

**Sin remains but does not reign – my mind is set on Christ!**

**Romans 7:14 - 8:11 – Leaders version**

**For a one hour study, just do the starred \* questions**

**Check in** – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

**What does the passage say and mean?**

90 minutes

\*1. **SHOUT-OUT** Why is knowing that something is wrong not enough to stop you from doing it?

*Don't try to reach a conclusion, just let the group brainstorm.*

\*2. Read Romans 7:14-15. What does God say is the problem?

*People are slaves to sin – we all have a sinful heart, see Mark 7:21-23. Even Paul the Apostle finds himself doing what he doesn't want to do. Remind the group that sin remains in the life of a believer, but it does not reign.*

*There's an ongoing debate re whether Romans 7:13-25 refers to the believer or the non-believer. If you want to know more, see the commentaries!*

\*3. Read Romans 7:18-19. What does Paul want to do, and what does he not want to do? What does he end up doing?

*He wants to do good and not evil. But he finds himself doing the wrong thing.*

**\*?**

Can you associate with this battle? Is there a conscious battle between your heart and your body over sin?

*If there's no awareness of a battle with sin, then you're not fighting it! If people are consciously struggling, whether they eventually do the right thing or the wrong thing, at least they recognise that God's law has authority over their life (7:14).*

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Deliberate sin is the things we do in full awareness that it is sinful, but choose to do it anyway. Are you aware of deliberate sin in your life at the moment? How might things start to change?

*If people say no, give some pertinent examples of sin – uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge, deliberate bad behaviour on the wing, cheating etc.*

*Make sure the discussion focuses on Christ's involvement in change - it's not about making good resolutions and relying on our own strength to overcome sin. Think about knowing God's will (reading the Bible) and asking Christ to help us to change (praying). It's usually a journey, not sudden change.*

\*4. Do you think it is a good thing or a bad thing that Christians struggle with sin? Why?

*The knee jerk answer may be that it's a bad thing, because we should be able to resist. Actually, it's a good thing – if we're not struggling with sin, then we've allowed sin to win.*

*This doesn't mean we can carry on sinning while calling it a struggle to make ourselves feel better. It does mean that the fight against sin takes effort on our part, even as forgiven believers, and the fact we are putting effort into it means we want to live God's way, but are not finding it easy.*

\*?

Repentance is not just something that unbelievers need to do, or something a believer once did. It's something believers do on a daily basis, as we sin on a daily basis. Are you in the habit of repentance? Why?

*If no, try to find out why. Do they think they don't sin? Do they not think ongoing repentance is necessary? Have they never thought about it?*

Questions 5-7 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

5. **SDL** Paul sums up his problem in Romans 7:22-24. How would you say the same thing in easier language?

6. **SDL** What does Paul recognise that he needs, in v24?

*A rescuer. He realises that he can't sort this out himself.*

7. **SDL** Read Romans 7:25 (the first bit). Who is the rescuer?

*It's the Father's plan but the Son is the rescuer.*

\*8. How would you explain to someone else what Jesus did to rescue you?

*It might help to write this on the board, so that the whole group can be involved in working out how to share the rescue plan (gospel) with someone else.*

*Something like this:*

- *God made the world and people good*
- *Problem*
  - *people sinned (rebelled against God)*
  - *sin causes separation from God and results in death. Someone has got to die for my sin.*
  - *we can't fix this problem because we are sinners.*
- *Rescue plan*
  - *Jesus is actually God, the Son of God, who became human and died as a ransom for our sins*
  - *he rose from the dead, because he had dealt with the problem of death*
  - *if we believe and trust in him our sins are forgiven and we have eternal life (will go to heaven)*

\*9. What is the amazing statement in Romans 8:1-2, as a result of what Jesus has done?

*There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Believers have been set free from the 'law of sin and death' (the fact that sin leads to death) by the law of the Spirit of life (grace).*

*We no longer stand before God condemned for our sins – he looks at us and sees Jesus' sacrifice for us.*

10. How does it make you feel to know that we, as believers, can stand before God not as condemned sinners, but as forgiven ones?

*This question becomes a totally different question for believers and unbelievers! You may be able to use it to lead to a gentle challenge to unbelievers to consider what they heard during the answer to Q8.*

11. Read Romans 8:3-4. What is the law (OT law) powerless to do and why?

*The law is powerless to make us righteous (remove our sin) because it is weakened by our sinful nature.*

*Once there is a law in place we just want to break it, because we are sinful (Rm 7:8, 7:15+). All the law can do is show us our sin and condemn us – which points us to Christ (3:20).*

12. How are the righteous requirements of the law met in us? (v4)

*God condemned sin through his Son, who had the likeness of sinful man but was not sinful. Therefore the requirements of the law are met in believers, (because not only is Jesus' death in our place, his righteousness (life of obedience) is also in our place. (Romans 5:19)).*

\*13. **SHOUT-OUT** Read Romans 8:5-8. How is the mind of a non-believer different to the mind of a believer?

Fill in the table on the flip-chart:

<b>Non-believer's mind</b>	<b>Believer's mind</b>
<i>Set on what the sinful nature desires</i>	<i>Set on what the Spirit desires</i>
<i>Is death</i>	<i>Is life and peace</i>
<i>Hostile to God</i>	
<i>Does not and cannot submit to God's law</i>	

*Then explain that the nature (the sinful nature or the Spirit) determines the mindset. People's minds are not like this because they think like this, but they think like this because their minds are like this.*

\*14. Read Romans 8:9. Why is the mind of a believer different - what does a believer have that a non-believer doesn't?

*The mind of the believer is under new management – that of the Holy Spirit, not the sinful nature. Everyone who belongs to Christ has the Spirit of Christ living in them.*

*(NB you may need to clarify 'controlled' – we still have a free will to sin, but, with the Spirit living in us, our consciences are sensitised to God's will and we grow more aware of our sin, and more willing to avoid sin).*

\*15. Read Romans 12:2. What happens when our minds are renewed by God?

*We become able to 'test and approve what God's will is'. Make sure you explain that this does not refer to guidance so much as to knowledge of right from wrong – a sensitised conscience, which starts to ring alarm bells when sin is around.*

16. Why do you think God renews our minds, not just our behaviour?

*Behaviour change is external and doesn't necessarily indicate any change of heart – we can choose to be 'good' for our own purposes. The internal change of heart in a believer, through the Spirit, that leads to renewal of the mind is much more powerful than a simple change in behaviour. More importantly, the internal change of heart and mind is of God, not of self, and is thus honouring to God, as is the resulting change in behaviour.*

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Have you become aware of a change in your thinking, or attitude to sin, since you have repented and believed in Jesus? How has this affected the way you behave?

**Check out** – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

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