

Day 1 Submission to Authority

Paul wrote this letter instructing people to participate in the government and support the leaders even if they're not Christians. This passage is referred to often and is used to encourage people who are living under an oppressive government. The Romans 13 passage makes it clear Christians should pray for their government leaders, regardless of their laws and policies. We are to live upstanding lives, pay our taxes, and participate in the government system. The only time a Christian should disobey the laws of the government is when the human laws and authorities force a Christian to break God's laws. Christians don't disobey the law as a matter of personal opinion, but only when they're forced by the government to go against what the Bible teaches—to violate or deny their faith. The confidence a Christian has about a bad government is that God is still in control and will still work through even the worst government to make his message of salvation, reconciliation, and eternal life known to everyone. God will bring judgment and punishment when it's necessary in his divine time plan. God will be with his minority and persecuted people. God will use even the most tragic events to reveal the truth to people.

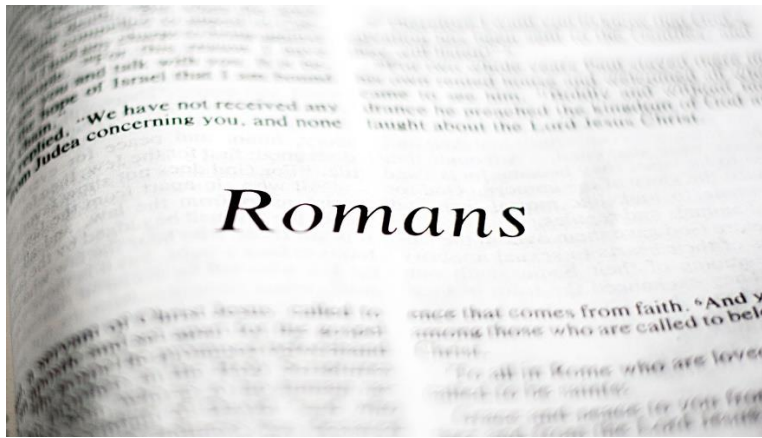
Today, we are going to look at Romans 13. Remember I encourage you to read the whole chapter, but the questions will focus in on the selected text. Let's take a look and see what we can learn.

Read Romans 13:1-7

What should be a Christian's response to the laws and leadership of government?

What will happen to those that resist the power and the ordinance of God? Explain.

What are a Christian's duties to those that are in authority?



Day 2 The Weak & The Strong

Nearing the end of his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul talks about accepting and working with fellow believers. Some Christians thought food sacrificed to idols was totally evil and should not be eaten. Others found the meat to be in excellent shape and at a bargain price and so they bought it. Disagreements followed with one side accusing the other of not being spiritual. Paul pleads that these minor things should not divide the body of Christ. The apostle Paul was a brilliant scholar. He could debate with the best of them and would often win his arguments—a couple times the losers were so sore they stoned Paul and drove him out of their towns. Yet Paul tells us to go easy on those who are not as strong in their faith as we might be. Paul basically says to make an effort to be at peace with those who don't believe exactly as you do.

Today, we are going to look at Romans 14. Remember I encourage you to read the whole chapter, but the questions will focus in on the selected text. Let's take a look and see what we can learn.

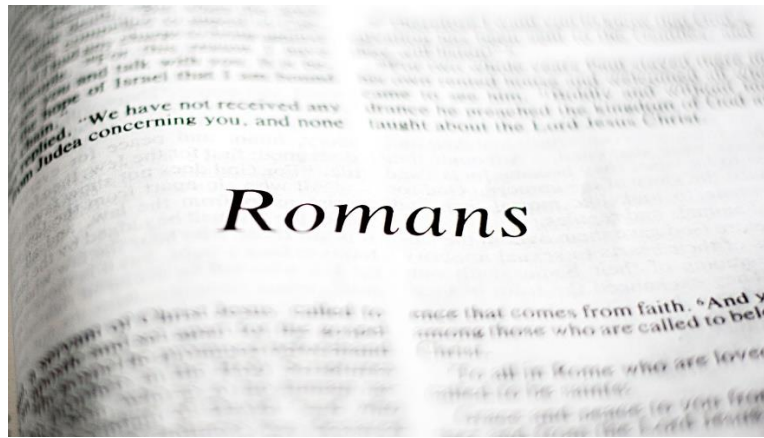
Read Romans 14

What are some areas where Christians have differences in their faith or practices today?

What behaviors might be considered a "stumbling block or obstacle" in some Christian circles?

What makes some Christians criticize or look down on other Christians or churches? Explain.

How does a Christian decide what is an important rule that shouldn't be broken and what isn't important for other people who are Christians?



Day 3 Friends beyond boundaries

The gospel of Jesus Christ rearranged the social contacts of members of the new church in Rome. Believers became close friends with people from all races and all economic levels of society. The new church stood out like a bright light in an empire that treated people according to power, race, gender, and economics. We all grow up believing some stereotypes about people who are different from us. Most of those generalizations are not true, but we believe them because we don't have any personal experiences with those people. Today we hear lots of talk about tolerating people who are different from us. God doesn't want us to be tolerant—he wants us to reach out and accept those people—because he created them in his image, he loves them, and Christ died for them. Acceptance means welcoming them into your life and into your group of friends. It requires time together and openness to new experiences and personal questions. People feel accepted when they know they can be honest and still be loved. Getting to know someone means knowing his story. Listening carefully and asking questions lets your personal connection grow deep. Knowing a story different from your story enriches your life and helps you understand the many experiences and concerns you have in common. A strong friendship keeps growing as the story keeps on happening and being shared. The best glue between friends is a shared faith in Jesus Christ.

Today we are going to be focusing in on Chapter 15. Remember I encourage you to read the whole chapter, but the questions will focus in on the selected text. Let's take a look and see what we can learn.

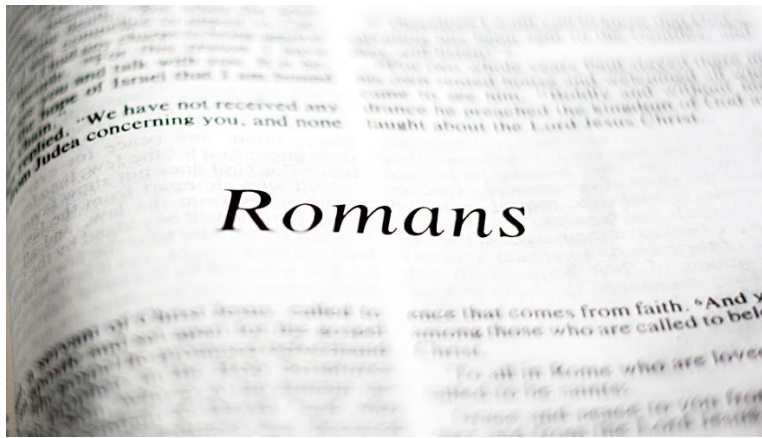
Read Romans 15:1-13

What does this passage teach about relationships?

What does it mean to accept another person or be accepted by someone else? What type of person do you find difficult to accept? Why?

When do you or have you felt real unity with people in this group or with others in your school?

What are some ways that we can build deeper unity in this group?



Day 4 Power of Real Friends

The apostle Paul wraps up this letter to the Romans with a long list of special people who give, sacrifice, help, and inspire him. Paul expresses his gratitude and appreciation to these people who have done so much for him. This passage is the last chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. Some people think it's a throwaway chapter filled with lots of strange names and personal comments. But don't overlook this chapter and what it's saying. It tells us how important relationships are to everyone who follows Jesus. God made us for relationships. The three-in-one God is a model of relationship. God wants to have relationship with us. Romans 16 reminds us the apostle Paul did not live a solitary life. He was a mighty and courageous servant of God, but he did not do it alone. We read about all these people who helped him and encouraged him by their words and actions. Life is tough. God gives us resources and strength, often through the lives of special people around us. Even the strongest people need help and encouragement. Being connected to others keeps us active and growing. A key part of relationship and life together is communication. God tell us how much he loves us, and encourages us to express those feelings to others. If you don't verbalize or act out love, people lack confidence and security. This chapter shows Paul taking time to thank people for what they did for him and express his love and admiration for them and their faith.

Today, we are going to look at Romans 16. Remember I encourage you to read the whole chapter, but the questions will focus in on the selected text. Let's take a look and see what we can learn.

Read Romans 16:1-16

In your own words, who was the apostle Paul? What is he like?

Let's make a list of what people did to help Paul and others. If it were your list, whom would you have on your list?

How did the actions of these people strengthen Paul's faith?

Who are the key people in your life? Think of people who have helped you, encouraged you, and stood by you when life was tough. When have you thanked them recently? Who are the people that you are helping or need to be helping?