



LC STUDY GUIDE “True Belonging”

The Passage: Romans 12:1
September 17 – September 30

How to use the LC Study Guide

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture—study that leads to life transformation in Christ and strives to serve “the other.”

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method (not necessarily on the themes of that particular sermon). In summary, this method stresses “Observation” (what the reader can see from the text), “Interpretation” (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and “Application” (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).
2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour or two of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group.
3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the LC Team

Suggestion for your First Meeting Back

Welcome everyone back. Check in on the summer and any fall transitions. As you likely know by now, this year’s ministry theme is on belonging and group life plays a central role. (You can catch up on anything you missed from our time at the Campus Leader Vision Gathering on Sep 8 in the most recent Leader’s Link, including links to watching the video of our gathering. <https://www.grace.org/resources/articles/leaders-link-september-2018/>)

A key piece of feedback from group leaders has been the need to create stronger commitment within our groups. And so we are asking groups to discuss what they hope to experience together by the end of the ministry year in June 2019. We have also created a group commitment that can be discussed and we highly recommend that your group modify to best fit your unique group culture. You can access it at www.grace.org/lcleaders

To allow your group some time to catch up, this week’s study is brief and focuses on one single, yet very important verse. Do your best to steward the time and have a rich and meaningful time together for your first group meeting.

Introduction

The book of Romans is Paul’s attempt to bring the gospel of Jesus to his largest audience possible. It would be like writing in the New York Times in terms of audience and distribution. Further, those reading Romans are largely a Gentile audience. So Paul, a Jewish rabbi, spends some time in explaining how all have sinned, fallen short of God’s glory, and are in need of a Savior who is Jesus.

The first 11 chapters have been described as “creed” and the last five have been labeled as “conduct.” While Chapters 1-11 are written in a more theological voice and framework, Chapters 12-16 are written to reflect the application of a life marked by confessed sin and trust in Jesus. And so, we come to a key transition here in Chapter 12...

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.

Romans 12:1

O – Perhaps these words are familiar to you, and perhaps they’re not. Re-read slowly, and pause over the clauses. What thoughts and reactions come to mind?

I – Paul urges “in view of God’s mercy” which points to Jesus’ redemptive work on the cross for all of humanity. And that work seeks the response of offering “our bodies as living sacrifices.” Discuss what you think a “living sacrifice” means. What are the consequences of fulfilling these words?

(Paul is re-casting the Old Testament sacrificial system on this side of Jesus’ resurrection. Further, God has always been more interested in the heart behind our sacrifices than what was laid on the altar. A living sacrifice is offering up to God the entirety of our lives, including what we do and what we love, to please God and to seek His Kingdom—there really is no suitable alternative to this. It also means that we live less selfishly and more generously in community with others.)

A – What might it look like to be a community of living sacrifices committed to pleasing God?

- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
- b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?)
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
- e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.