



## ROMANS LC STUDY GUIDE

### “True Belonging”

The Passage: Romans 13:1-10

October 15 – October 28

### 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

---

### Romans 13:1-10

<sup>1</sup> Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the

one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. <sup>4</sup> For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

<sup>6</sup> This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. <sup>7</sup> Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

<sup>8</sup> Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

**O** – Paul mentions a few themes in these ten verses. Which can you identify and which do you wish Paul would have spoken more about?

**I** – Understandably, these first 5 verses give us some pause. Are we to really abide by any law, including the ones that forbid our faith or cause harm to the people we love, or to the vulnerable? To answer this question well, you'll have to read the preceding chapter, and reframe the context with Romans 12:9-21 (included below).

*(It is difficult to discern what Paul means and what he doesn't. In one sense, his entire apostolic ministry was illegal, hence his numerous arrests, and eventual beheading in Rome. Paul is not necessarily saying, "abide by any law or rule.")*

***It makes all the difference to understand the distinctions between obeying unjust laws and submitting to authority.***

*In the context of Romans 12:9-21, we see Paul forbidding personal vengeance against one's enemies and the enemies with authority. Christ-followers do not live lawlessly, exacting revenge by our own accord, but rather we submit to the governing authorities. When it comes to unjust laws or abiding by a higher law, we'd see Paul's life as an example (like in Paul's visit to Philippi in Acts 16). Paul preached the gospel, was arrested, and accepted the consequences for his "crime of ministry." And he did this in submission to the governing rulers, but with even greater submission to Christ himself.)*

**A** – N.T. Wright offers this commentary of wisdom as it relates to these verses:  
 "No good will come to the cause of the **gospel** by followers of Jesus being

regarded as crazy dissidents who won't co-operate with the most basic social mechanisms. Paul is anxious, precisely because he believes that Jesus is the true Lord of the world, that his followers should not pick unnecessary quarrels with the lesser lords. They are indeed a revolutionary community, but if they go for the normal type of violent revolution they will just be playing the empire back at its own game. They will almost certainly lose, and, much worse, the gospel itself will lose with them.”<sup>1</sup>

We know that God despises evil and that we are to stand for the marginalized and vulnerable. Thus, we have a tension. From these words and more importantly, from our understanding of Scripture, how do faithful Christ-followers confront the evil that we observe in this world? How can we ensure that we don't betray Paul's teaching of submission to authorities?  
*(Standing up and speaking against injustice is not the same as not submitting to authority. As mentioned, we see Paul doing that when he preaches the hope of Christ. In fact, each time he calls Jesus 'Lord' he is undermining Caesar himself, as 'Lord' was his title. So there's subversiveness in Paul, too. Even more so, we see Jesus standing up for the marginalized.)*

*When it comes to not falling out of step with this biblical principle of submission to authority, prayer would be the essential place to start. Our private prayer life and our communal prayer life would help us. Our understanding of Scripture in how we treat others—including our enemies—is essential. And lastly, relying on the power of the Spirit to guide and empower us instead of relying on the rhetoric and power of us as men and women would give us perspective in our personal strategies and engagement.)*

I – While Paul calls the Roman Emperor Nero a servant of God (vs. 4, 6), Nero himself would have disputed that claim. Such rulers saw themselves as divine, holding their authority by their own right. But Paul puts them in their proper place and applies similar teaching when it comes to taxes. Taxes were a hot-button issue of the day, particularly the secondary form of “indirect taxation,” which was randomly collected by bullying and would sometimes cause riots. Nero himself promised to forbid indirect taxation (but he never fulfilled that promise). Why do you think Paul told his readers to pay the taxes and give respect and honor as well?

*(Similar to the first answer, this is a submission issue. Also central are Jesus' teaching and example of giving to whoever asks and paying Caesar's tax. But also, Paul wants Christians to gain societal credibility by being regarded as good citizens. In his mind, Christians were going to get into enough trouble proclaiming Christ, who was considered to be an outlaw by both Romans and Jews, had been raised from the dead, and is the Lord of all.)*

---

<sup>1</sup> Wright, T. (2004). *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 2: Chapters 9-16* (p. 85). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

**A** – What do you think Paul would say to us today as we navigate our cultural climate? Before we answer, let's take a moment and look carefully at this passage in our print Bibles or the ones on our phones. May we be wise and prayerful as we enter into this moment.

*(Paul would likely give us similar instruction, to submit to our authorities. In our case, our authorities allow us to speak freely, use the press, protest peacefully, seek justice in the courts, and most powerfully, to preach the power and hope of Christ. We can do these things through many avenues, such as creating non-profit organizations, giving to fundraisers, creating awareness through social media campaigns, even attending events like Q Commons ;) and many more.)*

---

**Additional support text: Romans 12:9-21**

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- 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.