

Children of God

Romans 8:12-39 – 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.

1. What can you remember of the study we did on Romans 7:14 – 8:11?

Sin remains in us as Christians, but it doesn't reign in us. We do things we don't want to do and we don't do things we want to do. We want to live God's way and honour him because the Holy Spirit is living in us, guiding us God's way. Since we have been saved by Jesus, we are no longer condemned by God because Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law for us, as well as paying for our sins.

What does the passage say and mean?

90 minutes

2. Read Romans 8:12-14. What does it mean to live according to the sinful nature? What does Paul tell us about living according to the sinful nature?

To live according to the sinful nature is to let sin reign in our hearts, and control us – it is to surrender to sin, to have your mind focussed on sin – Romans 8:5. In 8:13, Paul tells us that if you live according to the sinful nature you will die – death is the universal punishment for our sin.

3. How are those who are led by the Spirit different? (v13)

Those who are led by the spirit will live, because they have 'put to death the misdeeds of the body'. 'That is, there is a kind of life which leads to death, and there is a kind of death which leads to life.' (Stott 2007, p228).

4. What do you think it means to 'put to death the misdeeds of the body'?

Think back to the study on Romans 6 – 'I am dead to that'. To put to death the misdeeds of the body is to no longer be a slave to sin, no longer allow sin to reign over you (even though it remains in you) and to engage in the battle against sin. It is to fight (in God's strength) against my old habits (I already know I can't win that battle in my own strength...) resulting in changed behaviour.

- *Recognising evil as evil and repudiating it, so decisively that it can only be termed 'putting it to death'*

- *It's an active, not a passive process. We are responsible to 'put to death the misdeeds of the body.' But only the Spirit can give us the desire, determination and discipline to reject evil. Positively, we are to set our minds on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy, Philippians 4:8.*
- *If you do this, you will live.*
Stott (2007, p228-9)

The end game isn't to become a 'good person' but to live a life that honours God.

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What battles against sin do you think you ought to engage in this week?

This is about personal sin, not changing the world or changing anyone else. It's about you and your battle with specific sin. Encourage everyone to identify a sinful behaviour / habit / mindset they know needs to change, even if they don't feel able to verbalise it to the group. Remind them they can't fight this alone, we put it to death 'by the Spirit', v13. This requires (presupposes) prayer!

5. Read Romans 8:14-16. What else is different about those who are led by the Spirit?

How does this make you feel?

They are children of God.

Note: we are all creations of God, but only those who are led by the Spirit (i.e. repentant believers) are children of God.

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Following Jesus means you are a member of God's family, one of his children. How does that make you feel?

NB the idea of family may not be too enticing for some people. God's family is not based on human families. Human families should be based on God's family, but, as sinful people, we (as parents or children) mess it up. God's family is not messed up – it's perfect.

*6. **SHOUT-OUT** One of the things about having a father, is that we are his heirs. Read Romans 8:17 – what do you think it means to be an heir of God?

It may refer to God himself being the inheritance (this is what the Jews would have understood it to mean on an OT background), but it could refer to the inheritance of 1 Peter 1:4, that will never perish, spoil or fade.

*7. Read Romans 8:17-18. What do we share with Christ, and how does Paul compare these two things?

We share his sufferings (living in a fallen world, not his crucifixion) and his glory. The glory to be revealed in us is so great that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to it – so that glory will be great indeed!

*8. Read Romans 8:19. How does the rest of creation feel about the glory that will be revealed in us?

Creation (animate and inanimate objects, everything except humanity) is eagerly waiting for this to happen!

*9. Why is creation so excited about the children of God being revealed in their glory? (v20-21)

Creation is subject to (in bondage to) decay, not by its own choice or its own sin, but by God's will and because of humanities' sin (Genesis 3:17-19). When we are revealed in our glory, it will be freed from its bondage too! (i.e. when Jesus comes back).

*10. How does this give us a glimpse of what heaven will be like?

'Heaven' is often misrepresented – the Biblical picture of the world to come is of a renewed creation, Isaiah 65:17, a place where there will be no more decay, death, mourning, crying or pain, Rev 21:4, a place where God will live with his people (because sin will no longer separate us) Rev 21:3. The creation as we know it will not disappear, it will be put back to the factory settings of the perfection of Eden.

1 Cor 15:42-44, we will have a body that doesn't decay, is glorious, powerful and spiritual (not meaning that it is not physical, rather that it is fit to be in God's presence). See also v50-54.

*11. Read Romans 8:22-25. What is the hope that believers have? (v23)

Our adoption as sons (children of God) and the redemption of our bodies.

Adoption: 'Christians are already God's children, but this is a reference to the full realisation of our inheritance in Christ'. (NIVSB 1993, p1683).

Redemption of our bodies: 'The resurrection as the final stage of our adoption. The first stage was God's predestination of our adoption... the second is our present inclusion as children of God.' (NIVSB, p1683) (v24-25, Biblical hope = a promise already fulfilled but not yet seen)

Questions 12-14 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. Ask the group to pair up to do the next 3 questions on their sheets, then download as a group.

*12. **SDL** Read Romans 8:26-27. Creation groans in v22. We groan in v23. Who groans in v26, and why?

The Holy Spirit groans in prayer on our behalf! Note, this is not permission to not bother in prayer. Paul says that we don't know what to pray for, but the Spirit prays in accordance with God's will.

*13. **SDL** Read Romans 8:28-30 and underline on this sheet all the good things God has done for his children. Unpack the words you have underlined.

God works for the good of those who love him: ultimately, God works for our (believers') good. God uses our suffering to help us to become more like Jesus as our character is shaped in response to suffering.

called according to his purpose: our salvation is predestined, Eph 1:4

foreknew: God knew us from before creation, Eph 1:4

predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son: ultimately, God's purpose for us is that we become more and more like Jesus, in character, behaviour, attitude etc., reflecting his glory, not our own

justified: to be made righteous (right with God)

brothers and sisters: as believers, we are brothers and sisters in Christ

glorified: to have glory – as 8:18, our glory will be revealed in us in the future, when we have our sinless and perfected resurrection bodies.

*14. **SDL** Read Romans 8:31-32. What is Paul's response to these truths of God?

He's blown away! 'If 'God is for us, who can be against us?'

15. Read v34 (starting at 'Christ Jesus') – v37. Who else is praying for us? What promises are made to us in these verses?

We've already seen that the Spirit is praying for us, v27, now we see that Jesus is praying for us too!

No-one, and no depth of suffering, is able to separate us from Christ's love. In suffering and under persecution, we are more than conquerors, through Jesus, who loves us.

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What things do you fear could take you away from the love of Christ?

*16. Read Romans 8:35-39. What does the Bible say about this?

Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ!

(NB our love for him can grow cold, but his for us will not)

If your group are happy to pray to close, encourage them to pray together about what they have learnt in this study. Close with a prayer related to the wonderful promise of Romans 8:38-39.

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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'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.'

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16. Read Romans 8:38-39. What does the Bible say about this?