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A NavPress Bible study on the book of
ROMANS

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ISBN 08910-90738

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Printed in the United States of America

18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 / 00 99

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The LIFECHANGE series has been produced through the coordinated efforts of a team of Navigator Bible study developers and NavPress editorial staff, along with a nationwide network of fieldtesters.

SERIES EDITOR: KAREN LEE-THORP

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Objectives

Each guide in the LIFECHANGE series of Bible studies covers one book of the Bible. Although the LIFECHANGE guides vary with the individual books they explore, they share some common goals:

1. To provide you with a firm foundation of understanding and a thirst to return to the book;
2. To teach you by example how to study a book of the Bible without structured guides;
3. To give you all the historical background, word definitions, and explanatory notes you need, so that your only other reference is the Bible;
4. To help you grasp the message of the book as a whole;
5. To teach you how to let God's Word transform you into Christ's image.

Each lesson in this study is designed to take 60 to 90 minutes to complete on your own. The guide is based on the assumption that you are completing one lesson per week, but if time is limited you can do half a lesson per week or whatever amount allows you to be thorough.

Flexibility

LIFECHANGE guides are flexible, allowing you to adjust the quantity and depth of your study to meet your individual needs. The guide offers many optional questions in addition to the regular numbered questions. The optional questions, which appear in the margins of the study pages, include the following:

Optional Application. Nearly all application questions are optional; we hope you will do as many as you can without overcommitting yourself.

For Thought and Discussion. Beginning Bible students should be able to handle these, but even advanced students need to think about them. These questions frequently deal with ethical issues and other biblical principles. They often offer cross-references to spark thought, but the references do not give

obvious answers. They are good for group discussions.

For Further Study. These include: a) cross-references that shed light on a topic the book discusses, and b) questions that delve deeper into the passage. You can omit them to shorten a lesson without missing a major point of the passage.

(Note: At the end of lessons two through nineteen you are given the option of outlining the passage just studied. Although the outline is optional, you will probably find it worthwhile.)

If you are meeting in a group, decide together which optional questions to prepare for each lesson, and how much of the lesson you will cover at the next meeting. Normally, the group leader should make this decision, but you might let each member choose his or her own application questions.

As you grow in your walk with God, you will find the *LIFECHANGE* guide growing with you—a helpful reference on a topic, a continuing challenge for application, a source of questions for many levels of growth.

Overview and Details

The guide begins with an overview of the book. The key to interpretation is context—what is the whole passage or book *about*?—and the key to context is purpose—what is the author's *aim* for the whole work? In lesson one you will lay the foundation for your study by asking yourself, Why did the author (and God) write the book? What did they want to accomplish? What is the book about?

Then, in lesson two, you will begin analyzing successive passages in detail. Thinking about how a paragraph fits into the overall goal of the book will help you to see its purpose. Its purpose will help you see its meaning. Frequently reviewing a chart or outline of the book will enable you to make these connections.

Finally, in the last lesson, you will review the whole book, returning to the big picture to see whether your view of it has changed after closer study. Review will also strengthen your grasp of major issues and give you an idea of how you have grown from your study.

Kinds of Questions

Bible study on your own—without a structured guide—follows a progression. First you observe: What does the passage *say*? Then you interpret: What does the passage *mean*? Lastly you apply: How does this truth affect my life?

Some of the “how” and “why” questions will take some creative thinking, even prayer, to answer. Some are opinion questions without clearcut right answers; these will lend themselves to discussions and side studies.

Don't let your study become an exercise of knowledge alone. Treat the passage as God's Word, and stay in dialogue with Him as you study. Pray, “Lord, what do you want me to see here?” “Father, why is this true?” “Lord, how does this apply to my life?”

It is important that you write down your answers. The act of writing clarifies

your thinking and helps you to remember.

Meditating on verses is an option in several lessons. Its purpose is to let biblical truth sink into your inner convictions so that you will increasingly be able to act on this truth as a natural way of life. You may want to find a quiet place to spend five minutes each day repeating the verse(s) to yourself. Think about what each word, phrase, and sentence means to you. At intervals throughout the rest of the day, remind yourself of the verse(s).

Study Aids

A list of reference materials, including a few notes of explanation to help you make good use of them, begins on page 209. This guide is designed to include enough background to let you interpret with just your Bible and the guide. Still, if you want more information on a subject or want to study a book on your own, try the references listed.

Scripture Versions

Unless otherwise indicated, the Bible quotations in this guide are from the New International Version of the Bible. Other versions cited are the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB), and the King James Version (KJV).

Use any translation you like for study, preferably more than one. A paraphrase such as The Living Bible is not accurate enough for study, but it can be helpful for comparison or devotional reading.

Memorizing and Meditating

A Psalmist wrote, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). If you write down a verse or passage that challenges or encourages you, and reflect on it often for a week or more, you will find it beginning to affect your motives and actions. We forget quickly what we read once; we remember what we ponder.

When you find a significant verse or passage, you might copy it onto a card to keep with you. Set aside five minutes during each day just to think about what the passage might mean in your life. Recite it over to yourself, exploring its meaning. Then, return to your passage as often as you can during your day, for a brief review. You will soon find it coming to mind spontaneously.

For Group Study

A group of four to ten people allows the richest discussions, but you can adapt this guide for other sized groups. It will suit a wide range of group types, such as home Bible studies, growth groups, youth groups, and businessmen's studies.

Both new and experienced Bible students, and new and mature Christians, will benefit from the guide. You can omit or leave for later years any questions you find too easy or too hard.

The guide is intended to lead a group through one lesson per week. However, feel free to split lessons if you want to discuss them more thoroughly. Or, omit some questions in a lesson if preparation or discussion time is limited. You can always return to this guide for personal study later. You will be able to discuss only a few questions at length, so choose some for discussion and others for background. Make time at each discussion for members to ask about anything they didn't understand.

Each lesson in the guide ends with a section called "For the group." These sections give advice on how to focus a discussion, how you might apply the lesson in your group, how you might shorten a lesson, and so on. The group leader should read each "For the group" at least a week ahead so that he or she can tell the group how to prepare for the next lesson.

Each member should prepare for a meeting by writing answers for all the background and discussion questions to be covered. If the group decides not to take an hour per week for private preparation, then expect to take at least two meetings per lesson to work through the questions. Application will be very difficult, however, without private thought and prayer.

Two reasons for studying in a group are accountability and support. When each member commits in front of the rest to seek growth in an area of life, you can pray with one another, listen jointly for God's guidance, help one another to resist temptation, assure each other that the other's growth matters to you, use the group to practice spiritual principles, and so on. Pray about one another's commitments and needs at most meetings. Spend the first few minutes of each meeting sharing any results from applications prompted by previous lessons. Then discuss new applications toward the end of the meeting. Follow such sharing with prayer for these and other needs.

If you write down each other's applications and prayer requests, you are more likely to remember to pray for them during the week, ask about them at the next meeting, and notice answered prayers. You might want to get a notebook for prayer requests and discussion notes.

Notes taken during discussion will help you to remember, follow up on ideas, stay on the subject, and clarify a total view of an issue. But don't let note-taking keep you from participating. Some groups choose one member at each meeting to take notes. Then someone copies the notes and distributes them at the next meeting. Rotating these tasks can help include people. Some groups have someone take notes on a large pad of paper or erasable marker board (preformed shower wallboard works well), so that everyone can see what has been recorded.

Page 212 lists some good sources of counsel for leading group studies. *The Small Group Letter*, published by NavPress, is unique, offering insights from experienced leaders every other month.

BACKGROUND

Paul and Rome

Map of the Roman Empire



In the prologue to the 1534 edition of his English New Testament, William Tyndale calls the letter to the Romans "the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament" and "an introduction unto all the Old Testament."¹ Why? First, because the letter is the most thorough statement of the gospel that God has given us, and second, because it draws together the whole intent of the Old Testament to explain that gospel.

Tyndale goes on to say, "No man verily can read it too oft or study it too well: for the more it is studied the easier it is, the more it is chewed the pleasanter it is, and the more groundly it is searched the preciouser things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein." How did such a treasure come to be?

Timeline of Paul's Ministry

(All dates are approximate, based on F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, page 475.)

Public ministry of Jesus	28-30 AD
Conversion of Paul (Acts 9:1-19)	33
Paul visits Jerusalem to see Peter (Galatians 1:18)	35
Paul in Cilicia and Syria (Galatians 1:21, Acts 9:30)	35-46
Paul visits Jerusalem to clarify the mission to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:1-10)	46
Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus and Galatia (Acts 13-14)	47-48
<i>Letter to the Galatians</i>	48?
Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15)	49
Paul and Silas travel from Antioch to Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia (Acts 16-17)	49-50
<i>Letters to the Thessalonians</i>	50
Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1-18)	50-52
Paul visits Jerusalem	52
Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19)	52-55
<i>Letters to the Corinthians</i>	55-56
Paul travels to Macedonia, Dalmatia, and Achaia (Acts 20)	55-57
<i>Letter to the Romans</i>	early 57
Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-23:22)	May 57
Paul imprisoned in Caesarea (Acts 23:23-26:32)	57-59
Paul sent to house arrest in Rome (Acts 27:1-28:31)	59-62
<i>Letters to Philipians, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon</i>	60?-62
<i>Letters to Timothy and Titus</i>	?
Paul executed in Rome	65?

Looking westward

In 57 AD, Paul had been a missionary apostle for about twenty years. He had spent the past ten years evangelizing Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece (Achaia), and he felt his work there was fulfilled. Now that local leaders were equipped to care for the churches Paul had planted, Paul was looking westward to Spain—the farthest end of the Empire, which had never heard the gospel (Romans 15:23-24).

On the way to Spain, Paul hoped to satisfy a longing to visit Rome. Although he was legally a citizen of Rome (Acts 22:27-28), Paul had never seen the famed capital of the Empire. A stay there would be a chance to meet members of the network of churches already flourishing in Rome. Paul hoped that the Roman Christians would help provide funds and a base of operations for his mission to Spain.

However, Paul had met only a few of the hundreds of Christians now living in Rome. Also, he could not journey westward immediately. He had collected a gift of money for the poor Christians in Jerusalem from the Gentile Christians in Greece, and he felt he should deliver it to Jerusalem personally (Romans 15:25-26). For these reasons, he decided to send a letter of introduction to the Roman Christians to prepare them for his visit. The letter Paul wrote from Greece in the early spring of 57 AD (Acts 20:2-3) turned out to be his greatest treatise on the gospel.

Saul the Pharisee

To understand Paul's letter, we should know at least a few of the things the Romans may have heard about the apostle. He was born in the first decade AD in Tarsus, a prosperous city on the trade route from Syria to Asia Minor. Tarsus was known for its schools of philosophy and liberal arts, and Paul may have had some contact with these. Like most cities in the Empire, Tarsus probably contained synagogues of Greek-speaking Jews who were often as devout as their Hebrew-speaking brethren.²

However, in Philippians 3:5, Paul calls himself "a Hebrew of Hebrews," which probably means that his parents spoke Hebrew and raised him in a strict Jewish home, isolated as much as possible from the pagan city around them.³ They named their boy "Saul" after Israel's first king, for the family belonged to King Saul's tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). They must have owned property and had some importance in the community, for Saul was born not only a citizen of Tarsus (Acts 21:39) but also a citizen of Rome.⁴

Saul was sent to study Jewish Law in Jerusalem under the foremost rabbi of his day, the Pharisee Gamaliel (Acts 22:3, Galatians 1:14). The Pharisees (the Hebrew word means "the separated ones") felt God had set them apart to live by the *Torah* (the Law, or Teaching, of Moses). For them, that meant following the interpretations of the Torah laid down by generations of Jewish teachers. Some Pharisees held that a man was righteous if he had done more good than bad, but Saul apparently followed the more strict group that insisted that every least implication of the Law must be kept.⁵

The Pharisees expected a *Messiah* (Hebrew for “Anointed One”; Greek: *Christ*), who would deliver them from foreign oppression and rule with justice. However, Jesus of Nazareth had infuriated many Pharisees by interpreting the Law differently and acting like God. Thus, when some Jews began to proclaim Jesus as Messiah and Lord (a term usually reserved for God), strict Pharisees opposed them vehemently.

Saul helped to lead the fight against the proclaimers of Christ in Jerusalem (Acts 7:60-8:3, Galatians 1:13). When some were driven out, Saul obtained permission to pursue them to Damascus. But on the way there, Jesus confronted Saul in a blinding encounter (Acts 9:1-19), revealing to Saul that he was persecuting the very God he professed to worship. Saul’s life now turned from Pharisaic observance of God’s Law to a devoted obedience to Jesus Christ, the revealed Messiah. He joined the Jews who were urging other Jews to believe in Jesus, and shortly thereafter God called him to proclaim Jesus as Savior to Gentiles (non-Jews) also. Saul took the Greek name Paul when he turned to work among Gentiles.

Paul the missionary

Paul’s conversion may have marked his first move outward from cloistered Judaism into pagan culture. He spent seven years in Cilicia and Syria (Galatians 1:21), probably preaching Jesus along with Greek-speaking Jewish Christians. Then Barnabas brought Paul from Tarsus to Syrian Antioch, where by this time the church was more Gentile than Jewish.⁶

After some time, the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to evangelize Cyprus and Galatia for about two years. The missionaries then returned to Antioch, until some teachers came, saying that Gentile Christians must be circumcised and follow the Jewish laws. Paul and Barnabas strongly opposed this teaching, and eventually both they and the Judaizers went to Jerusalem to have the apostles pronounce on the matter. The apostles embraced Paul’s view that Gentile Christians had to be moral and avoid idolatry but did not have to keep Jewish customs (Acts 15:1-35). Sadly, this was not the end of the controversy; Paul struggled against Judaizers for years thereafter.

Paul launched another missionary campaign after the Jerusalem council. With Silas and some other companions, Paul spent four years in Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia (Greece). After a quick trip to Jerusalem and Antioch, Paul took a third journey to Ephesus, through Macedonia, and finally to Corinth (Acts 15:40-20:3). In Corinth or the nearby port of Cenchrea, while staying with a man named Gaius (Romans 16:23, 1 Corinthians 1:14), Paul probably wrote to Rome. Shortly thereafter he left Corinth for Jerusalem.

Arrival in Rome

Paul got to Rome, but not in the way he planned. When he appeared in Jerusalem with the alms from his Gentile converts, some Jewish enemies incited

the Roman authorities to arrest him. He spent two years in prison in Caesarea, but when a new Roman governor suggested sending Paul to stand trial in a Jewish court, Paul appealed for trial before Caesar (Acts 21:17-25:12).

The trip to Rome took nearly a year because of a storm and shipwreck (Acts 27:1-28:16), so Paul arrived about three years after he sent the letter announcing his plan to come. For two years the apostle was under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30), supported at least partly by members of the churches he had planted rather than by the Christians in Rome (Philippians 1:12-18, 2:25, 4:18). Paul was probably released from this first imprisonment in Rome and may even have gotten to Spain, but some years later he was rearrested, tried, and executed in Rome.

The church in Rome

The first Christians in Rome were probably Jews.⁷ They may have become Christians after Peter’s first Pentecost sermon in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5, 10-11,41), or they may have heard the gospel sometime thereafter. Business, religious pilgrimage, and pleasure were constantly carrying Jews back and forth between Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, and other cities. Some Jews probably heard the gospel in the East and carried the news back to Rome. When Paul met two Jews from Rome, Priscilla and Aquila, they were apparently already Christians (Acts 18:2-3).⁸ Along with all the other Roman Jews, these two had been expelled from the capital by Emperor Claudius because of persistent rioting in the Jewish community “at the instigation of Chrestus.”⁹

That expulsion took place in 49 AD, but a few years later both Christian and non-Christian Jews were back in Rome (Romans 16:3). By 57 AD there was also a substantial number of Gentile Christians in Rome, for Paul addressed both Jews and Gentiles at length in his letter (Romans 2:17, 11:11-21). Because he said a great deal about relations between Jews and Gentiles, we infer that neither group was a tiny minority in the churches.

When Paul wrote his letter, his understanding of the gospel was not the norm throughout the Empire, as it is today. A few of the Christians in Rome, such as Priscilla and Aquila, were familiar with Paul’s view of the faith. However, most of the Roman Christians had been converted by other apostles’ teaching. Now they were working out the details of the gospel with the Holy Spirit and the Old Testament to guide them. Some of the Roman Christians approached their relationship with Jesus from an orthodox Jewish point of view, others from an idolatrous past, and others from one of the many Jewish sects with various interpretations of the Old Testament and Jewish tradition. Paul had to keep this variety among Christians in mind as he presented his gospel as the one accurate understanding of Jesus’ work. When he described how Christians should live in light of the gospel, he emphasized unity and tolerance among Christians with different gifts and customs (Romans 12:1-15:13).

The righteousness of God

Paul's letter to the Romans systematically unfolds the gospel of God's Son, the revelation of *the righteousness of God* (Romans 1:16-17). In it, Paul deals with such huge and knotty issues as sin, guilt, salvation, grace, law, faith, works, righteousness, justification, sanctification, redemption, death, resurrection, the place of the Jews in God's plan of salvation, and the way we should live in light of our salvation. Martin Luther calls this book, "the daily bread of the soul."¹⁰ Feast on!

1. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), page 9.
2. A. T. Robertson, "Paul, the Apostle," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, volume 4 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), page 2276.
3. F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), pages 41-43.
4. Bruce, *Paul*, pages 32-40.
5. Bruce, *Paul*, pages 50-51.
6. Bruce, *Paul*, pages 127-133.
7. Bruce, *Paul*, pages 379-382.
8. *The NIV Study Bible*, edited by Kenneth Barker (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Corporation, 1985), page 1681.
9. Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 25. 4. Suetonius wrote seventy years after the expulsion and apparently thought Christ was a Jew present in Rome, but the riots were probably between Christian and anti-Christian Jews. See Bruce, *Paul*, pages 381-382 for an explanation.
10. Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1982), page xiii.

LESSON ONE

OVERVIEW

It is much easier to study a book passage by passage if you have first examined it as a whole. An overview is especially necessary if you have never studied the book of Romans before. Below are some suggestions for an overview of Romans; do as much as you like. Look over questions 1-8 before you begin.

1. First, imagine you are one of the Roman Christians who have just received this letter from the renowned Paul. Read it through for the overall message, as you would any letter. If reading large portions of Scripture is difficult for you, try this compromise: read 1:1-17, 3:21-26, 5:1-5, 8:1-4, 9:1-5, 11:13-15, 12:1-2, 15:14-33.
2. As you read, keep a list of *repeated words and ideas* that seem important to Paul's message. This list will help you notice the main ideas Paul is trying to get across and will also suggest questions you will want to answer when you study further. For instance, you may not understand words like *justification* and *righteousness* that are central to Paul's teaching. Write your list of key words and ideas here, and note your questions under number 3 below.

3. In your reading of Romans, or in the background on pages 9-14, you may have come across questions you'd like answered or concepts you'd like clarified. While your thoughts are still fresh, write your questions here. You can look for answers as you study further.

4. Paul carefully organized his message to the Romans; an outline can help you trace his train of thought. As you read the letter, observe the natural breaks in Paul's thought. Then make up a short summary for each passage. (If you are reading only selections of the book, summarize those.)

Here are some of the divisions the NIV suggests, but you can divide the book differently if you prefer:

1:1-17 _____

1:18-32 _____

2:1-16 _____

2:17-3:8 _____

3:9-20 _____

3:21-31 _____

4:1-25 _____

5:1-11 _____

5:12-21 _____

6:1-14 _____

6:15-23 _____

7:1-6 _____

7:7-25 _____

8:1-17 _____

8:18-39 _____

9:1-33 _____

10:1-21 _____

- _____
- 11:1-36 _____
- _____
- 12:1-21 _____
- _____
- 13:1-14 _____
- _____
- 14:1-15:13 _____
- _____
- 15:14-33 _____
- _____
- 16:1-27 _____
- _____

5. You may have noticed that 1:1-15 is basically an introduction that leads up to a statement in 1:16-17, and that the rest of the letter explains the statement in 1:16-17. Not every book of the Bible states its theme so neatly, but Paul wrote Romans more like a tight theological essay than a normal letter.

Look back at 1:16-17 and think about what Paul says in the rest of the book. Then, in a sentence or title, state what you think is the overall message of the book of Romans.

6. There are several main divisions in the letter, several major topics Paul covers. What title would you give to each of these?

- 1:1-17 _____
- 1:18-3:20 _____
- _____
- 3:21-4:25 (or 3:21-5:21) _____
- _____
- 5:1-8:39 (or 6:1-8:39) _____
- _____
- 9:1-11:36 _____
- _____
- 12:1-15:13 _____
- _____
- 15:14-16:27 _____

7. What do you notice about Paul as a person (his character, goals, etc.) from his letter to the Romans? If necessary, look back at 1:1-17, 9:1-5, 10:1, 11:13-14, 15:14-16:27.

8. If you have not already done so, read the background on pages 9-14. What information from there currently seems important to remember as you study Romans?

For Further Study:
Compare your answers to questions 4-6 to the outline in a study Bible or Bible handbook.

For Further Study:
For more background on Paul or the book of Romans, see a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia.

9. The last step of Bible study is applying what you have studied to yourself. One way to make an overview personal is to ask yourself these questions:

How do I want this book to affect me?

How is the overall message of this book relevant to my life?

What actions or matters for prayer and thought does my first reading of this book encourage?

Think about these questions, and jot any responses here.

For the group

This “For the group” section and the ones in later lessons are intended to suggest ways of structuring your discussions. Feel free to select what suits your group.

The main goals of an introductory lesson are to get to know the book of Romans in general and to get to know the people with whom you are going to study it. The group may benefit from having time to

read the “How to Use This Study” section on pages 5-8, the historical background on pages 9-14, and the whole book of Romans before everyone has to dive into detailed study.

Before group members tackle this overview, encourage them to read the whole letter but not to force themselves if they find it too difficult. Some people who are less familiar with Bible study, or less confident readers, find it frustrating to read all of a difficult book at one time. Other people have no trouble following the book at once.

Worship. Beginning with some kind of worship will help the group leave the day's concerns behind and focus on God. Some groups like to begin meetings with extended prayer and/or singing. Others prefer to start with just one song or a brief prayer for God's guidance, leaving more extensive worship until after the study.

Getting started. The beginning of a new study is a good time to lay a foundation for honest sharing of ideas, for getting comfortable with each other, and for encouraging a sense of common purpose. One way to establish common ground is to talk about what each group member hopes to get out of your group—out of your study of Romans, and out of any prayer, singing, sharing, outreach, or anything else you might do together. You can include what you each hope to give to the group as well. Why are you studying the Bible, and Romans in particular? If you have someone write down each member's hopes and expectations, then you can look back at these goals later to see if they are being met. You can then plan more time for prayer or decide to cover Romans more slowly if necessary. Also, if some people are primarily interested in studying the Bible, while others mainly want to share their lives with other Christians, all will be grateful to come to some agreement now. Suggest that each person write his or her goals in the front of this study guide for future reference.

You could take about fifteen minutes at the beginning of your discussion of lesson one to discuss goals. Or, you may prefer to take a whole meeting to introduce the study, examine the “How to Use This Study” section on pages 5-8, and share your goals.

Overview. You can structure your discussion like this:

1. *How to Use This Study.* The leader can remind the group of the main points from this section and then ask if anyone has questions about what to do. For example, point out the optional questions in the margins. These are available as group discussion questions, ideas for application, and further study. It is unlikely that anyone will have either the time or desire to answer all the optional questions and do all the applications. It is reasonable to expect a person to do *one* "Optional Application" for any given lesson. You might choose *two* "For Thought and Discussions" for your group discussion. If someone wants to write answers to the optional questions, suggest that he use a separate notebook. It will also be helpful for discussion notes, prayer requests, answers to prayers, application plans, and so on.

Note the observation-interpretation-application pattern in each lesson. Many of the numbered questions are observations and basic interpretations that lay the groundwork for deeper study. The meaty questions are often in the margins. In your group discussion, you may prefer to move quickly through the numbered questions (even skipping some) in order to concentrate on questions that interest you.

Point out the study aids on pages 209-213. If you own any, bring them in to show the group.

You may need to discuss how and why Christians memorize and meditate on Scripture. Christian meditation is not meant to empty the mind, as in oriental mysticism. Rather, after emptying your mind of distractions, you fill it with God's thoughts by dwelling on a short piece of His Word.

2. *Key words and ideas.* Ask, "What are some of the key words and ideas that struck you?"

3. *Outline.* Compare your answers for question 4 to each other and to other outlines (in your study Bibles, Bible dictionaries, the outlines on page 24, etc.). For example, let each person answer, "What is 1:18-32 about?" Then compare answers to question 6. Discuss the merits of different outlines. You'll find quite a variety of approaches if you look at several commentaries and dictionaries. You may want to evaluate different outlines again when you review the book after studying in detail.

4. *Theme.* What is the book about? Why did

Paul write to the Romans? (The background on pages 9-14 may help with this.) What does 1:16-17 tell you about Paul's theme?

5. *Paul.* It will be easier to apply Paul's words to yourselves if you see him as a real person with real feelings and goals. What does this letter reveal about him? What does the background on pages 9-14 add?

6. *The Romans.* What do you know from the background and the letter about Paul's readers? (Also, why is it important to know something about them?)

7. *Questions.* Record any questions group members have about the book. You may not want to answer them now, but you can all look for answers as you go along and discuss them at the appropriate times.

8. *Application.* If your group is not already familiar with how to apply Scripture to your lives, think of some sample ways of putting Paul's teaching into practice. Choose a paragraph from Romans, decide what it means, define the truth that is relevant to your lives, and think of one practical way in which you could act on that truth. This might include prayer, talking to someone, or doing something.

Wrap-up. The wrap-up is a time to bring the discussion to a focused end and to make any announcements about the next lesson or meeting. For example, you might ask the group to look at the box labeled "Study Skill—Application" on page 31 before beginning the questions in lesson two. Then members can be looking for ways to apply the passage as they study it.

Some people tend to prepare lessons for group discussions only one or two days before the meetings and then feel that it is too late to start working on an application. Tell the group that it is alright to begin memorizing a verse or thinking about an application after the group discussion of that passage.

Worship. Thank God for the book of Romans. Praise Him for some particular things He has revealed to you about Himself through this book. Ask Him to enable you each to understand and apply His words in this letter.

Outlines. Here are two of many possible ways to outline Romans:¹

- I. Introduction (1:1-15)
- II. Theme: Righteousness from God (1:16-17)
- III. The Unrighteousness of All Mankind (1:18-3:20)
 - A. Gentiles (1:18-32)
 - B. Jews (2:1-3:8)
 - C. Summary: All people (3:9-20)
- IV. Righteousness Imputed: Justification (3:21-5:21)
- V. Righteousness Imparted: Sanctification (6:1-8:39)
- VI. God's Righteousness Vindicated: The Problem of the Rejection of Israel (9:1-11:32)
- VII. Righteousness Practiced (12:1-15:13)
- VIII. Conclusion (15:14-33)
- IX. Commendation and Greetings (16:1-27)

- I. Superscription, Address and Salutation (1:1-7)
- II. Paul and the Roman Church (1:8-16a)
- III. The Theme of the Epistle Stated (1:16b-17)
- IV. The Revelation of the Righteousness which is from God by Faith Alone—"He who is righteous by faith" expounded (1:18-4:25)
- V. The Life Promised for Those who are Righteous by Faith—"Shall live" expounded (5:1-8:39)
- VI. The Unbelief of Men and the Faithfulness of God (9:1-11:36)
- VII. The Obedience to which Those who are Righteous by Faith are Called (12:1-15:13)
- VIII. Conclusion to the Epistle (15:14-16:27)

1. The first is from *The NIV Study Bible*, pages 1704-1705; the second is from C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), pages xv-xvii.