

R.S.V.P

GOD'S INVITATION



At the end of this document are two extra studies. One to use if you meet in the first week of September before the sermon series starts and one to use the week after the weekend away

Study 1 - Forgiveness

The Bible is full of invitations God has sent us, over the next four sessions we will look at four different things taken from Romans 5-8 that God has invited us and everyone else into. As you work your way through these chapters you will see that even in these few chapters there is more that God has for you.

1. Spend a few minutes to consider all the things God invites us to receive from him. How many different things can you unpack? E.g. God invites us to receive forgiveness, he invites us into new life, freedom, he invites us to be his children....)
2. **Read Romans 5** (you might want to have a quick skim through Romans 1-4 first to give context, this is where the added titles in the NIV can be useful!!)

Verse 1-11

3. What has happened to every Christian?/What things in this chapter does God offer us?
 - a. You may notice that this chapter doesn't explicitly mention 'forgiveness' but it does talk about justification, reconciliation, grace... as a group you might want to unpack and discuss what the different nuances of these words mean)

4. How can we be sure our hope will not disappoint us (v5-8)
5. When will we be saved, from what, how can we be sure? (9-10)
6. What can we boast about together? (v11)
7. How does boasting in God together affect our churches? Is it something you see? What does it look like in practice? How can we do it more at St Paul's (or which ever church members of your group attend)

Verses 12-21

8. Re read verses 12-21, Paul begins a more technical argument. As a group spend time unpacking the argument, does everyone understand what Paul is saying?

Here are some questions to guide you if needed.

- a. What are the consequences of sin? (v12)
 - b. What words are described (in the whole passage but brought out here) to describe the one thing Adam did and the one thing Jesus did?
 - c. How does the one thing Jesus did effect all Christians?
9. How does looking at God's outpouring of grace change the way we think about those 'outside' the church?
10. What stops you or others from accepting God's invitation to receive forgiveness?

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Study 2 - New Life

1. Read Romans 6.1-14
2. Skim over the passage together again and either together or breaking into smaller groups look out for and mentions all that God does in the passage, all that we are called to do and all the ways in which Christians are united with Christ some way in what he has done happens for us.
3. Can you summaries in a sentence what all this tells us in this passage?
4. Looking at what Paul says in verse 1 what would be some points to an argument that suggested as Christians we don't need to worry about sin and can keep doing?
5. What is the counter argument as to why we should stop sinning?
6. Look at verses 4, 5 and 8, what two things does Jesus' resurrection mean for us?
7. Compare Romans 6.5-11 and 1 Corinthians 15.17-20. What kind of life would we have if Christ had not been raised from the dead?
8. What response does Paul call for in verses 12-14? How is this different from the prevailing culture that says do your best and turn over a new leaf?
9. How does/should our new life look different from our old life?
10. Reflect on the study, what one thing will you take away? A new truth learned, a behavior to change, a new attitude to adopt....

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Study 3 - Freedom

1. Read Romans 6.15-23
2. Paul uses the metaphor of slavery to explain his point. Why do you think he uses this metaphor? What does it convey?*
3. According to Paul, whatever we choose we are slaves, how does that make you feel? How do you think the average modern/post modern thinker feels and thinks about this? (Google Invictus poem by William Ernest Henley)
4. How does slavery to sin differ from slavery to God?
5. Is the christian teaching on freedom a lie if we are always slaves to something? Why do you say that?
6. How do we balance today's passage with other passages such as Galatians 2.4, 5.1
6. Where do the two slaveries lead (v19-23)?
7. The christian is a slave to righteousness (v18) we are free from the bondage of sin. Yet Paul's question in v1 & 15 shows we are not yet fully free from the power of sin. What then is Paul urging us to do?

8. What are the 'benefits' of being under the different masters? (v20-22)

9. Douglas Moo summarizing this passage says, '*Sin, then, is a serious matter. Though set free from it, we can in effect become it's slaves again if we give ourselves to it.*' What areas of your lives have we given over to the wrong master? (This can be for personal reflection depending on what feels most appropriate for your group.)

10. v23 is one of the great summaries of the gospel message. Spend time considering the implications of this verse. Allow the discussion to lead you into prayer for yourselves and those you know.

11. Have you found freedom in this passage?

*There may well be several good answers to this question. If it doesn't arise naturally reflect on slaves in the market place who are sold to the highest bidder and how that relates to Jesus. For Paul, conversion to Christ is not just a deliverance from bondage to sin; it is a change of masters

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Study 4 - Children & Heirs

1. Do you remember the first time you were given a key for something, What did it open? Why were you trusted with it? How did you feel?
2. Read Romans 8.1-17 (we will mostly focus on the last part of this passage)
3. Verse 1 is a great memory verse to hold onto. What does that mean to you on a spiritual level and practically?
4. What does Paul mean by 'flesh'? (v5-8) What are the desires of the flesh and the Spirit?
5. How can you cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in your life? How can you hinder it?
6. What does it mean to be lead by the Spirit? (v14)
7. What is the particular role of the Spirit as described in this passage? (v15-16)
8. What does it mean to be an heir and have an inheritance? (in ordinary terms)
9. What is it that we are co-heirs of and what do we inherit both now and in the future?
10. How might we live differently as members of the family of God? How does our role as a member of God's family explain why it is so hard to serve Him in isolation?

Taste and See

This is an extra session for those groups meeting in the first week of September before the new sermon series starts.

1. The summer sermon series was Encounters with Jesus. Reflect on the series and which encounter spoke most to you.
2. This week we are looking at our encounter with Jesus, although we may prefer to use the language of relationship. Read Psalm 34 together.
3. (v1-3) Why should we praise God continually? What are the barriers that stop us? What does continual praise do to our Spirit?
4. Do you ever hear people say, or maybe even say it yourself that you ask God for help, and he does not come through. In the story (1 Samuel 19-21 for some context), David's circumstances did not improve a great deal. He was on the run from Saul for over 10 years, Yet read verse 4. How might this be different from the request and expectations that you or others you know have had of God?
5. Ask if anyone has a situation they are willing to share where it felt that God was not answering them but when they look back now they can see God in it.
6. What is verse 8 saying? Do you have confidence that if others allow themselves to 'taste' the Lord they will see he is good?
7. v9. What does it mean to fear the Lord? How would you explain verse 9 in the in the context of the Lord's goodness in verse 8?
8. Verses 15-22 contain several promises of support for the righteous. As you read through them, which ones encourage you the most? Who do you know that needs one of these promises right now?
9. Finish by returning to verse 8 again. How do you put into practice verse 8 for yourself, so that you can encounter God? How can you help others to 'taste and see that the lord is good'?

Our Invitation

If you are doing this study it means that you managed to meet every week in September, well done!! It should also mean that this is the week following the Weekend Away so this session will be a chance to reflect on that and an evening of prayer.

1. Spend some time reflecting on the weekend away, what did you enjoy about it. When you left on Sunday afternoon what was your main thoughts or emotions?
2. What did you take away from the teaching session? (For those in your group who did not go perhaps you could collectively summaries it and draw out some scripture that spoke to you)
3. What do you want to implement, change or continue to do going forward as you reflect on the weekend?

PRAY

5. Spend the rest of the evening in prayer. Some topics to guide you

The names of people you want to offer an invitation to

Take time to listen to each other and pray into their needs

Our church, the various ministry areas and opportunities

The recruitment process

Situations around the world

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