

## Introduction

Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome has been described as 'his masterpiece'. It is packed with deep themes, exploring many of the major fundamentals of the Christian faith. Huge tomes have been written on it by scholars over the centuries, despite it being less than 20 pages of a normal modern Bible!

That's why, over 6 weeks (3 Growth Group sessions), we're just looking at one chapter – chapter 12! It's also why we will only scratch the surface of the depths of what's being written.

Hopefully, you'll have some really stimulating conversations over the next few weeks. As you do, please bear in mind that the aim of these sessions is not to just think about things in theory, but to get to know God better and to try and grasp the practical implications of what Paul is saying for our lives. We want to both challenge ourselves and to encourage one another, so that we are increasingly aware of God's will for us and are transformed by the Holy Spirit, rather than conforming to the pattern of the world.

## Further Reading

If you want to explore Romans further, then there are endless options. You could use the Romans sections from a Bible series such as the 'Bible in One Year' app. Tom Wright's 'for Everyone' series are always recommended as a bit deeper than most daily notes, but still an easy going, sound and practical way of exploring the New Testament – he divides Romans into 2 books. Simon Ponsoy's 'God is for us' is another. Or there are many heavy-weight classics by John Stott, Martin Lloyd-Jones, Karl Barth and others.

## 1: Be Transformed

### WELCOME

*Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...*

Each share: What or who have you seen transformed (in any way)?

### WORSHIP

*Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...*

Listen to the song 'Make me a channel of your peace' (one example is sung by Susan Boyle) from the Prayer of St Francis of Assisi. As you do, make it your own prayer.

### WORD

Read the whole of **Romans 12** (or play an audio or video version)

Now re-read verses **1-8** (today's reading)

**Discuss** your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to do the 'What Next?' section*)

- This passage begins with a 'Therefore...'. Paul reminds us that the background to what follows is God's mercy.
  - \* In what ways has God shown his mercy to us?
  - \* What differences should it make to how we live?

- In 2s/3s: Look through some newspapers, magazines, popular websites or social media feeds.
  - \* What evidence do you see for 'the pattern of the world' today? (look at the subjects covered and/or the way they're written)
  - \* How would the pages be different if they were written in accordance with God's pattern, rather than the world's?
  - \* Share what you've found together as a whole group
  - \* In the light of this, what steps could you take practically to help renew your minds and be transformed?
- If somebody talks of 'worship', what do you think of? How does this picture fit with Paul's picture in verses 1-2?
  - \* When Paul talks of our 'bodies' (v1), he is talking of our whole selves. In what different ways might we offer ourselves to God as 'living sacrifices' in worship throughout our lives?
  - \* How do you feel about doing these things?
- Paul gives a few examples of gifts (v4-8), but there are many more
  - \* Discuss in 2s-3s: Think of a gift that you feel you have (even if only a bit!). What could you do to develop it and use it more effectively in a way that would please God?
  - \* What gifts or talents do you think we value most highly as a society today? Which do we tend to treat as 'lesser'?
  - \* Do you know people whose gifts are under-used or under-valued? How could you encourage them?

### WHAT NEXT?

- Briefly share situations in your lives for which you want to know God's will (v2)? Pray for one another that you would be open and responsive to God's will.
- Share situations or people that you know (locally and globally) who you think particularly need some sort of transformation in their lives – then pray for them.

## 2: Love Sincerely

### WELCOME

*Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...*

Talk about: What are some of the best examples of love that you've seen?

### WORSHIP

*Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...*

Ask God to speak to you. Read out Romans 12:9-16 slowly. As the verses are being read, each in silence listen for any phrase that particularly strikes you, then spend 2 minutes of quiet thinking about that. Now share the phrase you chose – and if you want, say something briefly about your thoughts. Finish with another 2 mins of silence in which you can think & talk to God about what's been said.

### WORD

#### Read Romans 12:9-16

**Discuss** your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to do the 'What Next?' section*)

- Paul writes 'Love must be sincere' (v9). How do each of the statements that follow show sincere love for God or for others?

- In 2s/3s: Go round the room giving each group 1 verse at a time from verses 9-16, until all the verses are used up (some will have 2-3 verses)
  - \* Each think of a situation that you spend time in (eg work, school, family). For each verse that your group has been given, talk about how that situation could be different if you and others increasingly followed the advice in that verse.
  - \* Share some of your thoughts with the whole group
- Looking at all these different pieces of advice from Paul:
  - \* Which do you think we are best or worst at in our society today?
  - \* Which do you find particularly hard to follow in practice and when? Why?
- How could you be more 'devoted to one another in brotherly love' as a Growth Group and as a church?
- Do you feel that as a society we are better at 'rejoicing with those who rejoice' or 'mourning with those who mourn' (v15)? How can we be different as Christians?
- How does the advice in these verses relate to being able to 'test and approve what God's will is' (v2)?

### WHAT NEXT?

- Has your group put on a social event for church members to invite others to recently? If not, then please have a go at planning one – and let us know your ideas.
- Pray for our nation, our church and one another that we would live more like Paul's picture.
- Share things individually that you are worried about at the moment – and pray for one another.

## 3: Good Over Evil

### WELCOME

*Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...*

What are your favourite parts of Glossop? Are there areas of the town that you rarely visit? Why?

### WORSHIP

*Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...*

Watch this video from Open Doors then pray for those suffering persecution for their faith, but still seeking to be 'joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer' (v12)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz4W\\_eJYIgQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz4W_eJYIgQ)

### WORD

**Read Romans 12:17-21**

**Discuss** your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and leave yourselves some extra time for 'What Next?' this week*)

- Give examples of situations where it is very difficult not to repay evil for evil (v17) or to take revenge (v19)
- What differences are there between 'living at peace with everyone' (v18) and covering over differences? Give some examples.
- Paul says: 'If it is possible, as far as it depends on you...'

- \* When might it be impossible to 'live at peace with everyone'?
- \* How far should we go to make peace? Are there limits?
- If we asked Paul or Jesus: 'Should I forgive someone who isn't sorry?' What do you think their answer would be?
  - \* How would you answer someone who asked you the same question?
- What examples can you think of in recent times of people overcoming evil with good?
- In what ways did Jesus show overcoming evil with good and living at peace with people?
- What would you regard as some of the most evil things today?
  - \* In these situations, what would it mean to 'overcome evil with good'?

### WHAT NEXT?

- Read back through the whole of Romans 12.
  - Individually, each take a time to write down 1-3 different things that you could do to help yourself follow more of Paul's advice – to be 'transformed by the renewing of your mind'
  - Pray for one another as you try to serve God in this way.
- Discuss anything you talked about in the 'What Next?' sections of sessions 1 & 2. How are you getting on?
- Pray for us as a church that we would all become together more like the body of Christ – using our different gifts together and bringing positive transformation to our community.