

*w e e k 5 f i v e*



Discover

This week, our Spiritual Care Packet presents an opportunity to pause and reflect on our conversation with Paul and the church in Rome in chapters twelve through sixteen. This week's packet will not feature any additional sections because I want to create space for us to breathe deeply of the richness and complexity of this text.

***This week, I invite you to read chapters twelve through sixteen in one setting.***



## Discover

This week, our Spiritual Care Packet presents an opportunity to pause and reflect on our conversation with Paul and the church in Rome in chapters twelve through sixteen. In this compelling text, Paul presents a vision for the church that is both inspiring and challenging. This vision is remarkable as Paul presents a people that disagree learning to share a table, learning to break bread together. A people that discover not how to tolerate one another but how to **belong** to one another as each serves and cares for the other. Paul envisions a people that bless their enemies sharing their sorrow and joy even as threats of persecution loom. Paul envisions a people who love with sincerity, cling to hope, are patient even in suffering, and extravagantly generous to all. Paul envisions a church that is wildly counter-cultural to the pervasive individualism and polarization that dominate our cultural landscape in America in 2020.

As I reflect on the world around us, Paul's vision feels as intangible and fleeting as the wind twisting through my fingers. Sitting with Paul's vision for the church and then beholding conflict and selfishness that thrive in the church today is like waking from a pleasant dream only to discover that the struggles of the church in Rome remain the struggles of the church today. Hundreds of years later, are we still conforming to the pattern of the world?

The longer I allow Paul's vision to spin around my mind, the greater my awe that this still God's invitation to the church today. An invitation to become a beautiful, diverse, and vibrant community that embodies the love of God for one another, for our neighbors, for our enemies, for those in authority, and for those without power. I marvel that God's vision for the church is radically wonderful but I also feel sorrow and powerlessness overwhelm me because this vision feels out of reach. How can I begin to love my neighbor who is not a follower of Jesus if my own brother or sister in faith is my enemy? How can we be invested in one another's lives when the demands of success and our frantic schedules destroy any opportunity for connection, for intimacy? How can I be present and attentive to God's prompting when I am preoccupied with texts, notifications, and the mindless scroll? How can I use my own power and status to radically welcome others when I risk my own comfort and status to do so? In a spirit of great regret, I confess my own conformity to the will of this world. This mutation of my inward self to crave the words and actions of the world twists my relationships with others until each is fractured and torn. How can we make a reality this vision for the church?

The lyrics to an old song comfort my heart...

**My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name.  
On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.**



## Discover

Who fully embodies the good, perfect, and pleasing will of God? Who first became a living sacrifice? His physical body broken and lifted up on an altar of wood. His body resurrected from the stillness of the tomb. Who remains a living sacrifice and our model for a life that lives and dies in perfect alignment with the will of God? As Lord of the living and the dead it is Jesus Christ whom we serve and it is Jesus Christ whose behavior and actions are the measuring line by which the living and the dead find judgement. It is only when we become imitators of Jesus, it is only when we clothe ourselves with Christ, that we too live and move in the world in complete accordance with the will of God.

Paul's vision for the church is an invitation to become more like Jesus Christ. This is the way. This is the only way. Our relationships with one another, with our neighbors, with our enemies, with the institutions and system that order our society, will never model this radical good, perfect, and pleasing will of God Paul envisions until we take on the mind of Jesus Christ, until we present our bodies just as he presented his own body. I challenge each of us to again read Romans chapters twelve through sixteen and witness how Paul's vision for the church is a vision of Jesus Christ. I challenge each of us to look inward and, with compassion and humility, ask God to reveal to us the ways that we are not submitting ourselves to the model of Jesus Christ. I challenge us to ask God to gently mold us and break us until our truest selves as image bearers of God are revealed and we embody the will of God in the same way as Jesus. I challenge us to cling to hope that the Kingdom of God is a place of righteousness, joy, and peace. This vision is possible and evil can be overcome by good.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” ***Romans 12:1-3***

“The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.”  
***Romans 13:12-14***

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.” ***Romans 14:17-19***





## Discover

“For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” **Romans 15:3**

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” **Romans 15:5-7**

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This table is designed to help us reflect on how being transformed to align our thoughts, words and actions with the good, perfect, and pleasing will of God is the catalyst that shapes all our relationships. These lists are not exhaustive and I encourage you to create your own categories and observations as you reflect on chapters twelve through sixteen. What would you add to the conversation?

### **When we take on the mind of Christ**

*our interactions with our brothers and sisters in the church are characterized by...*

- Belonging to One Another **Romans 12:5**
- Devotion to One Another **Romans 12:10**
- Showing Honor to Others Above Ourselves **Romans 12:10**
- Generosity **Romans 12:13**
- Hospitality **Romans 12:13**
- Lack of Contempt or Judgement Against One Another **Romans 14:1, 2-4, 10**
- Each Living and Dying to the Lord **Romans 14:8**
- Peace and Mutual Edification **Romans 14:19**
- Those with Power Radically Welcoming the Powerless **Romans 14:1, 21 | Romans 15:1**
- Giving Glory to God the Father of Jesus Christ with One Mind and One Voice **Roman 15:5-6**
- Acceptance of One Another **Romans 15:5-7**

### **When we take on the mind of Christ**

*our interactions with our enemies and our neighbors are characterized by...*

- Blessing Instead of Cursing **Romans 12:14**
- Rejoicing and Mourning with Our Enemies **Romans 12:15**
- Harmony **Romans 12:16**
- Pursuit of Peace **Romans 12:18**
- The Decision to Not Take Vengeance **Romans 12:19**
- Abundant Generosity **Romans 12:20**
- Honor and Respect **Romans 13:7**
- Love **Romans 13:9**
- A Love that Does no Harm Romans **Romans 13:10**
- A Desire not to Please Ourselves but to Build Up **Romans 15:2**



# Discover

## **When we take on the mind of Christ**

*our attitude is characterized by...*

- Submission to the Good, Perfect, and Pleasing Will of God *Romans 12:1-2*
- Discernment of the Will of God *Romans 12:2*
- Desire to Use Our Gifts to the Fullest Extent *Romans 12:6-8*
- Patience in Affliction *Romans 12:12*
- Humility *Romans 12:16*
- Casting Off Our Sinful Nature *Romans 13:12-13*
- Clothing Ourselves with Christ *Romans 13:14*
- A Decision to not put an Obstacle in the Way of a Brother or Sister *Romans 14:13*
- Joy *Romans 15:13*
- Peace *Romans 15:13*
- Trust in God *Romans 15:13*
- Overflowing Hope *Romans 15:13*
- The Power of the Holy Spirit *Romans 15:13*

