

Renew

How the Gospel Changes Us from the Inside Out



Community Group Study Guide
February – April 2010
Romans, Chapters 12-15

Holy Trinity Church, Chicago
Downtown and North Side Congregations

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Studies for the remainder of Romans will be provided later.

WELCOME TO A COMMUNITY GROUP

Introduction

We are committed to building authentic community in Chicago that transforms lives – so that each of us looks more and more like Jesus. Because we’ve been changed by the stunning good news of the gospel, we want to respond to one another in love. Jesus tells his followers, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Vision

We are praying for a movement of community groups throughout Chicago, so that our city is filled with Jesus’ glory.

Structure

Community groups meet weekly in homes throughout the neighborhoods of Chicago in groups of 6-12 people who commit to stay together for 12-18 months and plant a new community group.

Life

Community Groups at Holy Trinity Church help us connect on four levels:

- **Connect to God:** God designed people for relationship with Him – and so we’ve specifically designed community groups to bring you closer to God. In fact, the very reason why Jesus came into the world is to bring people into intense, personal and eternal relationships with God.
- **Connect to the Word:** We believe that God speaks today through his word. So in our community groups we train each other on how to listen carefully to what God says in his Word. We have found that as we’ve studied the Bible, it has changes us individually and as a group to be more like Jesus. Jesus teaches (Luke 24:44-47) that he is the point of history and the Bible, and so we are always connecting our story to the story of the text and the larger story of God’s work in history.
- **Connect to other people:** City living can be isolating. But Jesus calls us to live in Christ-like community with each other in accountability, sharing, love and commitment. So we laugh, pray, sing and share together on a weekly basis. We celebrate the idea that God himself lives in eternal community!
- **Connect to the city:** Even as God sent Jesus as a missionary to us, we believe God has called us on a mission for the Kingdom. So we intentionally serve those in our city, the poor, disadvantaged and isolated – celebrating God’s goodness towards us with them.

You are most welcome!

WINTER/SPRING 2010 COMMUNITY GROUP CALENDAR

Week of:

Jan 25	Group Study	Romans 11:33-12:2 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Feb 1	Group Study	Romans 12:3-8 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Feb 8	Group Study	Romans 12:9-21 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Feb 15	Group Study	Romans 13 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>

Friday Feb 19th to Sunday Feb 21st – **Serve Chicago**. Hope For Chicago will contact each group to coordinate service projects by Community Group.

Feb 22	Group Study	Romans 14:1-12 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Feb 29	Group Study	Romans 14:13-15:7 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
March 8	Group Study	Romans 15:8-13 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
March 15	Group Study	Romans 15:44-33 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
March 22	Group Study	Romans 16 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
March 29	No Community Group gatherings – Easter break	
April 5	Groups resume with a dinner	

Community Group dinners – we recommend that groups meet for a meal approximately every 4 to 6 weeks at the discretion of each group leader. Additionally, the group leader will determine whether or not the dinner should replace a study, be combined with an abbreviated study, or be held on a different day of the week.

Romans 12:9-21

Week of February 8th

Community Group calendar: **Study**

Texts: **Romans 12:9-21**

Ways in which you will interact with these texts:

- Personal study (we recommend three separate readings)
- Listen to sermon preached on February 7th
- Group discussion during week of February 8th

Romans 12:9-21 *English Standard Version (ESV)*

Marks of the True Christian

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

First Reading – *What does this passage tell you about God?*

1. What attribute of God is highlighted in this text? Explain why is it better that God exercise this attribute, rather than us?
2. Explain how can you look to the person and work of Jesus Christ to help in following the imperatives in this passage.

- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

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Summarize the passage:

What is the **theme** of the passage (i.e., a sentence that captures the timeless essence of the passage)?

What is the **aim** of the passage (i.e., how should you respond to this passage in thought and behavior)?

Romans 13

Week of February 15th

Community Group calendar: **Study**

Texts: **Romans 13**

Ways in which you will interact with these texts:

- Personal study (we recommend three separate readings)
- Listen to sermon preached on February 14th
- Group discussion during week of February 15th

Romans 13 *English Standard Version (ESV)*

Submission to the Authorities

13 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Fulfilling the Law Through Love

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹ Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

First Reading – *What does this passage tell you about God?*

1. What does this passage tell us God is the source of?

2. According to this passage, how does God work through “authorities”?
 3. Paul has given us many exhortations on how we are to live. Ultimately, what does he provide as the greatest reason and way to live a ‘loving’ life now (hint: see 13:11-14)?
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Second Reading – *What does this passage tell you about yourself?*

1. Do you naturally want to obey authorities and laws? Explain why or why not.
2. How does 13:1a challenge a widely held view that we are completely free to make our own decisions and choices? How do you view yourself as ‘being subject’ to the governing authorities? How is this different from both Romans 12:2 (“do not be conformed to this world”), but also different from blind obedience (see Acts 4:19-20)?
3. How does Paul’s admonition in 13:7 challenge you in light of the recent financial and property meltdown?
4. In 13:8 Paul is picking back up the ideal that followers of Christ will be characterized by love (12:9-21). Explain how this weeks (especially vv.9-10) and last weeks passages have challenged your outlook on “love”?

- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Third Reading – *What does this passage tell you about how you should live?*

1. Explain how this passage may change your view of authorities and laws.
 2. How does 13:1-7 help counterbalance 12:2 (that is, societal vs. individual boundaries and norms of behavior)?
 3. History tells of us clearly unjust governments (for example Nazi Germany), and Scripture does not portray governments as being perfectly just. How then do we obey Romans 13:1-7 in light of unjust, and imperfect, governments? See Acts 4:19-20.
 4. Paul in 13:11-14 is clearly writing to those who are followers of Christ. Explain how 13:11-14 both challenges your behavior and allows you to overcome ‘the night.’
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Summarize the passage:

What is the **theme** of the passage (i.e., a sentence that captures the timeless essence of the passage)?

What is the **aim** of the passage (i.e., how should you respond to this passage in thought and behavior)?

Romans 14:1-12

Week of February 22nd

Community Group calendar: **Study**

Texts: **Romans 14:1-12**

Ways in which you will interact with these texts:

- Personal study (we recommend three separate readings)
- Listen to sermon preached on February 21st
- Group discussion during week of February 22nd

Romans 14:1-12 *English Standard Version (ESV)*

Do Not Pass Judgment on One Another

14 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹ for it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall confess to God.”

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

First Reading – *What does this passage tell you about God?*

1. List the numerous ways God has either acted, or will act, from this passage.

2. How important does this passage state our living is to be done for God, and in view of God? Explain what this tells us about God

- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Second Reading – *What does this passage tell you about yourself?*

1. If we honestly reflect on our own heart, we will likely find that we do pass judgment on others related to matters that are more ‘opinion’ oriented. How does this passage convict you of why that attitude is not pleasing to God?

2. Given that we live in a particularly individualistic time and place, how does this passage challenge you (particularly 14:7-8)?

- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Third Reading – *What does this passage tell you about how you should live?*

1. This passage is particularly heavy on eschatological (end times) implications. How should these eschatological realities influence your life now?

2. What might being ‘weak’ in faith look like in a contemporary North American church? What might being ‘strong’ in faith look like in a similar church?

3. How do the attributes you wrote out in the preceding question compare with the Bible – that is, are the ‘weak’ attributes prohibited/discouraged, and are the ‘strong’ attributes promoted/encouraged? How much does culture (and numerous sub-cultures) influence

being 'weak' or 'strong'? How do we overcome any non-Biblical views on being 'weak' and 'strong' in our faith?

- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Summarize the passage:

What is the **theme** of the passage (i.e., a sentence that captures the timeless essence of the passage)?

What is the **aim** of the passage (i.e., how should you respond to this passage in thought and behavior)?

Romans 14:13-15:7

Week of March 1st

Community Group calendar: **Study**

Texts: **Romans 14:1-12**

Ways in which you will interact with these texts:

- Personal study (we recommend three separate readings)
- Listen to sermon preached on February 29th
- Group discussion during week of March 1st

Romans 14:13-15:7 *English Standard Version (ESV)*

Do Not Cause Another to Stumble

¹³ Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ¹⁴ I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

²⁰ Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. ²² The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. ²³ But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

The Example of Christ

15 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³ For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” ⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

First Reading – *What does this passage tell you about God?*

1. List the ways God's attributes and actions in this passage encourage us to follow the exhortations of the passage.
 2. How does this passage describe the "Kingdom of God"?
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Second Reading – *What does this passage tell you about yourself?*

1. Prayerfully examine your walk with Christ. How have you been tempted, or actually, "put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way" of someone else?
 2. If you have been a "stumbling block" for others, for whom were you trying to build a kingdom (God, a church, other people, yourself)?
 3. Can you distinguish between 'traditions' and Biblical/Unbiblical actions and attitudes? Explain how they are different, and how to identify, and eradicate, any unbiblical 'traditions' in your life that may really be stumbling blocks.
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Third Reading – *What does this passage tell you about how you should live?*

1. How can you better "bear with the failings of the weak"?

2. This passage speaks of freedom and flexibility afforded to followers of Christ, but it also speaks of a great unity that we are to collectively exhibit. What is that unity (hint: see 15:6), and how are you encouraged by this passage to live in light of that vision?
- Write out any prayer requests that come to mind as you read this text and interact with these questions.

Summarize the passage:

What is the **theme** of the passage (i.e., a sentence that captures the timeless essence of the passage)?

What is the **aim** of the passage (i.e., how should you respond to this passage in thought and behavior)?