



ONLINE GROUP PLAN

Spring 2020 // Romans // Session 10: Mercy

Suggested Use Date: 5/3/2020

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:

Think back to when you were a kid. When the time came to choose players for kickball, how quickly were you picked? Were you one of the first or were you one of the last to be picked? All of us want to be included. The good news is God includes all who come to Him in faith. Paul reminded his readers that salvation through faith in Jesus is available to everyone.

Read Romans 11:17-32 in your Bible and the comments for Session 10 in your *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* or *Daily Discipleship Guide*. Think about how your relationship with Jesus affects how you view others.

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 11:17-32. Reflect on the biblical concept of mercy.
- **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.



REMIND 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 discuss times they felt they were on the outside looking in. Encourage participants to talk about the emotions such experiences stirred in their hearts and minds.*

TRANSITION: Today's Bible study emphasizes that when it comes to salvation in Christ, the good news is that God includes all who come to Him in faith. Paul reminded the recipients of Romans that salvation through faith in Jesus is available to everyone. *Option: Use the Extra! idea. See goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras*

INTRODUCE: In Romans 9–11, Paul addressed the deep desire that his fellow Jews might accept Jesus. So far, most Jews had resisted the gospel message and insisted that keeping the law was the way of salvation. Despite the Jews' resistance to the gospel, Paul knew that God had not given up on Israel. In 11:17-32, Paul used the analogy of an olive tree to explain why Gentiles should not be prideful in their faith and Jews should respond to God's offer of saving grace.

GUIDE: *Briefly describe the grafting process and explain that Paul compared the inclusion of Gentiles in the gospel to the grafting of "wild" olive branches into the original trunk. (See PSG, p. 88; DDG, p. 85.)*

READ Romans 11:17-21. *Call attention to the following sentences found on page 88 of the PSG (DDG, p. 85): "Normally, a farmer would graft cultivated branches into a wild tree. But Paul reversed the order ... God did not destroy the whole tree. Instead, He grafted wild branches into the trunk."*

DISCUSS: *Lead the group to identify who is represented by the different parts of the olive tree. [Broken-off branches = Jewish unbelievers / Wild olive branches = Gentile believers / Rich root = God] Ask: **Why was it important for Paul to remind the Gentile believers to refrain from boasting about their salvation? How can religious pride become crippling or dangerous for believers today?***

SUMMARIZE: None of us has any reason to think we deserve salvation or have earned it because of our family background. Salvation for every believer is a matter of God’s grace alone. Our response to God for salvation should be humble gratitude, not pride or self-congratulations. *Give the group a few moments to read the Key Doctrine feature on “God’s Purpose of Grace” (PSG, p. 91; DDG, p. 83).*

READ Romans 11:22-24, calling attention to both God’s kindness and severity. Ask: **What other words or phrases could be used to describe God’s kindness?** (*Grace, salvation, forgiveness*) **God’s severity?** (*Judgment, condemnation, wrath*)

EXPLAIN: Paul emphasized the equal treatment of both Jew and Gentile in regard to salvation. Just as believing Gentiles had been grafted into the family of God, even so would Jews who did not remain in unbelief. If God could graft “wild” branches into the tree, He could easily graft “natural” branches back into the tree.

DISCUSS: Call attention to the comments on Romans 11:22-24 (PSG, pp. 89-90; DDG, p. 85). Ask: **How can we ensure that Paul’s analogy of grafting branches into the “rich root” of the tree is personal for us, and not merely theoretical?**

READ Romans 11:25-32. Explain that a “mystery” refers to a previously unknown truth that had been (or needed to be) revealed. The current state of unbelief by many Jews was a “partial hardening” that God used to open the way for Gentiles to hear the gospel and be saved. This “partial hardening” of Israel was limited in scope (not every Jew had rejected the gospel) and also limited in time (it would last “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”) (v. 25).

CLARIFY: Paul drew from two Old Testament prophets’ writings to support his statements regarding the temporary hardening of Israel. *Point out that Romans 11:26 includes a quotation of Isaiah 59:20 and Romans 11:27 contains an allusion to the new covenant announced in Jeremiah 31:31-34.*

HIGHLIGHT: *Emphasize the first two paragraphs found on page 93 of the PSG (or the comments under Day 4 in the DDG, p. 86).* Identify key phrases and words from that paragraph.

PROBE: What does God's plans being irrevocable tell you about His character?

SUMMARIZE: Call attention to the statements under *In My Context* (PSG, p. 94) or *Apply the Text* (DDG, p. 84).

RELATE: Ask the group to ponder these questions: **Who around you has thus far rejected Christ? What is your attitude toward them? How can you and your Bible study group continue to minister the gospel to them in a loving and respectful way?**

NEXT STEPS



- Contact the group and review the main point of the lesson (*The gospel continues to be offered to all people, Jews and Gentiles*). Challenge them to look for ways of showing mercy this week.
- 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.