

Maintain An Open Mind 'To Learn'

Studying the Word can be a refreshing experience every time. It can launch us into a new and deepening understanding, providing intimacy with our Father.

When we attend a Bible teaching or just read, it's a wonderful opportunity to see a new facet of a passage, even if we have heard it before. "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life." (Prov. 4:13)

However, if study becomes routine or no longer seems especially important, pray for a change in thinking. It is a great honor and privilege to read 'Christ the Word.' "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it." (Prov. 8:11) Scripture is precious treasure, our ultimate authority, and to be our very life!

It is commonplace in some foreign countries to walk half a day or more to attend a church service. Saints are attacked or jailed just for speaking the name of Jesus. Thankfulness ought to bubble out of every breath for all of our freedoms. Sometimes, worldly cares can cloud our vision. "Wise men lay up knowledge..." storing Scripture in their heart and soul for eternity. (Proverbs 10:14)

Thus, pray for the desire to 'seek and search' for the golden nuggets God has placed in His Word. (Proverbs 2:1-5) This is our power and wisdom, enabling us to grow and mature.

It's easy to forget that this Book is like NO other: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:1,3) In great love, the Father gave "...Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God," especially to You! (II Corinthians 1:24)

Christ Is the Word - Read It Daily!!

Family Bible Study In N. Chesterfield

Brian's Topic: Christ Is Our Wisdom/Power

Time: Fridays, 7-9 PM Call for info - (804) 519-1210

Christian Life Coach Support Services

Writers/Editors: Brian & Deborah J. Johnson, Certified Christian Life Coaches
(804) 519-1210 — Look us up on Facebook - lifecoachesdjb@yahoo.com
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Just A Minute! *With Scripture*

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Being Under Authority In Grace: What it Means! ~ Romans 13

Clearly, we are under God's authority, yet He teaches, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." (Rom. 13:1) We're also to be in subjection to these 'powers,' as authority is needed to maintain order and avoid chaos. God set guidelines for His institutions: marriage, government, and the Church, with specific structure and power as a "...minister of God to thee for good...". (Rom. 13:4)



Fathers nurture/children obey

Saints are to honor 'God's decreed power' in the positions of the world, realizing that the person in the role is not 'God-appointed,' nor perfect. Only the Lord Jesus can hold an office flawlessly. Therefore, expect 'humanness' in leaders, even from saints trying to live the Word, because unrealistic expectations can cause disillusionment and bitterness. Romans 13 instructs saints to honor the position and accept the authority's decision, even if you have had no input in the problem solving or when you disagree with the outcome.

When an 'authority' requires you to act in 'clear disobedience to God's Word,' Peter relays, "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29) Otherwise, the instruction is, "Servants, obey *in all things* your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God." (Col. 3:22) This can be difficult, so be on your knees continually. Remember, "...Vengeance is mine; I will repay, sayeth the Lord...". (Rom. 12:19) Trust God; authorities will *surely* give account for decisions and 'how' they lead.

Marriage/Family: Designated roles: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Guidance to the man: "...love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it..." and 'nurture' your children. Unto the woman: "...submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord," being in subjection, 'reverencing your husband.' (Eph. 5:22,25,33) To children: "...obey your parents in all things...". (Col. 3:20) As individuals are humbled by life, they can grow closer spiritually, relying on God's authority and the Word.

Government: Those put 'in power' work as "...the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Romans 13:4) Even the Lord Jesus Christ submitted to human government, paying taxes, though He is Lord of all. "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21) Thus, Paul instructs, "Render therefore to all their dues..." tribute, custom, fear, and honor. (Romans 13:7) Unless rulers are 'directing saints' to violate Truth, we are to stay in subjection.

Church: Particular structure is to be set in local assemblies, "...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God...". (I Tim. 3:15) Daily functioning, teaching, caring for the weak/feeble, discipline, etc. requires organization and leadership; this is vital for order, peace, and growth.

Colossians 3:23 directs us in all these functions: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men...". Sometimes, submission is extremely difficult. In the depth of our soul, we may 'feel' *we know better*. Yet, God instructs us to yield *to Him*, fully realizing our anguish and sorrows, as we choose to submit. It's a walk of faith. **The answer: Pray & stay in the Scripture.**



Paul's Roman Epistle: Designed to Establish the Body of Christ

Romans 7: Student Study Insights

Romans 7: 6 "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit..."



Use to teach others!

***The goal each month will be to address one successive chapter in the book of Romans and relay a few helpful study insights for application.**

Give this to a friend!

Romans 7 explains the uselessness of using 'self-righteous efforts' to please God, as they end in defeat/death. The example of marriage teaches that man is in bondage to 'the law' as long as he lives. However, our close identity with the Lord Jesus Christ's death/burial/resurrection, uniquely makes us free from the law; functional spiritual life is now possible. Paul's personal example, falling prey to 'the law,' showed the weakness of the flesh. This is why God separated our inward man from 'sin in the flesh.' It enables us to serve in grace, free from fear/guilt/self-condemnation. "Now if I do that I would not, **it is no more I** that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." (Romans 7:20) Investigate the Word using 2-3 ideas below:

- 1. Obtain context:** Read Romans 6 and 7 several times to gain the context of what Paul is teaching. Notice the flow between the two chapters and the related words and themes.
- 2. 'Looking back' at what is referenced:** The Genesis 2 Marriage Law teaches some things about living under a law. Study marriage further in the Old Testament/Gospels to gain insight.
- 3. Take note when Paul uses himself as an example:** Just as we all struggle with legalism, Paul put himself under a performance system in Verses 7-25. What does it mean (Verse 9) that he was "...alive without the law once..."? How did sin revive? Did Paul really die? Examine Verses 9-11 to define this 'death' from the context. What did he learn from the situation,

trying to live 'after the flesh?' How can this help in your life?

- 4. Clarify words in verses:** Read Romans 7:13 to find the purpose of 'the law' and how it works in us. Think on this.
- 5. Progressive terms teach progressive doctrine:** Examine Romans 6-7. Note the various words used about 'aspects of the body' and meditate on what's being taught: Old man and body of sin (6:6), mortal body (6:12), members (6:13), flesh (6:19), inward man (7:22), and the wretched man and body of this death (7:24). Log and think about your findings.
- 6. Study to make distinctions:** Numerous 'laws' are recorded in Romans 7:1-8:4. List and define the various 'laws' and keep notes to study the similarities and differences.
- 7. Skim Romans 7 for unfamiliar terms:** Make a point of using a dictionary regularly to look up words, but limit it to one or two terms, so you don't overwhelm yourself with this aspect of studying. Defining even common words, like 'for' or 'flesh,' can bring great surprises and be very helpful!
- 8. Questions can prompt thought & meditation:** Notice that Romans 7:24 is a 'summary verse,' which is written as a question. It shows the results of 'trying to live under the law' to be pleasing/acceptable, eventually ending in failure/death. Yet, how does it also offer hope? Verse 25 progresses the reader to clarify this hope, setting him up for what is to come in the next chapter. Meditation can provide new insights.

***Suggestion: For newer students, focus on 'reading' Scripture rather than trying to learn many study insights; yet, when you're ready, try one.**



Legalism: Expectations on Ourselves or Others

Galatians 3:3 "Are you so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"



Today, as members of the Body of Christ, we function in a magnificent 'time of grace': "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the **dispensation of the grace of God** which is given me to you-ward." (Eph. 3:1-2) Two ways God offers His grace today: 1) 'To be just': It is a free gift by simply believing in Christ's shed blood for our sin. 2) 'To live a godly, holy life': It's a free choice by faith to yield our life unto God. Grace reigns in day-to-day living as we cease from self-righteous works and walk by faith in God's Word, trusting His power in us.

Yet, our fleshly patterns are hard to break and, like the Galatians, we often put ourselves or others under the law, without realizing it. Legalism is a performance system, with expectations and consequences. For example, as a perfectionist, this writer has an old habit of maintaining unrealistically high standards of 'self.' What's the motive? Often, it's not to please God, but to please 'others,' desiring acceptance, and ultimately to exalt 'self-effort.'

For many, legalism can manifest itself by placing 'others' under a system of works. In the mind, there may be expectations for others to perform, such as rigid rules and boundaries that have consequences/rewards. 'If' you bring me a present for my birthday, I'll be happy with you; 'if not' I will be disappointed and may snub or rebuke you. Grace would accept someone bringing a gift with joy, yet not 'expect' it in order for the relationship to remain secure.

'Negative self-talk' can be a constant punishment of 'ourselves' for not living 'perfectly.' Sometimes we are disappointed or angry at others for not behaving how 'we expected.' We may justify our frustration through 'self talk' or complaining. We also may inform them of what 'should' have been done, even withholding affection. Legalism tends to be emotional reactions or retaliation; *grace forgives in a response of love.*

Romans 6-8 can help us look at life with Christ's mind: yield to God and His authority, *responding* graciously. There is no wisdom in placing ourselves/others under a performance system. "Are you so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3) **A Grace Response Is Always Wise**

Women's Bible Studies

- 1. New Study: Wednesday's 10:30-12pm**
(At the LaPrade Library)
- 2. Friday Study: 2-4pm (N. Chesterfield)**
Call for information - (804) 519-1210

How To Share the Word While Respecting Someone's 'Personal Journey Of Faith'

Romans 14:1 "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

Romans 14 can help us honor other believers, especially the 'weaker brethren.' The basic issue is respecting free will, which directs one's 'personal journey of faith,' as the Spirit leads. What is challenging is that 'growth rates' are often slower than what 'we' might desire for others. Recall that in grace, timing/maturity are between them & God.

Paul relays, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." We are to accept 'the weak' in love, realizing he's 'a work in progress,' just as are we. A new saint is to live according to 'what he believes,' even if WE think he is wrong. Convincing him 'your ideas' are right can cause 'doubt and disputes.' Focus him, rather, on the Word to study. God can then help him grow and trust in Scripture as **the sole authority** in order to walk by faith.

Sometimes, God uses members of the Body of Christ as His spokesperson to edify saints, even bring unbelievers to Christ: "...follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." (Rom. 14:19) As faithful ambassadors, we speak to others about the Word, but then allow God to do His mighty work in them. We are a resource to answer questions, help him be established, & encourage, yet care is needed to avoid legalism, like coercing/pressuring. Nurture them in grace to examine and trust in the Scripture, exercising their free will/faith.

We are not to judge 'another man's servant;' his journey may be different than what 'we think or expect.' The weaker brother may take a while to learn and let go of former things. Only God knows his struggles/strongholds; all He expects is a simple walk of faith. "...Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." (Romans 14:4)

Individuals are accountable to God for what they choose: "...we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Rom. 14:10) We may be 'stronger in faith,' yet we are NOT the weaker believer's 'god.' We can be a 'helper of their joy' and, in grace, encourage and teach them *how to study*. This develops faith and conviction. If a saint lives in sin, 'refusing to believe' the Truth from the Word, this is a different situation; it is rebellion. Leaders are to decide if/when separation is warranted. This is NOT done impulsively, but in sorrow, after clear instruction and warning, with ample time to respond and learn. It boils down to whether they have a heart attitude of faith. (I Corinthians 5)

As more mature saints, we are to present the Word in love. The weaker brother's responsibility is to read and study, trusting God, "...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23) If he *relies* on 'what YOU say,' he's not walking by faith in the Word's authority, but exalting YOU and YOUR word. Who has become his authority now? Our role is to encourage him to read, prove all things by the Word, then live by THOSE convictions. ***Growth takes time & grace!***

Living Your Faith When It Is NOT Convenient

Romans 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

This life promises challenges and difficulties, yet we have complete provisions to deal with whatever comes. God has *fully* provided so we are 'able to bear' what this life brings. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also *make a way to escape*, that ye may be able to *bear it*." (I Corinthians 10:13) Our 'escape' is sound doctrine and thinking, built into our soul to sustain us. Thus, we are to "...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." **Our armor:** loins girt with Truth, breastplate of righteousness, feet shod with gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, & the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. (Eph. 6:10-17) These are the perfect provisions for *all* our spiritual battles.

The smaller issues of life are our training ground for the weightier issues that hit, often unexpectedly. Now, in the calm, is when we are to be living sacrifices (Romans 12) by building ourselves up spiritually: reading, meditating, and praying, yet also making time for application to the details of life. Setting the flesh aside to live Christ provides important experience, strength, and trust in God for when the challenges come or when others need wise advice. Choose to be a soldier, prepared in grace. "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." This enables us to "...endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:1,3) and yield to Him.

Are you willing to prioritize time for reading, prayer, and to minister to others? One day, more may be asked of you, such as is happening in other countries. Following Christ costs many their lives, even a loved one. Living grace in the midst of difficulties takes preparation. Each morning ask yourself: 'Do I believe Christ is worth my time, energy, and my very life?' *Inner courage/strength comes as we concentrate on the goal and Truth, not circumstances.* Focusing on the weakness of the flesh or worldly concerns can immobilize you, creating anxiety. Don't wait to 'feel like it,' pray to live for Him, even if it's in fear & trembling. **God 'is able' to help you walk by faith!**

Christian Life Coach Support Services

Individual, Couple or Group Coaching - In person or phone
Presentations - Women's Retreats - Call (804) 519-1210
Donations Only-As a man purposes in his heart

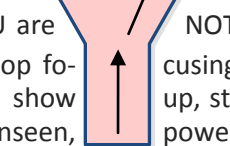
How to Live in the Spiritual Realm of Grace

Whether it's at night before going to sleep or during the day, when challenging thoughts arise, we can access God in His realm for help. He graciously provided His Spirit and Word the moment we trusted Christ. This provides *real* power!

Romans progresses us to know 'how' to live unto God, rather than unto sin and death. Behavior begins in the mind with thoughts. Therefore, develop the ability to 'step off' the worldly, unhealthy road of thinking to 'step up' into God's realm, onto His road of life and peace. Remember who you are; you are dead to sin and now alive; sin no longer 'has' to reign. God made us a new creation in Christ; "...reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Let not sin therefore reign...**". (Rom. 6:11-12)

Satan's Worldly Realm of Sin **God's Kingdom Realm of Grace**

Before Sleeping: Let us first address bedtime, as it seems easier to gain control of one's thought life. How can we 'turn off' plaguing problems and our negative 'self-talk' to access God?

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- 1) Pray and yield:** Realize YOU are NOT able to do this alone; trust God!
 - 2) Take control:** Purpose to stop focusing on the problems, events, and negative perspectives. When they show up, step off this harmful path of thinking. This will shut down Satan's unseen, powerful access to your mind. He desires to keep you 'in your problems,' pointing to the day's concerns and his worldly doctrine, which 'wind up' feelings, though you desire peaceful sleep. In bed, practice 'turning off' Satan's influence; shut these windows of thought and stay in prayer. Simultaneously...
 - 3) Refocus yourself:** Speak directly to God; emotions will slow and you can relax, knowing He *already* completely understands whatever is on your mind or happened that day. Concerns can now be 'turned over' to your loving Father. This frees up your heart and mind, enabling you to think in the Spirit. (i.e. Christ's great power and love, how blessed you are, and then, how Scripture can work in you.) Problems pale and peacefulness is now within your grasp as you are mentally on the road of godly thinking, yielding as an 'instrument of righteousness.' Focusing above and falling asleep is now much easier.

Daytime: 'Turning off' fleshly thoughts during the day is similar to bedtime, but busyness & distractions can make it difficult. Use what was learned at night, along with these practical suggestions, in order to live in the spiritual realm:

- 1) Daily time in Scripture:** Grace will first reign in your mind. To do this, concentrate directly on verses, becoming saturated with godly thinking. Read daily, spending free moments to think/pray about application. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 5:21) God can now be exalted in the highest place of your mind, enabling difficulties to be seen with an eternal perspective so grace can reign in life's details.
- 2) Find solutions:** Use daytime to problem solve; open this window for a **brief period** to avoid over-focusing. Consider wise approaches in prayer, make a decision, then move on. Leave this window *shut* until you *need* to deal with the issue again.
- 3) Keep God's window open, Satan's closed:** Now, "...seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Colossians 3:1) Yield & stay on God's path, the Kingdom realm, continually praying & redirecting thoughts to Him.

God 'is able' to help us gain control over our thought life, but it takes time. Our fleshly thinking has had control for many years. Patience is needed; ask for God's help. As we acquire a renewed mind by taking in the Word, we can focus more easily on God's realm. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2) Renewing the mind is a slow, lifelong process. God does not expect 'fast' progress, perfection, nor for us to 'compete' with others, as *we are under grace*! Spend time in Scripture: read, meditate, and keep maturing. Focus on and study foundational doctrine from Romans, but read all of Paul's epistles and Scripture. **Purpose to apply what's learned and believe.**

'God's realm' simply refers to His spiritual domain, His authoritative jurisdiction. It may seem strange to talk about, as it is invisible to us. Not many people discuss it as a reality. Yet, 'His Kingdom' is more real than what we see physically. Therefore, wise saints are "Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come...". (1 Timothy 6:19) This refers to time spent in the Scripture, proving and making it your own. God's eternal realm becomes 'real' as spiritual things renew your mind. His solutions and tools will now be more tangible and easier to use. Thus, awareness is vital in battling the spiritual warfare all around. It should be obvious why readers are continually encouraged to spend time in the Word. It is *everything*... OUR GREAT HOPE in this life and the life to come.

The King James Bible is used for all references. Verses may be underlined, numbered, or made bold for emphasis.



'On A Personal Side'

Forward testimonials, praises, personal growth, or feedback about this newsletter. We will print all we can.

From Our Readers...

"Things said in the (April Women's Retreat) were so instructive to the open hearts of others. I didn't care as much for the discussions of 'Old Testament women.' I would have really liked more on Grace." (Florida)

"Thank you again for the wonderful experience at the Retreat. We are sending along this check to help with the costs of the newsletter. I have shared it with some Christian friends." (Florida)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Women's Study In VA

Wednesday's at 10:30am to 12:00pm

Please join us for an additional time of fellowship-study in the Word of God. We are now meeting at the LaPrade Library, on Hull Street, N. Chesterfield.

Please call in case there are changes.

(804)519-1210

Newby's Bridge Ministry

This is a new quarterly leaflet that begins **this month** to reach the unsaved, new believers or individuals who are distanced from the Church and God. It will define terms and explain how the 'gulf' between them and God has been 'bridged' by the cross. Each edition will be sent with 'Just A Minute' quarterly in July/October/January/April. Feel free to copy and share with others or post in community settings. Ask if you don't receive a copy. **Tell Us What You Think!**