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

Romans 7 v 14 - 8 v 11 – Leader's version

For an hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – ask how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

What does the passage say and mean?

*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 v 14-15. What does God say is the problem?

People are slaves to sin – we all have a sinful heart, see Mark 7 v 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 v 13-25 refers to the believer or the non-believer. If you want to know more, see the commentaries!

*3. Read Romans 7 v 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.

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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 v 14).

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Deliberate sin is what 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 – 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 we able to resist. Actually, it's a good thing – if we're not struggling with sin we've allowed it 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. The fact we are putting effort into it means we want to live God's way but are not finding it easy.

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Repentance is not just something 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 t/he 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**.

5. **SDL** Paul sums up his problem in Romans 7 v 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 v 25 (the first bit). Who is the rescuer?

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

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*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 fully God; the Son of God who became human and died as a ransom for our sins*
  - *He rose from the dead, having paid for sin and thus overcome death*
  - *if we believe and trust in Him our sins are forgiven and we have eternal life*

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

Christians no longer stand before God condemned for their sins. God looks at us and sees Jesus' sacrifice for us. 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 (by God's grace).

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How does it make you feel to know that those who trust in Jesus are no longer condemned by God for their sin?

You may be able to use this discussion to lead to a gentle challenge to unbelievers to consider what they heard during the answer to Q8.

10. Read Romans 8 v 3-4. What is the OT law powerless to do and why?

The law (God's law) is powerless to save us because it is weakened by our sinful nature. Once a law is in place we just want to break it, because we are sinful. All the law can do is show us our sin and condemn us, and this points us to Christ (3 v 20).

11. So how are the requirements of God's law met in us? (v3-4)

The requirements of God's law are met in believers because they were met in Jesus (also Romans 5 v 19).

*12. **SHOUT-OUT** Read Romans 8 v 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

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

Our minds are not driven by our thoughts. They are influenced by the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit.

13. Read Romans 8 v 8. Why can we not please God if we are 'in the realm of the flesh'?

To be 'in the realm of the flesh' is to reject God and His Son as your Lord and Saviour. It doesn't matter how much 'good stuff' or 'God stuff' you do, you cannot please God if you are not saved.

14. Read Romans 8 v 9-11. What else are we promised, when the Holy Spirit is in us?

God will give us eternal life because His Spirit is in us!

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

We become able to 'test and approve what God's will is'. 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. We are transformed as our behaviour starts to change in response to this.

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

We can choose to 'be good' for our own purposes. Behaviour change is external and doesn't necessarily indicate a change of heart. The internal change of heart in a believer, through the Spirit, leading to renewal of the mind is much more powerful than a simple change in behaviour; it is a change in identity. More importantly, the internal change of heart and mind is from God 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 – ask how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

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