:6-11 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul describes judgment according to deeds and insists that God shows no partiality.

Interpretation in Scripture Read this with the letter's full argument: works expose a life, while chapters 3–4 deny that sinners establish righteousness by merit. Compare Psalm 62:12 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 2:6-11.

Apply it today Reject favoritism by wealth, ethnicity, family, or office. Let a congregation's decisions demonstrate the impartiality it preaches.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach judgment without favoritism in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 2:6-11, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 Conscience and the law

READ • ROMANS 2:12-16 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from judgment without favoritism toward the teacher's confidence. Read Romans 2:12-16 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Those with the written law and those without it are each accountable.

Interpretation in Scripture Conscience can bear witness but is not an infallible private revelation; Paul places its accusations and defenses under God's final judgment through Christ. Compare Acts 17:22–31 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 2:12-16.

Apply it today Listen carefully to conscience, then test it against Scripture and wise counsel. Do not assume an uninstructed person is beyond God's concern.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach conscience and the law in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 2:12-16, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 The teacher's confidence

READ • ROMANS 2:17-20 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from conscience and the law toward teach yourself. Read Romans 2:17-20 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense A speaker proud of possessing the law calls himself a guide and instructor.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul does not mock Israel's gift of revelation; he asks whether privilege has been turned into presumption. Compare James 3:1 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 2:17-20.

Apply it today Teachers should welcome questions and independent scrutiny. Position and training increase responsibility.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the teacher's confidence in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 2:17-20, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 Teach yourself

READ • ROMANS 2:21-24 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the teacher's confidence toward the sign and obedience. Read Romans 2:21-24 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The questions expose the gap between public instruction and private conduct.

Interpretation in Scripture The cited prophetic charge that God's name is dishonored among nations shows that hypocrisy damages witness. Compare Isaiah 52:5 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 2:21-24.

Apply it today Audit finances, speech, and care of vulnerable members before designing another campaign about reputation.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach teach yourself in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 2:21-24, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 The sign and obedience

READ • ROMANS 2:25-27 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from teach yourself toward the heart and the spirit. Read Romans 2:25-27 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Circumcision is a covenant sign, but an outward mark cannot substitute for obedience.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul's contrast challenges the use of any visible badge as a guarantee of faithful life. Compare Deuteronomy 10:16 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 2:25-27.

Apply it today Baptism, membership, and ministry credentials call for discipleship; they cannot hide injustice.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the sign and obedience in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 2:25-27, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 The heart and the Spirit

READ • ROMANS 2:28-29 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the sign and obedience toward the next chapter. Read Romans 2:28-29 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul speaks of an inward work of the Spirit and praise from God rather than people.

Interpretation in Scripture His heart language echoes Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6 and anticipates the Spirit's renewing work in Romans 8. Compare Deuteronomy 30:6 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 2:28-29.

Apply it today Pray for inward integrity. Form future leaders whose unseen life agrees with their public words.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the heart and the spirit in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 2:28-29, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 3

All under sin and righteousness as gift

Context Paul answers objections about Israel's privilege, gathers scriptural testimony to universal sin, and announces God's righteousness through the faithfulness and death of Jesus Christ. The movement from 3:20 to 3:21 is a hinge in the letter.

Purpose and audience Jew and Gentile stand on equal need and are invited to receive the same grace. Paul preserves the value of the law as witness while denying its power to justify sinners.

Read the chapter Romans 3:1–31 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter’s teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of all under sin and righteousness as gift serves Paul’s gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 3:1-4 The advantage of Israel

Romans 3:5-8 Can evil serve God?

Romans 3:9-18 A chorus of Scriptures

Romans 3:19-20 Every mouth stopped

Romans 3:21-22 But now

Romans 3:23-26 The cross and justice

Romans 3:27-30 Boasting excluded

Romans 3:31 Faith and the law

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

Justification, faith, and peace

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Justification describes God's favorable verdict on sinners through the redemption in Christ Jesus (3:24–26). Paul insists that all have sinned and that boasting is excluded. The gift is received through faith, so no person can present a résumé of observance as a claim against God. The cross displays divine justice and mercy together. Christian traditions differ over precisely how to describe atonement, imputation, and the relation of faith to works; the controlling text is Paul's account of God acting in Christ for those who could not establish their own righteousness.

Abraham provides Paul's scriptural case. Genesis 15:6 speaks of belief counted as righteousness before the covenant sign of circumcision in Genesis 17. David's blessing in Psalm 32 concerns forgiven sins. These examples show why the promise can embrace believers from the nations without making Israel's Scripture irrelevant. The same God who made the promise raised Jesus from the dead (4:23–25).

Romans 5:1–2 draws out the result: peace with God, access into grace, and hope of glory. Peace is the objective reconciliation God grants through Christ. A believer may still feel fear or depression, and a person may still face conflict and persecution. Paul does not equate a passing

feeling of calm with the whole promise. The Spirit pours God's love into hearts amid hardship (5:3–5), while the church is called to accompany those who suffer.

Justification is thus good news for the guilty and a rebuke to the self-righteous. Its pastoral force is lost if teachers use the doctrine merely to win disputes. Tell a repentant person why Christ, not a perfect past, is the ground of welcome. Tell the respected leader why no office places them above accountability.

A practical way to teach justification is to distinguish three questions. On what basis does God welcome a sinner? Paul answers with Christ's work, not human merit. How is the gift received? He repeatedly speaks of faith. What kind of life follows? Chapters 6, 8, and 12 describe new allegiance and embodied worship. The questions belong together, but each has a distinct answer. Confusing them can make obedience either a purchase price or an optional decoration.

The law and the gift of righteousness

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Paul asks whether faith makes the law void and answers no (3:31). The law witnesses to God's righteousness, discloses sin, and contains commands that teach love of neighbor. Yet the law cannot justify sinners by their performance (3:20) or free a captive person from sin's misuse of a good command (7:7–13). Read each occurrence of "law" carefully, since Paul can mean the Torah, a particular command, or a governing principle.

Romans 7 insists that the law is holy, righteous, and good. Sin seizes an opportunity through the command; the fault lies in sin. Those who belong to the risen Christ serve in the new way of the Spirit (7:4–6). Romans 8:3–4 then says that God has done what law could not accomplish through human weakness, so the law's righteous intention

can be fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit. Grace is not contempt for the Hebrew Scriptures.

The expression “works of law” is interpreted differently in scholarly discussions. Some emphasize human attempts to earn a verdict, while others emphasize boundary markers that distinguish Jews and Gentiles. Romans gives reason to take both the problem of boasting and the unity of Jew and Gentile seriously. We should avoid telling readers that Judaism as a whole taught crude self-salvation; Paul’s argument is more specific and his own love for Israel is unmistakable.

In practice, teach commands after and in light of grace. A church needs standards of truth, justice, sexuality, stewardship, and care, but these are not receipts that purchase God’s acceptance. Invite people to examine how Christ and the Spirit enable a love that does no harm to a neighbor (13:8–10).

The Sabbath, food laws, and circumcision can carry meanings of covenant identity as well as personal obedience. Paul’s treatment of Abraham before circumcision and of different practices in Romans 14 helps a mixed church ask who may belong at one table. Read these passages before importing a modern debate into a verse. A teacher should make clear when a claim follows directly from Paul’s wording and when it reflects a later tradition’s synthesis of multiple passages.

Study 1 The advantage of Israel

READ • ROMANS 3:1-4 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward can evil serve god?. Read Romans 3:1-4 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul answers that Israel was entrusted with God's oracles.

Interpretation in Scripture Human unfaithfulness does not cancel God's faithfulness. The argument must not be flattened into the claim

that Israel's history had no purpose. Compare Psalm 51:4 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 3:1-4.

Apply it today Receive inherited religious teaching with gratitude, while acknowledging failures in the community that carries it.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the advantage of israel in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 3:1-4, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 Can evil serve God?

READ • ROMANS 3:5-8 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the advantage of israel toward a chorus of scriptures. Read Romans 3:5-8 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul rejects the twisted inference that human wrongdoing becomes acceptable because God can bring good from it.

Interpretation in Scripture Divine faithfulness never authorizes deliberate injustice. Compare James 1:13–15 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 3:5-8.

Apply it today Refuse the defense that a ministry's positive outcomes excuse manipulation or abuse.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach can evil serve god? in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 3:5-8, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 A chorus of Scriptures

READ • ROMANS 3:9-18 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from can evil serve god? toward every mouth stopped. Read Romans 3:9-18 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul strings together Psalms and prophetic language to depict the reach of sin in speech, action, and worship.

Interpretation in Scripture The catena functions as an indictment of humanity, not a description that every person commits every offense equally. Compare Psalm 14:1–3 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 3:9-18.

Apply it today Read the quotations in their Old Testament settings and ask how speech reveals the moral life of a congregation.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a chorus of scriptures in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 3:9-18, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 Every mouth stopped

READ • ROMANS 3:19-20 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a chorus of scriptures toward but now. Read Romans 3:19-20 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The law addresses those under it so the whole world recognizes accountability.

Interpretation in Scripture No flesh will be justified by works of law; law brings knowledge of sin. Its diagnostic role is distinct from a cure. Compare Galatians 3:21–24 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 3:19-20.

Apply it today Stop treating rule keeping as a receipt proving that God owes salvation. Let conviction lead to Christ.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach every mouth stopped in a congregation with people of different ages and

backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 3:19-20, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 5 But now

READ • ROMANS 3:21-22 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from every mouth stopped toward the cross and justice. Read Romans 3:21-22 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense God's righteousness is manifested apart from the law yet attested by Law and Prophets.

Interpretation in Scripture The phrase concerning faith in or faithfulness of Jesus is debated; both readings direct attention to Christ and the believing response described in the passage. Compare Isaiah 53:1–12 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 3:21-22.

Apply it today Teach the gospel as an act of God in Christ that calls for faith, not a technique for self-improvement.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach but now in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 3:21-22, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 6 The cross and justice

READ • ROMANS 3:23-26 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from but now toward boasting excluded. Read Romans 3:23-26 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense All have sinned and fall short, and justification comes as a gift through redemption in Christ.

Interpretation in Scripture The term often translated propitiation or atoning sacrifice evokes God's provision at the cross; traditions differ on how to describe wrath and mercy here. Compare Leviticus 16:1–34 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 3:23-26.

Apply it today Proclaim forgiveness without minimizing the harm of sin. Offer restoration to victims alongside a call for offenders to repent.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the cross and justice in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 3:23-26, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 Boasting excluded

READ • ROMANS 3:27-30 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the cross and justice toward faith and the law. Read Romans 3:27-30 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense A single God justifies circumcised and uncircumcised people through faith.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul removes the grounds for ethnic and religious boasting while refusing to deny God's covenant history. Compare Deuteronomy 6:4 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 3:27-30.

Apply it today Build shared worship across social divides; do not require new believers to adopt one culture's customs as salvation's price.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach boasting excluded in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 3:27-30, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Faith and the law

READ • ROMANS 3:31 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from boasting excluded toward the next chapter. Read Romans 3:31 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's answer to whether faith nullifies the law is an emphatic no.

Interpretation in Scripture The law witnesses to the promise and exposes need, even as its place within Christ's new covenant must be worked out across chapters 4–8. Compare Matthew 5:17–20 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 3:31.

Apply it today Avoid slogans about 'no law' or 'only rules.' Ask what the command reveals about love of God and neighbor.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach faith and the law in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 3:31, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 4

Abraham, David, and the promise

Context The patriarch's story comes before Sinai and before circumcision. Paul reads Genesis 15 and Psalm 32 to argue that righteousness is credited through faith and that Abraham can be father of believing Jews and Gentiles.

Purpose and audience Believers tempted to rely on ancestry or observance hear that God's promise creates one family. The issue is the basis of belonging, not the erasure of Israel's story.

Read the chapter Romans 4:1–25 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter’s teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of abraham, david, and the promise serves Paul’s gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 4:1-3 Abraham believed

Romans 4:4-5 Wage or gift

Romans 4:6-8 David's blessing

Romans 4:9-12 Before the sign

Romans 4:13-15 Promise and law

Romans 4:16-17 Grace for the whole family

Romans 4:18-22 Hope against hope

Romans 4:23-25 Written also for us

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The doctrine of faith receiving the promise

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Paul turns to Abraham in Romans 4 because his story is foundational for the question of belonging to God. Genesis 15:6 places Abraham's trust in God's promise before the covenant sign of circumcision in Genesis 17. Paul's wage-and-gift comparison (4:4–5) clarifies the point: faith is not a religious performance that earns a salary from God. It is reliance on the God who speaks and acts for the undeserving.

Abraham's trust was not blindness to his situation. Paul says that he faced the weakness of his body and Sarah's barrenness while holding to the promised giver of life (4:18–22). Faith takes the circumstances seriously and entrusts their outcome to God. This passage should not be used to blame a couple for infertility or a patient for an illness that persists. Paul is explaining a particular promise in Abraham's story, not guaranteeing that every desired outcome will arrive on a reader's timetable.

David's words from Psalm 32 add the blessing of forgiveness (4:6–8). Abraham and David together show that the counted righteousness Paul describes is a gift amid real human need. The account is written also for those who believe in the God who raised Jesus (4:23–25). The

resurrection is not an afterthought to the cross; it marks God's vindication of the Son and grounds the believer's hope.

The doctrine helps a church welcome a person before their history has been made respectable. It also gives believers a reason to act: one who trusts a promise can leave boasting behind, worship honestly, and take a step of obedience. Invite younger readers to distinguish trust from denial and grace from entitlement.

The doctrine of one family across boundaries

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

The timing of Abraham's faith matters. He was counted righteous before circumcision, so Paul can call him father both of uncircumcised believers and of circumcised believers who walk in the same faith (4:9–12). The doctrine is about more than a private conversion. It concerns the shape of the people formed by God's promise. Gentiles do not have to become Jews to be embraced by the God of Abraham, while the Jewish story remains the indispensable setting of the promise.

The promise rests on grace so that it may be firm for all Abraham's offspring (4:13–17). Paul speaks of inheritance in a wide horizon and of the God who gives life to the dead. Compare Genesis 12:1–3, where Abraham is called and the families of the earth are blessed through him. Paul sees the inclusion of the nations as a fulfillment of God's purpose, not a late repair after the first plan failed.

A church can acknowledge meaningful cultural customs without treating them as entrance requirements to Christ. Language, dress, worship music, and inherited church practice may carry real value, yet none can become the wage by which a new believer purchases a seat at the table. Where disagreement arises, ask whether a proposed rule protects faithfulness or merely protects the comfort of an established group.

For teaching, draw a timeline: promise, belief, circumcision, and the later law. Then read Romans 4:23–25 and place Christ's death and resurrection within that long story. This exercise helps the coming generation see both continuity and surprise. It also gives a practical question: who is being treated as an outsider because a congregation has confused a custom with the promise?

Study 1 Abraham believed

READ • ROMANS 4:1-3 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward wage or gift. Read Romans 4:1-3 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul asks what Abraham found and turns to Genesis 15:6.

Interpretation in Scripture The narrative presents trust in God's promise as the occasion for credited righteousness; Abraham cannot boast of a wage earned from God. Compare Genesis 15:1–6 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 4:1-3.

Apply it today Tell a young believer the difference between receiving a promise and submitting a bill for religious work.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach abraham believed in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 4:1-3, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 Wage or gift

READ • ROMANS 4:4-5 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from abraham believed toward david's blessing. Read Romans 4:4-5 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense A worker receives wages as due, while Paul speaks of God justifying the ungodly through faith.

Interpretation in Scripture This is not praise for ungodliness; it identifies grace as the beginning of transformation. Compare Ephesians 2:8–10 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 4:4-5.

Apply it today Make repentance and welcome possible for people whose past is known. Do not require a polished testimony first.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach wage or gift in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 4:4-5, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 David's blessing

READ • ROMANS 4:6-8 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from wage or gift toward before the sign. Read Romans 4:6-8 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Psalm 32 celebrates forgiven wrongdoing and sin not counted against the repentant.

Interpretation in Scripture By pairing David with Abraham, Paul shows that counted righteousness includes God's merciful dealing with guilt. Compare Psalm 32:1–5 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 4:6-8.

Apply it today Practice honest confession in prayer and safeguard confidences in pastoral care.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach david's blessing in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 4:6-8, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 Before the sign

READ • ROMANS 4:9-12 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from david's blessing toward promise and law. Read Romans 4:9-12 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The chronology matters: Abraham believed before circumcision.

Interpretation in Scripture The sign later sealed rather than caused the righteousness of faith, making him father of all who believe. Compare Genesis 17:9–14 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 4:9-12.

Apply it today Honor church ordinances as gifts while teaching that no external ritual can replace trust in Christ.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach before the sign in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 4:9-12, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Promise and law

READ • ROMANS 4:13-15 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from before the sign toward grace for the whole family. Read Romans 4:13-15 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The promise that Abraham would inherit the world does not arrive through law but through the righteousness of faith.

Interpretation in Scripture Law exposes transgression where it speaks; it cannot manufacture the promised inheritance. Compare Galatians 3:15–18 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 4:13-15.

Apply it today Teach God's promise with confidence, then teach commands as a response shaped by gratitude.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach promise and law in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 4:13-15, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 Grace for the whole family

READ • ROMANS 4:16-17 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from promise and law toward hope against hope. Read Romans 4:16-17 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Because the promise rests on grace through faith, it can be secure for all Abraham's offspring.

Interpretation in Scripture God gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not exist; Paul locates family identity in divine initiative. Compare Genesis 17:1–8 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 4:16-17.

Apply it today Welcome believers across generations and cultures without making a single tradition the measure of belonging.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach grace for the whole family in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 4:16-17, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 Hope against hope

READ • ROMANS 4:18-22 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from grace for the whole family toward written also for us. Read Romans 4:18-22 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Abraham faced bodily limits and Sarah's barrenness while trusting the giver of the promise.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul does not describe denial of facts; faith considers the difficulty and relies on God's ability. Compare Hebrews 11:8–12 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 4:18-22.

Apply it today Do not use this passage to blame those whose prayers for healing or children remain unanswered.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach hope against hope in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 4:18-22, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Written also for us

READ • ROMANS 4:23-25 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from hope against hope toward the next chapter. Read Romans 4:23-25 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The credited-righteousness statement extends to those who trust the God who raised Jesus.

Interpretation in Scripture His death and resurrection give the Abraham story its Christ-centered culmination. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:12–22 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 4:23-25.

Apply it today Explain the resurrection as integral to justification and hope, not a decorative ending to the cross.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach written also for us in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 4:23-25, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 5

Peace, hope, and the two humanities

Context Paul draws out what justification means: peace with God, access to grace, hope amid suffering, and reconciliation. He then compares Adam's trespass with Christ's obedient act.

Purpose and audience The justified community should understand both assurance and the costly love that made it possible. The comparison of Adam and Christ situates personal salvation in a larger human story.

Read the chapter Romans 5:1–21 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter's teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of peace, hope, and the two humanities serves Paul's gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 5:1-2 Peace and access
Romans 5:3-5 Suffering and hope
Romans 5:6-8 Love before our improvement
Romans 5:9-11 Reconciled and saved
Romans 5:12-14 Death through Adam
Romans 5:15-17 The gift is greater
Romans 5:18-19 One act and many
Romans 5:20-21 Grace reigns

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

Peace with God and reconciliation

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 5 begins with a therefore. Because Paul has explained justification by faith in chapters 3–4, he now describes its fruit: peace with God through Jesus Christ, access into grace, and hope of glory (5:1–2). Peace is a reconciled relationship established by Christ; it does not mean every believer always feels calm. A distressed Christian may still need patient care while resting on a promise that does not depend on the moment's feelings.

Paul does not deny tribulation. Endurance, tested character, and hope are named within it, and the Holy Spirit pours God's love into believers' hearts (5:3–5). This is not a command to leave people in preventable suffering. A church that preaches hope should also give food, protection, medical help, and companionship as it can. The love of God is shown in Christ's death for people who were still sinners, not for people who had made themselves worthy (5:6–8).

The argument becomes a "much more" assurance: if enemies were reconciled through the Son's death, those reconciled have reason to hope in his life (5:9–11). The church should speak of future salvation without promising exemption from current hardship. The believer's

boast is in God, who gives reconciliation, not in the strength of personal faith.

Invite readers to distinguish peace with God from peace with every circumstance. Read 5:1–11 and ask what Christ has done, what the Spirit does, and what believers hope for. This ordered reading helps the coming generation offer comfort without minimizing pain.

Adam, solidarity, and grace greater than sin

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 5:12–21 widens the lens. Sin entered through one man and death spread to humanity; Christ's obedience and gift answer Adam's trespass. Christians have differed over how guilt is inherited, how corruption is transmitted, and how the "all" and "many" language should be related to personal faith. Before selecting a theory, notice Paul's decisive asymmetry: the gift in Christ is not merely as large as the trespass. Grace abounds and life reigns through him.

The contrast should prevent two errors. First, sin cannot be explained only as a set of isolated choices by otherwise independent people. Paul pictures humanity within a history and a power it cannot easily escape. Second, no person should be treated as worthless because of Adam. The whole comparison directs attention toward the new possibility made available in Christ, who loved people while they were still sinners (5:6–8).

Romans 6:23 uses the contrast of wages and gift. Death is sin's wage; eternal life is God's gift in Christ. The two sides are not symmetrical transactions. Paul immediately presses believers to stop offering their bodies to sin and present themselves to God (6:12–14). A serious doctrine of sin must therefore lead both to gratitude for undeserved life and to practical resistance against destructive habits.

For teaching, distinguish guilt, shame, temptation, and harm. A person may need forgiveness, restoration of trust, safety from another's actions, or help to change a pattern. Do not answer all four needs with a single slogan. Ask how Romans 1–3 diagnoses universal need and how chapters 5–6 announce a greater grace that bears fruit in holiness.

For group study, compare the repeated "one" and "many" in 5:12–21 and then follow Paul's own next question in 6:1. The comparison with Adam is not meant to end in detached speculation about a past event. It presses the reader toward the gift in Christ and toward a new life. Children and young readers can grasp the contrast through the different outcomes of destructive and faithful acts, provided the teacher does not reduce inherited sin to a simplistic accusation against them.

Hope that can endure without denying pain

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Romans 5:1–5 begins with peace with God and moves into hope amid tribulation. Paul does not call suffering pleasant. He describes endurance and tested character while grounding hope in the Spirit's pouring of God's love into hearts. The cross supplies evidence of that love when people were still sinners (5:6–8). Hope therefore is not confidence that every circumstance will improve quickly. It rests on reconciliation with God through Christ and on the promise of his life.

A person living with anxiety may be tempted to read distress as proof of divine abandonment. Paul's logic does not equate an anxious feeling with God's verdict. The church can read the passage with tenderness and provide companionship and practical care. The text cannot replace appropriate medical or pastoral support; its particular gift is a truthful reason to endure without having to pretend pain is good.

Cancel culture is an imprecise modern label for experiences ranging from accountability for real wrongdoing to disproportionate public shaming. Romans 5 does not erase responsibility or the need for repair.

It does say Christ loved sinners before they could present a flawless record. A church formed by this grace should practice truthful correction, protection of those harmed, and a path for repentant people to grow rather than making one failure a permanent identity.

Teach the coming generation to locate hope in a person and a promise, not in an uninterrupted record of success. Read 5:1–11 and name what God has done, what the Spirit gives, what remains difficult, and what future is promised. This is a sturdy hope for the present life because it does not require a false description of it.

Study 1 Peace and access

READ • ROMANS 5:1-2 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward suffering and hope. Read Romans 5:1-2 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Being justified by faith yields peace with God through Jesus and standing in grace.

Interpretation in Scripture This is an objective reconciled relationship, not a promise that every feeling of anxiety vanishes. Compare Ephesians 2:13–18 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 5:1-2.

Apply it today Help a distressed believer distinguish God's welcome from the daily ebb and flow of emotion.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach peace and access in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 5:1-2, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 2 Suffering and hope

READ • ROMANS 5:3-5 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from peace and access toward love before our improvement. Read Romans 5:3-5 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul traces endurance and tested character toward hope; the Spirit pours God's love into believers' hearts.

Interpretation in Scripture He does not call suffering good in itself or ask the church to leave people in preventable harm. Compare James 1:2–4 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 5:3-5.

Apply it today Offer food, protection, and companionship to sufferers while praying for persevering hope.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach suffering and hope in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 5:3-5, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 Love before our improvement

READ • ROMANS 5:6-8 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from suffering and hope toward reconciled and saved. Read Romans 5:6-8 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Christ died for the ungodly while they were still sinners.

Interpretation in Scripture God's love is demonstrated in action at a time when people could not claim to have deserved rescue. Compare John 15:12–13 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 5:6-8.

Apply it today Let outreach begin with care rather than a test of social respectability.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach love before our improvement in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 5:6-8, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 Reconciled and saved

READ • ROMANS 5:9-11 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from love before our improvement toward death through adam. Read Romans 5:9-11 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's much more argument moves from Christ's death to life in him.

Interpretation in Scripture Those reconciled by the Son may hope in God's future deliverance; rejoicing is directed toward God, the giver of reconciliation. Compare Colossians 1:19–23 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 5:9-11.

Apply it today Speak of assurance without promising immunity from every hardship before the final renewal.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach reconciled and saved in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 5:9-11, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Death through Adam

READ • ROMANS 5:12-14 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from reconciled and saved toward the gift is greater. Read Romans 5:12-14 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Through one man sin entered the world and death spread.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul's condensed argument has generated debate about inherited guilt and corruption; the plain movement is universal death in Adam and the need for Christ's greater gift. Compare Genesis 3:1–19 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 5:12-14.

Apply it today Teach human solidarity in sin without treating children or vulnerable people as less worthy of care.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach death through adam in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 5:12-14, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 The gift is greater

READ • ROMANS 5:15-17 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from death through adam toward one act and many. Read Romans 5:15-17 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The parallel is deliberately unequal: grace in Jesus overflows beyond Adam's trespass.

Interpretation in Scripture The reign of death is answered by a gift of righteousness and life in Christ. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:45–49 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 5:15-17.

Apply it today Do not give evil the final word in testimony or preaching; name both loss and the abundance of God's grace.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the gift is greater in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 5:15-17, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 One act and many

READ • ROMANS 5:18-19 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the gift is greater toward grace reigns. Read Romans 5:18-19 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul contrasts Adam's disobedience with Christ's obedience.

Interpretation in Scripture The scope of 'all' and 'many' must be read with his wider emphasis on faith; Christian traditions differ on implications for universal salvation. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:21–28 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 5:18-19.

Apply it today Avoid using a difficult summary sentence to cancel the letter's call to faith and repentance.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach one act and many in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 5:18-19, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Grace reigns

READ • ROMANS 5:20-21 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from one act and many toward the next chapter. Read Romans 5:20-21 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Law makes trespass visible, and grace abounds where sin increased.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul's next question in 6:1 shows why this is not a license to sin: grace reigns through righteousness toward eternal life. Compare Romans 6:1–4 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 5:20-21.

Apply it today Celebrate forgiveness, then immediately teach the shape of a freed life.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach grace reigns in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 5:20-21, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 6

Dead to sin and alive to God

Context Paul answers the objection that abundant grace encourages sin. Union with Christ in death and resurrection, pictured in baptism, establishes a new identity and a new allegiance.

Purpose and audience Believers in Rome need practical freedom from sin's mastery. Paul speaks in terms of bodies, habits, and service rather than merely inward feeling.

Read the chapter Romans 6:1–23 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter’s teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of dead to sin and alive to god serves Paul’s gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 6:1-4 Baptized into death

Romans 6:5-7 The old self crucified

Romans 6:8-11 Count yourselves alive

Romans 6:12-14 Present your members

Romans 6:15-18 Freedom and allegiance

Romans 6:19 A human analogy

Romans 6:20-22 Fruit and outcome

Romans 6:23 Wages and gift

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

Union with Christ and a holy life

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 6 asks whether believers should continue in sin so grace may abound. Paul's answer begins with union with Christ. Those baptized into Christ are identified with his death and burial and called to walk in newness of life (6:1–4). The language does not make temptation vanish. It names a decisive change in belonging and a future tied to Christ's resurrection. Different churches explain the relation of baptismal sign and saving grace differently; all should teach the life to which baptism points.

Paul's commands flow from identity. Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God (6:11). Do not let sin reign in your mortal body (6:12). Present your members to God as instruments of righteousness (6:13). Each verb concerns embodied decisions. Grace is not moral passivity, nor does Paul suggest that self-effort alone creates the new life. The one who gives freedom also summons active obedience.

The slavery metaphor describes competing allegiances and outcomes. It should be handled with awareness of the ancient institution and must never be used to defend the ownership or exploitation of human beings. Paul explicitly calls the comparison a human way of speaking (6:19).

Sin's service ends in death; service to God bears fruit in holiness and eternal life (6:20–23).

A church can turn this doctrine into discipleship by pairing baptism with patient mentoring and by addressing habits of speech, money, work, sexuality, and power. Measure growth by sustained truthfulness, repentance, and service rather than demanding an instant testimony of perfection. Invite the coming generation to ask not only "What am I allowed to do?" but "To whom do I now belong?"

The doctrine of union with Christ also reshapes how we speak about failure. A relapse into an old pattern requires repentance and often concrete repair, but it does not require inventing an entirely new Christ or earning a second entrance to grace. Paul calls believers to reckon with an identity already given and to present their members accordingly. The church can keep both assurance and accountability by telling the truth about harm and walking with a person through sustained change.

The doctrine of baptism and new allegiance

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Paul's question in Romans 6:1 asks whether abundant grace encourages continued sin. His emphatic denial is grounded in baptism into Christ's death and in participation in his resurrection life (6:2–4). Christian traditions disagree about the precise relation between baptismal sign and saving grace, but Paul's ethical direction is plain: those identified with Christ are called to walk in newness of life. The passage does not portray the rite as a license to avoid discipleship afterward.

The old self is crucified with Christ so that sin's enslaving mastery might be broken (6:5–7). This is a decisive change in belonging. It does not say a temptation can never recur. Paul still commands believers to consider themselves alive to God, refuse sin's reign, and present their bodily

members to God (6:11–14). The bodily language matters: grace reaches speech, money, work, sexuality, and the use of power.

The slavery analogy in 6:15–22 makes opposing allegiances vivid, while Paul acknowledges that he speaks in human terms (6:19). It must never be used to defend human enslavement. The outcome of sin is death, but eternal life is God's gift in Christ (6:23). A Christian obeys because life has been given, not in order to purchase it.

A congregation can make baptism a beginning of supported formation: teach its meaning, connect a new believer with patient mentors, and offer honest accountability. Ask young ministers to explain both the gift and the commands. A sermon on freedom is incomplete if it offers no practical route to a changed life.

Freedom from sin's mastery and from performance

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Romans 6 does not announce that a believer can never be tempted. It says that those joined to Christ in his death and resurrection need not remain under sin's rule (6:1–14). Paul asks them to reckon themselves alive to God and to present their bodies to him. Freedom is therefore an allegiance and a practice. It reaches what the hands do, what the mouth says, how money is used, and how one treats another person when no audience is present.

Performance pressure often makes a person oscillate between pride on a successful day and shame after failure. Paul's order is different. The believer's new belonging comes through Christ before the commands to present the body. Grace gives no permission to continue a destructive pattern, but obedience does not buy a second entrance into grace. A community can keep this distinction clear by offering both accountability and the means to recover through confession and repair.

Paul's slavery metaphor belongs to an ancient world and is explicitly presented as a human analogy (6:19). It must not justify human ownership or exploitation. Its point is that rival powers claim a life and lead toward different ends. Sin's wages are death; eternal life is God's gift in Christ (6:23). The result of freedom is not isolated self-rule but service to God that bears fruit in holiness.

For young Christians, compare the question "How do I prove myself?" with "To whom do I belong?" The second can lead to specific daily choices without making personal worth depend on a perfect record. Invite each reader to name one habit that feeds an old mastery and one supported practice that reflects life in Christ.

Study 1 Baptized into death

READ • ROMANS 6:1-4 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward the old self crucified. Read Romans 6:1-4 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's answer to continued sin is emphatic.

Interpretation in Scripture Baptism identifies believers with Christ's death and burial so that they may walk in new life. Traditions differ on the relation between the sign and the grace it signifies, but the ethical direction is clear. Compare Colossians 2:12–13 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 6:1-4.

Apply it today When celebrating baptism, explain the daily walk to which it points and provide mentoring afterward.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach baptized into death in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 6:1-4, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 The old self crucified

READ • ROMANS 6:5-7 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from baptized into death toward count yourselves alive. Read Romans 6:5-7 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Union with Christ's death breaks the old person's enslavement.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul describes a decisive transfer of mastery, not the claim that temptation has disappeared. Compare Galatians 2:19–20 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 6:5-7.

Apply it today Offer accountability that expects growth without shaming honest reports of struggle.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the old self crucified in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 6:5-7, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 3 Count yourselves alive

READ • ROMANS 6:8-11 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the old self crucified toward present your members. Read Romans 6:8-11 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Christ's resurrection is irreversible; death no longer rules him.

Interpretation in Scripture Believers are instructed to reckon themselves dead to sin and alive to God, bringing their self-understanding into line with Christ's action. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:20–26 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 6:8-11.

Apply it today Begin a daily prayer by naming whose life you belong to before facing a familiar temptation.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach count yourselves alive in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 6:8-11, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 4 Present your members

READ • ROMANS 6:12-14 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from count yourselves alive toward freedom and allegiance. Read Romans 6:12-14 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Sin remains a would-be ruler in mortal bodies, yet Paul commands resistance and the offering of bodily members to God.

Interpretation in Scripture Grace is the new realm of belonging; it is not passivity. Compare 1 Corinthians 6:12–20 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 6:12-14.

Apply it today Form concrete practices for speech, money, sexuality, work, and rest. Ask what your hands can do for another today.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach present your members in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 6:12-14, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Freedom and allegiance

READ • ROMANS 6:15-18 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from present your members toward a human analogy. Read Romans 6:15-18 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul repeats the objection in another form.

Interpretation in Scripture Freedom from law's regime does not mean freedom to return to sin; obedience from the heart is the fruit of a new master. Compare John 8:31–36 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 6:15-18.

Apply it today Discuss the limits of the slavery metaphor, whose ancient social context must never justify human enslavement.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach freedom and allegiance in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 6:15-18, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 A human analogy

READ • ROMANS 6:19 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from freedom and allegiance toward fruit and outcome. Read Romans 6:19 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul says he speaks in human terms because of weakness.

Interpretation in Scripture The analogy makes the transfer of allegiance vivid, but no earthly owner provides a complete image of God's liberating lordship. Compare Philemon 1:8–16 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 6:19.

Apply it today Help readers separate the apostle's illustrative language from approval of exploitation.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a human analogy in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 6:19, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 Fruit and outcome

READ • ROMANS 6:20-22 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a human analogy toward wages and gift. Read Romans 6:20-22 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Former slavery to sin produced shame and death; now service to God bears fruit in holiness and ends in eternal life.

Interpretation in Scripture The contrast concerns the trajectory of a life, not instant flawlessness. Compare Galatians 5:16–25 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 6:20-22.

Apply it today Measure growth by sustained patterns of truth, care, and repentance rather than a single dramatic experience.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach fruit and outcome in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 6:20-22, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Wages and gift

READ • ROMANS 6:23 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from fruit and outcome toward the next chapter. Read Romans 6:23 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Death is sin's wage; eternal life is God's gift in Christ.

Interpretation in Scripture The asymmetry matters: life is neither earned by moral labor nor detached from the Lord who gives it. Compare John 3:16–17 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 6:23.

Apply it today Offer a clear invitation to trust Christ and a real community in which new believers can grow.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach wages and gift in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 6:23, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 7

Law, sin, and the cry for rescue

Context The marriage illustration opens a discussion of release from the law's jurisdiction through Christ's death. Paul then insists that the law is good while sin exploits the commandment. The anguished first person speech culminates in thanks to God through Jesus.

Purpose and audience Readers must avoid treating Jewish Scripture as evil. The debated identity of the 'I' in 7:7–25 affects how one relates the struggle here to the Spirit-filled life of chapter 8.

Read the chapter Romans 7:1–25 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter’s teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of law, sin, and the cry for rescue serves Paul’s gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 7:1-3 An illustration from marriage

Romans 7:4-6 Belonging to another

Romans 7:7-8 The law is not sin

Romans 7:9-12 A good command and death

Romans 7:13 Sin shown as sin

Romans 7:14-20 The divided will

Romans 7:21-24 Who will deliver me?

Romans 7:25–8:2 Thanks be to God

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The doctrine of the law as good but unable to rescue

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Paul's marriage illustration in 7:1–6 serves one point: death changes a binding relation. Through Christ's death, believers belong to the risen one and bear fruit for God, serving in the new way of the Spirit. The illustration is not a full pastoral policy on marriage, divorce, or abuse. Its doctrinal concern is the changed relationship between believers, the law, and Christ.

Paul immediately asks whether the law is sin and answers no (7:7). A command such as the prohibition of coveting identifies desire that would otherwise be hidden. Sin exploits the good command to produce disobedience. The law is holy, righteous, and good (7:12), but it is not a power that can cure the person whose will has become divided. This diagnosis is especially important when a teacher is tempted to answer every spiritual struggle with another rule.

The term law changes force in the chapter. Sometimes it points to the Mosaic command; sometimes Paul speaks of a principle at work in the members. A careful reader should track each use and avoid turning every occurrence into one identical meaning. The contrast between letter and Spirit in 7:6 is not permission to despise Israel's Scriptures. Paul's own argument depends on their holiness and witness.

The church can teach commands as truthful diagnosis and as guidance for a life of love, while directing people to Christ and the Spirit for rescue. Ask a younger minister to explain a command and then answer, from Romans 7–8, how God enables a person to live differently. Both parts belong in a complete sermon.

The doctrine of deliverance beyond the divided will

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

The first-person voice in 7:14–25 desires the good and yet does what it hates. Interpreters differ about the identity of the "I": Paul's own experience, Adam, Israel under the law, the human person without Christ, or the continuing struggle of a believer. The passage does not explicitly give the speaker a label that ends debate. It does depict a conflict which the recognition of a good command cannot resolve.

The cry "Who will deliver me?" directs the reader outside the self. Paul thanks God through Jesus Christ and moves into the announcement of no condemnation in Christ and freedom by the Spirit (7:24–8:2). Do not stop a lesson at the cry, as if Paul had nothing more to say. Do not rush past the anguish either; a believer who struggles may need the language of honest lament before hearing a confident answer.

Romans 8:12–13 brings the doctrine into practice. By the Spirit believers put sinful deeds to death. This is active resistance within a gift of life, rather than self-salvation by moral energy. Accountability, prayer, wise counsel, and practical changes in routine may all serve this work. In serious situations, protection and professional support may be necessary alongside pastoral care.

Ask students to read 7:7–8:13 without stopping at the chapter break. Mark which statements describe the law, sin, Christ, and the Spirit. Then ask how a sermon can name failure truthfully while refusing to leave a hearer under despair. The answer should arise from Paul's movement toward Christ's liberating work.

Freedom when the will is divided

IDENTITY • FREEDOM • HOPE • TRANSFORMATION

Romans 7 portrays the terrible difference between recognizing a good command and doing it. The identity of the "I" in 7:14–25 is debated, so a teacher should not force every hearer into one psychological portrait. Paul's clear conclusion is that the law is good while sin can exploit it, and that a divided will needs deliverance beyond its own resolve. The cry at the chapter's end prepares the answer in Christ and the Spirit at the start of chapter 8.

Some forms of shame say, "Because I still struggle, I must be nothing but my struggle." Romans 7 permits honest naming of conflict without making it the believer's last name. Romans 8 announces no condemnation in Christ and the Spirit's life. This does not cancel the work of confession, repair, and resistance. It places those actions in a relationship where grace can enable them instead of fear trying to manufacture them.

The comparison with Augustine is instructive. In Confessions he describes knowing something of the good while his habits and desires resisted surrender. The passage in Romans 13:13–14 called for putting on Christ and refusing to provision the old pattern. His account illustrates a turning of the will by grace; it does not prove that all readers will follow the same emotional sequence. Augustine's later reflection on the Spirit and the Letter underscores that a command alone cannot heal a will that needs God's help.

Read Romans 7:7–8:13 as one movement. For a contemporary reader caught in repeated comparison, compulsive habits, or fear, ask for practical support and trusted accountability. Freedom may involve daily choices made with help. The promise is not that the church can control a person into holiness, but that Christ's answer reaches deeper than information alone.

Study 1 An illustration from marriage

READ • ROMANS 7:1-3 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward belonging to another. Read Romans 7:1-3 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense A marriage bond ends with death in the example.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul uses this familiar legal relationship to illustrate changed jurisdiction; he is not giving a complete account of divorce, remarriage, or pastoral care. Compare Mark 10:2–12 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 7:1-3.

Apply it today Do not use the illustration to trap someone in an abusive relationship. Read the point in verse 4.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach an illustration from marriage in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 7:1-3, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 Belonging to another

READ • ROMANS 7:4-6 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from an illustration from marriage toward the law is not sin. Read Romans 7:4-6 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Through Christ's body believers have died to the law so they may belong to the risen one and bear fruit for God.

Interpretation in Scripture They serve in the new way of the Spirit rather than the old way of the written code. Compare 2 Corinthians 3:4–6 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 7:4-6.

Apply it today Teach obedience as a living response to Christ rather than a performance for acceptance.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach belonging to another in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 7:4-6, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 The law is not sin

READ • ROMANS 7:7-8 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from belonging to another toward a good command and death. Read Romans 7:7-8 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul rejects that equation.

Interpretation in Scripture The commandment identifies coveting, while sin seizes the opportunity to stir contrary desire. The defect lies in sin's misuse of the good command. Compare Exodus 20:17 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 7:7-8.

Apply it today Use commandments to name the problem accurately, then lead people toward God's remedy.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the law is not sin in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 7:7-8, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 A good command and death

READ • ROMANS 7:9-12 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the law is not sin toward sin shown as sin. Read Romans 7:9-12 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The command intended for life becomes an occasion for sin to deceive and kill.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul concludes that the law and commandment are holy, righteous, and good. Compare Psalm 19:7–11 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 7:9-12.

Apply it today Avoid speaking of the Old Testament as a failed or malicious book. Teach its witness within the full biblical story.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a good command and death in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 7:9-12, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Sin shown as sin

READ • ROMANS 7:13 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a good command and death toward the divided will. Read Romans 7:13 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The good law exposes the deadly character of sin, which works through what is good.

Interpretation in Scripture Exposure is a step toward diagnosis, but it does not itself supply the power of renewal. Compare Galatians 3:19–25 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 7:13.

Apply it today When a sermon uncovers guilt, also preach Christ and the Spirit's help.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach sin shown as sin in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 7:13, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 The divided will

READ • ROMANS 7:14-20 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from sin shown as sin toward who will deliver me?. Read Romans 7:14-20 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The 'I' describes a painful gap between willing good and doing evil.

Interpretation in Scripture Readers disagree whether this dramatizes Israel under law, humanity apart from Christ, or continuing Christian struggle; Paul does not explicitly resolve the speaker's identity here.

Compare Galatians 5:16–17 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 7:14-20.

Apply it today Use the passage to encourage honest confession, while refusing to make perpetual defeat the whole Christian story.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the divided will in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 7:14-20, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 Who will deliver me?

READ • ROMANS 7:21-24 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the divided will toward thanks be to god. Read Romans 7:21-24 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The inward delight in God's law coexists with another power at work in the members.

Interpretation in Scripture The cry for deliverance points beyond mere self-command and prepares the announcement of freedom in chapter 8. Compare Psalm 130:1–8 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 7:21-24.

Apply it today Pair accountability with prayer and practical support; do not say 'try harder' as if that were Paul's answer.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach who will deliver me? in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 7:21-24, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Thanks be to God

READ • ROMANS 7:25–8:2 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from who will deliver me? toward the next chapter. Read Romans 7:25–8:2 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The thanksgiving names Jesus Christ, and the following lines announce no condemnation and the Spirit's liberating law.

Interpretation in Scripture The chapter boundary must not sever the cry from its answer. Compare Romans 8:1–4 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 7:25–8:2.

Apply it today Read chapters 7 and 8 together when counseling someone who feels trapped by failure.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach thanks be to god in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 7:25–8:2, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 8

The Spirit, adoption, and unbreakable love

Context Romans 8 answers the cry of chapter 7. In Christ there is no condemnation; the Spirit gives life, leads God's children, intercedes amid groaning, and anchors hope for creation's renewal. The chapter ends with the security of God's love in Christ.

Purpose and audience The audience is a suffering, mixed community learning that the Spirit forms a family. Paul offers assurance without denying bodily weakness or future hope.

Read the chapter Romans 8:1–39 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter's teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of the spirit, adoption, and unbreakable love serves Paul's gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 8:1-4 No condemnation
Romans 8:5-8 Mind set on the Spirit
Romans 8:9-11 The Spirit dwells in you
Romans 8:12-13 An obligation to live
Romans 8:14-17 Children and heirs
Romans 8:18-25 Creation groans
Romans 8:26-30 The Spirit intercedes
Romans 8:31-39 Nothing can separate

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The Holy Spirit gives life

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 8 names the Spirit at the center of Christian existence. The Spirit of life frees believers in Christ from the law of sin and death (8:2). God acts through the sending of his Son where the law was weakened by human flesh (8:3). Those in Christ have the Spirit dwelling in them (8:9–11), and the God who raised Jesus will give life to their mortal bodies. Paul's hope is resurrection, not the abandonment of bodily life.

To set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace (8:5–6). Flesh in this contrast does not mean that every bodily appetite is evil; it names a posture resistant to God. The Spirit turns a person toward God's purposes and gives power to resist sinful deeds (8:12–13). This is why the church should teach spiritual formation through prayer, the reading of Scripture, communal worship, truthful correction, and acts of mercy, rather than merely promising an intense moment of feeling.

Paul speaks of the Spirit as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (8:9), while the Father sends the Son and raises the dead. Christian Trinitarian teaching draws on the broader New Testament to confess the one God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Romans contributes to that confession by describing distinct divine relations and actions, but it does not present a

later creedal formula. The theological language should help us hear Paul, not replace his sentences.

For the church today, the Spirit's presence cannot be measured by a leader's claim to unquestioned authority. A proposed message or action should be tested by Scripture, its fruit, and its treatment of other people. The Spirit who gives life is not an excuse for coercion or confusion. Ask whether a ministry's teaching moves people toward Christ, truth, peace, and responsible love.

Paul does not portray the Spirit as a temporary supplement to faith. The Spirit marks belonging to Christ, gives life, leads children, assists prayer, and sustains hope. These roles touch conscience, worship, the body, and the future. Compare Romans 8 with Galatians 4:4–7 and 5:16–25: adoption and moral formation are related, while gifts and experiences must be assessed in service of Christ. The congregation should ask whether its practices make space for prayer and tested discernment.

Adoption, prayer, and hope

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Those led by the Spirit are God's children. The Spirit of adoption replaces a posture of slavery to fear with the cry to the Father, and bears witness that believers are children and heirs with Christ (8:14–17). Adoption is a gift of belonging. It should not be used to diminish earthly adoptive families or to imply that an abused person must remain in danger to prove trust. The image speaks of God's welcome, inheritance, and care.

The same heirs suffer while awaiting glory. Creation groans, believers groan for the redemption of their bodies, and the Spirit helps their weakness with intercession (8:18–27). Prayer does not depend on finding flawless words. Hope is directed toward a future not yet seen. The church can therefore lament honestly and also act now to relieve

avoidable suffering. Romans 8 does not call evil good; it promises God's faithful purpose to conform his people to the image of his Son (8:28–30).

Paul ends with the gift of the Son, Christ's intercession, and the assurance that no distress, persecution, danger, or death can separate believers from God's love in Christ (8:31–39). "More than conquerors" is spoken amid real hazards; it cannot be honestly preached as a guarantee of wealth, health, or exemption from grief. The assurance is that Christ's love holds a people who suffer.

Teach the Spirit's work in a way that joins confidence and tenderness. Pray with the person who cannot pray, make room for lament, and provide practical help. Invite younger believers to understand adoption as secure belonging that opens them toward care for others, not a title that places them above them.

The future resurrection promise guards against a narrow spiritualism. Paul speaks of mortal bodies and creation itself, not only the fate of an inner soul. The Spirit's presence is a foretaste, while believers still groan. This pattern makes room for medical care, environmental responsibility, and aid to people whose suffering cannot be solved by a slogan. Hope does not demand denial of pain. It motivates a community to accompany those who wait for what they cannot yet see.

Identity as children of God

IDENTITY • FREEDOM • HOPE • TRANSFORMATION

Romans 8:14–17 gives the identity theme its strongest language. Those led by the Spirit are children of God; the Spirit of adoption bears witness that they belong and are heirs with Christ. This is received belonging, not an identity fabricated through achievements, followers, ancestry, or a leader's approval. The cry to the Father makes access intimate, while shared inheritance includes suffering with Christ before glory. It is not a promise that a child of God will never feel afraid.

The chapter begins with no condemnation for those in Christ (8:1). That verdict is not a statement that every human criticism is false. A person can need correction, an apology, and restitution while remaining loved by God. Conversely, the existence of a public accusation does not make it a divine verdict. A church can distinguish truthful accountability from humiliation that traps a person in a single moment. This distinction is vital when a young reader fears that rejection by a crowd has erased their worth.

Adoption is a theological picture of grace and inheritance. It should be taught with care for those whose family histories include loss or abuse. God's fatherly welcome cannot be used to require a vulnerable person to return to danger. The Spirit leads children toward life and holiness, and the church should make that family belonging tangible through safe, faithful relationships.

Ask a group to list every description of the Spirit in 8:9–17 and every promise connected with children and heirs. Then ask what practices would help a congregation treat a new believer as family. The next generation needs a belonging that can withstand shifting status while also learning to welcome others.

Unshakable hope amid groaning

IDENTITY • FREEDOM • HOPE • TRANSFORMATION

Romans 8 does not leap directly from no condemnation to a painless victory. Creation groans, believers groan, and the Spirit helps their weakness (8:18–27). The promised redemption includes bodies and the created world. Hope concerns what is not yet seen, so patience is not denial. The church can speak of future glory and still lament injustice, sickness, and loss in the present.

The assurance that God works toward good for those who love him is framed by the purpose of conformity to Christ (8:28–30). Paul does not call the evil event itself good or invite a teacher to explain another

person's suffering. The Spirit intercedes when believers do not know how to pray. Sometimes the most faithful response is to sit with a person, pray simply, and offer concrete help while trusting the God whose purpose exceeds our explanation.

The closing questions point to the Father's gift of the Son, Christ's death and resurrection, his intercession, and the endurance of divine love (8:31–39). Tribulation, danger, and death remain real in the list. "Nothing can separate" names the security of God's love in Christ through those dangers, not a guarantee that they will never arrive. This is why unshakable hope can be preached honestly to the persecuted and the grieving.

For readers living with anxiety or hopelessness, invite a slow reading of the three groanings and the final assurance. Let them name what hurts without shame. Then ask what companionship and practical care the church can offer. Hope is sustained by God's love and expressed through a body of people who refuse to leave sufferers alone.

Study 1 No condemnation

READ • ROMANS 8:1-4 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward mind set on the spirit. Read Romans 8:1-4 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The verdict rests on being in Christ, because God has acted in his Son where the law was powerless through human flesh.

Interpretation in Scripture The Spirit's life-giving work enables the law's righteous intention to be fulfilled. Some manuscripts expand verse 1 with wording found later in verse 4; the central claim remains Christ's liberating work. Compare John 3:16–18 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 8:1-4.

Apply it today Do not use condemnation as a tool of spiritual control. Call people to holiness from the security of Christ's work.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach no condemnation in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 8:1-4, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 Mind set on the Spirit

READ • ROMANS 8:5-8 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from no condemnation toward the spirit dwells in you. Read Romans 8:5-8 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Flesh is not simply the physical body; in this contrast it describes humanity oriented away from God.

Interpretation in Scripture The Spirit redirects mind and desire toward life and peace. Compare Galatians 5:16–25 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 8:5-8.

Apply it today Teach discernment through prayer, Scripture, and communal accountability, not by treating every personal impulse as the Spirit's voice.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach mind set on the spirit in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 8:5-8, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 The Spirit dwells in you

READ • ROMANS 8:9-11 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from mind set on the spirit toward an obligation to live. Read Romans 8:9-11 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Belonging to Christ is marked by the indwelling Spirit, whom Paul calls both Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ.

Interpretation in Scripture The God who raised Jesus will also give life to mortal bodies. The passage links present transformation to future resurrection. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:42–49 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 8:9-11.

Apply it today Care for bodies and communities as places of God's promised renewal. Avoid separating spiritual life from material need.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the spirit dwells in you in a congregation with people of different ages and

backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 8:9-11, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 4 An obligation to live

READ • ROMANS 8:12-13 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the spirit dwells in you toward children and heirs. Read Romans 8:12-13 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Believers owe nothing to the flesh's rule.

Interpretation in Scripture By the Spirit they put sinful deeds to death. Paul's language unites divine agency with active moral resistance; it is not self-salvation. Compare Colossians 3:1–10 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 8:12-13.

Apply it today Name one destructive habit and enlist a trustworthy partner for a concrete change.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach an obligation to live in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 8:12-13, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Children and heirs

READ • ROMANS 8:14-17 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from an obligation to live toward creation groans. Read Romans 8:14-17 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The Spirit leads God's children and bears witness with their spirit.

Interpretation in Scripture The cry to Abba expresses intimate access, while adoption grants inheritance with Christ. Sharing his glory is joined to sharing his suffering. Compare Galatians 4:4–7 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 8:14-17.

Apply it today Welcome those without secure family ties. Teach adoption as belonging by grace, never as a claim that suffering proves neglect.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach children and heirs in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 8:14-17, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 Creation groans

READ • ROMANS 8:18-25 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from children and heirs toward the spirit intercedes. Read Romans 8:18-25 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Present suffering is set beside coming glory.

Interpretation in Scripture Creation's groaning, believers' groaning, and hope for bodily redemption show that salvation is not an escape from creation but its liberation. Compare Revelation 21:1–5 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 8:18-25.

Apply it today Support environmental care and embodied mercy as signs of hope, without claiming human action can complete God's future renewal.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach creation groans in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 8:18-25, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 7 The Spirit intercedes

READ • ROMANS 8:26-30 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from creation groans toward nothing can separate. Read Romans 8:26-30 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The Spirit helps weakness when believers do not know how to pray.

Interpretation in Scripture The promise that God works in all things for good is qualified by the goal of conformity to the Son; it does not label every evil event good. Foreknowledge and predestination are debated across traditions. Compare 1 Corinthians 2:9–12 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 8:26-30.

Apply it today Pray with sufferers without explaining away their pain. Hold the promised end in Christ before them gently.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the spirit intercedes in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 8:26-30, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 8 Nothing can separate

READ • ROMANS 8:31-39 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the spirit intercedes toward the next chapter. Read Romans 8:31-39 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's questions recall God's gift of the Son, Christ's intercession, and the endurance of divine love through danger and death.

Interpretation in Scripture More than conquerors means held by Christ amid trials, not guaranteed worldly success. Compare Psalm 44:22–26 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 8:31-39.

Apply it today Read the passage with persecuted or grieving believers, and accompany them with material help.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach nothing can separate in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 8:31-39, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 9

Israel, mercy, and God's purpose

Context After celebrating assurance, Paul grieves for fellow Israelites and asks whether God's promises have failed. He revisits patriarchal stories and prophetic texts to speak of election, mercy, and the inclusion of Gentiles.

Purpose and audience Gentile readers must not turn a hard chapter into contempt for Israel. Paul's anguish and chapter 11's warning against arrogance frame every interpretation.

Read the chapter Romans 9:1–33 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter’s teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of israel, mercy, and god's purpose serves Paul’s gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 9:1-5 Paul's sorrow

Romans 9:6-9 The word has not failed

Romans 9:10-13 Jacob and Esau

Romans 9:14-18 Mercy and Pharaoh

Romans 9:19-23 Potter and clay

Romans 9:24-29 Called from the nations

Romans 9:30-33 The stumbling stone

Romans 9–11 Reading the whole argument

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

Israel, election, and mercy

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 9–11 begins with Paul's grief over his fellow Israelites (9:1–5). Their covenants, worship, promises, patriarchs, and the Messiah's lineage matter. He asks whether God's word has failed and explores promise, election, mercy, and human response through stories of Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Pharaoh, and prophetic quotations. Interpretive traditions differ on whether particular examples establish the eternal destiny of individuals or describe the historical calling of peoples. The reader should not conceal the difficulty, and should not read one verse as if the argument ended there.

Paul prays for Israel's salvation in chapter 10 and proclaims the nearness of the word of faith. The shared Lord is generous to all who call on him; sent messengers announce the good news (10:9–15). In chapter 11 Paul denies that God has rejected his people outright, points to a remnant, and warns Gentile believers not to boast over the branches of an olive tree whose root supports them (11:1–24). The warning is direct and remains relevant wherever Christian teaching slides into contempt for Jews.

A mystery concerning Israel and the nations culminates in the statement about "all Israel" and in the claim that God's gifts and calling are

irrevocable (11:25–29). Christians propose different accounts of the timing and manner of Israel's salvation. Paul himself ends by marveling at divine wisdom (11:33–36). No confident modern timetable should drown out his humility.

For preaching, keep the three chapters together. State God's mercy and human responsibility without pretending all questions are settled. Reject antisemitism, honor the Hebrew Scriptures, and remember that Gentile believers stand by faith rather than superiority. Invite the coming generation to learn Israel's story as a necessary part of understanding Jesus and Paul.

Paul's scriptural quotations in Romans 9–11 can be examined one by one. Genesis narrates the promise to Abraham's family; Exodus portrays mercy and confrontation with Pharaoh; Hosea and Isaiah speak into Israel's history and future; Deuteronomy supplies language for the near word. Read at least one source passage in full. The exercise reveals how Paul reasons with Israel's Scriptures rather than discarding them. It also makes an interpreter less likely to use a severe quotation as a weapon against people.

The doctrine of mercy and the potter

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 9 asks whether God's word has failed when many of Paul's own people have not received the Messiah (9:6). Paul revisits Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Moses and Pharaoh to speak of promise, calling, and mercy. The stories are difficult and have generated differing doctrines of election. The immediate question is God's faithfulness to his promises, and the opening emotion is Paul's grief for his kin, not triumph over them.

The declaration of mercy to Moses (Exodus 33:19) affirms that grace cannot be demanded as a wage (Romans 9:14–16). The account of Pharaoh includes hardening and raises real questions about human

agency. Paul does not settle every philosophical question in a few sentences. He calls the objector to recognize the difference between Creator and creature, using the potter image (9:19–23). Jeremiah 18 supplies a useful comparison in which a nation's response also matters. Each passage should be read on its own terms.

Paul then cites Hosea and Isaiah as he speaks of those called from the nations and of a remnant (9:24–29). He closes the chapter with the contrast between righteousness pursued as though by works and righteousness received through faith, with Christ as the stumbling stone (9:30–33). These movements belong together. Election language is not an excuse to stop proclaiming the gospel; chapter 10 immediately speaks of prayer and a universal invitation to call on the Lord.

Teach this passage with humility. State what Paul argues clearly, identify where interpretations diverge, and resist telling an anxious seeker that desire for God proves rejection. Read through chapter 11 before drawing a conclusion about Israel or Gentile believers.

Study 1 Paul's sorrow

READ • ROMANS 9:1-5 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward the word has not failed. Read Romans 9:1-5 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's grief for his kin introduces Israel's privileges: covenants, worship, promises, patriarchs, and the Messiah's human lineage.

Interpretation in Scripture His lament rules out triumphalism even before difficult claims about election begin. Compare Exodus 4:22–23 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 9:1-5.

Apply it today Speak about Jewish neighbors with respect and reject antisemitism in church teaching.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach paul's sorrow in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 9:1-5, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 The word has not failed

READ • ROMANS 9:6-9 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from paul's sorrow toward jacob and esau. Read Romans 9:6-9 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul distinguishes physical descent from the line through which the promise advances, drawing on Isaac's story.

Interpretation in Scripture The point is God's fidelity to a particular promise, not the denial that Israel is Israel. Compare Genesis 21:8–12 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 9:6-9.

Apply it today Ask how a community may confuse inherited privilege with responsive faith.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the word has not failed in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 9:6-9, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 Jacob and Esau

READ • ROMANS 9:10-13 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the word has not failed toward mercy and pharaoh. Read Romans 9:10-13 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Before the twins were born, the narrative locates the promise in God's call rather than their works.

Interpretation in Scripture The Malachi quotation concerns the histories of Israel and Edom; interpreters differ on how far it establishes individual predestination. Compare Genesis 25:19–26 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 9:10-13.

Apply it today Teach the difference between a quotation's original national setting and a later theological inference.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach jacob and esau in a congregation with people of different ages and

backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 9:10-13, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 4 Mercy and Pharaoh

READ • ROMANS 9:14-18 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from jacob and esau toward potter and clay. Read Romans 9:14-18 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul quotes God's declaration of mercy to Moses and the Pharaoh story.

Interpretation in Scripture God's freedom in mercy is central; the hardening language raises genuine questions about human agency that Paul will continue to address. Compare Exodus 33:12–19 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 9:14-18.

Apply it today Do not tell a frightened person that their desire for God proves God has rejected them.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach mercy and pharaoh in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 9:14-18, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Potter and clay

READ • ROMANS 9:19-23 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from mercy and pharaoh toward called from the nations. Read Romans 9:19-23 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The potter image challenges a creature's claim to sit above God in judgment.

Interpretation in Scripture Jeremiah 18 uses the same image in a context of response and warning; Romans should be read with that broader prophetic background. Compare Jeremiah 18:1–11 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 9:19-23.

Apply it today Allow humble questions about justice while resisting confident claims to know every hidden purpose of God.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach potter and clay in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 9:19-23, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 Called from the nations

READ • ROMANS 9:24-29 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from potter and clay toward the stumbling stone. Read Romans 9:24-29 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Hosea and Isaiah supply language for mercy and remnant.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul's use of Scripture explains the surprising arrival of Gentiles and the preservation of Israelites without treating prophetic texts as disposable proof-texts. Compare Hosea 1:8–11 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 9:24-29.

Apply it today Read the source passages as well as Paul's citations; invite believers from different backgrounds to read together.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach called from the nations in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 9:24-29, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 7 The stumbling stone

READ • ROMANS 9:30-33 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from called from the nations toward reading the whole argument. Read Romans 9:30-33 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Gentiles who did not pursue the law attained righteousness by faith, while Israel's pursuit did not reach its goal when it sought righteousness as though by works.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul identifies Christ as the contested stone. Compare Isaiah 28:14–16 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 9:30-33.

Apply it today Examine where religious diligence has displaced trust in Christ and love for neighbors.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the stumbling stone in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 9:30-33, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Reading the whole argument

READ • ROMANS 9–11 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the stumbling stone toward the next chapter. Read Romans 9–11 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Chapter 9 cannot be the final word on Israel.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul proceeds through Israel's responsibility, the gospel's invitation, a remnant, Gentile humility, and God's irrevocable gifts. This larger arc sets limits on isolated claims. Compare Romans 11:25–32 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 9–11.

Apply it today Teach these three chapters in sequence and distinguish a church tradition's doctrine from Paul's explicit statements.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach reading the whole argument in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 9–11, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 10

The near word and the sent messenger

Context Paul continues to pray for Israel's salvation, contrasts righteousness pursued as self-establishment with righteousness by faith, and uses Deuteronomy to describe the accessible word of faith. The chapter turns toward proclamation and response.

Purpose and audience Jewish and Gentile hearers confront a shared Lord and a public call to believe. Paul's argument is missionary and prayerful, not a license to caricature Judaism.

Read the chapter Romans 10:1–21 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter’s teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of the near word and the sent messenger serves Paul’s gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 10:1-4 Prayer and zeal

Romans 10:5-8 The word is near

Romans 10:9-10 Heart and mouth

Romans 10:11-13 The same Lord of all

Romans 10:14-15 Sent to announce

Romans 10:16-17 Not all obeyed

Romans 10:18-21 Israel has heard

Romans 10–11 Mission and humility

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The doctrine of Christ as the goal of the law

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Paul's deep desire and prayer in 10:1 are for Israel's salvation. His criticism of a zeal that seeks to establish its own righteousness must be read in that posture of love, not as permission to mock Jewish devotion. The term translated "end" in 10:4 can express goal, culmination, or termination in a particular respect. Readers must examine how the following verses contrast righteousness pursued through law with righteousness received in relation to Christ.

Paul draws on Leviticus 18 and Deuteronomy 30. The word is near; no one must climb to heaven to bring Christ down or descend to raise him from the dead (10:5–8). The gospel rests on God's completed action in the incarnate, crucified, and risen Son. Confessing Jesus as Lord and believing that God raised him are joined in 10:9–10. Neither phrase is an incantation detached from trust and discipleship.

Paul's argument also assumes a shared Lord whose generosity reaches everyone who calls upon him (10:11–13). A church must speak clearly about Christ and remove avoidable cultural barriers that make its invitation narrower than his. A person should not be required to master a technical vocabulary before being told what God has done.

Teach this doctrine by reading Deuteronomy 30 in its own setting and then Romans 10. Ask what Paul preserves and how he speaks of Christ. Invite younger readers to explain the gospel in plain language without reducing confession to an empty formula or turning the chapter into a judgment on an entire people.

The doctrine of proclamation and hearing

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

The sequence in 10:14–15 moves from sending to preaching, hearing, believing, and calling. Paul uses Isaiah's image of the messenger who brings good news. The logic honors both divine generosity and human communication. A hearer cannot respond to a message never made intelligible. The church therefore has a responsibility to translate, teach, send, and support messengers who speak truthfully.

Hearing does not force belief. Paul quotes Isaiah to acknowledge rejection (10:16–17), then argues that Israel has not simply lacked all witness (10:18–21). The chapter closes with the image of God stretching out hands to a resistant people. This is a more patient picture than a ministry that counts decisions, blames hearers for every refusal, or treats persuasion as coercion.

The relation of faith and hearing gives a practical role to Scripture read aloud, preaching, testimony, conversation, and careful explanation. Not every believer has the same task, but the whole community can make witness possible through prayer, hospitality, and material support. Paul's longing for Israel shows that mission should remain personal, never an argument designed to win over a stereotype.

Invite a congregation to examine its language. Can a visitor understand what is said about Jesus? Can someone ask a sincere question without being shamed? Can a young Christian explain resurrection and lordship in their own words? These are modest but necessary tests of a community that wants the good news to be heard.

Study 1 Prayer and zeal

READ • ROMANS 10:1-4 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward the word is near. Read Romans 10:1-4 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's desire and prayer are for Israel's salvation.

Interpretation in Scripture Zeal can miss God's righteousness when it seeks to establish its own; Christ is the law's telos, a word that can mean goal or culmination as well as end. Compare Deuteronomy 30:11–14 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 10:1-4.

Apply it today Pray for people with whom you disagree, and explain disagreements without mocking sincere devotion.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach prayer and zeal in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 10:1-4, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 The word is near

READ • ROMANS 10:5-8 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from prayer and zeal toward heart and mouth. Read Romans 10:5-8 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul reads Leviticus and Deuteronomy in relation to Christ.

Interpretation in Scripture No one must ascend to fetch the Messiah or descend to raise him; God's saving action makes the message near in preaching and faith. Compare Leviticus 18:5 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 10:5-8.

Apply it today Make the gospel understandable in ordinary language rather than reserving it for specialists.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the word is near in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 10:5-8, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 Heart and mouth

READ • ROMANS 10:9-10 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the word is near toward the same lord of all. Read Romans 10:9-10 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Belief in God's raising Jesus and confession of Jesus as Lord belong together.

Interpretation in Scripture These verses summarize a response to the gospel, not a mechanical formula that guarantees a changed life apart from trust and discipleship. Compare Philippians 2:9–11 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 10:9-10.

Apply it today Invite honest confession and provide patient teaching after a first response.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach heart and mouth in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 10:9-10, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 The same Lord of all

READ • ROMANS 10:11-13 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from heart and mouth toward sent to announce. Read Romans 10:11-13 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul joins Isaiah and Joel to declare that everyone who calls on the Lord may be saved.

Interpretation in Scripture The universal invitation rests on the Lord's generosity and crosses the Jew–Gentile boundary. Compare Joel 2:28–32 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 10:11-13.

Apply it today Remove barriers of language, class, and status that make a church's invitation narrower than Paul's.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the same lord of all in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 10:11-13, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Sent to announce

READ • ROMANS 10:14-15 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the same lord of all toward not all obeyed. Read Romans 10:14-15 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The sequence from sending and preaching to hearing, believing, and calling underscores the need for a communicated message.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul reuses Isaiah's image of good news arriving through a messenger. Compare Isaiah 52:7–10 in its own setting.

Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 10:14-15.

Apply it today Train and support messengers who speak clearly and listen to the people they serve.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach sent to announce in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 10:14-15, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 Not all obeyed

READ • ROMANS 10:16-17 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from sent to announce toward israel has heard. Read Romans 10:16-17 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Hearing is necessary but does not guarantee reception.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul cites Isaiah's report of unbelief, showing that the gospel's rejection is neither a surprise nor proof that the message has no power. Compare Isaiah 53:1 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 10:16-17.

Apply it today Evaluate faithfulness in witness without coercing decisions or treating hearers as numbers.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach not all obeyed in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 10:16-17, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 Israel has heard

READ • ROMANS 10:18-21 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from not all obeyed toward mission and humility. Read Romans 10:18-21 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's quotations from Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah argue that the problem is not a total absence of witness.

Interpretation in Scripture He also depicts God's outstretched hands toward a resistant people. Compare Isaiah 65:1–2 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 10:18-21.

Apply it today Let the image of God's patience temper harsh sermons about rejection.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach israel has heard in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 10:18-21, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Mission and humility

READ • ROMANS 10–11 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from israel has heard toward the next chapter. Read Romans 10–11 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The proclamation of a shared Lord sets up Paul's insistence in chapter 11 that Gentile believers cannot boast over Israel.

Interpretation in Scripture Mission and humility must remain together. Compare Romans 11:17–24 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 10–11.

Apply it today Plan intergenerational evangelism that communicates hope without cultural superiority.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach mission and humility in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 10–11, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 11

The remnant, the olive tree, and mercy

Context Paul answers whether God has rejected his people, uses Elijah's remnant and an olive tree to address Jew and Gentile, and ends in wonder at divine mercy and wisdom.

Purpose and audience Gentile Christians in particular hear a prohibition of arrogance. The passage grounds hope in God's faithfulness to Israel while leaving debated questions about the timing and manner of Israel's salvation.

Read the chapter Romans 11:1–36 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter’s teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of the remnant, the olive tree, and mercy serves Paul’s gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 11:1-6 By no means

Romans 11:7-10 Hardening and remnant

Romans 11:11-15 A purpose beyond stumbling

Romans 11:16-18 The olive tree

Romans 11:19-24 Stand by faith

Romans 11:25-27 A mystery concerning Israel

Romans 11:28-32 Irrevocable gifts

Romans 11:33-36 Praise after argument

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The doctrine of the remnant and irrevocable calling

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Paul asks whether God has rejected his people and answers, “By no means” in the sense of his emphatic denial (11:1). He identifies himself as an Israelite and remembers Elijah’s fear that he was alone. The remnant preserved by grace does not abolish the larger question of Israel’s future; it demonstrates that God’s faithfulness has not ceased even amid widespread unbelief.

Paul later describes Israel as beloved with respect to the patriarchs and says that God’s gifts and calling are irrevocable (11:28–29). These sentences prevent the reader from making the church’s inclusion into a story of divine forgetfulness. They also require restraint in claims about how Israel’s salvation will occur. “All Israel” in 11:26 has received several interpretations; Paul calls the matter a mystery and places it within God’s mercy.

The Hebrew Scriptures matter here: Abraham’s promise, Elijah’s story, Isaiah’s hope, and covenant language all contribute to the argument. A Christian congregation should study these writings as Scripture without asserting that Jewish people have no living relation to them. Respectful witness and serious disagreement can coexist without contempt.

For the next generation, read all of Romans 9–11 before making a claim from a single sentence. Write down Paul's grief, prayer, warning, and praise. If an interpretation produces pride over Israel, it must answer the explicit prohibition against boasting in 11:18.

The doctrine of the olive tree and mercy

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

The cultivated olive tree is an image of shared nourishment rooted in God's promises (11:16–24). Gentile believers are grafted in as wild branches. They must not boast over natural branches, because the root supports them. Their standing is by faith and calls for fear of presumption, not anxiety that God is capricious. God is also able to graft natural branches in again.

Paul's discussion of stumbling, jealousy, and future fullness has been interpreted in more than one way. Yet his pastoral address to Gentiles is unmistakable: do not become wise in your own eyes (11:25). The mystery is framed by the larger argument that God has consigned all to disobedience so that he may have mercy on all (11:32). The word "all" must be read in context, but it cannot be reduced to mercy for only one ethnic group.

The doxology in 11:33–36 is part of the doctrine. Paul has reasoned at length, cited Scripture, warned his audience, and then confessed the depth of God's wisdom. Worship does not replace study, and study cannot pretend to exhaust God's judgments. This is a model for handling disputes over election and Israel without arrogance.

A church can embody the olive-tree lesson by resisting antisemitism, teaching the Old Testament carefully, refusing ethnic superiority, and thanking God for mercy. Ask whether its songs, stories, and lessons make clear whose promises nourish the people of Christ.

Study 1 By no means

READ • ROMANS 11:1-6 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward hardening and remnant. Read Romans 11:1-6 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul himself is an Israelite and living evidence against a total rejection.

Interpretation in Scripture Elijah's story shows a remnant preserved by grace, which excludes boasting about works as the source of belonging. Compare 1 Kings 19:9–18 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 11:1-6.

Apply it today Correct any teaching that says God simply discarded the Jewish people.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach by no means in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 11:1-6, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 Hardening and remnant

READ • ROMANS 11:7-10 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from by no means toward a purpose beyond stumbling. Read Romans 11:7-10 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul distinguishes the elect remnant from the hardened and cites Scripture about dulled perception.

Interpretation in Scripture Read these severe words alongside his prayer, the warning to Gentiles, and the future hope that follows. Compare Isaiah 29:9–10 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 11:7-10.

Apply it today Do not convert a description in Paul's argument into prejudice against living Jewish communities.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach hardening and remnant in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 11:7-10, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 A purpose beyond stumbling

READ • ROMANS 11:11-15 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from hardening and remnant toward the olive tree. Read Romans 11:11-15 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Israel's stumbling is not an irrevocable fall in Paul's reasoning.

Interpretation in Scripture Gentile inclusion may provoke renewed response, and Paul envisages a richer future outcome. Compare Deuteronomy 32:21 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 11:11-15.

Apply it today Thank God for the gospel's reach without celebrating another community's loss.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a purpose beyond stumbling in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 11:11-15, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 The olive tree

READ • ROMANS 11:16-18 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a purpose beyond stumbling toward stand by faith. Read Romans 11:16-18 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Gentile believers are grafted into a cultivated tree whose root supports them.

Interpretation in Scripture The metaphor depicts shared nourishment from Israel's covenant story; it forbids boasting over branches. Compare Genesis 12:1–3 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 11:16-18.

Apply it today Study the Hebrew Scriptures as part of Christian formation while honoring Jewish readers who understand them differently.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the olive tree in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 11:16-18, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Stand by faith

READ • ROMANS 11:19-24 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the olive tree toward a mystery concerning israel. Read Romans 11:19-24 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Broken and grafted branches become a direct warning: faith, not ethnic superiority, is the ground of standing.

Interpretation in Scripture God can graft natural branches in again; severity and kindness belong together. Compare John 15:1–8 in its own

setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 11:19-24.

Apply it today Examine triumphal language in worship and teaching, and replace it with gratitude and humility.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach stand by faith in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 11:19-24, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 A mystery concerning Israel

READ • ROMANS 11:25-27 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from stand by faith toward irrevocable gifts. Read Romans 11:25-27 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul speaks of a partial hardening until the fullness of the Gentiles and says that all Israel will be saved.

Interpretation in Scripture Interpretations of 'all Israel' and the timing vary. The text itself directs readers to God's covenant mercy, not a timetable for speculation. Compare Isaiah 59:20–21 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a

connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 11:25-27.

Apply it today State the interpretive options fairly and refuse date-setting or antisemitic conclusions.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a mystery concerning israel in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 11:25-27, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 7 Irrevocable gifts

READ • ROMANS 11:28-32 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a mystery concerning israel toward praise after argument. Read Romans 11:28-32 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Even amid opposition to the gospel, Israel remains beloved with regard to the patriarchs; God's gifts and calling are irrevocable.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul concludes that mercy, rather than human superiority, frames the story of disobedience. Compare Jeremiah 31:31–34 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or

qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 11:28-32.

Apply it today Pray and witness with respect, remembering the mystery and mercy Paul emphasizes.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach irrevocable gifts in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 11:28-32, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Praise after argument

READ • ROMANS 11:33-36 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from irrevocable gifts toward the next chapter. Read Romans 11:33-36 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The doxology confesses the depth of God's wisdom and the limits of human counsel.

Interpretation in Scripture It follows serious reasoning rather than replacing it, and leads into the bodily worship of chapter 12. Compare Job 41:11 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 11:33-36.

Apply it today Let difficult study end in worship and an honest admission of what remains beyond us.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach praise after argument in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 11:33-36, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 12

Living worship and genuine love

Context The mercies of God in chapters 1–11 now become a call to present bodies, renew minds, exercise diverse gifts, and practice sincere love even toward enemies.

Purpose and audience Paul addresses the entire community. Doctrine becomes shared life, not a privilege reserved for teachers or an escape from ordinary relationships.

Read the chapter Romans 12:1–21 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter's teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of living worship and genuine love serves Paul's gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 12:1 Living sacrifice

Romans 12:2 A renewed mind

Romans 12:3-5 One body

Romans 12:6-8 Gifts for service

Romans 12:9-13 Love without hypocrisy

Romans 12:14-16 Bless and live together

Romans 12:17-19 Do not repay evil

Romans 12:20-21 Overcome evil with good

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

Worship, church, and mission

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 12 begins with an appeal by God's mercies. To present bodies as a living sacrifice is to make worship visible in ordinary action (12:1). Renewal of mind enables discernment; no member should think too highly of self. Diverse gifts belong to one body, and love must be sincere (12:2–9). Paul's commands include hospitality, sharing needs, patience in suffering, blessing persecutors, and refusing vengeance. Doctrine reaches its intended end in this kind of life.

Chapter 13 places the church in public life. Governing authorities are described according to their proper task of restraining evil and serving good. This does not turn every actual order into a good order. Read the passage with Romans 12, Acts 5:29, and the prophets' concern for justice. Paul also commands payment of what is owed and names love as the abiding debt. The approaching day calls for honorable conduct, not sensational date-setting.

Chapters 14–15 address differences over food and days. Those who have liberty must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not judge the others. A conscience matter calls for welcome and restraint for another's good. The kingdom's priorities are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (14:17). These chapters do not make

abuse a mere preference; they describe disputable practices among people seeking to honor the Lord.

The church's worship is therefore neither private feeling nor uniform custom. It is a body of people shaped by mercy, truth, accountability, and regard for the neighbor. Let younger believers see older ones disagree without contempt, give without performance, and use gifts for service rather than rank.

The phrase "living sacrifice" can be taught through the ordinary week. Bodies are present when people work, care for children, share a meal, use a phone, handle money, or stand beside a distressed neighbor. Presenting the body to God is therefore neither a one-time dramatic speech nor a vague inward wish. Romans 12:9–21 gives examples. Let a group select one of those commands, decide what it requires in its own setting, and report honestly on the practice next week.

The doctrine of gifts and sincere love

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 12 follows the long exposition of God's mercy with an appeal to present bodies as a living sacrifice. The renewed mind resists conformity and learns to discern God's will (12:1–2). This worship is not limited to a gathering or a song. It reaches the ordinary body in its work, rest, speech, and care. The "therefore" keeps the imperatives rooted in mercy already received.

Paul warns against inflated self-estimation and portrays believers as many members of one body (12:3–5). Prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, and mercy are exercised according to grace (12:6–8). The list is not a ladder on which visible gifts outrank quiet ones. Different functions exist for the body's good, and a leader should not treat a gift as freedom from correction.

The commands that follow describe love without hypocrisy: honor others, share needs, practice hospitality, bless persecutors, rejoice and weep with others, refuse vengeance, and overcome evil with good (12:9–21). Such love can require protection and truthful reporting of harm. Refusing personal retaliation does not require a victim to remain in danger or a church to conceal an offense.

For teaching, name both a gift and the neighbor it serves. Invite younger believers to notice those who host, give, visit, and listen, not only those who speak publicly. Ask whether a congregation's budget, conflict practices, and treatment of overlooked members match the love it proclaims.

Study 1 Living sacrifice

READ • ROMANS 12:1 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward a renewed mind. Read Romans 12:1 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Therefore points back to God's mercies.

Interpretation in Scripture Bodily presentation to God is a living act of worship, encompassing ordinary conduct rather than only a ritual moment. Compare 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 12:1.

Apply it today Ask what worship means for schedules, meals, work, and care for neighbors this week.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach living sacrifice in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 12:1, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 2 A renewed mind

READ • ROMANS 12:2 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from living sacrifice toward one body. Read Romans 12:2 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Resisting conformity and undergoing transformation belong together.

Interpretation in Scripture Discernment grows as the mind is renewed, rather than by unexamined rejection of everything in the surrounding culture. Compare Ephesians 4:17–24 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 12:2.

Apply it today Teach young people to test messages with Scripture, reason, prayer, and a wise community.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a renewed mind in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 12:2, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 3 One body

READ • ROMANS 12:3-5 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a renewed mind toward gifts for service. Read Romans 12:3-5 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul warns against inflated self-estimation and pictures many members in one body.

Interpretation in Scripture Different functions belong to people who are members of one another. Compare 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 12:3-5.

Apply it today Give less visible members real voice in planning and decision-making.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach one body in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 12:3-5, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 Gifts for service

READ • ROMANS 12:6-8 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from one body toward love without hypocrisy. Read Romans 12:6-8 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and mercy are exercised according to grace.

Interpretation in Scripture The list is illustrative of diverse service, not a ranking of spiritual worth. Compare 1 Peter 4:10–11 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 12:6-8.

Apply it today Mentor gifts with safeguards, generosity, diligence, and compassion.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach gifts for service in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 12:6-8, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Love without hypocrisy

READ • ROMANS 12:9-13 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from gifts for service toward bless and live together. Read Romans 12:9-13 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul gathers commands about honoring others, patience in tribulation, prayer, sharing needs, and hospitality.

Interpretation in Scripture Genuine love has material and communal form. Compare 1 Corinthians 13:1–13 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 12:9-13.

Apply it today Make a church budget reflect its stated love for those in need.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach love without hypocrisy in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 12:9-13, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 Bless and live together

READ • ROMANS 12:14-16 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from love without hypocrisy toward do not repay evil. Read Romans 12:14-16 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Blessing persecutors, rejoicing and weeping together, and associating with people of low position challenge pride.

Interpretation in Scripture Empathy is a discipline of shared life. Compare Philippians 2:1–5 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 12:14-16.

Apply it today Let younger and older members tell their stories without rushing to correct their emotions.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach bless and live together in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 12:14-16, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 Do not repay evil

READ • ROMANS 12:17-19 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from bless and live together toward overcome evil with good. Read Romans 12:17-19 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul forbids private vengeance and calls believers to seek peace as far as it depends on them.

Interpretation in Scripture This does not erase the need for justice, protection, or truthful reporting of harm. Compare Matthew 5:38–48 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 12:17-19.

Apply it today Protect victims and use lawful remedies while rejecting retaliatory cruelty.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach do not repay evil in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 12:17-19, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Overcome evil with good

READ • ROMANS 12:20-21 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from do not repay evil toward the next chapter. Read Romans 12:20-21 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul cites Proverbs 25 about feeding an enemy and concludes with active goodness.

Interpretation in Scripture The image of burning coals is debated; it must not turn kindness into disguised revenge. Compare Proverbs 25:21–22 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 12:20-21.

Apply it today Choose one safe, concrete act of good that refuses an escalating conflict.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach overcome evil with good in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 12:20-21, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 13

Public responsibility and the debt of love

Context Paul addresses governing authorities, taxes and honor, neighbor-love, and alert living in light of the approaching day. The chapter belongs beside Romans 12's rejection of vengeance and the wider Bible's witness against injustice.

Purpose and audience A vulnerable minority community needed guidance for public conduct. Modern readers must interpret the passage without treating every state action as morally right.

Read the chapter Romans 13:1–14 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter’s teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of public responsibility and the debt of love serves Paul’s gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 13:1-2 Authorities under God

Romans 13:3-4 A public servant

Romans 13:5-7 Conscience and dues

Romans 13:8 The continuing debt

Romans 13:9-10 Love fulfills the law

Romans 13:11-12 The approaching day

Romans 13:13 Walk honorably

Romans 13:14 Put on Christ

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The doctrine of authority and public good

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 13:1–7 describes governing authorities in relation to their proper service: restraining wrongdoing and commending good. Paul asks believers to be subject to authorities and to give taxes, revenue, respect, and honor as due. This guidance follows Romans 12's refusal of private vengeance. The state's role in addressing wrongdoing does not make the church free to retaliate on its own.

A description of office is not a declaration that every official act is just. Israel's prophets rebuked rulers; the apostles in Acts 5:29 insisted on obeying God when commands conflicted. Christians have debated the limits of submission in settings of persecution and abuse. The passage cannot be used to demand silence from victims or to pronounce corruption righteous. Its own account of authority as a servant for good supplies a moral measure.

Conscience matters in 13:5. Believers are not asked merely to calculate the risk of punishment; they are asked to act responsibly in public life. Paying lawful obligations, refusing bribery, caring for neighbors, and using lawful avenues to seek justice may all be part of that responsibility. The forms vary by place and time, so an application must attend to actual circumstances.

Invite a group to place Romans 12:17–21, 13:1–7, and Acts 5:27–29 side by side. Ask what each passage addresses and where a teacher must make a careful inference. The coming generation needs both respect for public order and the courage to protect people when an authority fails its task.

The doctrine of love as fulfillment

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Paul turns from what is owed in taxes and honor to the continuing debt of love (13:8). Love of neighbor sums up commandments against adultery, murder, theft, coveting, and other harm (13:9–10). This does not set love against moral commands as though kindness could authorize injury. Love fulfills the law by seeking the neighbor's good and refusing to do harm.

The approaching day gives urgency to honorable living (13:11–14). Paul calls believers to put away revelry, drunkenness, sexual misconduct, quarrelling, and jealousy and to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. The list joins visible conduct to relational motives. A congregation that denounces one private vice while thriving on envy and factions has not taken the whole exhortation seriously.

The chapter therefore brings doctrine into public and personal practice. Christians should honor obligations and seek just structures, while remembering that the neighbor is more than a case or a political symbol. The debt of love continues after a tax has been paid. It asks what will protect another person's life, dignity, and possibility of flourishing.

Ask younger readers to identify one neighbor affected by a decision at school, work, or church. What would it mean to do no harm in that concrete case? Then ask how putting on Christ shapes motives as well as public behavior. These questions keep the doctrine close to Paul's closing exhortation.

Augustine and the moment of turning

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In Confessions VIII.12 Augustine recounts a prolonged struggle of the will. He heard a call to take up and read, opened the apostolic text, and encountered Romans 13:13–14. He describes a decisive clearing of doubt. The scene is often shortened into a miracle of opening a page, but the book tells a longer story of searching, argument, prayer, habit, and the grace that brought him to a decision. It does not authorize a doctrine that every believer must have the same dramatic conversion moment.

Paul's instruction is to walk honorably, put away revelry, quarrelling, jealousy, and disordered desire, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ (13:13–14). The words name concrete choices, but the larger letter has already established God's prior mercy and the Spirit's life. Augustine's account shows how a hearer may move from understanding a command to surrendering to Christ. The command is not a substitute for grace; it calls the person to respond to it.

Augustine's On the Spirit and the Letter later reasons that a law can disclose what should be done while the Spirit of grace aids the will. Compare Romans 7:7–25 and 8:1–13. Transformation reaches desire and action. It cannot be reduced to collecting more information, adopting religious language, or maintaining an impressive appearance. The fruit must be seen in truthfulness, restraint, love, and the refusal to harm a neighbor.

A teacher can invite a reader to ask: What truth do I already understand but resist? What habit am I provisioning? What help do I need to take one faithful step? The story can inspire an honest response without making someone else's pace of change a reason for shame.

Transformation as the vision of Theos

IDENTITY • FREEDOM • HOPE • TRANSFORMATION

The name Theos Transforming Ministries directs our attention to the God who changes people. Romans 12:1–2 is an anchor for that vision: by God's mercies, believers present their bodies in worship and are transformed through renewal of mind so that they may discern his will. The passive form of "be transformed" points to a work received, while presenting bodies and resisting conformity require active response. The vision holds grace and obedience together.

Romans gives transformation a sequence without making it a mechanical timetable. God reconciles through Christ (5:1–11), joins believers to his death and resurrection (6:1–11), gives life by the Spirit (8:1–17), and gathers a body that exercises gifts and sincere love (12:3–21). The mind learns to judge differently; the body acts differently; the community handles conflict differently. This change is often gradual and must be assessed by faithfulness, not by publicity or dramatic claims.

A ministry can test its teaching by asking what changes after a lesson. Do listeners gain a deeper grasp of the text? Do leaders welcome correction? Are vulnerable people safer? Are gifts used for service? Are believers equipped to pray, repent, reconcile, and care for neighbors? These are not numerical substitutes for God's work. They are practical signs that the proclaimed gospel is being lived.

For younger readers, transformation can be described as becoming more like Christ by the Spirit in daily choices. It does not demand a perfect life before belonging. Nor does it leave destructive patterns untouched. Augustine's journey reminds us that knowledge must reach the will; Paul's letter reminds us that the change begins with God's mercy and becomes visible in a community of love.

Study 1 Authorities under God

READ • ROMANS 13:1-2 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward a public servant. Read Romans 13:1-2 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul calls for ordered submission and describes authorities as established under divine sovereignty.

Interpretation in Scripture The text is not a claim that a ruler is God or that every command deserves obedience; compare Acts 5:29 and biblical prophetic critique. Compare Acts 5:27–29 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 13:1-2.

Apply it today Respect lawful order while refusing commands that require wrongdoing.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach authorities under god in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 13:1-2, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 A public servant

READ • ROMANS 13:3-4 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from authorities under god toward conscience and dues. Read Romans 13:3-4 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The authority is described by its proper function: rewarding good and restraining evil.

Interpretation in Scripture That moral description provides a standard by which actual conduct can be examined. Compare Isaiah 1:16–17 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 13:3-4.

Apply it today Pray for officials, report abuses, and support institutions that protect the vulnerable.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a public servant in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 13:3-4, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 Conscience and dues

READ • ROMANS 13:5-7 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a public servant toward the continuing debt. Read Romans 13:5-7 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul joins concern about punishment to conscience and names taxes, revenue, respect, and honor.

Interpretation in Scripture Responsible participation need not mean uncritical praise. Compare Luke 20:20–26 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 13:5-7.

Apply it today Pay what is owed and exercise civic accountability honestly.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach conscience and dues in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 13:5-7, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 The continuing debt

READ • ROMANS 13:8 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from conscience and dues toward love fulfills the law. Read Romans 13:8 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense After financial obligations comes the enduring debt of love.

Interpretation in Scripture It is never fully discharged because a neighbor remains a person to be served. Compare Matthew 22:34–40 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 13:8.

Apply it today Make neighbor-love visible through fair pay and faithful promises.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the continuing debt in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 13:8, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Love fulfills the law

READ • ROMANS 13:9-10 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the continuing debt toward the approaching day. Read Romans 13:9-10 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul collects commandments against harm and summarizes them in love of neighbor.

Interpretation in Scripture Love cannot be used to excuse what harms; it fulfills the moral aim of the commands. Compare Leviticus 19:18 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies

Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 13:9-10.

Apply it today Ask who bears the cost of a proposed church decision and whether it protects the neighbor.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach love fulfills the law in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 13:9-10, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 The approaching day

READ • ROMANS 13:11-12 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from love fulfills the law toward walk honorably. Read Romans 13:11-12 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's urgency rests on salvation's future completion.

Interpretation in Scripture Night and day are moral images calling believers to wakefulness, not a license to predict a date. Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 13:11-12.

Apply it today Prepare the next generation for patient faithfulness rather than sensational timetables.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the approaching day in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 13:11-12, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 Walk honorably

READ • ROMANS 13:13 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the approaching day toward put on christ. Read Romans 13:13 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Revelry, drunkenness, sexual disorder, quarrelling, and jealousy are named as conduct unsuitable to the day.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul connects personal and relational ethics. Compare Galatians 5:19–21 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 13:13.

Apply it today Address hidden rivalries alongside visible public misconduct.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach walk honorably in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 13:13, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Put on Christ

READ • ROMANS 13:14 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from walk honorably toward the next chapter. Read Romans 13:14 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The final command sums up a new identity and a practical refusal to provision desires that draw one toward sin.

Interpretation in Scripture Clothing imagery is about a sustained pattern of life. Compare Ephesians 4:22–24 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 13:14.

Apply it today Plan routines and relationships that support the character of Christ.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach put on christ in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 13:14, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 14

Welcome across disputed practices

Context Paul addresses differences over food and days among believers who belong to the same Lord. The strong and weak must refuse contempt and judgment, limit liberty for love, and pursue peace.

Purpose and audience Mixed communities may differ in conscience and inherited practice. Paul is discussing disputable matters, not permission to conceal abuse or abandon the gospel.

Read the chapter Romans 14:1–23 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter's teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of welcome across disputed practices serves Paul's gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 14:1-4 Welcome without quarrels
Romans 14:5-6 Days before the Lord
Romans 14:7-9 Belonging in life and death
Romans 14:10-12 God's judgment seat
Romans 14:13-15 Do not wound a sibling
Romans 14:16-18 The kingdom's priorities
Romans 14:19-21 Build one another up
Romans 14:22–15:1 Faith and responsibility

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The doctrine of conscience in disputed matters

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 14 addresses believers who differ over food and days. One eats freely, another abstains; one esteems a day, another treats days alike (14:1–6). Paul forbids the eater's contempt and the abstainer's judgment. Both stand before the same Lord. The dispute concerns practices a believer can offer to God with thanksgiving, not permission to call exploitation or violence a harmless preference.

Conscience is important because a person can sin by acting against conviction even when a thing is not unclean in itself (14:14, 23). Yet conscience also needs formation. It is neither a private revelation that binds everyone nor a nuisance that the confident may simply ignore. Paul asks the community to hold truthful freedom and patient regard together.

The weak and strong labels describe positions in the argument, not rankings of spiritual worth. A strong believer who uses liberty carelessly may wound a sibling for whom Christ died (14:15). A believer who abstains may wrongly condemn the one whom God has welcomed. Each must stop making personal practice the measure of another's standing with God.

For group teaching, identify the actual issue Paul names before importing a contemporary disagreement. Ask whether the modern case is genuinely disputable, whether it harms others, and whether the community can make room for conscience. The next generation needs a model of conviction that can listen without surrendering truth or dignity.

The doctrine of liberty governed by love

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

The kingdom is not centered on eating and drinking but on righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (14:17). Paul therefore calls believers to pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding (14:19). Liberty is a real good. Its voluntary restraint for another's sake can also be a real good. This is not a warrant for a domineering person to control everyone else's choices through a claim of offense.

Paul's reasoning moves into chapter 15. The strong should bear with others and seek a neighbor's good for building up, taking Christ's self-giving as their pattern (15:1–3). Welcome is a work of the whole body, not merely the private politeness of an individual. A congregation can create room for conversation, explain shared decisions, and avoid shaming members whose conscience is still being formed.

It is useful to distinguish a liberty, a conscience, and a danger. The first can be exercised or set aside; the second calls for patient attention; the third requires protection and truthful intervention. A church that puts every dispute into the same category will either police harmless differences or neglect real harm. Romans 14 asks for discernment, not indifference.

Invite a class to write two explanations of a disputed practice, one from each person's perspective, before proposing a common approach. Can each person thank the Lord without despising the other? Can the group

pursue peace without coercion? The exercise makes the doctrine of love visible in a real conversation.

Study 1 Welcome without quarrels

READ • ROMANS 14:1-4 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward days before the lord. Read Romans 14:1-4 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense A believer who eats everything must not despise one who abstains, and the abstainer must not judge the eater.

Interpretation in Scripture God has welcomed the other servant. Compare 1 Corinthians 8:1–13 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 14:1-4.

Apply it today Distinguish a conscience matter from a harm that requires correction; then make room for honest difference.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach welcome without quarrels in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 14:1-4, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 Days before the Lord

READ • ROMANS 14:5-6 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from welcome without quarrels toward belonging in life and death. Read Romans 14:5-6 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Some esteem one day above another; others treat days alike.

Interpretation in Scripture Each acts before the Lord with thanksgiving, so conscience is exercised in relationship to him rather than as a weapon. Compare Colossians 2:16–17 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 14:5-6.

Apply it today Explain your practice without demanding that every congregation adopt it.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach days before the lord in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 14:5-6, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 Belonging in life and death

READ • ROMANS 14:7-9 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from days before the lord toward god's judgment seat. Read Romans 14:7-9 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense No one lives or dies to oneself.

Interpretation in Scripture Christ's death and life establish his lordship over the community's whole existence. Compare 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 14:7-9.

Apply it today Honor the person behind the disputed practice before defending your preference.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach belonging in life and death in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 14:7-9, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 God's judgment seat

READ • ROMANS 14:10-12 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from belonging in life and death toward do not wound a sibling. Read Romans 14:10-12 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Both contempt and judgment are checked by the fact that each gives account to God.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul does not ban responsible discernment; he denies the right to usurp God's place over a sibling. Compare Matthew 7:1–5 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 14:10-12.

Apply it today Replace public mockery with patient conversation.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach god's judgment seat in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 14:10-12, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 Do not wound a sibling

READ • ROMANS 14:13-15 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from god's judgment seat toward the kingdom's priorities. Read Romans 14:13-15 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense A practice may be permitted in itself yet become destructive when used without regard for another's conscience.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul measures freedom by the neighbor for whom Christ died. Compare 1 Corinthians 10:23–33 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 14:13-15.

Apply it today In a shared setting, choose care over winning a symbolic argument.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach do not wound a sibling in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 14:13-15, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 6 The kingdom's priorities

READ • ROMANS 14:16-18 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from do not wound a sibling toward build one another up. Read Romans 14:16-18 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Food and drink are not the kingdom's center.

Interpretation in Scripture Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit locate the community's life in God's reign. Compare Galatians 5:22–23 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies

Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 14:16-18.

Apply it today Ask whether disputes have displaced prayer, justice, peace, and joy.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the kingdom's priorities in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 14:16-18, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 Build one another up

READ • ROMANS 14:19-21 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the kingdom's priorities toward faith and responsibility. Read Romans 14:19-21 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul calls believers to pursue peace and mutual edification.

Interpretation in Scripture Voluntary restraint is a gift when a liberty would trip another believer, though coercive control is not the aim. Compare Ephesians 4:1–6 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 14:19-21.

Apply it today Set shared practices through listening, not pressure from the loudest group.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach build one another up in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 14:19-21, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 8 Faith and responsibility

READ • ROMANS 14:22–15:1 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from build one another up toward the next chapter. Read Romans 14:22–15:1 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Conscience matters because acting against it can become sin.

Interpretation in Scripture The strong are then called to bear the weaknesses of others, moving the argument toward Christ's example in chapter 15. Compare Romans 15:1–7 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 14:22–15:1.

Apply it today Teach the formation of conscience and provide space for it to mature.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach faith and responsibility in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 14:22–15:1, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 15

Christ's welcome and Paul's mission

Context The letter's final major argument urges the strong to bear with others, calls Jew and Gentile to unified praise, and explains Paul's ministry, Jerusalem collection, and intended journey via Rome to Spain.

Purpose and audience The Roman churches should welcome one another and become partners in Paul's mission. Theology leads to hospitality, generosity, and concrete travel plans.

Read the chapter Romans 15:1–33 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter’s teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of christ's welcome and paul's mission serves Paul’s gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 15:1-3 Bear with others

Romans 15:4-6 Scriptures and hope

Romans 15:7 Welcome one another

Romans 15:8-13 One praise among nations

Romans 15:14-16 A minister of the gospel

Romans 15:17-21 What Christ accomplished

Romans 15:22-29 Jerusalem, Rome, Spain

Romans 15:30-33 Strive together in prayer

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The doctrine of welcome in Christ

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 15:7 gathers the earlier dispute into a command to receive one another because Christ has received believers. The basis is not an agreement on every custom, nor is it a denial of truth. Christ's own self-giving guides the strong to seek the neighbor's good, while the Scriptures give endurance and hope (15:1–6). Harmony aims at common praise of God.

Paul then speaks of Christ serving the circumcised to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, and of Gentiles glorifying God for mercy (15:8–13). His chain of quotations from Israel's Scriptures shows that unity between Jew and Gentile belongs within God's long purpose. Gentile worship does not begin by erasing Jewish history; Jewish believers are not required to carry every inherited custom as a rule for all nations.

Welcome is observable. Does a visitor understand what the church teaches? Are people of different backgrounds able to pray and serve together? Does a member whose practice differs on a disputable matter have a voice? A church may announce welcome from a pulpit and still arrange its habits so that only one group belongs comfortably. Paul calls the congregation to examine that gap.

For the next generation, read Psalm 117 and Isaiah 11 alongside Romans 15:8–13. Let students see how Paul's hope for the nations is anchored in Scripture. Then invite them to design one practice of hospitality that would make Christ's welcome credible to someone previously kept at a distance.

The doctrine of shared mission and generous partnership

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Paul describes his ministry among Gentiles as a grace received and credits Christ for what has been accomplished through him in word and deed by the Spirit (15:14–19). His ambition to preach where Christ has not been named is a particular calling. It does not diminish the labor of those who sustain existing congregations, teach children, host gatherings, or care for the poor.

His travel plan joins Jerusalem, Rome, and Spain (15:22–29). The collection for Jerusalem expresses material fellowship from Gentile churches toward Jewish believers. Mission is therefore not only speech in a new place. It includes resources, accountability, gratitude for spiritual gifts received, and service to people in need. Paul's request for prayer about danger and acceptance of his service (15:30–33) shows that an apostle depends on others.

A congregation should make its mission budget understandable and its partnerships reciprocal. Those who give should not use money to dominate, and those sent should not pretend to be self-sufficient. When plans change, honesty honors the people who prayed and helped. A faithful report can name difficulties as well as achievements.

Ask young ministers to identify a messenger, a host, a teacher, a giver, and an intercessor within the same mission. Each role matters. Then read the greetings of chapter 16, where Paul names co-workers, and ask whether the community remembers the people whose unseen labor made its ministry possible.

Study 1 Bear with others

READ • ROMANS 15:1-3 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward scriptures and hope. Read Romans 15:1-3 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The strong must seek a neighbor's good for building up rather than pleasing themselves.

Interpretation in Scripture Christ's own self-giving, read through Psalm 69, supplies the pattern. Compare Psalm 69:7–9 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 15:1-3.

Apply it today Leaders should carry burdens without silencing the people they mean to help.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach bear with others in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 15:1-3, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 Scriptures and hope

READ • ROMANS 15:4-6 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from bear with others toward welcome one another. Read Romans 15:4-6 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Earlier writings instruct and encourage the community, producing endurance and hope.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul prays for harmony and common praise, not uniformity of every custom. Compare 2 Timothy 3:14–17 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 15:4-6.

Apply it today Read difficult biblical passages with patience across generations.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach scriptures and hope in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 15:4-6, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 Welcome one another

READ • ROMANS 15:7 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from scriptures and hope toward one praise among nations. Read Romans 15:7 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The command rests on Christ's welcome and aims at God's glory.

Interpretation in Scripture It gathers chapters 14–15 in a concise pastoral instruction. Compare John 13:34–35 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 15:7.

Apply it today Design gatherings and leadership pathways where newcomers can actually belong.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach welcome one another in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 15:7, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 One praise among nations

READ • ROMANS 15:8-13 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from welcome one another toward a minister of the gospel. Read Romans 15:8-13 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Christ serves the circumcised to confirm patriarchal promises, and Gentiles glorify God for mercy.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul's chain of quotations makes Jew–Gentile worship the fruit of God's faithfulness. Compare Psalm 117:1–2 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 15:8-13.

Apply it today Teach the Old Testament sources of Paul's hope and make room for multiple languages in praise.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach one praise among nations in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 15:8-13, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 5 A minister of the gospel

READ • ROMANS 15:14-16 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from one praise among nations toward what christ accomplished. Read Romans 15:14-16 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul praises the Romans' goodness and knowledge while reminding them boldly of his grace-given commission to Gentiles.

Interpretation in Scripture His priestly imagery describes their offering made acceptable by the Holy Spirit. Compare Acts 9:15–16 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point

here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 15:14-16.

Apply it today Affirm a community's gifts while still offering needed correction with humility.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a minister of the gospel in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 15:14-16, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 6 What Christ accomplished

READ • ROMANS 15:17-21 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a minister of the gospel toward jerusalem, rome, spain. Read Romans 15:17-21 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul credits Christ for his ministry in word and deed, by signs and the Spirit.

Interpretation in Scripture His ambition to preach where Christ was not named is a particular calling, not a condemnation of those who nurture existing churches. Compare Isaiah 52:15 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 15:17-21.

Apply it today Value both frontier mission and long-term pastoral care.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach what christ accomplished in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 15:17-21, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 Jerusalem, Rome, Spain

READ • ROMANS 15:22-29 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from what christ accomplished toward strive together in prayer. Read Romans 15:22-29 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul's travel plan joins a material collection for Jerusalem to a proposed mission in Spain.

Interpretation in Scripture Gentile churches share resources with Jewish believers as an expression of fellowship. Compare 2 Corinthians 8:1–15 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 15:22-29.

Apply it today Connect missionary vision to transparent finances and reciprocal partnership.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach jerusalem, rome, spain in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 15:22-29, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 8 Strive together in prayer

READ • ROMANS 15:30-33 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from jerusalem, rome, spain toward the next chapter. Read Romans 15:30-33 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul asks for prayer about danger, acceptance of his service, and joyful arrival in Rome.

Interpretation in Scripture Even an apostle is dependent on others and does not pretend to control outcomes. Compare Ephesians 6:18–20 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 15:30-33.

Apply it today Pray for missionaries by name and listen when their plans change.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach strive together in prayer in a congregation with people of different ages

and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 15:30-33, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

CHAPTER 16

Co-workers, greetings, and final praise

Context The closing chapter names Phoebe, Prisca, Aquila, and many other co-workers, includes a warning about divisive teaching, relays greetings from Paul's circle, and ends with a doxology.

Purpose and audience The names disclose a network of women and men, households, migrants, and laborers who sustained the gospel. The letter's doctrine is embodied in real relationships.

Read the chapter Romans 16:1–27 in your NKJV Bible. Notice how its opening connects with the previous chapter and how its ending prepares the next.

The chapter in one movement The doctrine exposition and eight passage studies that follow move through this chapter’s teaching. Their headings guide the argument but do not replace the inspired text. Ask how the theme of co-workers, greetings, and final praise serves Paul’s gospel and the life of the community.

Passage map

Romans 16:1-2 Receive Phoebe
Romans 16:3-5 Prisca and Aquila
Romans 16:6-7 Mary and Junia
Romans 16:8-16 A network of affection
Romans 16:17-20 Watch divisive teaching
Romans 16:21-23 Greetings from the team
Romans 16:25-26 The revealed mystery
Romans 16:27 Glory through Jesus Christ

Begin with observation

Which repeated words, questions, Old Testament references, or changes of speaker do you notice? Write your first observation before reading the exposition.

The doctrine of shared ministry

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Romans 16 reveals the people behind the letter's arguments and travel plans. Paul commends Phoebe of Cenchreae and asks the Romans to receive and assist her (16:1–2). He greets Prisca and Aquila as co-workers who risked themselves and hosted a church. Mary labored; Junia and Andronicus shared imprisonment. These names are evidence that the gospel was carried by a broad network of women and men, not by one public speaker alone.

Some titles in the chapter are debated. The terms used for Phoebe's service and for Junia's relationship to the apostles have received differing interpretations. A teacher should present the textual question fairly. Whatever conclusion one reaches about formal office, Paul's praise of their substantial work and his instruction to assist Phoebe should not be minimized.

Tertius identifies himself as the one who wrote down the letter (16:22). That detail reminds us of the human collaboration involved in a first-century letter. A scribe, hosts, travelers, patrons, and congregations all had parts to play. Paul remains the ancient author; the existence of helpers does not erase his authorship. Their labor makes the message's journey visible.

A church can name its hidden workers and provide them with support, rest, and a voice. The next generation should learn to credit the people who taught, carried, hosted, copied, prayed, gave, and protected. The doctrine of the body becomes credible when the body's members are seen.

The doctrine of discernment and final praise

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

Paul warns against those who create divisions contrary to the teaching received and deceive the unsuspecting (16:17–20). Discernment is necessary because persuasive speech can hide self-serving conduct. Yet an honest question or a report of harm must not be dismissed as divisive merely because it unsettles a leader. The test concerns truth, conduct, and the effect on vulnerable people.

The final doxology praises God's power to establish the believers according to the gospel, the revelation of a mystery long hidden and now made known among the nations for the obedience of faith (16:25–27). These words echo the opening of Romans. Paul's deep reasoning about sin, grace, Israel, and church life closes in praise to the only wise God through Jesus Christ.

The ending invites a reader to hold doctrine and relationship together. The warning asks a church to protect the gospel and its people; the greetings ask it to honor co-workers; the doxology asks it to locate the whole work in God's wisdom. A ministry that claims doctrinal purity but manipulates people has not heard all three movements.

Conclude a group study by reading Romans 1:1–7 beside 16:25–27. What themes frame the letter? Name one person whose faithful service you have overlooked, one teaching that needs careful testing, and one reason for gratitude. This is a practical way to end Romans where Paul ends—with obedience, community, and praise.

Study 1 Receive Phoebe

READ • ROMANS 16:1-2 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the chapter opening toward prisca and aquila. Read Romans 16:1-2 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul commends Phoebe, associated with the church in Cenchreae, and asks the Romans to assist her.

Interpretation in Scripture The terms for her service and patronage have generated discussion about ministry roles; her entrusted mission is unmistakable. Compare Acts 18:18–27 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 16:1-2.

Apply it today Recognize and support women who carry substantial responsibility in the church.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach receive phoebe in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 16:1-2, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 2 Prisca and Aquila

READ • ROMANS 16:3-5 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from receive phoebe toward mary and junia. Read Romans 16:3-5 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The couple are Paul's co-workers who risked their lives and hosted a church in their house.

Interpretation in Scripture Hospitality, sacrifice, and shared labor stand behind the public life of the letter. Compare 1 Corinthians 16:19 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 16:3-5.

Apply it today Thank hosts and practical workers by name, and protect them from endless unseen demands.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach prisca and aquila in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 16:3-5, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 3 Mary and Junia

READ • ROMANS 16:6-7 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from prisca and aquila toward a network of affection. Read Romans 16:6-7 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul praises Mary's labor and names Andronicus and Junia, his kin and fellow prisoners.

Interpretation in Scripture The phrase about apostles in verse 7 is debated in translation and interpretation; either reading warrants careful recognition of their costly service. Compare Acts 16:1–5 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 16:6-7.

Apply it today Let disputed titles prompt study, not erasure of a worker's contribution.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach mary and junia in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 16:6-7, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 4 A network of affection

READ • ROMANS 16:8-16 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from mary and junia toward watch divisive teaching. Read Romans 16:8-16 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Repeated greetings to beloved people, households, and laborers show how the gospel traveled through relationships.

Interpretation in Scripture Names are part of the evidence of a diverse community, not disposable closing material. Compare Philippians 4:2–3 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 16:8-16.

Apply it today Map who sustains your congregation and include those usually left out of public thanks.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach a network of affection in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 16:8-16, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 5 Watch divisive teaching

READ • ROMANS 16:17-20 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from a network of affection toward greetings from the team. Read Romans 16:17-20 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Paul warns against those who cause divisions contrary to received teaching and exploit the unsuspecting.

Interpretation in Scripture His call for discernment should not be turned against good-faith questions or those reporting harm. Compare 1 John 4:1–6 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or

qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 16:17-20.

Apply it today Evaluate teachers by truthfulness, conduct, and care for people, not charisma alone.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach watch divisive teaching in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 16:17-20, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?



Study 6 Greetings from the team

READ • ROMANS 16:21-23 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from watch divisive teaching toward the revealed mystery. Read Romans 16:21-23 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense Timothy, Tertius the scribe, Gaius the host, Erastus, and Quartus appear in the final greetings.

Interpretation in Scripture Tertius's own line reminds us that a letter dictated by Paul passed through human collaboration. Compare Acts 19:22 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul's point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 16:21-23.

Apply it today Teach the next generation that faithful ministry is shared work with many roles.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach greetings from the team in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 16:21-23, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 7 The revealed mystery

READ • ROMANS 16:25-26 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from greetings from the team toward glory through jesus christ. Read Romans 16:25-26 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The doxology celebrates God's power to establish believers through the gospel, a long-hidden mystery now made known among the nations for the obedience of faith.

Interpretation in Scripture It returns to the letter's opening themes. Compare Ephesians 3:1–12 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 16:25-26.

Apply it today Review the whole letter before reducing it to a favorite isolated verse.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach the revealed mystery in a congregation with people of different ages and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 16:25-26, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Study 8 Glory through Jesus Christ

READ • ROMANS 16:27 • NKJV

Place in the chapter Paul moves from the revealed mystery toward the next chapter. Read Romans 16:27 in that movement; the chapter opening explains the audience and purpose.

Literal sense The final praise directs glory to the only wise God through Jesus Christ.

Interpretation in Scripture Paul's argument ends in worship, as in 11:33–36; teaching should likewise yield gratitude and a life of obedience. Compare Romans 11:33–36 in its own setting. Notice how that passage illuminates or qualifies Paul’s point here; a connection between texts should never replace the words of Romans 16:27.

Apply it today Write a brief prayer naming one truth learned and one neighbor you will serve.

For the church and the coming generation Consider how to teach glory through jesus christ in a congregation with people of different ages

and backgrounds. Ask younger readers to name a practice that follows from the passage and a safeguard against using it to harm a neighbor.

Reflect and respond

What is Paul asking his first hearers to understand in Romans 16:27, and what one response would make that understanding visible in your community?

Chapter notes and response

Conclusion and teaching guide

Paul's argument begins with the gospel as God's power and ends with praise to the only wise God. Between those points he refuses human boasting, centers righteousness in Christ, announces life by the Spirit, grieves for Israel, and describes a community that welcomes, serves, gives, and prays. The church should not stop at a doctrine it can recite. The letter asks what mercy makes possible in bodies, relationships, public life, and mission.

Teach Romans in sequence. Give extra time to chapters 3–4 on justification, 6–8 on union with Christ and the Spirit, 9–11 on Israel and mercy, and 12–16 on the visible habits of the gospel. Invite disagreement about debated passages without surrendering careful reading. Let people name questions the study has not settled.

A closing practice: read Romans 12:1–21 and 15:5–7 together. Name one mercy received, one neighbor to welcome, and one action the group will take before its next meeting.

The title of this study gathers three strands of Paul's argument. Identity is the Spirit-given belonging of children and heirs in Romans 8. Freedom is the new allegiance in Christ that breaks sin's mastery in Romans 6–7 and answers shame with no condemnation in Romans 8. Hope begins with peace and reconciliation in Romans 5 and persists through groaning because nothing can separate believers from God's love in Christ in Romans 8. These promises do not erase anxiety, public accountability, or suffering. They help the church accompany people truthfully through them.

Theological questions for further study

Righteousness and faith

In Romans 3:21–26, the phrase about Jesus and faith is discussed as human faith in Christ or Christ's faithfulness. Compare translations, read Galatians 2:16–21, and ask how each reading describes God's initiative and our response.

Sin, Adam, and Christ

Romans 5:12–21 supports multiple accounts of inherited sin and universal scope. Note Paul's contrasts before settling a doctrinal system; compare 1 Corinthians 15:21–28.

The first person in Romans 7

The speaker in 7:7–25 has been read as Paul, Adam, Israel, humanity under law, or a believer's struggle. Read 7:5–6 and 8:1–4 on both sides and state what the passage clearly says before identifying the speaker.

The Holy Spirit

Romans 8 presents the Spirit as indwelling, life-giving, leading, witnessing, and interceding. Compare John 14–16, Galatians 5:16–26, and 1 Corinthians 12. Distinguish Paul's stated claims from later theological formulations, while recognizing the Father, Son, and Spirit in his argument.

Israel and election

Romans 9–11 should be read as a single argument. Distinguish divine calling, human response, Gentile inclusion, Israel's continuing place, and the mystery of 11:25–32. Compare Genesis 12:1–3 and Jeremiah 18:1–11.

Public authority

Romans 13:1–7 describes the proper work of authority. Place it with Romans 12:17–21, Acts 5:29, and prophetic calls for justice. Ask how a

church honors public order and protects people when officials fail their stated task.

References and further reading

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These works are recommended for comparison. The expository prose, study questions, and judgments in this book are the author’s own; citations do not imply endorsement by the named writers.

About the author

Ssentaba Ronald is the author of this Romans study, published by Theos Transforming Ministries Library. He has pursued biblical learning and teaching through his ministry and studies, including time at Harvest Bible University. His aim in this book is to make Paul's letter understandable to readers who want to examine the text, think theologically, and live the gospel in the church and in the next generation.

IDENTITY. FREEDOM. HOPE.

Who am I in Christ? Can grace free me from the rule of sin? How can hope endure when life is painful?

Paul’s letter to the Romans speaks to these questions through the righteousness of God revealed in Jesus Christ. It leads readers from the human need for mercy to justification by faith, new life in the Spirit, adoption as God’s children, and love expressed in the church and the world.

This study walks through all sixteen chapters. Each chapter offers context, purpose, biblical interpretation, doctrine, practical application, and space to write a response. Read it alongside the New King James Version and test every lesson against the passage itself.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ssentaba Ronald writes Bible studies for readers, teachers, and the coming generation of ministers.

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