

R &amp; R BIBLE STUDY 2019-20



# breath-taking grace

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

## LESSON 13

Finally. We've made it to chapter 12. I LOVE this chapter. It's so practical, which I appreciate. Paul firmly believes that belief dictates behavior, so the first 11 chapters are designated to just that ... doctrine. He makes sure we understand sin and our need for a Savior. He talks about faith, righteousness, judgement, and justification through Jesus Christ. He lets us know that we will continue struggling with sin, but we have power over it, through the Holy Spirit. He talks A LOT about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, so his reader will understand how the Church was born! We see His justice and His relentless love. And now, Paul decides it's time to see how these doctrines are played out in our lives in a practical sense. Paul's motto seems to be *learn the truths, appropriate the truths, and live the truths*. (Similar to what Jesus said in Mark 4:20, "... hear the Word, accept it, and bear fruit ...")

Chapter 12 is a turning point, sort of an outline of Christian living. He desires to show us how to apply the Gospel to everyday living. I tell ya, this chapter is packed full of exhortations, calls to obedience and commitment, and warnings. There are no grey areas, it's perfectly clear! I, for one, love it when people cut to the chase and are just clear with what they're saying, so I appreciate Paul's bluntness. I'm going to take two lessons to go through this one, just so we don't miss anything.

Please be prayed up and prepared to hear from the Holy Spirit. Make the decision beforehand that you'll allow Him to show you lifestyle changes that should be made, perspective alterations, and attitude adjustments. But also, to give you the desire, the will, and the power to make the appropriate changes!

### First Day

1. Begin today by reading Romans 12:1-21. Observe the facts. Who is he talking to? What seems to be his main point? Are there any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?

2. What “transition” word do you find in verse 1? Why is it there?
3. Do you see any “warnings” in this chapter?
4. Scholars break this chapter up in a variety of ways, one being the responsibilities toward God versus the responsibilities toward society or others. Can you categorize them below?
  - A. Responsibilities towards God:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - B. Responsibilities towards others:
5. Can you define and explain the difference between the words “conform” and “transform”?
6. What immediate application do you see for yourself? Which verses “jumped” off the page at you?

**That's it for today. Get ready for a great week!**

**Memory Verse of the Week:** “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:2

**Second Day**

**Work on your memory verse.**

1. Please read Romans 12 again, all the way through, to appreciate and understand the flow of it. Then return to verses 1-2. Some would call these verses a “Call to Commitment.” What do you think? What commitment are we being called to?

Remember when you see a transition word like “therefore,” you have to figure out what “it’s there for.” 😊 It reminds us to look at what the author had been saying to understand the connection of where he is now going. In this context, Paul is saying in light of all the doctrines he has laid out and explained, therefore, this is how one should live. The “therefore” also reminds the reader of their motivation for living right, which is the Gospel.

2. According to verses 1 and 2, what is the greatest sacrifice? Why do you think Paul used this language? How does he describe the believer’s sacrifice?
3. How does this sacrifice provide a contrast to the sacrifices they were used to offering?
4. How do we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, practically speaking? What does that mean? (How is this a spiritual act of worship?)

I love what Weirsbe wrote about this verse, “Just as Jesus Christ had to take on Himself a body in order to accomplish God’s will on earth, so we must yield our bodies to Christ that He might continue God’s work through us. We must yield the members of our body as instruments (6:13) to do what is right for the Holy Spirit to use in the doing of God’s work.”

Timothy Keller’s definition of a “living sacrifice” is awesome. He wrote, “It means to be fully at God’s disposal. It means, actively, to be willing to obey God in anything He says in any area of life; and passively, to be willing to thank God for anything He sends in any area of life.” He also wrote, “The word ‘living’ may mean that the sacrifice is a constant thing. The word ‘sacrifice’ means ‘to kill.’ That makes it a ‘living killing!’ It means we must continually renew our position as wholly obedient and at God’s disposal.”

5. Do you think you are living “fully at God’s disposal”? Ponder that question. And what are your thoughts on the above quote by Keller?
  
6. Now let’s explore verse 2. Another one packed with power! Can you rewrite verse 2 in your own words?
  
7. According to verse 2, what is one of the believer’s greatest threats?
  
8. How can changing how you think change how you act?
  
9. In J.B. Phillips version of the Bible, he translates verse 2 like this: “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.” What are some ways the world tries to do this?
  
10. Are you resisting the temptation to conform to this world? In what areas do you find it difficult NOT to conform?

There is always pressure to adopt the customs and behavior of the world in which we live. Paul presents two patterns, the pattern of the world and the pattern of God's will. He wants us to first recognize and reject the world's pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting, and to embrace God's pattern of living. The word "transform" refers to an inner transformation rather than a mere conformity. This transformation allows us to "test and approve what God's will is," which is good, well-pleasing, and complete.

We are "transformed" when we "renew" our mind, which means to "adjust one's spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God, which has a transforming effect on one's life." David Shepherd wrote, "A renewed mind is concerned with those issues of life that have lasting importance. By nature, our thoughts tend to dwell on the fleeting present. The renewed mind enables us to discern the will of God. Released from the control of the world around us, we can come to know what God has in mind for us."

11. What does Paul say about this in Colossians 3:1-4?

12. How do the Word of God and the Spirit of God work together to renew our minds?

13. What are some steps you have taken, or can take, toward the renewing of your mind?

14. One last question. Describe the tension believers experience by living between two worlds; one that is dying and one that will live forever.

### Third Day

#### **Ponder your memory verse. Are you “presenting” yourself to Him?**

I told you, ladies, we are on the third day of our lesson and we’ve only focused on the first two verses! They are so deep and so amazing and so life-changing! Let’s continue and see what the Spirit has for us today.

1. Read Romans 12:1-21, then focus on verses 3-8. What warning does Paul first give them? Why?
  
2. Paul says that part of the transformation process is “thinking rightly” about ourselves or being honest in our evaluation of ourselves. Why is having an inflated view of ourselves, our abilities, or our talents so dangerous?
  
3. How does pride affect how we depend or relate to others, as well as how we depend on God?

Paul isn’t saying to think too highly of yourself, or too low. He tells them to think “soberly,” which means the opposite of being drunk. The definition is to be “rigorously accurate, completely in touch with reality.” He wants us to think straight about ourselves. In verse 3 Paul refers to “a measure of faith.” This word is from the Greek word “metron” which is more of a standard of measurement, not an amount. In other words, some translate what Paul is saying as “All of you have been given your saving faith in Christ crucified, and that is how you are to measure yourselves. The “measure” by which we evaluate ourselves is the Gospel!

4. Do you believe you “think” soberly of yourself? Be honest. Do you struggle with thinking too highly or too low of yourself?

5. How does comparing ourselves with others affect how we evaluate ourselves? What should we use as our measuring stick?
  
6. On one hand, we are all the same “in Christ.” On the other, we are all “different.” What do verses 4-8 say about this? What imagery does Paul use?
  
7. How does “evaluating ourselves honestly” tie in with seeing ourselves as parts of one body? What’s Paul saying?
  
8. How does this section, along with 1 Corinthians 12, reveal how the body of Christ, the Church, is supposed to function? What happens when one part of the body doesn’t do their part?

David Shepherd wrote, “The Christian faith is essentially a corporate experience. Although each member of the body comes to faith by an individual act of faith, the believing community lives out its Christian experience in fellowship with one another.” Keller wrote, “The second way to get a correct view of ourselves is to remember to whom we belong – to our church body; not to ourselves, because we belong to Christ – and then get to work in ministry, finding out what God has equipped us to do our best, and doing it with all our might!”

9. So, I must ask, do you understand the importance of using your gifts in the Christian community and being a part of what God is doing in the local church? Would you consider yourself to be an active part of the body of Christ? What “part of the body” do you see yourself as?
  
10. As far as the gifts Paul mentions, what point is he trying to make?

11. What gifts does Paul refer to in verse 6-8? Also make note of the gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 18, and Ephesians 4:11. (None of these lists are considered “complete,” but are only some Paul chose to mention.) Do you have any of these gifts? If so, are you using them to their fullest?

12. How are the gifts supposed to be exercised, according to 1 Peter 4:10-11? What are they for?

We’ll talk more about spiritual gifts tomorrow. For now, ask the Holy Spirit to show you those you have been given, if you don’t know. He is faithful!

#### **Fourth Day**

**Work on your memory verse.**

Today I’d like to take time to define some of the gifts Paul mentions. Please forgive me, but I’ve found Timothy Keller’s work on this very easy and clear to understand, so I will give him all the credit for the definitions, etc. Rather than try to reword what he says, I’ll just quote him, if that’s ok. I pray this is helpful and a practical way to help you learn more about your own particular gifts.

**Generally speaking, spiritual gifts break into three categories:**

1. **Speaking gifts** (Prophecy, teaching, exhorting, knowledge, etc.)
2. **Leading gifts** (Government, administration, wisdom, etc.)
3. **Serving gifts** (Giving, mercy, hospitality, miracles, tongues and their interpretation, healing.... These last 3 can also be in a separate category of ‘sign gifts’)

These gifts are given so they can be expressed through ministries, particular channels of service that focus on people’s needs. A particular ministry may require one specific gift, or a combination of gifts.



### Here are some brief definitions of the gifts listed in Romans 12:

A. **Prophecy** (vs 6) This probably isn't the gift of giving divinely inspired messages from God. In some places in the New Testament, prophets seem to give divine messages as in the Old Testament (ie: Agabus in Acts 11:28), but in 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul puts the prophets in a position subordinate to the apostles, who had divine authority. Paul is saying that the prophet must not prophecy in a way that contradicts Christian doctrine. Now, if prophecy were a divine word direct from God, why would such a rule be laid down? It could be that the word 'prophecy' has more than one meaning. Here in Romans 12:6, it seems to mean 'preaching or anointed utterance.'

B. **Service** (vs 7) This is the word 'diakonia' which means 'practical service.' People with gifts of service are good at the practical tasks, and good at administration. They are great team workers and do not need the spotlight.

C. **Teaching** (vs 7) This is the gift of making the truth clear and understandable. A good teacher may not be a good preacher and visa versa. And teaching gifts can vary greatly: some are better in small groups, others in large groups, some with children, some with peers, and so on.

D. **Encouragement** (vs 8) This is the word 'parakaleo' which means to 'come alongside.' Encouragement is a good translation, but it also includes most of what today we would call 'counseling, support, or inspiration.' Encouragers are not necessarily trained, formal counselors. They can serve as advisors, supporters, greeters, and welcomers in many ways.

E. **Giving** (vs 8) People with this gift not only enjoy giving in unusual proportions but are wise in their gifts. Their generosity is spiritually very fruitful.

F. **Leadership** (vs 8) Leaders are people with the gift of getting people to follow them. They can put a vision before a group and inspire them to get there.

G. **Mercy** (vs 8) This is a gift of people specifically moved to work with the poor, the sick, the weak, the prisoner, the addicted, the elderly, and so on.

### Discerning Your Gifts

How do we discern our own spiritual gifts? Paul gives us three things to do:

**\*Self-examination.** Paul wants us to 'think of yourself with sober judgement' with regard to gifts. To begin with, we look at our hearts to discover gifts. We can look at our feelings. We ask: What do I enjoy doing? What kind of ministry is satisfying and attractive to me? We can look at our perceptions of needs. What problems do I most notice? Do I feel burdened for the poor? For people with counseling needs? Do I feel the church is too disorganized? In other words, it is possible that you are especially sensitive to the kinds of needs that God has called you to meet? We can look at our effectiveness. Am I any good at what I enjoy? Do people get helped? Ask those who know you to be sure that your judgement is sober and rigorously accurate.



4. Have you ever considered that your gifts were “for” the church? How do we sometimes use them selfishly?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. After reading the above definitions, have you identified a gift you didn’t know you had?

**Fifth Day**

**Write out your memory verse.**

1. Today let’s explore the first 8 verses of Romans 12 once more. Can you think of some specific ways you can use your gifts to serve others?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Do you think that more than one gift can be used at the same time in conjunction with one another? Can you give some examples?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How is it possible for someone to use their spiritual gift for their own glory, or for purposes other than what it was intended? (Have you ever been guilty of that?)

4. We know we are called to be good stewards of what we have been given. Do you think this refers to the use of spiritual gifts as well?

Verse 2 tells us to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The same word is used of Jesus’ transfiguration (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2), in which His glorious state in the age to come was seen in anticipation in this age. “We, too, are being ‘transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory’ (2 Cor. 3:18). By nature, we have a ‘depraved mind,’ (1:28), but by grace, this mind is changed so that right at the core of our humanity, we love God’s law (7:22, 25). This renewal of the mind is the work of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).” (Chris Ash)

5. Weirsbe said, “If the world controls our thinking, we are conformers. If God controls our thinking, we are transformers!” Which are you? Are you prone to copy the customs, thinking, and behavior of the world? In what way?
  
6. Our motivation to obey God should stem from our gratitude for the Gospel of grace, according to Paul, but sometimes people are motivated by fear. What can be some of the side effects or consequences if our obedience is fear-based rather than motivated by grace?
  
7. What’s your motivation to be a “transformer” rather than a conformer? Be honest as you search your heart. Is it a thankful heart for His grace? Is it fear? Is it peer pressure?

Sometimes fear can cause doubt, discouragement, or bitterness. Fear can be exhausting, causing us to go numb over time. Fear also threatens to rob us of our security in Christ. I pray that we will truly understand that once we are “in Christ,” we are **in** Christ. We still continue to struggle with sin, but we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and our standing in Christ is secure. Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold. Be brave and be bold. Be a living sacrifice, and don’t crawl off of that altar! 😊

