

ROMANS 12

LIVING IN VIEW OF GOD'S MERCY

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SERIES BREAKUP

DATE	IN SMALL GROUP	AT SALT CHURCH
4-10 Oct	Romans 12:1	
11-17 Oct	Romans 12:2	
18-24 Oct	Romans 12:3-5	
25-31 Oct	Choose your own	5pm Church at 275 (hopefully), Sun 31 st
1-7 Nov	Romans 12:6-8	Constitution Feedback Night, Mon 1 st
8-14 Nov	Romans 12:9-11	
15-21 Nov	Romans 12:12-13	Grow, Fri 19 th
22-28 Nov	Romans 12:14-16	
29 Nov-5 Dec	Romans 12:17-21	Combined Coaching Sesh, Mon 29 th 10am Church at 275 (hopefully), Sun 5 th
6-12 Dec	Finish for the year!	Christmas Mission Events, in Dec

OVERVIEW

The Book of Romans

When Paul brought the gospel to Thessalonica, he made a lot of enemies. His opponents said to the town council, *‘These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also’* (Acts 17:6 ESV).

There’s actually a lot of truth in that accusation. Paul’s message, the gospel of God, does turn the world upside down. In the gospel God pours out his mercy, and people who deserve death are declared right before God by faith in Jesus Christ. That news changes individuals, families, communities. It changed you. Romans explains that gospel. As Martin Luther put it:

This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is the purest Gospel. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes . . . We find in this letter, then, the richest possible teaching about what a Christian should know: the meaning of law, Gospel, sin, punishment, grace, faith, justice, Christ, God, good works, love, hope and the cross. We learn how we are to act toward everyone, toward the virtuous and sinful, toward the strong and the weak, friend and foe, and toward ourselves... Each and every Christian should make this letter the habitual and constant object of his study. God grant us his grace to do so. Amen

(Martin Luther, *Preface to the Letter of St Paul to the Romans*, 1552)

Why Romans 12

In Term 4 at Salt Church we're digging into just one chapter of this book, Romans 12, looking at 1-2 verses each week. Why one chapter?

Because of lockdown: we'll still be on zoom in Small Groups for the next few weeks and it's harder to have a good convo on zoom than in person. So rather than covering 20 vs / week, we're going with 2 vs. Yet even as we read the bible verse by verse, we can still get so much gold from it.

Because it answers the questions we're asking: 'But how should I live now?' is one of the classic questions Christians ask. As much as we love talking about big stuff like God and salvation, at some point we want to know how I should live, what I should do, how I can please God in my life? It's the same for our church too – how should *we* live, what should *we* do, how can *we* please God more with *our* lives?

That's what Romans 12 is all about. Paul lists dozens of commands to show us how to live as Christians. God doesn't leave us to guess how he wants us to act, he tells us clearly. Yet it's important to remember that Christianity is not simply a list of dos and don'ts. How we live totally depends on God's grace and mercy. That's why Romans 12 starts like this:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy...

In response to 11 chapters that unpack the compassion, grace and mercy God has shown Christians, Paul tells us how we should *therefore* live. As we dig into Romans 12, let's ask God to show us the kind of people he wants us to be, and to help us love him more deeply and obey him more fully.

ROMANS 12:1 • 4-10 OCT

OVERVIEW: We're launching into Romans 12, and covering 1 verse. This crucial verse gives the context for the whole chapter of rules.

PRAY TO START: Ask for God's help to understand God's mercy.

Read Romans 12:1

QUESTIONS:

- What are Christians told to do / not do?
- Why are we meant to do / not do that?
- What do you think this looks like in practise in your life?
- Think about these two statements:
 - 1) we obey God's rules
 - 2) we receive God's mercy

Which order would you put these 2 statements in – which comes first?

What problem might you run into if you put 1 before 2?

What problem might you run into if you left 1 out?

Martin Luther once wrote: "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone". Meaning: it's entirely trusting God's mercy that saves us, but having been saved, in response we live a life of joyful obedience. That's what we're saved for and why God gives us his mercy.

- What do you love about being a Christian? Spend a few minutes giving thanks to God for those things, His mercies to you.

PRAY TO END: Thank God for his mercy. Ask God to help us offer our time, energy, money, bodies, whole lives to him in worship.

ROMANS 12:2 • 11-17 OCT

OVERVIEW: Verse 2 gives us a choice. Will you conform to the world – being squished into its mould, going with the flow of this world's values and beliefs, being like a chameleon that changes colours to match whatever the people around you say and do. Or will you have a transformed mind so you can know and do what will please God?

PRAY TO START: Ask for God's help to please Him.

Read Romans 12:2

QUESTIONS:

- What are Christians told to do / not do?
- Why are we meant to do / not do that?
- What do you think this looks like in practise in your life?
- When are you most tempted to just copy what people around you do?
- How can you 'renew your mind'? Also check out **Eph 4:17-24**.
- What's God's will for you? Also **Mark 3:35, 1 Thess 4:1-3, 1 Pet 2:15, 4:2**.

PRAY TO END: Thank God for his mercy. Ask for help to be transformed.

ROMANS 12:3-5 • 18-24 OCT

OVERVIEW: Verse 3 moves from our vertical relationship to our horizontal ones. Christianity is not just 'me and God', but 'us and God'. So how do we live as a Church community?

PRAY TO START: Ask for God's help to value other Christians.

Read Romans 12:3-5

QUESTIONS:

- What are Christians told to do / not do?
- Why are we meant to do / not do that?
- What do you think this looks like in practise in your life?
- When are you most tempted to compare yourself to other Christians?
- What is good and bad about comparing ourselves to other Christians?
- The opposite of pride is sober-judgement / humility. But what's that...

CS Lewis once wrote: *"humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less; it is a blessed self-forgetfulness"*.

Do you agree? If you lived this way, how would that change the way you treated other Christians?

PRAY TO END: Thank God that he has saved us to be part of a body. Ask for his help to serve our church community by fighting pride.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN • 25-31 OCT

GET EXCITED, THERE'S A NEW CONSTITUTION...

This Sunday we're taking a planned pause in Romans 12 to get ready for a big exciting moment in our church's life – reviewing our new constitution!

Ok maybe not exciting, but still big. Our constitution governs how Salt Church operates, and in this day and age of limited accountability for pastors and the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, it's something we really want to get right!

So this Sunday Michael will show us from the bible some key things to keep in mind as we think about a constitution (how does the church relate to Government, who does God want to lead his church, how do we trust our leaders but also keep them accountable, etc.) Then on Monday night we'll have a Q&A event about the proposed new constitution and will launch a 3 week period where we're asking all members of Salt Church to comment and give feedback on the proposed new constitution.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN: This means that, this week in Small Groups, you get to choose your own adventure. One downside of the way we unpack books at Salt is we move quick! You might have started a great chat in your group 1 week, but by the next we've moved on.

This week is a chance to choose your own adventure – continue 1 of those chats or look at another topic / question / part of the bible your group wants to. Choose your own weeks can be great for your group digging into something that's puzzling, troubling or exciting them.

SOCIAL FUN TIMES:

If you haven't done a social / fun thing for a while you could use this week for that. See chap 5 & 6 of [Getting Started as a Small Group Leader](#) for tips on how to use these to grow your group, so you get more out of them.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE DISCUSSION:

Alternatively, if you want to continue a previous discussion or dig into another topic / question / part of the bible here's how you could do that...

Getting Ideas: A week before, let your group know there's a 'choose your own' week coming up. Collect ideas, like a topic / question / part of the bible they want to explore. Vote to find the most popular 1 & get prepping.

Getting Prepped: Brainstorm where in the bible the topic / question comes up. Or for a part of the bible, read it a bunch of times to work out what it means. Ask your coach & other leaders if they know good places to go / what the passage means. If you're more experienced at this you can read a systematic theology or commentary (there's a bunch upstairs at 275 Keira St you can borrow). Plus, if you're keen to learn more about how to create studies, check out [Writing a Small Group Study](#) by Richard Sweatman.

Packaging a Discussion: Here's 3 options...

1. Use the COMA method: ask the group what's the *Context* | what you *Observe* | what you think it *Means* | how you think it *Applies* to us.
2. Use the [Swedish Method](#) to read the passage & ask [these questions](#):
 - a. What stands out to you?
 - b. What's a question you have?
 - c. What do you think the big point is?
 - d. What do you think this will mean for your life?
 - e. What from this passage can you share with someone else?
3. Just read a passage, ask 'what do you reckon?' & see where you go.

NEED HELP?

You don't have to have all the answers or be the expert to be a Small Group Leader, so don't stress out for this week. Just get people into God's word & let Him teach & transform us by His Spirit. Your Small Group Coach is always available & ready to give you help too.

ROMANS 12:6-8 • 1-7 NOV

OVERVIEW: We're often fascinated about spiritual gifts. Today we'll see who has them, what they are, and what they're for – we all have gifts, abilities and circumstances we can use to contribute to the well-being of church.

PRAY TO START: Ask for help to use the gifts God's given us for his glory.

Read Romans 12:6-8

QUESTIONS:

- What are Christians told to do / not do?
- Why are we meant to do / not do that?
- What do you think this looks like in practise in your life?
- There are 7 gifts in this list (and you can find other 'gifts lists' in 1 Cor 12:4-31, Eph 4:11 and 1 Pet 4:10-11). For each of these 7 gifts:
 - What do you think it means?
 - What could be an example of using it?
- Share 1 or more gifts you think someone else in your Small Group has, that they can use, or are using, to serve Christians.
- What unanswered questions do you have about gifts?

PRAY TO END: Ask God to help us know what gifts he has given us, and to help us use our gifts to grow the church and in the way he wants us to.

ROMANS 12:9-11 • 8-14 NOV

OVERVIEW: As Christians we've been loved so deeply by God, and that love transforms us and our Church, so we love one another. This section of Romans 12 shows us what that love for each other looks like in practise.

PRAY TO START: Ask for God's help to love each other as he has loved us.

Read Romans 12:9-11

QUESTIONS:

- What are Christians told to do / not do?
- Why are we meant to do / not do that?
- What do you think this looks like in practise in your life?
- Let's try some reverse psychology. If we disobeyed these commands what would your life, our Small Group, and our Church look like?
- How would you use v9 to speak to this scenario:

One Christian (who has been a Christian for a few years) tells another Christian in passing that they love going out on Saturday nights and getting drunk with friends.

- How would you use v10 to speak to this scenario:

After church someone who's been at Salt for 6 months says to the person sitting next to them: 'I just don't feel loved at Salt Church. My old church was much more loving.'

- How would you use v11 to speak to this scenario:

People are sharing prayer points in Small Group when one person says 'I used to be so much more excited about being a Christian and serving at church, but now I just feel spiritually dry all the time'.

PRAY TO END: Thank God for his sincere love towards us and the way his love transfers our lives and Christian communities.

ROMANS 12:12-13 • 15-21 NOV

OVERVIEW: Christians need to stand together, serve together, endure hardship and stick-it-out together, showing other-person-centred love.

PRAY TO START: Ask for God's help to be other-person centred like him.

Read Romans 12:12-13

QUESTIONS:

- What are Christians told to do / not do?
- Why are we meant to do / not do that?
- What do you think this looks like in practise in your life?
- For these 5 commands, rank them in order from easiest to apply to hardest to apply, then share your list with the group.

Spend time encouraging each other about this. You'll probably find that people who find one command 'easier' will have tips and ideas to help people who find that command harder.

PRAY TO END: Thank God that he shows us what matters to him.

ROMANS 12:14-16 • 22-28 NOV

OVERVIEW: Christians need to humbly connect with one another as members of the body, and share our joys and struggles.

PRAY TO START: Ask for God's help to live out these commands.

Read Romans 12:14-16

QUESTIONS:

- What are Christians told to do / not do?
- Why are we meant to do / not do that?
- What do you think this looks like in practise in your life?
- What do you think of this quote:

Love that is genuine will not respond to a fellow believer's joy with envy or bitterness, but will enter wholeheartedly into that same joy. Similarly, love that is genuine will bring us to identify so intimately with our brothers and sisters in Christ that their sorrow will become ours.'

Douglas Moo, Commentary on Romans

PRAY TO END: Thank God that he was willing to associate with lowly us.

ROMANS 12:17-21 • 29 NOV - 5 DEC

OVERVIEW: We finish Romans 12 off with God's commands to show peace and kindness to people who have hurt us instead of seeking revenge, just as God has done to us.

PRAY TO START: Ask for help to love our enemies.

Read Romans 12:17-21

QUESTIONS:

- What are Christians told to do / not do?
- Why are we meant to do / not do that?
- What do you think this looks like in practise in your life?
- Why might we *not always* be able to live at peace with someone?
- When someone hurts us we sometimes say, 'I have a right to be angry!' Then we gather allies and gossip about and slander that person.
Are there times you've done something like this in the past?
How can we do things differently the next time someone hurts us?
- Finish by actually praying for people who've hurt you and asking God to bless them – as hard as it is to do that, it is what God has done to us.

PRAY TO END: Thank God for all these life-giving commands we've seen in Romans 12, and for his mercy to us that means we can live his new way.

FINISHING UP • 6-12 DEC

DIRECTION: Have a Christmas party with your group to end the year! The reason we have Small Groups is so we can help each other know God better and learn to love each other like He's loved us. As you finish up for the year – or maybe even finish as a group – take the chance to reflect on how God's grown you in your relationship with Him & each other.

Fyi groups normally finish up in early Dec rather than later, because:

1. It's way better for the vibe of your group to finish well, with people coming & wanting more, rather than limping to the end of the year with people slowly dropping off. That's painful for everyone!
2. December's a full time for lots of people with shopping, holidays, Christmas parties. So beat the rush & get in early!

If your group's finishing up altogether, or if people might change groups next year, think through ending well. Chat with your Coach & check out 'It's a Living Thing' in chap 5 of [Getting Started as a Small Group Leader](#) for tips.

REFLECT: Think back to when you first joined this group.

- How have you seen your relationship *with God* grow this year?
- How have you seen your relationship *with other people here* grow?
- How have you seen *someone else in our group* grow as a Christian?

PLAN: As we finish up meeting for the year, what can you do:

- To keep growing as a Christian over summer and into next year?
- *To help others in this group* keep growing as Christians over summer?

PRAY: Finish your night and year in prayer

- Thank God for how He's grown us to know Him better and taught us to love each other like He loves us this year.
- Ask God to help us grow over summer & next year, so we'd all know, love & trust Him more at the end of next year than we did this year.



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Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy,
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God
– this is your true and proper worship.

Romans 12:1