



Group Discussion Guide

Romans 7:1-12

For groups meeting March 29 evening through April 4 morning.

Paul's discussion about the law in Romans 7:1-6 is directly tied to his statement in Romans 6:14: "Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace." Paul identified his readers as "those who know the law" and therefore understand the truth, "the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives," (v. 1). He chose to use marriage as an illustration to demonstrate this concept. In verses 2-3 Paul shared that the law only binds a married woman to her husband while he is alive; that if he dies she is then (and only then) free to marry another man.

He explained how this illustration applies to those who have believed on Jesus Christ – that they "have died to the law through the body of Christ" and therefore now belong to Jesus "who has been raised from the dead," (v. 4). This new union with Christ gives believers a purpose; it is not only about being released from the law, but also "in order that we may bear fruit for God," (v. 4). Paul explained that before believers had come to know Christ, they were "living in the flesh," and that their sinful desires were stirred up by the law. These sinful desires led to "bearing fruit for death," meaning they led to disobeying God (v. 5). Believers are no longer bound to the law and have died to the sinful nature that "held us captive," and now therefore "serve in the new way of the Spirit," (v. 6). While the law was meant to be observed in faith, relying on the power of God, the reality was that most who attempted to follow the law likely did so in their own power. Faith in Christ, however, more clearly led believers to follow Jesus in the power of the Spirit of God, who now lived inside each person who had trusted in Jesus.

This line of thinking of course led Paul to address the role of the law in "arousing our sinful passions," (v. 5). Was Paul indicating that somehow the law was at fault? He again answered a hypothetical question with, "By no means!" (v. 7). And in the very next sentence, Paul again seemed to point to the law as the reason he knew about sin (v. 7). Paul used the sin of coveting as an example and wrote that the law's command "you shall not covet" led him to do exactly that (vs. 7-8). However, Paul also clearly identified the cause of this as he wrote "sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment," (v. 8). His readers then understood that the law was not responsible for sin in a person's life; it was in fact the sinful nature inherited from Adam.

In verses 9-11, Paul explained in more detail how this played out in his own life. His own sinful desires seemed to "come alive" when he learned the law, and this sin brought death (v. 9). He wrote that the law was meant to produce life, but for him it became death (v. 10). Again he was not blaming the law for this; he was merely pointing out how his own sinful nature responded to the law of God. Sin, he wrote, deceived him and killed him (v. 11). To make certain his

readers understood the truth about the law, Paul wrote, “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good,” (v. 12).

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think about Paul's use of the marriage relationship as a way to explain how people were bound to the law before coming to faith in Christ? What does this illustration show you about this relationship between people and the law?
2. Paul specifically states that we belong to Jesus "in order that we may bear fruit for God" (v. 4). How has your relationship with Christ led you to do things that glorify God?
3. How do you think "our sinful passions" could be "aroused by the law" (v. 5)? In what ways do you still see this play out today?
(Keep in mind Paul's specific example in vs. 7-8).
4. In your own words, contrast "the old way of the written code" and "the new way of the Spirit" (v. 6). How are they different and how does this affect our lives?
5. Based on what Paul writes in verses 8-11, how should we view sin? Why does it seem so difficult to say no to sin at times?
6. Given what Paul writes about the law and sin in our reading from this week, what is your understanding of the law? How would you explain to someone else?
7. Specifically in your life right now, how do you need to be encouraged to serve "in the new way of the Spirit" (v. 6)?