



# *A Gentle Ramble through the Bible™*

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## **STUDY GUIDE** **THE 3rd MISSIONARY JOURNEY:** **ROMANS**

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*No charging people to learn about God.  
Period. Got that?  
Okay, then. Have at it!*

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## REFERENCE

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### Tools for Your Backpack

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Click here to get to the [Reference Material](#).

There you will find:

- [How to Approach a Difficult Passage](#)
- A handy table of [Nations of the Bible](#)
- Links and info on free and low-cost [Bible study tools](#)
- Some great info on the [Twelve Tribes of Israel](#)
- An [Index of the Psalms](#) showing authors (if known) and showing which stories or passages each psalm relates to
- A very helpful [Table of the Kings of Israel and Judah](#) side-by-side, along with the names of the prophets called to speak the word of the Lord to them
- A helpful framework for [making sense out of the books of the Prophets](#)
- A chart organizing the chapters of [Jeremiah in Chronological Order](#)
- [Maccabees Chronology](#) showing material covered in each class as we go along
- [Timeline of the Gospels](#)
- [Timeline of Acts and the Undisputed Letters of Paul](#)

## CLASS #158: Idolatry and Sexual Immorality

### It's About Intimacy

In the Hebrew Bible, YHWH consistently views himself as Israel's lover and husband who tenderly provides for her every need, protecting her and delighting in her. When she turns to other nations for protection and to their gods as her god, YHWH reacts as if they are committing adultery.

#### THE BACKGROUND:

*Note: Idols were worshiped on hilltops or wherever a "spreading tree" could be found.*

##### Hos 1:2 (NIV)

2 When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD."

##### Isa 57:5-8 (NIV)

5 You burn with lust among the oaks and under every spreading tree; you sacrifice your children in the ravines and under the overhanging crags. 6 ...to [idols] you have poured out drink offerings and offered grain offerings... 7 You have made your bed on a high and lofty hill; ... Forsaking me, you uncovered your bed, you climbed into it and opened it wide; you made a pact with those whose beds you love, and you looked with lust on their naked bodies.

##### Jer 2:5 (NIV)

5 This is what the LORD says: "What fault did your ancestors find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves.

##### Jer 2:23-24 (NIV)

23 "How can you say, 'I am not defiled; I have not run after the Baals'? See how you behaved in the valley; consider what you have done. You are a swift she-camel running here and there, 24 a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving— in her heat who can restrain her? Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves; at mating time they will find her.

*(See next page for the questions)*

*Feel free to skip between questions. Don't spend all your time on Part 1.  
It is Part 2 where the healing lies.*

PART 1:

Is it possible that sexual intimacy has been given as a sort of object lesson in which we learn how to be intimate with each other **and** with God?

If so, would it make more sense as to why it is so important to guard our sexual experiences?  
Is this why it is so important that sex be within the context of a caring, committed relationship?

Is this why a healthy intimate relationship with each other will generate the fruit of the Spirit while demeaning and destructive usage of ourselves and each other is a gateway to the vices and to idolatry?

PART 2:

Are we viewing God through our lens of broken relationships and abused intimacy? What happens if we view God through the lens of what **should** be and should have been?

## CLASS #159: The Blood of Christ

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### What Does It Mean?

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We have to set aside our preconceived notions about the blood of Christ this week and stand for a moment in Paul's shoes. We have to **start** with the Jewish understanding of a sin offering and think about what it says about God's attitude towards our sin.

1. Under the Law, a sin offering was made for the community's **unintentional sin** towards God. It involved sacrificing a **very** expensive animal and sprinkling its blood on all the various altars in the Tabernacle (some of which the entire community could see), but it **also** involved sprinkling the blood in front of the veil that shielded the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies. The Mercy Seat was where God's very presence dwelt.

Why would the blood be sprinkled in front of the veil where the priests could see it but the people couldn't? Why would it not be sprinkled inside the veil directly in front of the Mercy Seat? *(I answered this in class, so this is just a reminder to use as a starting point)*

2. How would the people of antiquity have understood the purpose of blood sacrifice to their gods? How did YHWH use Jesus during his lifetime to teach his people that he is a different sort of God? Put another way, what did Jesus require before healing/forgiving people?

Now that we are anchored in the Jewish framework, we need to think about what **Jesus'** blood might mean.

3. Paul says God positions/places Christ for the **purpose** of a sin offering. What was God's purpose of a sin offering under the Law as per #1 above?
4. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus said his **purpose** was to proclaim the Year of the Lord's Favor (release from all that holds us captives, sight for the blind, healing, etc.). How is this related to the purpose of a sin offering?



## CLASS #161: Paul and the Law

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### What Does This Reveal About Paul?

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In Romans 7:7-25 Paul, a **devout Pharisee and lifelong student of the Law**, suddenly switches to “I” language and says some things that are hard to wrap our heads around.

1. “Sin was already at work in me before the Law, but I was unaware it was sin. For example, I didn’t know what “coveting” was.” (Rom 7:7)

(Quick Answer--yes or no) Do you believe that? Are unbelievers *generally* unaware that things like covetousness, jealousy, murder, adultery, and disrespect are bad?

**What might this reveal about Paul personally?**

2. “The Law was good, but because it made me aware of sin and sin came alive for me, sin was able to seduce me.” (Rom 7:8-11)

Does knowing that something is wrong make someone more susceptible to doing it?

**What might this reveal about Paul personally?**

3. “The Law, which was good, was necessary to make sin utterly, excessively sinful (and for sin to ultimately cause my death), so there is no mistake whatsoever about it.” (Rom 7:13)

Is this what the purpose of the Law was? Is this how God presented it through Moses? What was the Law for (from the point of view of the Hebrew Bible)?

**What might this reveal about Paul personally?**

4. “The real me wants to do right, but I cannot. Jesus rescued me from this. Through Jesus, the Spirit lives in me and I am able to walk by the Spirit, wanting what the Spirit wants. Living by the flesh leads to death, but living by the Spirit and putting to death the actions of the flesh leads to life.” (Rom 7:17-8:13)

What does he mean by “putting to death the actions of the flesh”? Think about the fruit of this teaching. This has led to people thinking anything having to do with the body is bad or shameful (e.g. sex). **What might this reveal about Paul personally?**

5. **What is the Spirit trying to say to us?**



## CLASS #162: Descendants of Ishmael

### How Much Do You Know About Islam?

There are three basic principles of Islam:

- God is One
- There will be a final resurrection and Day of Judgment
- Although your actions are predestined, your intentions are not. You will be judged on your intentions.

There are five Messengers of Islam:

- Noah, the confidante of God
- Abraham, the friend of God
- Moses, the word of God
- Jesus, the spirit of God
- Muhammad, the beloved of God and final Messenger

Is it True or False that Muslims believe:

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | That all are born with original sin                                                                                                                                                                   |
|  | Muhammad met all of the following in heaven in his vision:<br>God, Adam, Abraham, Joseph, Aaron, Moses, Jesus, John the Baptist                                                                       |
|  | God communicates directly with humans through the Holy Spirit.                                                                                                                                        |
|  | There should be separation of church and state                                                                                                                                                        |
|  | That Jews and Christians--any who believe in God and do righteousness--will have their reward on the Last Day and have nothing to fear                                                                |
|  | In the virgin birth of Jesus, the miracles of Jesus, and call Jesus the Messiah and the Word                                                                                                          |
|  | That God rescued Jesus from crucifixion and took him to heaven, substituting someone else who was made to look like him on the cross                                                                  |
|  | In the Second Coming of Jesus in order to destroy Xnty and bring all to the true faith (Islam). Then Jesus will die and be buried and will be resurrected with the rest of us on the Day of Judgment. |

*See next page for Matching Game*

## Matching Game

|              |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Qu'ran    |  | Mystics of Islam                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 2. Shi'ia    |  | Descended to earth in 610 CE                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 3. Imam      |  | Branch of Islam that believes Imam can be any righteous descendant of Prophet's tribe above the age of puberty                                                                                                                                  |
| 4. Sunni     |  | Means "path" and is God's justice and mercy. Emphasizes character. Aim is reconciliation.                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5. Sufi      |  | "God" in Arabic                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 6. Shari'a   |  | Scholar in Islamic law. Issues legal opinions called "fatwas"                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 7. Mufti     |  | Title bestowed by some Shi'ia sects on highly respected clergy. Prior to modern times, such a cleric would avoid politics                                                                                                                       |
| 8. Caliph    |  | Branch of Islam that believes Imam must be descendant of Prophet. Can be a child.                                                                                                                                                               |
| 9. Ayatollah |  | Supreme religious and political authority. Develops law where Shari'a is silent. Fell into disarray in modern times. Last one was in 1931. Reinstated by ISIS in 2014 but obviously only a tiny percentage of Muslims recognize this authority) |
| 10. Islam    |  | For Sunni, this is title like "pastor"--means leader of local mosque. For most Shi'ia, it is their single supreme leader.                                                                                                                       |
| 11. Allah    |  | Means "surrender" [to God]                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## CLASS #163: PREDESTINED AND ELECT

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### Known Beforehand and Chosen

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In Romans 8 thru 11 Paul introduces the words “predestined” which simply means “known beforehand” and “elect” which is another way of saying “chosen.” There are *centuries* of doctrine built on these passages. In class we noticed that these passages are in the context of the **Jews** not the Gentiles. That puts a different spin on things, doesn’t it?

**Context A:** In Romans 11 Paul reminds them of the story in 1 Kings 19 of the prophet Elijah who was on the run for his life, hunted by the vicious queen Jezebel. Elijah, prone to depression anyway, has collapsed and cried out to the Lord saying, “Just kill me now. I can’t go on like this. I am the only one left who believes in you, Lord. Everyone else has been put to death and now they are coming after me.” And God says, “Yah, no. I have 7000 left who have not bowed their knee to Baal. Now rest and eat something and then get out there and do your job.”

**Context B:** Paul reminds the Jews of this story and says, “It’s just like that now. There is a remnant left, chosen by grace and not by works--meaning that Israel sought [God/righteousness] but only the elect/chosen found it. The rest were hardened.<sup>1</sup> God gave them eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear.”<sup>2</sup>

1. **Given this context** and the understanding from the end of Ch 11 where Paul says **God will have mercy on us all regardless of our disobedience:**
  - a. Does “predestined/know beforehand” in Romans 11 mean God knows who will choose to trust him and therefore he hardens the rest, or does it mean something else entirely?
  - b. In the Hebrew Bible “elect/chosen” referred to God choosing Abraham and his descendants to walk before him and be blameless/holy--a blessing to the entire world. It had nothing to do with heaven or hell. Has Paul changed that?

This bit about “God gave them eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear” is quoted a lot in the New Testament. In Matthew 13, Jesus says this is why he teaches in parables--because the people’s hearts are calloused, otherwise they’d be able to truly see and hear him. In the highlighted bit in Context B above, is Paul changing what Jesus said?

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<sup>1</sup> A classic example of someone hardening their heart repeatedly and then God saying, “Okay, then--you’ve got it. I’ll use you anyway” is Pharaoh.

<sup>2</sup> Quote from Moses’ speech of exasperation to the Israelites who still refused to believe and trust God even after the rescue from Egypt and the daily manna and water and clothing God provided. (Deut 29)

## CLASS #164: THE GIFTS AND CALL OF GOD

### How To Live As A Christian

In the last few chapters of Romans, Paul gives a pretty thorough description of what it means to live as a Christian. **Feel free to skip around and discuss the ones that catch your eye.**

| Paul's Instructions for Living as a Christian                                                                                       | Ref         | What does this mean?<br><i>Some are obvious--don't be afraid to take these things at face value</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Give your body as a living sacrifice.<br>This is true worship.                                                                      | 12:1        |                                                                                                     |
| Be transformed by the changing of your mind.                                                                                        | 12:2        |                                                                                                     |
| Don't think too highly of yourself, but be honest about yourself.                                                                   | 12:3        |                                                                                                     |
| Use whatever gifts you have.                                                                                                        | 12:4ff      |                                                                                                     |
| <i>Sincerely</i> love others more than yourself.                                                                                    | 12:9-10     |                                                                                                     |
| Detest evil. Keep company with/cling to good.                                                                                       | 12:9        |                                                                                                     |
| Stay passionate about serving the Lord.                                                                                             | 12:11       |                                                                                                     |
| Pray always. Be patient under trial.<br>Rejoice in hope.                                                                            | 12:12       |                                                                                                     |
| Contribute towards the needs of the saints.                                                                                         | 12:13       |                                                                                                     |
| Bless, don't curse, those who hurt you. Never repay evil by doing evil, but support and fill the needs of such people.              | 12:14,17,20 |                                                                                                     |
| Come alongside others in their joy and in their pain.                                                                               | 12:15       |                                                                                                     |
| Come alongside the lowly. Don't be haughty.                                                                                         | 12:16       |                                                                                                     |
| Be at peace with everyone to the extent it is up to you. Trust God to defend you and repay those who hurt you.                      | 12:18-19    | <i>Think about how God "repays."</i>                                                                |
| Submit to the authorities, pay your taxes, stay beneath the radar for they have swords for a reason. They were put in place by God. | 13:1-7      | <i>This is along the lines of Jesus' teaching about giving unto Caesar what is Caesar's.</i>        |

| Paul's Instructions for Living as a Christian                                                                                                                          | Ref        | What does this mean?<br><i>Some are obvious--don't be afraid to take these things at face value</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pay your debts.                                                                                                                                                        | 13:8       |                                                                                                     |
| Act right, as if all your deeds can be plainly seen in the daylight, not in carousing and drunkenness, nor promiscuity nor lewdness, nor constant strife and jealousy. | 13:13      |                                                                                                     |
| Clothe yourself with Jesus Christ.                                                                                                                                     | 13:14      |                                                                                                     |
| Adjust your own actions to accommodate each other and avoid confusing or tempting someone who might be weaker in their faith journey.                                  | 14:1-12    |                                                                                                     |
| Don't judge each other, but instead let the stronger bear burdens for the weaker.                                                                                      | 14:13-15:1 |                                                                                                     |