



ONLINE GROUP PLAN

Spring 2020 // Romans // Session 12: Citizens

Suggested Use Date: 5/17/2020

For use with Explore the Bible Leader Guide, Personal Study Guide, and Daily Discipleship Guide



PREPARATION

Best Practices for Leading an Online Group



PRAY for your group members and for God to grant you insight as you study and prepare your Bible study session. Do this throughout the week.



SCHEDULE your group's online Bible study using the online meeting tool you prefer. Invite group members and guests to participate using a meeting ID if required by your online meeting tool. [Click here](#) to view a Best Practices document for online groups.



SEND digital copies of the next session to group members who do not have a print copy. If using the *Personal Study Guide*, encourage group members to read the passage and comments for the next session. If you are using the *Daily Discipleship Guide*, encourage your group members to follow up your session by engaging with the five daily Bible readings.



CONNECT with your group via email or text messaging early in the week.

Create your own message:

- Briefly tell the group the title of your next Bible study, why it is important, and what they will learn.
- Challenge group members to study before the group session if your group uses a *Personal Study Guide*; remind group members to follow up your online study with their daily readings if your group uses the *Daily Discipleship Guide*.
- Remind group members when your group will meet online.

Or copy and paste this suggested wording into the email or text message to your group:

Our view of the government often depends on our current circumstances. Paul dealt with the believer's relationship to governing authorities. He called for submission to authority, balancing government's God-given right to rule with our submission to God, who alone holds absolute authority. Focus on Romans 13:1-14 in your Bible and the comments for Session 12 in your Explore the Bible *Personal Study Guide* or *Daily Discipleship Guide*. Consider ways believers should seek to represent Christ well in their communities and world.

We will meet at (add time) using (name of online tool). Here is the link to our meeting: (add meeting ID if your online tool doesn't do that automatically)



PREPARE to lead your group's Bible study.

- **Study** Romans 13:1-14, focusing on how we represent Christ in action.
- **Listen** to the Explore the Bible Adult Leader Podcast. Go to goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training for an overview of the main points and key ideas from each session.
- **Visit** the Explore the Bible blog for additional leader helps at goExploreTheBible.com/Leader-Helps
- **Create** your teaching plan for guiding your group's online Bible study experience. Use the Online Group Plan on the next pages as a starting point, modifying it for your group as needed. Consult the *Adult Commentary*, *QuickSource*, and *Leader Pack* for additional ideas and resources.



REMINDE your group members to study and prepare via another email or text message closer to the day your group meets.

- Include a quote from the *Personal Study Guide*, a question, or an insight you plan to discuss with the group when you meet online.



HELPFUL LINKS

- Explore the Bible main landing page: goExploreTheBible.com
- Digital version of Explore the Bible: curriculum.lifeway.com
- Explore the Bible leader helps: goExploreTheBible.com/Leader-Helps
- Explore the Bible Podcast: goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training
- Free Coronavirus links and leader helps: lifeway.com/coronavirus



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NOTES

GREET *people as they join and encourage them to describe their relationship with local government. Encourage them to share what they value the most in their local government.*

TRANSITION: In these final chapters of Romans, Paul reminded believers of their responsibilities as Christ followers. In Romans 13, he dealt with the believer's relationship to government authorities. *Option: Use the Extra! idea. See goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras*

READ Romans 13:1-4. *Ask: What was Paul's rationale for directing believers to submit to governing authorities? Highlight that the rationale for submission is God's sovereignty over human affairs.*

Point to the Key Doctrine (Religious Liberty) on page 108 of the Personal Study Guide (p. 108) or in the Daily Discipleship Guide (p. 99): Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. Emphasize that while we are citizens of heaven we also live as citizens of earth. As such we have a responsibility to respect our leaders and submit to them.

DISCUSS: *How might a believer show respect to government leaders even when they disagree with government leaders? (PSG, p. 107; DDG, p. 99)*

READ Romans 13:5-7, *asking the group to listen for another reason for honoring government. Once read, explain: Believers are to walk in freedom from guilt resulting from disobedience. Honoring the laws of the government removes any guilt from disobeying them.*

DISCUSS: Paul made it clear that paying taxes and other fees was not up for debate. Ask: **How does paying taxes and other government fees bring honor to God? What other obligations might a believer need to fulfill to a government as a means of honoring Him?**

TRANSITION: We know that not all human governments function in godly ways; some throughout history have been dominated by evil people and systems. Christians should always be at the forefront of standing for, participating in, and honoring good, godly government. They do that by demonstrating Christlike love to all people.

READ Romans 13:8-10. *Guide the group to note how Paul used the Ten Commandments to illustrate the relationship between love and the law.*

HIGHLIGHT: *Emphasize from the PSG (p. 109):* Neighbors are not defined by geography or ethnicity. Instead, our neighbors are anyone we can help. As a result, our love should extend as far as God's love—to the entire world (John 3:16). We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), and we reflect Him to the world through our love. *Solicit response.*

DISCUSS: **How does keeping the commandments listed by Paul demonstrate love for others?** *(PSG, p. 109; DDG, p. 99) Guide the group to develop a working definition of love.*

READ Romans 13:11-14, *inviting the group to note the motivation Paul implemented to get the attention of his audience.*

DISCUSS: **How does thinking about Jesus' return serve as motivation for believers to make a difference today?** *(PSG, p. 110; DDG, p. 99)* **How can a believer shed light in a dark world and do so with love? Are there inappropriate ways of being light in a dark world? Explain.** *(PSG, p. 111; DDG, p. 99)*

REFLECT: Guide the group to reflect on the subtitle for today's session on Romans 13 on page 104 of the PSG or page 96 of the DDG: Believers should seek to represent Christ well in their communities and world.

CHALLENGE: Use the following adapted version of the first question set under In My Context (PSG, p. 112) or Apply the Text (DDG, p. 100) to challenge the group in living for Christ each day: **What are some things we can do personally and as a group to represent Christ in our community while practicing social distancing? How can we be a light by ministering to government leaders, first responders, and those on the front lines in the Covid-19 crisis?**

RELATE: Invite the group to share prayer requests. Lead in a prayer for discernment in ways to represent Christ well in your community.

If using the Daily Discipleship Guide, remind the group to complete the Daily Explorations this week.

NEXT STEPS



- Contact the group and remind them of the believer's obligation to reflect Christ's light and love in a dark world.
- Send digital copies of the next session to group members who do not have a print copy. If using the Personal Study Guide, encourage group members to read the passage and comments for the next session.
- Repeat the process outlined in the Preparation section of this document.