Welcome to The Romans Course

I'm excited to journey with you through this amazing letter. From Saint Augustine to David Suchet, the Letter to the Romans has transformed many lives. That's right, the distinguished Hercule Poirot actor became a Christian while reading Romans. Who knows what will happen as we explore it together?

That said, Romans can be challenging. Some verses are hard to understand, and other bits seem controversial in our cultural context. But as we unpack the letter in its original setting, we will see the relevance of the overall message for today.

Filmed against the stunning backdrop of Rome, as well as in a studio, the ten sessions of *The Romans Course* include video teaching. This participants' guide provides further notes and suggested questions for discussion and, at the end of each session, there are Bible passages to read before the next time. Follow the reading plan and you will have read the entire letter to the Romans by the end of the course. Alongside these core resources, there's also a book I have written – *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* (Hodder, 2023) – to help you dig a bit deeper.

Every great adventure has challenging moments. That's what makes the whole thing so rewarding in the end. Romans may be the Mount Everest of the Bible but trust me, the view will be worth it! Let's get going ...

Andrew Ollerton

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Getting started

This is a chance to find out how well you know Romans. At the other end, you can do the quiz again and see your progress. So, without searching online, give it a try!

ROMANS QUIZ:

- Who wrote Romans?
- When was it written (roughly): AD 27, AD 57, AD 87?
- How many chapters does it contain?
- In which chapter is the phrase: 'For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love ...'
- Who delivered the letter to the churches in Rome?
- Why was the letter written?
  - to provide a systematic theology
  - to defend Christian belief against Roman critics
  - to unite Jews and Gentiles in a shared mission
- In which chapter is the phrase: 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (NIV)?
- How long to the nearest hour would it take the average reader to finish Romans?
- Fill in the blank from this sentence in Romans: 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the _____ that brings salvation to everyone who believes ...' (NIV)
- Name a famous Christian who was transformed through Romans?

Don't worry about your score at this stage. The more answers you get wrong, the greater the opportunity to grow!

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Session 1: Gospel.

How can we become more confident in our faith?

ROMANS 1.1–17

KEY VERSE:

'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes ...'

ROMANS 1.16 (ESV)

Part I: The back story

ROMANS 16

WHO WROTE ROMANS?

'Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God ...'

ROMANS 1.1 (NIV)

WHO WAS ROMANS WRITTEN TO?

Paul's greetings at the end of the letter (Romans 16) describe a close-knit and diverse community of Christians. They met in several house churches in ancient Rome.

WHO BROUGHT THE LETTER TO ROME?

'I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord ...'

ROMANS 16.1–2 (ESV)

WHAT'S THE UNDERLYING MESSAGE OF ROMANS?

Two main concerns pulsate through the letter: unity and mission. Paul wants to unite Jewish and Gentile Christians around the gospel so they can play their part in God's mission.

'Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you ...'

ROMANS 15.7 (NIV)

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Discussion time

READ ROMANS 16.1–16

1. What strikes you about the list of names and greetings in general?

2. What phrases capture the quality of their relationships together? What specific attributes and contributions does Paul mention?

3. Imagine these early Christians meeting in a house together ... what might it have been like? How does this help us reimagine what church is really all about?

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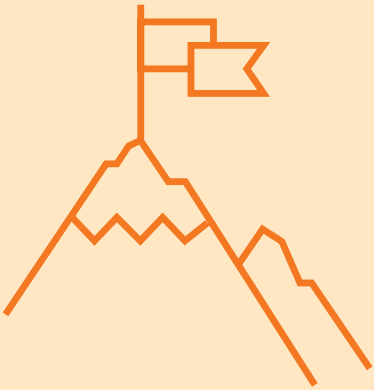

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Part II: The power of the gospel

> 'So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.'
>
> ROMANS 1.15 (ESV)

How confident are you in the relevance and power of the gospel today?

The gospel is good news that fulfils a bigger story

'... the gospel [God] promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David ...'

ROMANS 1.2–3 (NIV)

The gospel welcomes everyone who believes

'... [the gospel] is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed ...'

ROMANS 1.16–17 (NIV)

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Part II: Reflection time

READ ROMANS 1.16–17
A COUPLE OF TIMES

Why is the gospel still good news that is relevant today?

On the scale of 1–5, how confident are you in the gospel? What holds you back from sharing it? In what ways has this session helped?

PRAYER

Pray that our confidence in the gospel will grow as we journey through Romans together.

NOTES:

READING ROMANS:

Before the next session, read the following passages in Romans:

- READING 1: **Romans 1.1–17**
- READING 2: **Romans 1.18–32**
- READING 3: **Romans 2.1–16**
- READING 4: **Romans 2.17–29**
- READING 5: **Romans 3.1–20**

READING SUGGESTIONS:

- Chapter 1 of *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* by Andrew Ollerton

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Session 2: Sin.
What's wrong with the world?

ROMANS 1.18–3.20

KEY VERSE:

'For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ... '

ROMANS 3.22–23 (ESV)

Part I: What's wrong with the world?

The gospel is good news. But that implies there is also bad news ...

GOD IS REVEALED THROUGH CREATION

'For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made ...'

ROMANS 1.20 (NIV)

HUMANS TRY TO REPLACE GOD WITH THINGS HE HAS CREATED

'Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images ...'

ROMANS 1.22–23 (NIV)

HUMANS EXPERIENCE THE DAMAGING EFFECTS OF SIN

'Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts ...'

ROMANS 1.24 (NIV)

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Discussion time

READ ROMANS 1.18–25

1. Consider Romans 1.19–20. What can we learn about God from creation? What gives you a sense of wonder?

2. Consider Romans 1.21–23 and Romans 1.25. In what ways does sin lead to a downward spiral? How have you experienced this?

3. What idols are we prone to serving today – in culture and in our own hearts? Consider Romans 1.25. How might worshipping God be a powerful way to reverse the negative effects of sin and idolatry?

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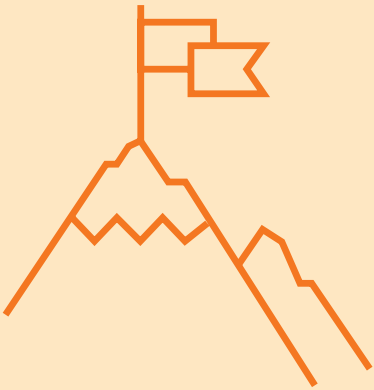

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Part II: What's wrong with religion?

IF ROMANS 1 FOCUSES ON THE PROBLEM OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, ROMANS 2 HIGHLIGHTS THE DANGER OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS:

'You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself ...'

ROMANS 2.1 (NIV)

IF WE ASSUME WE ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS, WE BECOME PROUD, CRITICAL AND JUDGMENTAL. WHETHER JEW OR GENTILE, RELIGIOUS OR IRRELIGIOUS:

'There is no difference ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...'

ROMANS 3.22–23 (NIV)

This honest diagnosis is good for us. It cultivates humility and a deep reliance on God.

NOTES:

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Part II: Reflection time

READ ROMANS 3.19–24

How could this dose of realism enable greater honesty with God, yourself and others? How might the bad news of sin help us appreciate the value of the gospel?

PRAYER

Let's take a moment to humble ourselves before God and confess our need of him. The words of the Anglican liturgy may help:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault … We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.

READING ROMANS:

Before the next session, read the following passages in Romans:

- READING 1: **Romans 3.21–26**
- READING 2: **Romans 3.27–31**
- READING 3: **Romans 4.1–9**
- READING 4: **Romans 4.10–15**
- READING 5: **Romans 4.16–25**

READING SUGGESTIONS:

- Chapter 2 of *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* by Andrew Ollerton

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Session 3: Salvation.
What's so amazing about grace?

ROMANS 3.21–4.25

KEY VERSE:

'All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.'

ROMANS 3.24 (NIV)

Part I: Justified by faith

How does the death of Jesus put us right with God?

THE SLAVE MARKET (redemption)
'... all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.'
ROMANS 3.24 (NIV)

THE TEMPLE (sacrifice)
'God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood - to be received by faith.'
ROMANS 3.25 (NIV)

LAW COURT (justice)
'[God] did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus'.
ROMANS 3.26 (NIV)

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Discussion time

READ ROMANS 3.21–26

1. If you had to post a one-minute video on social media explaining how guilty people can be put right with God, what might you say?

2. Review each of the three metaphors Paul uses:

    1. The slave-market (verse 24)
    2. The temple sacrifice (verse 25)
    3. The law court (verse 26)

    How does each picture help us appreciate what Christ accomplished for us? Which feels most significant for you right now?

3. Do you tend to focus more on God's standard of justice or his work to justify us? How does forgetting one or the other affect our view of God, ourselves and others?

NOTES:

God's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense

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Part II: Living by faith

Be grateful not boastful

'If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God.'

ROMANS 4.2 (NIV)

Be adventurous not cautious

'... follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had ...'

ROMANS 4.12 (NIV)

Having been justified by faith, we can step out in faith

Abraham was 'fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.'

ROMANS 4.21 (NIV)

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Part II: Reflection time

READ ROMANS 4.18–25

How does Abraham's example inspire us? Consider verse 18: 'Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed ...' What past disappointments hold us back? What might it mean for us to believe God and step out in faith?

PRAYER

Pray that we would live grateful and adventurous lives in response to God's grace.

NOTES:

READING ROMANS:

Before the next session, read the following passages in Romans:

- READING 1: **Romans 5.1–5**
- READING 2: **Romans 5.6–8**
- READING 3: **Romans 5.9–11**
- READING 4: **Romans 5.12–17**
- READING 5: **Romans 5.18–21**

READING SUGGESTIONS:

- Chapter 3 of *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* by Andrew Ollerton

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Session 4: Peace.

How can we find rest in a stressful world?

ROMANS 5

KEY VERSE:

'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'

ROMANS 5.8 (NIV)

Romans 5 reflects on our experience of salvation.

How confident are you that God loves you?

Part I: God's peace is a certain fact

How does the death of Jesus put us right with God?

PEACE WITH GOD

'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ...'

ROMANS 5.1 (NIV)

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ACCESS TO GOD

'... through [Christ] we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.'
ROMANS 5.2 (NIV)

How does the death of Jesus put us right with God?

'... while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'
ROMANS 5.8 (NIV)

Discussion time

READ ROMANS 5.1–2,9–10

1. What has helped you to become more assured of God's love for you personally?

2. In what ways do we struggle to believe that we have peace with God? How does Romans 5.1–2 help us to overcome this?

3. Do you ever struggle in worship or feel unwelcome in God's presence? What keeps you at a distance from God? How can Romans 5.9–10 help us?

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Part II: God's peace is a lived experience

WE EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE EVEN THROUGH SUFFERING

As Christians, we won't avoid suffering but we can experience it in a different way.

'Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope ...'

ROMANS 5.3–4 (ESV)

WE EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

We can know God loves us as a fact (Romans 5.8) and feel God's love as a personal experience.

'... God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.'

ROMANS 5.5 (NIV)

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Part II: Reflection time

READ ROMANS 5.3–5

How can God's love make us more resilient during tough times? How have you experienced this in your own life?

PRAYER

Take a moment to read Romans 5.5. Pray over it and ask God for a fresh experience of his love and peace in our hearts.

NOTES:

READING ROMANS:

Before the next session, read the following passages in Romans:

- READING 1: **Romans 6.1–11**
- READING 2: **Romans 6.12–14**
- READING 3: **Romans 6.15–23**
- READING 4: **Romans 7.1–6**
- READING 5: **Romans 7.7–25**

READING SUGGESTIONS:

- Chapter 4 of *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* by Andrew Ollerton

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Session 5: Freedom.
How can we avoid negative cycles?

ROMANS 6–7

KEY VERSE:

> 'Offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life ... sin shall no longer be your master ...'
>
> ROMANS 6.13–14 (NIV)

Part I: Know who you are

ROMANS 6.1–11

'What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!'
ROMANS 6.1–2 (ESV)

INSTEAD, GRACE GIVES US A NEW IDENTITY SO WE CAN LIVE IN FREEDOM

'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were buried therefore with him ... in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.'
ROMANS 6.3–4 (ESV)

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A Christian is united with Christ or 'in Christ'.

As Jesus died for our sin, so we have died with him: 'our old self was crucified with [Christ] ...'

ROMANS 6.6 (ESV)

As Jesus rose again, so we are alive in him: 'we too may live a new life.'

ROMANS 6.4 (NIV)

Discussion time

READ ROMANS 6.3–4,11

1. To what extent do you know that you died **with** Christ and have been set free from the reign of sin? What difference does this make to your sense of identity?
2. In what area of your life is fighting sin hard at the moment? How can we 'count on' who we are in Christ and not give in to temptation?
3. Re-read verse 11 and in place of 'sin' silently hold out an area of your life (e.g. anger, greed, lust) to God.

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Part II: Live out your new identity

ROMANS 7 EXPRESSES AN HONEST CRY OF FRUSTRATION AND FAILURE

'What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?'
ROMANS 7.24 (NIV)

ROMANS 7 REMINDS US THAT MORAL LAWS AND RULES CANNOT CHANGE US. INSTEAD, WE NEED TO LIVE OUT OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST.

COUNT ON IT

'In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.'
ROMANS 6.11 (NIV)

ACT ON IT

'Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life ...'
ROMANS 6.13 (NIV)

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Part II: Reflection time

READ ROMANS 6.12–13

What practical changes could you make to stop sin getting close to you?

What would it mean to offer yourself more fully as an instrument in God's hands?

PRAYER

Pray through Romans 6.12–14. Make a note of any feelings or thoughts that flood your mind. Bring them to God. Ask Jesus to help you walk in the freedom he secured for us.

NOTES:

READING ROMANS:

Before the next session, read the following passages in Romans:

- READING 1: **Romans 8.1–4**
- READING 2: **Romans 8.5–11**
- READING 3: **Romans 8.12–17**
- READING 4: **Romans 8.18–30**
- READING 5: **Romans 8.31–39**

READING SUGGESTIONS:

- Chapter 5 of *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* by Andrew Ollerton

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Session 6: Hope.
What has God promised?

ROMANS 8

KEY VERSE:

'... we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.'

ROMANS 8.23–24 (NIV)

Part I: The big picture

Justification ROMANS 8.1–11 › Adoption ROMANS 8.12–17 › Glorification ROMANS 8.18–30

'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.'

ROMANS 8.1 (ESV)

THE GOSPEL IS FORGIVENESS FOR THE PENALTY OF SIN, AND FREEDOM FROM THE POWER OF SIN. OUR PAST DOES NOT DETERMINE OUR FUTURE. SO LET'S:

'... put to death the misdeeds of the body ...'

ROMANS 8.13 (NIV)

'... have [our] minds set on what the Spirit desires ...'

ROMANS 8.5 (NIV)

Fulfil the 'righteous requirement of the law ...'

ROMANS 8.4 (NIV)

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'... we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God ...'
ROMANS 8.15–16 (ESV)

Abba: Aramaic term that expressed both respect and intimacy (similar to 'Papa').

Discussion time

READ ROMANS 8.1–4,15–16

1. Can you identify patterns of thought or behaviour that come from living under condemnation? What truths in these verses do we need to choose to believe? How can they become part of us?
2. What do we learn about what it means to be a child of God in these verses? How can we enjoy a more intimate relationship with God as our 'Abba, Father'?

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Part II: God is for us

Justification
ROMANS 8.1–11

Adoption
ROMANS 8.12–17

Glorification
ROMANS 8.18–30

OUR FUTURE HOPE GIVES US COURAGE TO KEEP GOING THROUGH LIFE'S CHALLENGES

NEW CREATION

'... the whole of creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth ...'
ROMANS 8.22 (NIV)

NEW BODIES

'... we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.'
ROMANS 8.23 (NIV)

NEW SECURITY

Romans 8 concludes with some amazing promises

'If God is for us, who can be against us?'
ROMANS 8.31 (NIV)

'... we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.'
ROMANS 8.37 (NIV)

'... [nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'
ROMANS 8.39 (NIV)

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Part II: Reflection time

READ ROMANS 8.31–39

Which truths in these verses are you already living in the light of? Which do you find most difficult to believe and why?

PRAYER

Pray and ask God to help you live in the light of these great truths.

NOTES:

READING ROMANS:

Before the next session, read the following passages in Romans:

- READING 1:
  Romans 9.1–18
- READING 2:
  Romans 9.19—10.4
- READING 3:
  Romans 10.5–21
- READING 4:
  Romans 11.1–24
- READING 5:
  Romans 11.25–36

READING SUGGESTIONS:

- Chapter 6 of *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* by Andrew Ollerton

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Session 7: Mystery.
If God is sovereign, what is our role?

ROMANS 9–11

KEY VERSE:

'Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!'

ROMANS 11.33 (NIV)

Part I: Backstage – God is Sovereign

ROMANS 9; 11

PAUL IS PASSIONATE ABOUT HIS OWN PEOPLE, THE JEWS:

'For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people ...'

ROMANS 9.3 (NIV)

In Romans 9, Paul redefines the covenant people (Israel) according to God's purpose of election.

In Romans 11, Paul describes God's mysterious purpose to use the salvation of the Gentiles to bring many Jewish people to faith in their Messiah.

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Discussion time

READ ROMANS 9.14–16, 19–21; 11.25–32

1. Read Romans 9.14–16. How do you respond to the idea of God's unconditional election? Why might we find it disturbing? Why might it also be a source of comfort?
2. Read Romans 9.19–21. How do you feel about a God who acts in mysterious ways that we can't fully understand? In what areas of life do you need to trust that God is sovereign?
3. Read Romans 11.25–32. How would you summarise God's overarching purpose for Israel and the nations from Paul's teaching in these verses? How might this stir a sense of wonder and worship?

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Part II: Onstage – we are responsible

READ ROMANS 10

God's purpose may be mysterious but our role is clear

- Confess that Jesus is Lord

  ROMANS 10.9–13

'If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.'

ROMANS 10.9 (NIV)

The gospel is both inclusive (everyone) and exclusive (Jesus)

- Communicate the gospel

  ROMANS 10.9–13

'... how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?'

ROMANS 10.14 (NIV)

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Part II: Reflection time

READ ROMANS 10.9–13

In what ways can we demonstrate our allegiance to Christ today?

What might it mean for you to have 'beautiful feet'? How can we go out of our way to share God's love and truth?

PRAYER

Pray for fresh confidence to share the gospel. Pray for open doors and hearts.

NOTES:

READING ROMANS:

Before the next session, read the following passages in Romans:

- READING 1: **Romans 12.1–2**
- READING 2: **Romans 12.3–8**
- READING 3: **Romans 12.9–13**
- READING 4: **Romans 12.14–17**
- READING 5: **Romans 12.18–21**

READING SUGGESTIONS:

- Chapter 7 of *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* by Andrew Ollerton

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Session 8: Devotion.
How can we live full on for God?

ROMANS 12

KEY VERSE:

'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 ...'

ROMANS 12.1 (NIV)

Part I: Living sacrifices

ROMANS 12.1–2

In view of God's mercy:

WE MUST BREAK WITH PAST WAYS OF LIVING:

'Do not conform to the pattern of this world ...'

ROMANS 12.2 (NIV)

WE MUST EMBRACE GOD'S TRUTH:

'... be transformed by the renewing of your mind.'

ROMANS 12.2 (NIV)

WE MUST DEVOTE OUR WHOLE SELVES TO GOD:

'Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering.'

ROMANS 12.1 (THE MESSAGE)

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Discussion time

READ ROMANS 12.1–2

1. How different does your life look now compared with your 'old' life? If it does not look different, what are the things that are holding you back?

2. Why is it so important not to conform to society? Have you experienced criticism for being different? In what ways do you find yourself being influenced by the world?

3. What might it mean to be a 'living sacrifice' today? Do you have an example of surrendering to God's leading?

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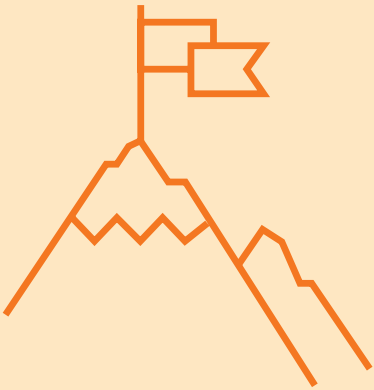

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Part II: Loving servants

ROMANS 12.3–21

WE ARE TO BE LOVING SERVANTS IN GOD'S FAMILY

'Be devoted to one another in love' – using our gifts, offering hospitality and sharing our resources (verse 10, NIV).

WE ARE TO BE LOVING SERVANTS TOWARDS OUR ENEMIES

'Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse' (verse 14, NIV).

'Do not repay anyone evil for evil' (verse 17, NIV).

'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink' (verse 20, NIV).

'Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good' (verse 21, NIV).

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Part II: Reflection time

READ ROMANS 12.14–21

What might it mean for us to serve others and 'overcome evil with good'? Is there someone who has hurt us to whom God is calling us to show kindness?

PRAYER

Pray for practical ways we can respond to this teaching and for fresh courage to act on it.

NOTES:

READING ROMANS:

Before the next session, read the following passages in Romans:

- READING 1: **Romans 13.1–7**
- READING 2: **Romans 13.8–10**
- READING 3: **Romans 13.11–14**
- READING 4: **Romans 14.1–12**
- READING 5: **Romans 14.13–23**

READING SUGGESTIONS:

- Chapter 8 of *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* by Andrew Ollerton

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Session 9: Community.
How can we live together in love?

ROMANS 13–14

KEY VERSE:

> 'For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ...'
>
> ROMANS 14.17 (NIV)

Part I: How to be a godly citizen in a secular society

RESPECT THOSE IN AUTHORITY (ROMANS 13.1–5)

'Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.'

ROMANS 13.1 (NIV)

CONTRIBUTE TO THE GOOD OF SOCIETY (ROMANS 13.6–10)

'Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continual debt to love one another ...'

ROMANS 13.8 (NIV)

LIVE IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST (ROMANS 13.11–14)

'The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.'

ROMANS 13.12 (NIV)

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Discussion time

READ ROMANS 13.1–5

1. What do you make of the idea that secular authorities are 'God's servants'? In what ways do we find it challenging to 'submit' to those in authority in our context?
2. Under what circumstances might forms of civil disobedience be justified for Christians? Try to think of some specific examples.

READ ROMANS 13.6–14

3. What might it mean practically for us to:
   - Contribute to the good of society
   - Live in the light of Christ

NOTES:

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Part II: How to be a positive member of Christ's Church

GOD'S GOAL FOR THE CHURCH IS UNITY NOT UNIFORMITY

'Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.'

ROMANS 15.7 (NIV)

WE MUST DISTINGUISH BETWEEN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MATTERS

THOSE WITH A 'STRONG' CONSCIENCE MUST BE CONSIDERATE

'It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.'

ROMANS 14.21 (NIV)

THOSE WITH A 'WEAK' CONSCIENCE MUST ACT WITH CONVICTION

'... whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.'

ROMANS 14.23 (NIV)

WE MUST PROTECT OUR UNITY IN CHRIST

'Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.'

ROMANS 14.19 (NIV)

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Part II: Reflection time

READ ROMANS 14.17–19

Think of someone you know who is a channel of peace and unity without compromising the gospel. What can we learn from their example?

How does this passage challenge the way we treat one another? In what areas may this be necessary today?

PRAYER

Pray for God to make you a channel of peace and unity by accommodating differences without compromising the gospel.

NOTES:

READING ROMANS:

Before the next session, read the following passages in Romans:

- READING 1: **Romans 15.1–7**
- READING 2: **Romans 15.8–21**
- READING 3: **Romans 15.22–33**
- READING 4: **Romans 16.1–16**
- READING 5: **Romans 16.17–27**

READING SUGGESTIONS:

- Chapter 9 of *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* by Andrew Ollerton

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Session 10: Mission.
How can we be ambitious with the gospel?

ROMANS 15–16

KEY VERSE:

'Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel ... to the only wise God be glory for ever through Jesus Christ! Amen.'

ROMANS 16.25,27 (NIV)

Part I: What is our mission and how do we do it?

READ ROMANS 15

PAUL REVEALS AMBITIOUS MISSION PLANS:

'I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you ...'
ROMANS 15.24 (ESV)

WHAT WAS PAUL'S MOTIVATION?

'... in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.'
ROMANS 15.9 (ESV)

'In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.'
ROMANS 15.17 (ESV)

WHAT WAS PAUL'S METHOD?

'... by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God ...'
ROMANS 15.18–19 (ESV)

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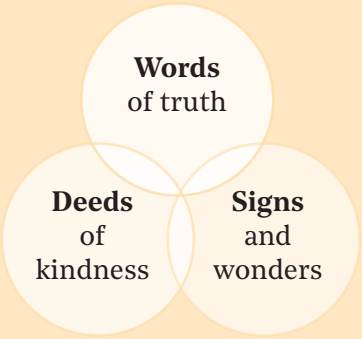
We can share the gospel in three ways:



- What was Paul's mission?

'It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known ...'

ROMANS 15.20 (NIV)

Discussion time

READ ROMANS 15.17–20

1. Consider your community and friends. What people or situations spring to mind where the power of the gospel is desperately needed?
2. Paul outlined three missional practices. Which comes most naturally to you and which are you prone to neglect? How can we become more intentional about each practice?

READ ROMANS 15.30–33

3. In verse 30, Paul says 'join me in my struggle'. Why can mission be a 'struggle'? What might it mean for us to share the gospel in ways that are ambitious and entrepreneurial today?

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Part II: The ground we've covered

'For I am not ashamed of the gospel ...'

ROMANS 1.16 (NIV)

How confident are you in the gospel now?

THE GOSPEL IS A ROOTED STORY

'... the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God ...'

ROMANS 16.25–26 (NIV)

THE GOSPEL IS A RELEVANT STORY

'... the obedience that comes from faith ...'

ROMANS 16.26 (NIV)

THE GOSPEL IS A RELATIONAL STORY

'... so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

ROMANS 15.6 (NIV)

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Part II: Reflection time

Looking back, what have you most appreciated about our adventure through Romans? What was new for you? What's changed in the way you think or act?

PRAYER

Consider Paul's closing prayer in Romans 16.25–27. Ask God to help you become more rooted in the gospel and more confident to share it.

NOTES:

READING SUGGESTIONS:

- Chapter 10 of *Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life* by Andrew Ollerton

FEEDBACK:

- We'd love to hear your reflections on your overall experience of *The Romans Course*. Use the QR code or visit biblesociety.org.uk/romans-survey to let us know.

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