



STUDY GUIDE

RIGHT WITH GOD

7.5.2015

[set up]

What kinds of rules or regulations – family law – did you have growing up? Would you classify your parents as strict, lenient, or somewhere in between?

Did you have a tendency to be a law keeper or a law breaker? Why do you answer the way you do?

[digging deeper]

Remember that in this section of Romans, Paul is responding to unwarranted conclusions and to unjust accusations that some people are making as a result of the truth of justification by grace through faith alone. In Romans 6 he answered the allegation that if we are saved by grace through faith and not by works, then we can continue to sin so that grace might increase. Here in Romans 7 he is addressing the allegation that because we are saved by God's grace and not by our law-keeping that the Old Testament law of God must not matter anymore.

Read Romans 7 aloud as a group. Be seeking to answer these questions:

- If we are not saved by keeping God's law then what should be our present relationship to and attitude toward the law of God?
- Why should we bother at all to obey the law if we are saved by grace through faith alone?

Read Matthew 22:34-40 in order to remind yourself that the whole point of the law is love – love for God and love for one another. Discuss how this understanding lifts the whole discussion about our relationship to the law to a very practical level.

Ask your group, "Has anyone had a New Life conversation where salvation by grace through faith alone has been clearly explained to an unbeliever only to hear them say, 'That's too simple. That's too easy. There must be more to it than that. If all have to do is believe, then why bother to be good?'" (If no one has had that experience, let your group know that if they have enough New Life conversations with people, they are likely to hear something like this in the future.)

Find the verses in Romans 7 where Paul teaches that God uses the law to convict us that we are sinners. Why do you think it is so difficult in our culture for people to admit that they are sinners by nature and by choice? When did you first see yourself that way?

Scan Matthew 5:17-48. What was the attitude that Jesus had toward the law of God? How does He help us see that following the spirit of the law is much more difficult than following the letter of the law? How might the understanding that Jesus has about the law equip you in your New Life conversations to lovingly and gently help people see themselves as law breakers?

Read Galatians 3:10-11. Discuss why "trying harder" and "doing more" in an attempt to keep the law of God is futile and will leave us condemned before God.

Notice that in Romans 7:25a that this whole discussion about the Christian's relationship to the law results in connecting us to Christ. Read Galatians 3:23-25 and explain how the law has been our teacher (tutor, instructor, guardian) to lead us to Jesus.

Read Romans 7:4-6 again. How would you explain in a New Life conversation the fact that we as believers do not HAVE TO obey the law, but that we WANT TO obey the law? What has changed in us?

Find the section in Romans 7 where Paul talks about his ongoing struggle with sin – that he doesn't do the good he wants to do and that he does the evil he does not wish to do. Some Bible scholars feel that Paul is talking about his pre-conversion experience. Others feel that he is talking about his ongoing experience as a Christian. How do you interpret that passage?

Make a list of sins that you or Christians you know struggle against even after being saved. Read Galatians 5:16-21. In light of the Galatians passage, how would you describe the believer's struggle against sin?

Evaluate these statements: "If a person who claims to be a Christian does not struggle against sin then it may be a sign that he or she is not truly justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The struggle against sin is a sign that a person is truly saved." How could these statements serve as both a warning and a comfort?

If you believe that Paul is describing his struggle against sin as a Christian, then why do you think God would allow the struggle to continue in such a fierce way before our ultimate glorification and perfection?

Bonus question: Discuss how this understanding of the law in Romans 7 will keep us on the highway of holiness and out of 1) the ditch of legalism and out of 2) the ditch of antinomianism.

[living it out]

In Romans, we have discovered some important truths about our identity in Christ:

- I have been made right with God.
- I am justified by grace through faith.
- I have been forgiven of all of my sins – past, present, and future.
- I have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ.
- I have peace with God.
- I can hope in God.
- I have died to sin.
- I have been raised to walk in newness of life.
- I can present my members as instruments of righteousness.
- I have been released from the law - from having to do more and from having to try harder to please God.
- I can now serve in the new way of the Spirit.

What is a practical thing that every person in your group could do in order to remind himself or herself of these important truths every day for the next 7 days? How might reminding yourself of these truths actually result in an increased capacity and ability for you to love God and love others more?

Challenge your group and yourself to memorize Romans 7:6 - "But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code."

End your time praying for some of the names on your New Life 10|24 prayer list. Also, pray that the members of your group will find themselves more and more WANTING to obey the law of God with the result that each of you will increasingly bear the Fruit of New Life.