

BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16



Introduction

As we conclude our study in Romans, it is fitting that we would focus on building up the body of Christ. Among all of the theological language and difficult passages, it can be easy to lose sight of the importance of building up the church. God's word is given so that lost men, women, boys and girls can be brought near to God in salvation and built up into his likeness through discipleship. In other words, God's word is given for evangelism and Christian growth.

Paul closes his book with a strong reminder to the Roman believers that they are not to live unto themselves. Instead, they live for God and for each other. Romans shows us that the drive toward individualism is not only an American issue, it is as old as the church—in fact as old as the human race. Adam and Eve wanted to rule themselves and live for their own pleasure. Through Christ, believers are empowered to glorify God and serve others.

Of course, at the close of the book it is fitting that we also return to the beginning to be reminded of the great and overarching theme of the book in 1:16-17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of god for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith.'" The book of Romans was not written as a document to power theological debate, but fuel for evangelistic fervor.

As we conclude our studies in the book of Romans, pray that God would give you the same love for his truth that Paul displayed. Pray also that God would give you the heart and understanding to put that truth into action through evangelism and discipleship. Every word of God proves true, and the truth captured in this wonderful letter is life and hope to all who read it. God bless you as you open his word and work together as a church to build up Christ's body here at Malvern Hill.

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Romans: Background Information

When we study books of the Bible, it is important to understand some basic background about the book. Many of these pieces of information like who wrote it, when was it written, to whom was it written and why was it written (i.e. – the “Explore” section of our Bible study map) can help us to better comprehend God’s truth. Here is some background information for the book of Romans:

Author

Romans 1:1 clearly identifies the author of Romans as the Apostle Paul. It is also worth noting that like several of Paul’s letters, he used an amanuensis or scribe to write Romans (Rom 16:22). Some speculate that Paul had an eyesight problem that caused him to rely on a scribe to write down his dictations (see Gal 6:11).

Date

Unlike some of the letters in the New Testament, most scholars agree on the date of Romans. From the book of Romans, we know that Paul was headed to Jerusalem to bring an offering for poor (Rom 15:25-26). He was hoping that this offering would help the relationship between the Jewish and Gentile Christians (Rom 15:27). Paul then intended to go from Jerusalem to Rome and then from Rome to Spain.

The context clues that we see in Romans would indicate that Paul wrote this letter towards the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 18:22-21:17). Some of the people mentioned in Romans 16 would lead us to believe that Paul letter from Corinth which would date it around A.D. 57 during his time in Greece (Acts 20:2-3).

Destination

Paul identifies the recipients of this letter in as “those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints” (1:7). We do not know much about how the church at Rome was started. Some traditions indicated Peter and/or Paul as having started the church at Rome, but biblical and historical evidence discredits this theory. However, using

statements by the Roman historian Suetonius, we believe that there were Christians in Rome by AD. 49.

The Roman church was comprised of both Jewish and Gentile Christians and there was apparently some disunity and struggles between the two groups. In A.D. 49, Emperor Claudius’s expelled all Jews (including Jewish Christians) from Rome. Later, when the edict was lifted and Jews were allowed back, there were some understandable conflicts as the Jewish believers returned to a now-Gentile church. These conflicts appear to be part of the background behind Paul’s reasons for writing this letter.

Purpose

Paul identifies the recipients of this letter as “those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints” so he was writing to the church at Rome (1:7). From his letter, we know that Paul had several reasons as to why he wrote to them. First, he desired for there to be no tensions between the Jews and Gentiles. This is why Paul spends significant portions of Romans discussing the issue of the Old Testament law and its relation to sin, salvation, and the gospel.

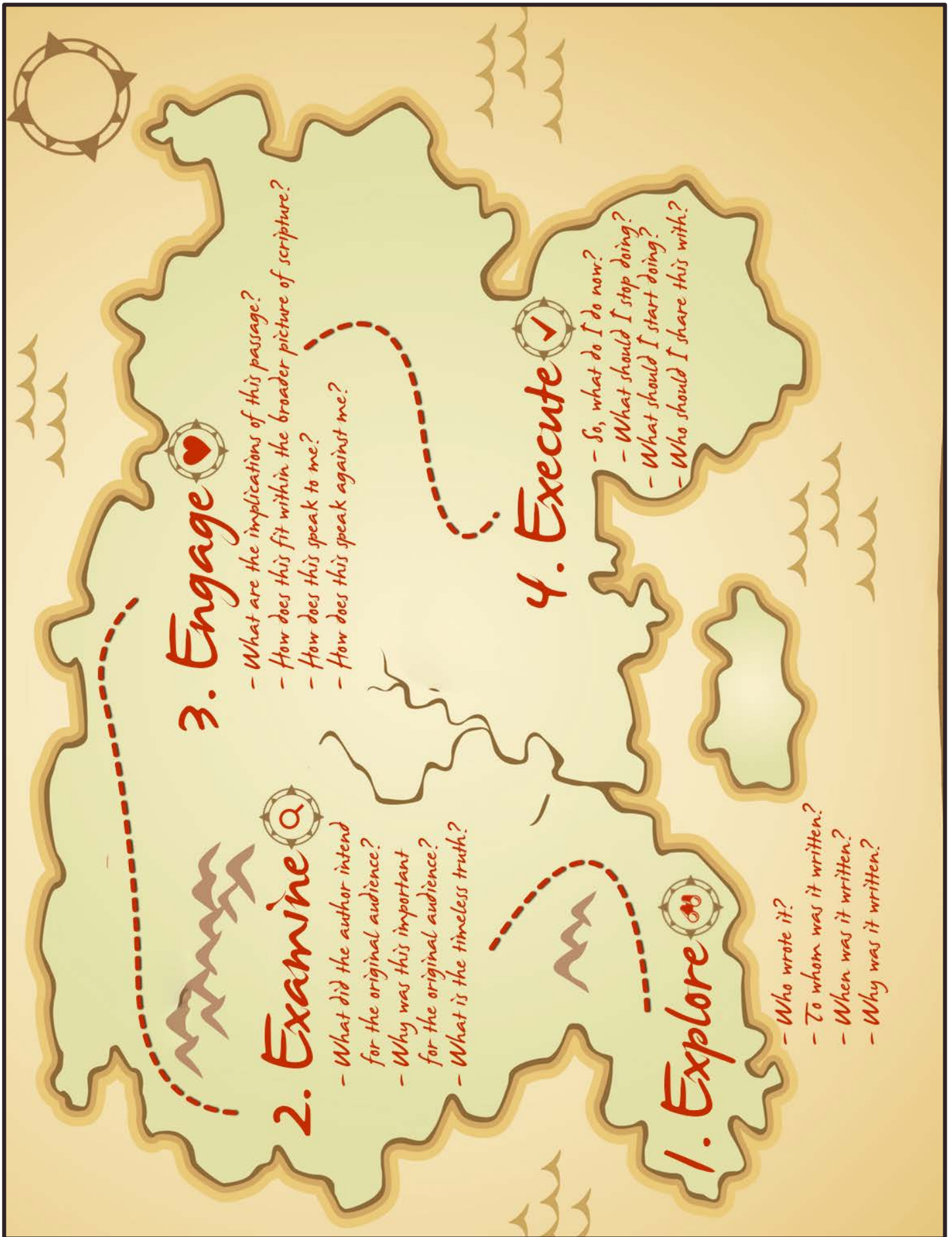
A second reason for Paul writing Romans was to unpack how theology drives actions. Paul spends the first 11 chapters of Romans unpacking the good news of the gospel. Then in Romans 12:1, Paul writes, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” Our beliefs influence our actions. Lastly, Paul wrote to the Romans with the future hope that he would be able to come visit them so that they could provide spiritual and material resources that would help him take the gospel to Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28).

Sermon Calendar

<u>Study Date</u>	<u>Sermon Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Big Question and Synopsis</u>
Sept-4	Aug-28	Only God Can Judge Me	Romans 14:1-12	<p>Paul makes clear in this passage that God alone judges, but the primary emphasis is not on defending oneself, but on abstaining from judging others. Our goal should be building up others, not judging and tearing them down.</p> <p>Big Question: Are you examining or encouraging?</p>
Sept-11	Sept-4	Choose Fellowship Over Food	Romans 14:13-23	<p>Christians have been given great freedom in Christ, but that freedom must not be used to destroy others. Fellowship matters more than food, or drink. Every effort must be made to maintain Christian unity.</p> <p>Big Question: What are you willing to lose to maintain fellowship?</p>
Sept-18	Sept-11	Bear with the Weak (But Be Strong)	Romans 15:1-7	<p>Mature believers have a responsibility to bear with those who are weak, but the weak must not be left to atrophy. The goal of every Christian should be growing stronger in Christ every day.</p> <p>Big Question: Are you picking others up or wallowing in your own weakness?</p>
Sept-25	Sept-18	Plan A	Romans 15:8-13	<p>The cross was not God's "Plan B" after Adam and Eve fell in the garden. It has always been God's intention to save the world through Jesus. Christians should glorify God for his mercy and wisdom in creation and salvation.</p> <p>Big Question: Do you have joy from God's wisdom?</p>
Oct-2	Sept-25	Bold Grace	Romans 15:14-22	<p>Though confident of Christ's work on their behalf, Paul felt it important to remind the Roman believers of Christ's sacrifice and their responsibility. His authority as an apostle afforded him this privilege even if he could not be with them physically.</p> <p>Big Question: Who is speaking boldly into your life?</p>

Sermon Calendar

<u>Study Date</u>	<u>Sermon Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Big Question and Synopsis</u>
Oct-9	Oct-2	Missionary Priorities	Romans 15:22-32	<p>Paul had a great desire to visit Christians in the seat of the Roman Empire, but his missionary priorities kept him busy preaching the gospel.</p> <p>Big Question: How can you organize your priorities according to God's kingdom principles?</p>
Oct-16	Oct-9	Christian Networking	Romans 16:1-16	<p>Paul's ministry was contingent upon the support of others. Effective missions and ministry requires the support of many for the expansion of the gospel.</p> <p>Big Question: How can you support the ministry of others?</p>
Oct-23	Oct-16	Watch Out	Romans 16:17-20	<p>The spirit of Christ is a spirit of unity, but Christian unity must be built around true and proper Christian doctrine.</p> <p>Big Question: What unifies you?</p>
Oct-30	Oct-23	Church is a Team Sport	Romans 16:21-23	<p>The book of Acts and the letters of Paul show that he rarely if ever traveled alone. He ministered as a part of a team. The proclamation of the gospel is a group effort.</p> <p>Big Question: How are you supporting the ministry of your church?</p>
Nov-6	Oct-30	Why We Do What We Do	Romans 16:25-27	<p>The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever. Ultimately, all Christian ministry is done to honor Christ. Christians live for their king.</p> <p>Big Question: Why do you do what you do?</p>





BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16

Only God Can Judge Me (Romans 14:1-12)

Week 1 – September 4, 2016

Sermon Notes from Sunday, August 28

Use this space to write down notes from the sermon or your personal study.

Discussion Guide for Sunday, September 4

BIG THOUGHT

Do not judge the biblical convictions of others.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Sometimes, we can judge other Christians about matters of Christian freedom (where our conscience and wisdom dictate our decision). What are some ways that we see Christians judging one another on these issues?

INTRODUCTION

“When our children were young, my husband and I decided we wouldn’t watch R-rated movies. We made this decision in good conscience and never regretted it. I found, however, that it made me feel judgmental toward other parents who watched R-rated movies. I began to feel they weren’t fully committed to Christ because they watched things I’d decided not to watch.

I realize how ridiculous it is to judge someone’s relationship with God by what movies he or she watches, but my evaluation was so subtle at the time. As I made this judgment, I never thought about my own sin or all the things the person I was judging was doing right. Instead, I focused on this one thing I thought they were doing wrong.

Being a Pharisee is so easy. It’s great to make rules to guide our own behavior, but when we extend those rules to everyone around us, we’re in danger of becoming like the Pharisees, whom Jesus denounced as hypocrites.”

(Source: JoHannah Reardon, in newsletter introduction at ChristianBibleStudies.com)

EXAMINE

- 1. Pay close attention to the wording of Romans 14:1-12. Do you think that Paul was writing primarily to those who were strong or to those who were weak in their practice of faith?**

- 2. What is the timeless truth of Romans 14:1-12?**

ENGAGE

- 3. People rarely quarrel within the church about clean or unclean foods in the twenty-first century. How can we determine whether an issue is a sin issue or a liberty issue? What are some examples of liberty issues that we see today? Choose someone to read Mark 7:9-13 out loud in class.**

4. **How do Jesus' words to the Pharisees relate to Paul's admonition here? What is the difference between Jews struggling to walk away from OT laws and Pharisees? How can believers slide into phariseeism today?**

5. **Though Paul may have had one group in mind more than another, Paul gives instruction to both the strong and weak. What concessions should each group make for the sake of unity?**

6. **In Romans 14:10, Paul changes his language. Instead of referring to a "person" or a "servant," Paul talks about "brothers." How does this change in language affect the attitude of those reading Paul's letter?**

EXECUTE

7. **When you read this passage of Scripture, do you have a tendency to think of yourself as strong or weak? Why? How can we accurately gauge our spiritual maturity?**

8. **Paul says that "weaker" believers struggle with dietary laws and "days." What should be your response to the "weaker" believers in your life?**

9. **Some people reading this passage of Scripture might say "only God can judge me." How would you respond to that statement? How do you reconcile this passage with other passages of Scripture like Matthew 7:16- 20 or Matthew 18:15-20?**

Prayer Requests



BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16

Choose Fellowship Over Food (Romans 14:13-23)

Week 2 – September 11, 2016

Sermon Notes from Sunday, September 4

Use this space to write down notes from the sermon or your personal study.

Discussion Guide for Sunday, September 11

BIG THOUGHT

Christian unity is of utmost importance.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Share a story about a time where you saw a church family damaged as a result of sinful divisiveness and how it could have been handled differently? (Note: Be careful to avoid gossip. Do not be too specific or detailed.)

INTRODUCTION

“The English Channel tunnel connecting England with France, later called the Chunnel, was a two-headed beast from the start. Two mammoth firms were heading the project — one charged with finance and operation, the other responsible for building the chunnel. Each of these companies was also two-headed — equally French and British.

No one was allowed to take charge. Leadership, more times than not, was reduced to the management of conflict. Said a high-ranking executive, “The project . . . created a lot of tension because it [was] not geared to solving problems; it [was] geared to placing blame.’ The English yelled at the French, and the French yelled at the English. Said another executive, “There were nervous breakdowns galore.’

The problems were primarily due to a lack of shared standards. The two countries had a different word for everything. The French had their accounting system; so did the English. The French ran on 380 volts; the British on 420. Instruction manuals were bilingual. There were even two different standards used to measure sea level.

‘When you have people coming from two different nations,’ said one of the engineers, ‘each believes that only their regulations are right.’”

(Source: Robert Lewis with Rob Wilkins, *The Church of Irresistible Influence*)

Many times, divisions and disunity arise in the church when members focus on the non-essential details instead of the overall mission. May we continue to focus on Christ and “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).

EXAMINE

1. How do these verses fit within the context of Romans and what we studied last week?

2. What is the timeless truth of Romans 14:13-23?

ENGAGE

3. Ask a volunteer to read John 13:31-35. Who spoke these words? What do these words tell us about the importance of love within the church?

4. **Why were food and feast days such contentious issues within the early church? Based on Galatians 3:1-9, how do you believe Paul felt about the importance of dietary restrictions or other laws?**

5. **Why was it important that the Roman church maintain unity? How would division affect believers within the church? How would division affect non-believers as they examined the church?**

EXECUTE

6. **The Spirit of Christ is one of unity, but unity is not always possible. What are some issues that would be worth division within the church? What are issues that are not worth dividing over?**

7. **What would you be willing to give up to maintain fellowship within your church? How serious is the issue of divisiveness?**

8. **Paul urges the church to be unified, but even in unity disagreements sometimes exist. How can you, as a church member, disagree agreeably and maintain unity even in their differences?**

Prayer Requests



BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16

Bear with the Weak (But Be Strong) (Romans 15:1-7)

Week 3 – September 18, 2016

Sermon Notes from Sunday, September 11

Use this space to write down notes from the sermon or your personal study.

Discussion Guide for Sunday, September 18

BIG THOUGHT

Christians are to grow in godliness and bring others along with them.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Have you ever paid for personal training? Why would you want a personal trainer who was in better shape than you currently are?

INTRODUCTION

“When I first ran track in prep school, my coach invited me to his home for dinner. After the meal, he pulled out a notebook with my name on the front cover. He turned to the back page, which bore the heading ‘June 1957’ — three and a half years away.

‘Gordon, these are the races I’m going to schedule you to run about four years from now. Here are the times you will achieve.’

I looked at those times. They were light-years away from where I was as a runner. Then Coach began turning back the pages of that book, page by page, showing the forty-two months he had scheduled for workouts. These were the graduated, accelerated plans for my increasing skill on the track in the coming months.

Coaches and other leaders know the necessity of strategic, long-range planning. Similarly, a wise and all-knowing God has a plan for our lives, as down through the years we gradually become more like Jesus.”

(Source: Gordon MacDonald, Promise Keepers’ “Go the Distance” Conference, August 11, 2000)

Paul understood that only those who had grown in Christ could effectively lead others to do the same. The blind can’t effectively lead the blind, and the spiritually weak will not lead others to spiritual strength.

EXAMINE

- 1. Paul had already written about the importance of loving neighbors (Rom. 13:9-10). Why did he need to remind the Roman believers again?**

- 2. What is the timeless truth of Romans 15:1-7?**

ENGAGE

- 3. Concern for one’s neighbor is a constant theme in this passage and in Romans 14 as well. How might the church of today be different if it focused as much on care for neighbors?**

4. **Read Romans 15:7. What is the ultimate purpose for our welcoming others? How does this verse help you to welcome even difficult people into your life?**

5. **According to 15:1, the strong are to bear with the weak. What is the responsibility of the weak? Read 2 Corinthians 5:17, is spiritual atrophy and option for Christians?**

6. **According to this passage, what is the foundation for harmony with one another? How does this harmony bring God glory?**

EXECUTE

7. **Maturity exists along a spectrum. Regardless of where you are in your Christian journey, you can identify some people who are stronger in Christ and some who are weaker in Christ than you are. How can you respond to each of these kinds of people?**

8. **According to Romans 15:5, how can you live in harmony with others? Who are the people in your life whom you need God to help you love and live with in harmony?**

Prayer Requests



BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16

Plan A (Romans 15:8-13)

Week 4 – September 25, 2016

Sermon Notes from Sunday, September 18

Use this space to write down notes from the sermon or your personal study.

Discussion Guide for Sunday, September 25

BIG THOUGHT

The cross was not plan B.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Sometimes we don't recognize a good idea until it has already been done. Share an example of a time when you saw the value of an idea only after it had already been done.

INTRODUCTION

"Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, has inspired a new religion. Yoism, invented by a Massachusetts psychologist, is based on the 'open source' principle that the general public creates a combined, creative authority and source of truth.

Yoism operates and evolves over the Internet and has numerous contributors. It shuns traditional religious authorities and divine inspiration in favor of the wisdom of humans. Bob Dylan, Albert Einstein, and Sigmund Freud are among its revered saints.

Dan Kriegman founded Yoism in 1994 to make religion open to change and responsive to the wisdom of people everywhere. 'I don't think anyone has ever complained about something that didn't lead to some revision or clarification in the Book of Yo,' Kriegman says. 'Every aware, conscious, sentient spirit is divine and has direct access to truth. . . . Open source embodies that. There is no authority.'"

(Charles Piller, "Divine Inspiration from the Masses," *LA Times*, July 23, 2006)

Unlike manmade religions, Christianity needs no revision. There is not a need for change and response because God is the author of all wisdom. The cross of Jesus represents the epitome of God's wisdom and love revealed to the entire world.

EXAMINE

- 1. What affect did Paul hope his words would have in the church at Rome?**

- 2. Paul wrote "Christ became a servant to the circumcised...in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs" (15:8). Who are the patriarchs and why did Paul mention them?**

- 3. What is the timeless truth of Romans 15:8-13?**

ENGAGE

- 4. The New Testament shows that the majority of Jews in the first century rejected God's message in Christ and his work to bring salvation to the Gentiles. What does Paul teach in this passage about the Old Testament's message concerning the Gentiles?**
- 5. Throughout the New Testament, the fulfillment of prophecy is used as evidence that Jesus is the Messiah. Why is the fulfillment of prophecy important for proving Christ's divinity?**

EXECUTE

- 6. In what ways has God filled you with joy and peace by believing in Christ? How does that joy and peace drive you to glorify God?**
- 7. Jesus became a servant so that he could save his people. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 that he has become all things to all people to save some. In what ways could you better serve others as an evangelist?**
- 8. One of the reasons the Jews did not believe in Jesus is that they misunderstood the prophecies concerning him. They read God's word through their own selfish lenses and assumed that the Messiah would look, act, and think like they did. How are you tempted to read your own story into God's story and distort the Bible's teaching to fit your own situation?**

Prayer Requests



BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16

Bold Grace (Romans 15:14-21)

Week 5 – October 2, 2016

Sermon Notes from Sunday, September 25

Use this space to write down notes from the sermon or your personal study.

Discussion Guide for Sunday, October 2

BIG THOUGHT

The gospel is primary.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Have you ever been corrected by someone who didn't know you? How did that make you feel?

INTRODUCTION

Kenneth Mitchell of Jacksonville Florida shares a story of sacrifice that impacted him as young man:

"Years ago, I worked part-time on the loading docks of various trucking companies. At one company I met a fine Christian man named Rufus Kidd. He had just completed his associate's degree in transportation and wanted to make it a full-time career. Since the company was beginning to open up to minorities at that time, Rufus, an African-American, interviewed for a position.

Later I asked him how the interview went, and he said they offered him a job in sales, which would pay well and offer unlimited opportunity. I was excited for him, but he said he wasn't going to take it. Although it was everything he wanted, he would have to give up his ministry with singles at his church. He said he would wait for a job to come along that would allow him to continue to teach his class.

Rufus sacrificed his chance to leave the sweltering docks and gave up a brand-new career to continue teaching."

(Source: Larson and Ten Ellshoff, *1001 Illustrations That Connect* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), pg. 532.)

What have you given up to serve Christ?

EXAMINE

1. Why would Paul have needed to remind the Roman church of his apostolic ministry?
2. In Romans 15:15, what defense does Paul give for his boldness?
3. What is the timeless truth of Romans 15:14-21?

ENGAGE

- 4. What are some of the criticisms that the Roman church could direct toward Paul? How might churches be tempted to criticize pastors or other Christian leaders who speak hard truths?**

- 5. What gave Paul the authority to speak boldly into the lives of the believers in Rome? What authority do other believers have to speak hard truths into your life?**

EXECUTE

- 6. Holding someone accountable can be a daunting task, but the task is made easier when permission is given for the work of accountability. Who in your life has permission to hold you spiritually accountable?**

- 7. There is little doubt that Paul would have loved to visit the church in Rome, but he was hindered because of his calling. What would you be willing to deprive yourself of to preach the gospel to others?**

- 8. Paul writes about preaching the gospel where it has not been named. Today mission strategists talk about the 10/40 window—an geographic area that includes North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia—as an area of great lostness and resistance to the gospel. What can you do to advance the gospel in the 10/40 window and other unreached areas of the world?**

Prayer Requests



BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16

Missionary Priorities (Romans 15:22-32)

Week 6 – October 9, 2016

Sermon Notes from Sunday, October 2

Use this space to write down notes from the sermon or your personal study.

Discussion Guide for Sunday, October 9

BIG THOUGHT

The mission of the Kingdom comes first.

DISCUSSION STARTER

What are ways that you support missionaries now or have been able to in the past?

INTRODUCTION

“A student once asked Albert Einstein how many feet were in a mile. He was astonished when Einstein replied, ‘I don’t know.’

The student was sure the great professor was joking. Surely Einstein would know a simple fact that every schoolchild is required to memorize. When the student pressed for an explanation, the professor declared, ‘I make it a rule not to clutter my mind with simple information that I can find in a book in five minutes.’

Albert Einstein was not interested in trivial data. His passion was to explore the deep things of the universe. And his passion for mathematical and physical truth made him a pivotal fixture in world history.”

(Source: R. C. Sproul Jr., *In the Presence of God* (Word, 1999))

In our world of constant distractions and entertainment, people can find it difficult to focus on things that require great concentration and attention. How can you minimize distractions and focus on God’s kingdom?

EXAMINE

1. Why did Paul want to visit the church in Rome?

2. What is the timeless truth of Romans 15:22-32?

ENGAGE

3. It can be very easy to become inwardly focused so Paul reminded the Roman believers about their part in helping fulfill the Great Commission. How might first century believers have focused more on their own needs and desires than on the needs of others?

4. **In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul urges the believers in Corinth to imitate him, even as he imitated Christ. How does this passage in Romans invite others to imitate Paul's way of Kingdom living?**

5. **Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8, which was written towards the end of Paul's life. How was Paul able to maintain the pace of ministry described in Romans 15:22-33?**

EXECUTE

6. **What could you change in your life today to better arrange your life around God's kingdom-principles?**

7. **In what ways have money or possessions gotten in the way of God's mission for your life? How can you work to keep money from possessing you and better use your financial gifts for God's glory?**

8. **As you read Romans 15:3-33, how would you describe the kind of prayer that Paul is requesting? How can you strive for a prayer life like that?**

Prayer Requests



BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16

Christian Networking (Romans 16:1-16)

Week 7 – October 16, 2016

Sermon Notes from Sunday, October 9

Use this space to write down notes from the sermon or your personal study.

Discussion Guide for Sunday, October 16

BIG THOUGHT

Missions and ministry requires the work of many.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Think about someone who impacted your life for Christ. Share with your LifeGroup about how this person made a difference in your life.

INTRODUCTION

“When we started the PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) in 1973, we had no money — not a dime — and we were going to start a new denomination. One group gave us \$90,000 for world missions. The only two missionaries we had — Dick Dye and a young woman named Ellen Barnett — were down in Acapulco.

Missionary Dick Dye had been in Acapulco for two months trying to start a church. Whenever he got discouraged, he looked up at a cross he could see on a nearby mountain. That encouraged him. Finally, he drove up the mountain to find out about that cross. And when he did, he found it attached to a big hotel. So Dye asked the secretary, ‘Can I speak to the man who runs this establishment?’

‘Do you have an appointment?’

‘No appointment, I just want to tell him something.’

‘What do you want to tell him?’

‘I want to thank him.’

The secretary got the owner. Dye said, ‘I’m a missionary from the United States here in Acapulco. I’ve been discouraged. But I see that cross and it encourages me. I want to thank you for having it up there.’

The man looked at Dye, put his head down on his desk, and began to weep. He wept and wept. Finally he raised his head and said: ‘That cross has been up there for years. All I’ve heard is criticism. You’re the first man who ever said thank you. Now, who are you and what do you need?’

‘I’m just a missionary,’ Dick answered.

‘Where do you meet?’

‘We don’t meet anywhere. I don’t have any place to meet.’

The owner said, ‘Come with me.’ He took Dick to a beautiful chapel and said, ‘We have church here at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. From now on, it is yours at 10:00 a.m. You begin services next week.’

That was the beginning of the first Presbyterian Church in America missionary plant. Within a few years, we turned four congregations over to the Presbyterian Church of Mexico. How did it start? With one guy who said thank you.”

(Source: James Baird, in the sermon “To Be Thankful,” Independent Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia)

God has a network of his people at his disposal to complete his mission.

EXAMINE

1. How might Paul have known so many people in Rome?

2. What is the timeless truth of Romans 16:1-16?

ENGAGE

3. What are some of the reasons that Paul might have mentioned specific people by name at the end of his letter?

4. Paul addressed a number of people in this letter by name. How might that have encouraged others in the Roman church to listen to Paul's words?

5. What does this list of names teach you about the importance of relationships within the Christian community?

EXECUTE

6. Paul didn't just know about the church, he actually took the time to know some of the people of the church. What are you doing to invest in people and not only the structure or organization of our church?

7. God often uses our past to shape our future. How might the relationships you have from your past be used for God's glory today?



BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16

Watch Out (Romans 16:17-20)

Week 8 – October 23, 2016

Sermon Notes from Sunday, October 16

Use this space to write down notes from the sermon or your personal study.

Discussion Guide for Sunday, October 23

BIG THOUGHT

Unify around God's truths.

DISCUSSION STARTER

What are the things that help you to be unified with your family or friends?

INTRODUCTION

Small mistakes can sometimes have significant consequences. Consider this story about a marital fight over a simple note:

"My farmer husband, Larry, isn't a cook. So when I accepted a lunch invitation with former coworkers, I put food for Larry in the oven and scribbled a note: 'Dinner in oven.' Returning at 4:00 p.m., I waved at Larry working outside, but he didn't wave back. *Guess he's had a bad day*, I thought.

In the kitchen, the plot thickened. There were no dirty dishes, and the casserole was still in the oven. Only a sandwich that I intended to throw away was missing from the refrigerator.

When Larry came in, I asked, 'What did you have for dinner?'

Silence.

'Did you get my note?'

'Sure did,' he replied gruffly. 'It said, 'Dinner is over!'

I now proofread all my notes."

(Source: Evelyn Shetter, "Lite Fare," *Christian Reader* (May – June 2000))

Like this story, small misunderstandings and trivial issues can cause great divisions within a church family. Christians are called to be watchful for those who cause division and for the little things that can divide the community of believers.

EXAMINE

1. **Why might Paul have felt the need to warn the church at Rome about divisive people?**

2. **What is the timeless truth of Romans 16:17-20?**

ENGAGE

3. **What are the kinds of division against which Paul specifically warns in Romans 16:17?**

4. **How does Paul suggest we are to deal with those who seek to cause division? What are some other Scripture passages that address the issue of division? (Ex. - Matt. 18:15-20, Titus 3:10, 1 Cor. 1:10, Gal. 5:15, Proverbs, etc.)**

5. **Paul urges the Romans, and us, to be “wise to what is good and innocent to what is evil.” What does this mean? How can Christians put this commandment into practice today?**

6. **How does Romans 16:20 give hope as you wade through the difficulties of life?**

EXECUTE

7. **The Bible often warns against division. How can we respond to individually to divisiveness in our church family? How should our church leaders respond?**

8. **Paul knew of the obedience of the Roman church even though he had never visited them. Do people know you to be a person of obedience to Christ? How can you show others your commitment to Christ without being Pharisaical?**

9. **Disagreements within the church are expected, just as they are within a healthy family. What can you do to make sure that your disagreements do not become divisive? How can you head off division before it festers?**

Prayer Requests



BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16

Church is a Team Sport (Romans 16:21-23)

Week 9 – October 30, 2016

Sermon Notes from Sunday, October 23

Use this space to write down notes from the sermon or your personal study.

Discussion Guide for Sunday, October 30

BIG THOUGHT

Christians need other Christians.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Talk about a time when the presence of another Christian helped you to be a better witness.

INTRODUCTION

“That sixteen-ounce jar of honey in your pantry exists only because tens of thousands of bees flew some 112,000 miles in a relentless pursuit of nectar gathered from 4.5 million flowers. Every one of those foraging bees was female. By the time each died — living all of 6 weeks during honey-making season — she had flown about 500 miles in 20 days outside the hive.

As these bees were flying themselves to death, production inside the hive continued with stupendous efficiency, as follows: A bee brings nectar to the hive, carried tidily in her ‘honey stomach.’ The bee is greeted by a younger, homebody receiver bee, who relieves her of her load. A receiver bee deposits nectar into a cell, reducing its water content and raising its sugar level by fanning it with her wings and regurgitating it up to 200 times, killing microbes along the way. More bees surround this cell and others and fan them with their wings 25,000 times or so, turning nectar into honey. When the honey is ripe, wax specialists arrive to cap off the cells. That is how every single ounce of every single honey pot, bottle, or jar in the world — hundreds of thousands of them — is brought into being.

‘Every gulp of raw honey is a distinct, unique, unadulterated medley of plant flavor; a sweet, condensed garden in your mouth,’ writes Holley Bishop, an awed amateur beekeeper trying her level best with ordinary English to capture a miracle.”

(Source: Eric Miller, “Shock and Awe,” *Books and Culture* (September – October 2006))

As Christians, we are called to carry out the Great Commission. The fulfillment of Christ’s commission will take the involvement of all believers, so there is no room in the church for individualism. The task is too great for one person to accomplish.

EXAMINE

- 1. Who are the eight people mentioned by Paul in Romans 16:21-23?**

- 2. What is the timeless truth of Romans 16:21-23?**

ENGAGE

- 3. Paul was a pioneer missionary; he made it his goal to go to places where Christ had not been named. What are some reasons why ministry partners may have been vital to his ministry?**

4. Paul mentions Timothy as a “fellow worker” (16:21). Paul was a mentor to Timothy, but Timothy grew into a colleague in ministry. What does 2 Timothy 4:9 tell you about the relationship that developed between Paul and Timothy?

5. Paul is well known and so is Timothy, but many people who are not well known today were apparently important to Paul’s ministry. What does this teach you about the importance of supposedly “unknown” people within the church?

EXECUTE

6. Tertius wrote Paul’s letter for him. Tertius was basically Paul’s secretary, and yet it seems that he was an integral part of Paul’s ministry. What gifts do you have that you could be using in the church?

7. Everyone is has a place within a church family. How can we help those in “less-visible” positions know they are valued within our community? What can you do as an individual to honor and care for those in these areas?

8. Read 1 Corinthians 1:14. The Gaius mentioned there is probably the same Gaius mentioned here at the end of Romans. Paul mentions him as a host—he opened his home to Paul and the church. How can you serve your church and God’s kingdom with hospitality?

Prayer Requests



BUILDING UP THE BODY

A Study of Romans 14-16

Why We Do What We Do (Romans 16:25-27)

Week 10 – November 6, 2016

Sermon Notes from Sunday, October 30

Use this space to write down notes from the sermon or your personal study.

Discussion Guide for Sunday, November 6

BIG THOUGHT

Mankind's greatest purpose is to glorify and enjoy God.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Discuss times when you have lost sight of your ultimate priorities (in marriage, parenting, your job, etc...)

INTRODUCTION

"Children will play with virtually anything they get their hands on. It's no surprise, then, that when Dutch children in the town of Barneveld uncovered an unexploded World War II artillery shell, they played with it. In fact, they had games with it for several months.

That shell was still live and contained high explosives. Thankfully, the deadly plaything did not explode in the Barneveld playground as the children tossed it about. Eventually the authorities learned about the shell, confiscated it, and exploded it in a safe place.

Those who are not yet mature often fail to recognize the danger in what they are doing. For children, the world is a playground, and bombs make great toys."

(Source: Craig Brian Larson, "Children Play with a Bomb," PreachingToday.com)

It is important for Christians to think carefully about their greatest purpose. If God is not the primary purpose of all that we do, we may find ourselves in danger without recognizing it. We need to know why we do what we do.

EXAMINE

- 1. Is it possible that first century Christians could have lost sight of God's glory as their main goal?**

- 2. What is the timeless truth of Romans 16:25-27?**

ENGAGE

- 3. Based on verse 25, what is the strength that Christians can depend upon?**

- 4. Read Ephesians 3:1-6. How does that passage help us understand the the mystery of the gospel that Paul writes about in Romans 16:25?**

5. Paul refers to the gospel as “my” gospel. Obviously the gospel is God’s gospel. Why would Paul refer to it also as “my” gospel? (Note: Galatians 1:6-10 may help to shed some light.)

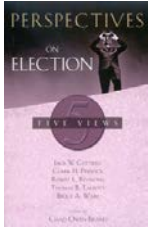
EXECUTE

6. If the gospel is the source of knowing God and learning about his strength, can a Christian ever “get over” the gospel? How should the gospel continue to affect you and strengthen you as a Christian?
7. Paul concludes the most systematically developed theological book in the entire Bible with praise for God. What does this teach you about the ultimate purpose of theology (learning about God)? How is your worship affected as you grow deeper in your understanding of God?
8. As you reflect on the months of study we have spent in Romans, in what ways has your life changed as a result of this study? Is your prayer life or commitment to Christ in other ways richer?

Prayer Requests

Recommended Resources for Romans

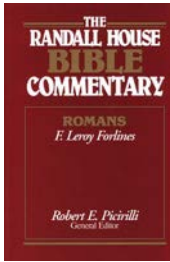
Book Resources



Five Perspectives on Election – One of the major themes in the book of Romans is God’s work of election. This book gives a great overview of five different views on election through a debate between five different theologians.



Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary – Witherington focuses on the background of the readers to whom the book of Romans was original written.



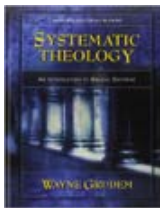
Romans: The Randall House Bible Commentary– F. Leroy Forlines writes as a free-will Baptist, but his commentary is approachable for students of all levels and well researched. The author has included several essays within the commentary that add to the study of Romans.



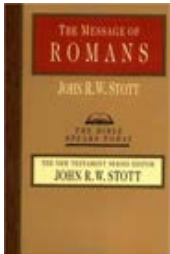
Hard Sayings of Paul – Drawing on years of pastoral experience and study, Manfred Brauch takes on forty-eight of Paul’s hardest sayings. Brauch helps believers to understand and apply these difficult passages to their Christian Life.



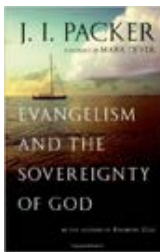
The Epistle to the Romans: NICNT Commentary – This is the expanded commentary by Dr. Douglas J. Moo who also wrote the NIV Application Commentary. This commentary delves deeper into the exegesis of the text.



Systematic Theology – Wayne Grudem’s textbook is among the most used by evangelicals today. Grudem clearly and systematically lays out the theological themes introduced by Paul.



The Message of Romans – John Stott has written what many consider to be the best popular-level commentary on the book of Romans. His approach is both pastoral and devotional and offers deep insights from a balanced perspective.



Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God – Two of the overarching themes of Romans are God’s sovereignty and evangelism. J.I. Packer explores how the two concepts work together through God’s church. This is a classic work on evangelism.

Online Resources

The Story – If you are looking for an easy visual way to share the gospel, check out viewthestory.com. This website unpacks God’s “big story” of salvation through the themes of creation, fall, rescue, and restoration in the Bible. It is a colorful and sensible way for people to understand our sin and need for a savior. You can even download a free app to your iPhone or Android phone.

Blue Letter Bible – The Blue Letter Bible is an online resource that offers multiple translations of the Bible, translations, and definitions from the original languages, and some commentaries. In addition to the website, there is an app you can download to your tablet or smartphone. <http://www.blueletterbible.org>.

John Piper’s Sermons on Romans - Dr. John Piper’s sermons on the book of Romans can be found at his ministry’s website, <http://www.desiringgod.org>. Dr. Piper is an example of a godly and patient pastor who spent many years working through the book of Romans. His sermons on this book serve as a model for many.

Paige Patterson’s Lectures on Romans – Southwestern Theological Seminary has made a series of lectures of Dr. Paige Patterson on Romans available on YouTube. Dr. Patterson was one of the leaders in the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention and continues to be one of the convention’s leading voices. You can view the first lecture at <http://youtu.be/0Jqd7C1wu0s> or by going to YouTube and searching for “Focused Study in Romans.”