



Life Group Study Guide

Introduction

In 2025, GateWay Bible Church will embark on an exciting journey through the book of Romans. Together, as a church family, we will dive deep into this powerful letter, exploring its profound truths and life-changing message. Our GateWay pastors will lead the way, preaching through Romans as a unified team, bringing fresh insights and transformative wisdom. Meanwhile, our Life Groups will dig even deeper, engaging in meaningful discussions and personal reflections to uncover the timeless relevance of Romans in our lives today. This year-long exploration promises to strengthen our faith, deepen our understanding, and draw us closer to God's purpose for us as a church. Join us as we walk through this monumental book and experience its power to shape our lives.

How to Use our Life Group Guide

Each study begins with a series of questions specifically designed to help us engage the text of Romans in personal study and Life Group discussion, according to the **S.O.A.P.** method of Bible study:

S- Scripture: Read the passage and look for a word or phrase that stands out to you.

O- Observe: Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context. What do you think God is saying to the original audience?

A- Apply: Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life. What is God saying to you? How will you be different today because of what you just read?

P- Prayer: Pray God's word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

Work on these exercises at any time throughout the week. Some may find it helpful to work through the exercises in sections—such as two or three blocks of 15 to 20 minutes each, while others may want to study the whole passage in one, hour-long sitting. Whichever approach you choose to take, please answer the exercises before your Life Group meeting. In Life Groups, we'll discuss our answers to the Bible study questions together. To maximize our study of God's Word and the impact it can have on our

lives, we encourage everyone to work through all questions in each of the weekly studies, but Life Group leaders may choose to focus on some questions more than others. In addition to resources in this booklet, we also encourage you and your Life Group to take full advantage of the following Romans-specific resources.

Romans 1-7 & 8-16 For You: For reading, for feeding, for leading (God's Word For You - Romans Series Book 1 & 2) by Tim Keller

Romans: An Expository Commentary by R.C. Sproul

Reading Romans with John Stott: 10 Weeks for Individuals or Groups by John Stott

Be Right (Romans): How to Be Right with God, Yourself, and Others by Warren W. Weirss

Romans: A 12-Week Study (Knowing the Bible) by Jared C. Wilson

The Book of Romans

The Book of Romans has the power to change lives. Just ask Augustine, whose life was radically transformed when he encountered one verse from Romans. Or Martin Luther, whose understanding of the gospel was forever altered through studying this book. Romans has not only changed individuals but has shaped the course of history. And God still desires to transform us through it today.

Romans is rich in deep theology, but we must remember that it's not merely meant to inform us—it's designed to transform us. In Romans 12:1–2, Paul urges us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, and to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Transformation begins with the mind, and this is where Romans offers its greatest challenge and reward.

Some people are eager for transformation but avoid the hard work of renewing their minds. They focus on doing but neglect the thinking and meditating that are essential to deep transformation. On the other hand, there are those who dive into theology, yet their knowledge of God does not lead to changed lives. Romans teaches us that true transformation comes when our minds are renewed—when we labor to understand and apply God's Word to every area of life.

As we engage with Romans, we must remember that the goal is not just intellectual understanding but personal transformation. The gospel—the central theme of Romans—has the power to transform us because it reveals God's righteousness. Through the gospel, God justifies sinners, transforms lives in the present, and promises future glorification. The power of salvation in Romans is rooted in the righteousness of God revealed in Christ. Beholding this righteousness is the key to lasting life-change.

Romans is not just a book to be studied; it's a book that, when embraced, can transform your life. Dive into it, engage your mind, and allow the power of God's gospel to reshape your heart and actions. The gospel is powerful enough to change us from wrath-deserving sinners into glorified worshippers. Don't just read Romans—let it transform you.

The Basics

Romans is a letter from Paul to the Christians in Rome. Paul, the sender, identifies himself in the very first verse (1:1), and we know he is writing to Christians in Rome because he addresses the letter, “*To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people*” (1:7). Paul is writing to all Christians, from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds (2:1–4; 11:13–21; etc.). Paul loves the Christians in Rome and longs to see them and be mutually encouraged, but he hasn’t been able to visit them yet (1:11–13). Paul writes to the Romans to encourage them in the faith with his written words and because he wants to raise support for a missionary journey to Spain (1:13; 15:24–28). He also plans to visit the Roman Christians on his way to Spain. In other words, we can safely say that Romans is one of the most theologically-rich missionary support letters that has ever been written. Paul’s overall intentions remain clear: to encourage the Roman Christians with his words, to raise money for a trip to Spain, and to eventually visit the Roman Christians and be mutually edified by their fellowship together.

How to Study

Read and re-read the book. There is no replacement for first-hand, prayerful, and reflective reading of God’s Word (Psalm 1). Read actively and inquisitively, ask the text questions, and interact with it. This is a great way to unclutter our thoughts and get rid of the assumptions of what we might think Paul is saying. Another way to interact with the text is to hear it read to you. The whole book takes just about an hour to listen to, and it’s an efficient way to consume Scripture throughout the week. What should we look for when we read? Several things.

1. Pay attention to repeated words and phrases. Repeated words and phrases reveal the author’s interest. For example, God is the most common word in the book of Romans (161 times). The next most common word is Law (78 times). Even this surface analysis tells us that Romans is God-centered. As another example, we notice that the word “Spirit” occurs 21 times in Romans 8, while only once in Romans 7. This is just one example of the contrast between these two chapters that gives us a clue to the meaning of the text. Even “*obedience that comes from faith*” (1:5, 16:26), which occurs at the very beginning and end of the book, gives us major clues. How does the book of Romans relate obedience and faith? As you read, keep looking for those repeated words and phrases.

2. Pay attention to logical connectors (for, therefore, but, etc.). Romans is filled with logical connectors. Each one is a gold-mine. Here’s a simple example: *That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. **For** I am not ashamed of the gospel, **because** it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. 17 **For** in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” (Romans 1:15-17, emphasis added)*

What does the word “for” and “because” do in these verses? We can follow Paul’s logic by asking these questions.

Q: Paul, why are you eager to preach the gospel (1:15)?

A: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel” (1:16)

Q: Why are you not ashamed of the gospel?

A: “because it is the power of God that brings salvation” (1:16)

“For” and “because” link these statements together. They are not just independent ideas. They build on each other. If you wanted to write them backward, you could do it with “therefore”:

In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed (1:17), **therefore** the gospel is the power of God (1:16) ... **therefore** I am not ashamed of the gospel (1:16) ... **therefore** I am eager to preach the gospel (1:15).

Now, we can see clearly that the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel is what makes the gospel potent. Since it's no impotent gospel, Paul is not ashamed of it. And if Paul's not ashamed of the gospel, he's eager to preach it. How can this chain help us identify why we are not eager to share the gospel?

Whenever you come to a connector word like “for” or “therefore,” underline it and look at the phrases or verses before and after to discover what ideas they are connecting.

3. Pay attention to questions. Paul asks at least 50 rhetorical questions in Romans. These clue us into his progression of thought. For example, Paul asks, “*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?*” (6:1 NIV). When you encounter a question like this, ask yourself: What prompted Paul to raise this rhetorical question? How does Paul answer this question in the verses that follow?

4. Pay attention to Old Testament quotes and allusions. The New Testament did not yet exist when Paul was writing Romans. So, when Paul wants to make his point from Scripture, he reaches for the Old Testament. Pay attention to when and how Paul uses it to ground his argument. Go back and read these passages. For example, in Romans 3:9–18, when Paul wants to prove that everyone is unrighteous before God, he piles on several Old Testament verses, one after another. In Romans 10, when he wants to show the reader that salvation for the Gentiles was always God's plan, Paul quotes from all three parts of the Old Testament: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. He is, in essence, arguing, “What I'm saying is right there in your Bibles.”

To summarize: Look and look and look at the text. The more you look, the easier it will get. Ask God's Spirit for help as you study his Word. Once you've spent time wrestling with it yourself, feel free to use other resources, like commentaries, when you are stuck on certain passages.

The Big Picture

One of the key principles of interpreting any Bible book is this: The whole interprets the parts, and the parts interpret the whole. As you study the parts of a book, you'll gain a better understanding of the whole of the book. And the more you study the book as a whole, the more you will be helped in understanding its parts correctly. Think of it like you're looking at Santa Cruz County in Google Maps. Sometimes you zoom out to understand where you are, and sometimes you have to zoom in to get your bearings. When we get lost in a section of Romans, having a big picture helps re-orient us to what is going on. The big-picture summaries below are an attempt to understand the whole of the book as we prepare to zoom in with our weekly Bible studies.

In the book of Romans, Paul declares the righteousness of God in the gospel (1:16–17). Paul wants the Christians in Rome to know that God is absolutely righteous, meaning he is forever faithful and true (3:1–8) and that he is righteous in his just condemnation of sinners (1:18–3:20). Paul also writes about God’s gracious salvation of sinners who trust in Christ (3:21–4:25) and that God is righteous in the way he grants us Christ’s righteousness (3:21–30). God is righteous in his dealings with Israel and the nations (9–11). This means we can build our life on God’s faithfulness and his righteousness, and we can trust that he will never lie, never do wrong, and always come through on his Word (4:16–25). When we build our life on his righteousness, the result is unfailing hope (5:1–11; 8:20–39). Like Abraham, we learn to hope against hope in trusting God (4:18, see Week 2), and this hope bears incredible fruit in our lives: the obedience of faith (1:5; 16:26), the putting to the death of our sin (6:12–23; 8:13), and perseverance in suffering (5:1–5; 8:26–39). This tomorrow-hope in the faithfulness of God creates a people who are ready to give up preferences and be united to one another in love, like Jews and Gentiles (12:1–15:13). As you can see from the many times the word “righteous” is mentioned in this paragraph, the book of Romans is built on one solid foundation—the righteousness and faithfulness of God.

A Simple Outline of Romans

The following is a proposed outline for the book of Romans. The “concepts” line helps identify some of the key doctrines that are covered in the selected passages.

1:1-17	The righteousness of God revealed in the gospel.
1:18-3:20	The righteousness of God in his wrath against unrighteous sinners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrighteousness of Gentiles (1:18–32) • Unrighteousness of Jews (2:1–3:8) • Is God righteous in judging his own people? (3:1–7). • (In this section, Paul connects God’s righteousness to God’s faithfulness and truthfulness.) • The unrighteousness of all people (3:9–20) <i>Concepts: God’s righteous wrath, our unrighteousness</i>
3:21-4:25	The righteousness of God in saving sinners through faith in Christ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God demonstrates his righteousness through the death of Jesus (3:21–26) • God’s gift-righteousness through faith to Jews and Gentiles (3:27–31) • Abraham’s faith in God’s faithfulness (4:1–25) <i>Concepts: God’s saving righteousness, justification by faith, grace, law</i>
5:1-8:39	Faith in God’s righteousness creates unfailing hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope enables perseverance in suffering (5:1–11), the battle against sin (6, 8), etc. because hope is banking on the future faithfulness of God, on the grounds of the gospel (8:32) <i>Concepts: Hope, suffering, union with Christ, obedience of faith, Spirit</i>
9:1-11:36	God’s righteousness towards Israel and the Gentiles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is faithful and his Word has not failed, even if Jews do not believe • God is faithful and righteous in all his dealings: in judging some and saving some <i>Concepts: Israel, Gentiles, election, mercy</i>
12:1-16:27	The fruit of hoping in God’s righteousness: transformation through total dedication to God <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian community (12:3–13:14) • Strong and weak: accept each other in love (14:1–15:13) • Closing remarks (15:14–16:27) <i>Concepts: The church, love, unity, missions</i>

Final Thoughts

Just as this book has changed the minds and hearts of many (like Augustine and Martin Luther), we look forward to how God will use Romans to transform our church in this season. With every Bible study in this series, our hope is that we all will see the gospel with greater appreciation, love God with greater passion, and apply the messages of Romans in ways that impact our everyday lives and bear witness for Christ in our communities. *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”- Romans 15:13*

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Assurance – God’s guarantee that your salvation is certain.

Atonement – The reconciliation of a person with God, often associated with the offering of a sacrifice. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ made atonement for the sins of believers. His death satisfied God’s just wrath against sinful humanity, just as Old Testament sacrifices symbolized substitutionary death as payment for sin.

Circumcision – The ritual practice of removing the foreskin of an individual, which was commanded for all male Israelites in Old Testament times, as a sign of participation in the covenant God established with Abraham.

Conscience – The ability to understand the rightness or wrongness of one’s actions and motives.

Covenant – A binding agreement between two parties, typically involving a formal statement of their relationship.

Doxology – Expression of praise to God.

Election – The eternal reality that God has chosen people to show His glory to and show His glory through.

First Born – Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature.

Foreknowledge – To know beforehand; God is completely aware of all things before they happen or even existed.

General Call – God has offered salvation to all; Jesus died for all in order to save some. God desires that all be saved and has made faith possible or effective for some. The whole world has access to the death of Christ for salvation, but only some will believe.

Glorification – The ultimate transformation and exaltation of believers in the presence of God, which happens at the end of life or when Christ returns.

Glory – The holiness of God made manifest and put on display.

Grace – Unmerited favor, especially the free gift of salvation that God gives to believers through faith in Jesus Christ.

Holy – Set apart, justified.

Imputation – To attribute something to someone or credit it to his or her account. Often refers to God’s crediting the righteousness of Jesus Christ to every believer.

In the Spirit – to be alive to the things of God and in pursuit of those things.

Indwelling – In scripture, refers to the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit within believers.

Israel – God’s chosen people as promised to Abraham in Genesis.

Justification – The act of God’s grace in declaring sinners fully acquitted and counting them as righteous before Him on the basis of the finished work of Christ, received through faith alone.

Kingdom of God – Where God rules and reigns as supreme. Jesus brought its arrival and will finish that work upon His return.

Natural Law – God’s existence revealed through the natural order of creation that makes everyone accountable.

Predestination – God’s sovereign choice of people for redemption and eternal life. Also referred to as “election.”

Propitiation – The appeasement of wrath by the offering of a payment that satisfies the debt. Jesus made propitiation for the sins of humanity by His suffering and death.

Reconciliation – The restoration of peace between alienated or opposing parties. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has reconciled believers to God.

Remnant – In the Bible, a portion of people who remain after most others are destroyed by some catastrophe. The notion of a “remnant” can be found in various events recorded in Scripture, including the flood and the return of exiled Judah.

Repentance – A complete change of heart and mind regarding one’s overall attitude toward God and one’s individual actions.

Righteousness – The quality of being in right standing, found without sin before God.

Sacrifice – An offering to God, often to signify forgiveness of sin. By His death on the cross, Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of believers.

Sanctification – The process of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Satan – A spiritual being whose name means “accuser.” As the leader of all demonic forces, he opposes God’s rule and seeks to harm God’s people and accuse them of wrongdoing. His power, however, is confined to the bounds that God has set for him, and one day he will be destroyed along with all his demons.

Sovereign Mercy – The ultimate reality that God gave Jesus what we deserved in order that we can have what we do not deserve, which is eternal life with Him.

Sovereignty – Supreme and independent power and authority. Sovereignty over all things is a distinctive attribute of God. He directs all things to carry out His purpose.

Substitutionary Atonement – The core reason for Jesus’ death on the cross. Identifying with His Father’s will, Jesus offered Himself to die as a substitute for believers. He took upon Himself the punishment they deserved and thereby reconciled them to God.

Transgression – A violation of a command or law.

Union with Christ – To be one with Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Credits: Much of the content in this guide came from Tim Keller’s book, Romans 1-7 For You, John Piper’s Ministry, Desiring God, and the book, “Romans - A 12-Week Study” by Jared C. Wilson

Memorizing Romans 8

Week	Memory Verse
1	Romans 8:1-2
2	Romans 8:3-4
3	Romans 8:5-6
4	Romans 8:7-8
5	Romans 8:9-10
6	Romans 8:11
7	Romans 8:12-13
8	Romans 8:14-15
9	Romans 8:16-17
10	Romans 8:18-19
11	Romans 8:20-21
12	Romans 8:22-23
13	Romans 8:24-25
14	Romans 8:26-27
15	Romans 8:28
16	Romans 8:29-30

Week	Memory Verse
17	Romans 8:31
18	Romans 8:32
19	Romans 8:33-34
20	Romans 8:35
21	Romans 8:36-37
22	Romans 8:38
23	Romans 8:39
24	Romans 8:40
25	Romans 8:41-42
26	Romans 8:43
27	Romans 8:44-45
28	Romans 8:46-47
29	Romans 8:48-49
30	Romans 8:50-51
31	Romans 8:52-53
32	Romans 8:54

SOAP: Scripture

1. Read Romans 1:1–17, keeping in mind that this is the introduction to a long letter. What might we expect to find in the rest of Romans based on this introduction?
2. Looking at Romans 1:8–15, what does Paul want for the Roman Christians? What different ways does Paul express his affections for the Roman believers?
3. Read Romans 1:1–6 again. Now, flip to the end of the book and read Romans 16:25–27. What similarities can we identify between the two sections? Remember, many in Paul’s audience would hear this letter recited out loud instead of reading it with their own eyes. And writers in Paul’s time often repeated main ideas at the beginning and the end, which helped the audience remember key phrases and concepts.
4. In your own words, write a phrase or sentence that summarizes what you think the theme of Romans is. We’ll come back to this exercise when we have finished studying the entire book and compare your answers.

SOAP: Observation

5. Romans 1:2 declares that the gospel was promised beforehand by God’s prophets in the Holy Scriptures. Why is this important?
6. Paul uses the terms “faith” and “belief” several times in Romans 1:1–17. What do we learn about faith from this passage?
7. Romans 1:1–17 contains a number of words that are important for Christians—“gospel,” “salvation,” and “righteousness.” How are these words related to one another in Romans 1:1–17? Based on Paul’s use of these three words in this passage, how would you explain each term?

8. What groups are mentioned by Paul in Romans 1:14? Why is Paul obligated to them and what must he do because of this obligation?

9. Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel? How should this understanding affect our lives?

SOAP: Application

10. What do you think Paul means by the phrase “obedience of faith” in Romans 1:5? What does it look like to practice that obedience in our own lives?

11. Paul says clearly that he is “not ashamed of the gospel” in Romans 1:16. What would it look like to be ashamed of the gospel? How have you experienced temptations to hide what you believe about Jesus?

12. Reflect on the ways Romans 1:1–17 shows us that Jesus deserves our worship and respect. How do these truths encourage you to share the gospel? Share the practical steps you will take this week to display the gospel with your Life Group.

13. What does it look like to mutually encourage one another as believers like Paul desired to do in Romans? How can we do that as a Life Group?

14. Verse 6 says that believers are “*called to belong to Jesus Christ.*” What does it mean to be long to Jesus Christ? How is your life different because you belong to Jesus? What actions, decisions, or priorities is the Holy Spirit prompting you to consider?

15. What questions do you want answered about the gospel, faith, or the book of Romans during our study this year?

SOAP: Prayer

Read Psalm 143. Pray through the following prompts, according to the **A.C.T.S.** method.

Adoration: Give God praise for these characteristics that you see in Psalm 143:

- He is steadfast (143:8,12).
- He is merciful (143:1).
- He is righteous (143:1,11).
- He is faithful (143:1).
- He is what our soul truly needs (143:6).

Confession: Plead with God for his mercy. The Lord has every right to judge us for our unrighteousness. Confess to God how we have not been steadfast and faithful like he has been to us.

Thanksgiving: Thank God for the following blessings:

- God lifts our souls and guides us when we are down.
- God already has victory over our greatest enemies—sin, death, and the devil.
- Thank God that he has maintained his relationship with us in his steadfast love.

• **Supplication:** Ask God that he would help lift our spirits where situations in our lives have made us downcast (143:3–4). Ask that God would guide us in your next steps in our lives (143:10). Ask that God would be our refuge (143:9)