

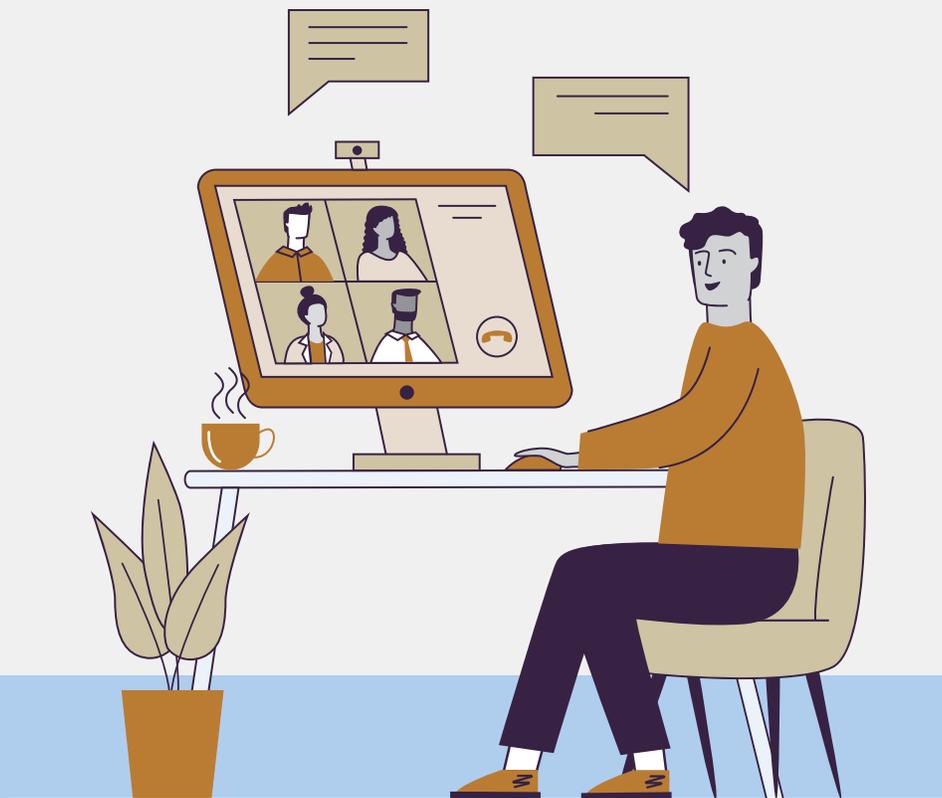


ONLINE GROUP PLAN

Spring 2020 // Romans // Session 13: Accepting

Suggested Use Date: 5/24/2020

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:

The human body is an amazing creation. A series of systems—such as the circulatory system, the digestive system, the skeletal system, and the nervous system—all work together to keep things moving and growing. Any problem in one system can create problems in another. The body of Christ works the same way. To keep the body healthy and effective, believers must live in unity.

Read Romans 14:1-12 in your Bible and the comments for Session 13 in your *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* or *Daily Discipleship Guide*. What are some things that you (as well as the group) can do to accept and encourage other believers to facilitate unity?

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 14:1-12. Notice Paul's use of rhetorical questions.
- **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



ONLINE GROUP PLAN

Explore the Bible // Spring 2020 // Romans // Session 13: Accepting

NOTES

GREET people as they join and discuss the systems that operate in unity within the human body. Ask: **When have you seen a breakdown in one area create another problem in a different area of your body? How might this same type of cause and effect happen in a church?** (PSG, p. 113; DDG, p. 105)

TRANSITION: In chapter 14, Paul emphasized the principles of Christian liberty and love as guides for attitudes and behavior during disagreements. *Option: Use the Extra! idea. See goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras*

GUIDE: Read **Romans 14:1**. Paul drew a distinction between doctrine (truth that never changes) and practice (methods that can be adapted). Emphasize that the term “weak in faith” is often a relative term—that is, each of two believers who disagree over the importance of a religious tradition or practice might view the other as being “weak in faith.”

READ: Paul illustrated his point that believers should not get into heated arguments about “disputed matters” with two real-life experiences. Read **Romans 14:2-4**, encouraging the group to listen for the first of the two real-life experiences (eating or refusing to eat certain foods).

COMMENT: The apostle understood that we have a tendency to elevate our personal preferences to the level of non-negotiable doctrines.

DISCUSS: Call attention to these sentences found on page 115 of the PSG (DDG, p. 109): Christians from a Gentile background had embraced their spiritual liberty and were able to eat anything with a clear conscience. But weak believers, likely those from a Jewish heritage, struggled with their new freedom. Because they still worried about consuming food the law considered unclean, they would eat only vegetables.

ASK: What are some issues that stir debates in the church today? How do these compare to the issues pointed to by Paul? (PSG, p. 117; DDG, p. 109)

READ Romans 14:5-8, asking the group to listen for how believers can avoid getting into heated arguments with one another over “disputed matters.”

EXPLORE: Paul identified a second real-life experience about which believers from different backgrounds had been arguing: the observance of certain holy days. Lead the group to reflect on their feelings about the different ways churches observed Easter this year in light of restrictions from the pandemic threat. Make the point that questions of whether or in what manner to observe certain holy days had become a point of heated argument among believers in Paul’s day. Some Christians believed that certain days were more important than other days. Others believed that every day was equally holy for all Christ-followers.

EXPLAIN: Draw from the commentary on pages 135-136 in the Leader Guide to explain the following: (1) Neither side had justification to condemn the other. (2) Each group needed to carefully think through their position and put it into practice. (3) The most important factor was sincerely honoring the Lord with their own consciences and practice. **Ask: In what ways can we turn arguments about things that don’t matter into opportunities to honor the Lord?**

DISCUSS: Call attention to the Key Doctrine statement on “The Church” (Leader Guide, p. 132; PSG, p. 118; DDG, p. 107). Invite a volunteer to read the statement aloud. **Ask: What does operating under the lordship of Christ look like when a church expresses different views on nonessential matters? How does viewing God as owner change your perspective on how you treat other believers?**

READ Romans 14:9-12, emphasizing the two questions Paul posed to the church.

PROBE: Why did Paul warn against believers criticizing each other? What’s the danger in criticizing others? (DDG, p. 110) Which action do you consider to be more divisive: judging others or looking down on others? Explain. (PSG, p. 120; DDG, p. 111)

HIGHLIGHT: Paul would answer that neither judgment nor contempt is appropriate in the body of Christ. Believers are to be understanding of each other and not obstacles within the church. And Paul reminded Christians that everyone will be accountable to the Lord for their actions.

SUMMARIZE: Call attention to the summary statements on page 121 in the PSG (DDG, p. 108). Ask: **What are some ways that we as individual believers and as a group can demonstrate God’s ownership of our lives? How can we honor the Lord by showing respect to those who have different religious traditions and/or preferences?**

RELATE: Invite the group to share with each other practices they look forward to reestablishing. Encourage them to explain how that practice helps them honor God.

NEXT STEPS



- Contact each group member to simply pray with them. Pray specifically for God to give them a heart for people with whom they may disagree.
- 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.