



Lesson 10 ~ Torn Between Two Lovers!

Romans 7

Discussion Starter

- When you were dating, did you ever get caught two-timing? Did anyone two-time you?

Introduction

If you consider yourself a Christ-follower, how would you explain to someone how you live life and what you do in order to follow Christ? A person in whom Christ lives has a God-given desire to live a good, righteous and holy life, but how, exactly, does one go about living this life? Do we follow some religious code or try to live by the Ten Commandments? Do we live by the Golden Rule or maybe by what Jesus said were the two most important commandments: Love God and love others? Perhaps we just try to do what feels right and good at the time, trusting we will make good and right choices. Maybe we don't give the process much thought at all and just let life "unfold".

How to follow Christ is a very important question for the serious disciple of Christ, and it is not something that comes naturally or automatically;

rather, it is something we need to learn and practice. In **Romans 6**, we learned that we are to consider ourselves dead to sin because the power of sin has been broken in our lives through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Yet, we will discover in **Romans 7**, that our struggle with sin and struggle to live holy and righteous lives continues even after we have been born again and God comes to live in us. The question, then, becomes how do we handle this struggle?

Before Paul tells us how we *are* to live Christ-pleasing lives in **Romans 8**, he first tells us how we are *not* to live life. In this lesson we will learn that living by some religious code or keeping a set of rules (even if they are God's rules) is not the way God intends us to live life – for at least two reasons. First, it doesn't work and second, it is not what Jesus meant when he said, "Follow me."

Preparation

1. Before you read **Romans 7**, ask God to open your eyes so that you may see wonderful truths in his Word (**Psalms 119:18**). You may want to make the following prayer your own:

Triune God – Father, Son and Spirit,

I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.

I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.

So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

I ask this in the powerful name of Father, Son and Spirit.

Amen

2. Read **Romans 7** slowly and thoughtfully. As you read and reread, **underline or highlight** any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a **question mark** beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

You may also want to read the Scripture in another translation. The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *New International Version (NIV)* and the *New Living Translation (NLT)*. The questions are phrased to be answered from **either** of these versions. Other translations and paraphrases should only be used as supplementary texts to help your understanding.

Questions

Read **Romans 7:1-6**

1. Why doesn't keeping and living by the law apply to the born-again Christ-follower (7:1, 4, 6)?

- ♥ Does it surprise you that Christ-followers are not expected to live by the law? Why or why not?
 - ♥ Does this mean that a Christ-follower does not need to live a good and upright life? Why or why not?
2. Under the Old Testament law, a man and women were bound to each other in marriage until one of them died. After the death of one, the living spouse was released from the law of marriage and free to marry another. What legal changes happen to a woman when her husband dies (7:2-3)?

What similar changes happen to Christ-followers when they die to the law (7:4)?

- ♥ What were some rules taught in your religious training? Do you feel more married to Christ or to some religious code? How so?
 - ♥ We must die to the law in order to be united to Christ. Why can't we follow both the law and Christ?
3. Why do we need to be released from the law (7:5)?

- ♥ Can you think of some experiences in your life when the law seemed to **arouse** evil desires?
 - ♥ Using the analogy of marriage, who were you married to originally (7:5)? How did that marriage work out? Does your "ex-husband" continue to cause problems? How so?
4. What is the difference between living a holy life by trying to keep the law and living a holy life by the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us (7:6)? Consider **Ezekiel 36:26-27** and **2 Corinthians 3:17**.

- ♥ Do you live by *rules* or out of *relationship*? How would you explain the difference between these two?
- ♥ What verse makes clear that we are neither legalists obeying mere rules nor libertines obeying no rules?
- ♥ How can the Spirit help us please God in a way that following the law can't?

Read **Romans 7:7-13**.

(If you usually use the **NIV** Bible, it might be helpful to also read these verses in the **NLT**.)

From the previous verses (7:1-6), one might come to the conclusion that God's law does more harm than good and should be discarded for it cannot rescue humanity from the bondage of sin and it seems to actually increase our tendency to sin rather than help us not to sin! But Paul wants to make clear in these verses (7:7-13) that the law itself is not the problem, for God's law is holy, right and good (7:12). However, because the law *reveals, provokes* and *condemns* sin in us, we may find ourselves blaming God's law for our problems instead of the real culprit, sin.

5. Humans did not always have God's law. The law was given during the time of Moses, long after the time of Adam, Noah, Abraham and Joseph. Why did God give his law and commandments (7:7)?

♥ If there were no law, would there, then, be no sin? Why or why not?

♥ Is a person a sinner even if they know nothing of God's law? Why or why not?

6. Paul uses *coveting*, the last of the *Ten Commandments*, as an example of sin (7:7). The first nine commandments forbid *outward actions* (Exodus 20:1-17), but the tenth (do not covet) forbids an inner attitude of the heart. What do you think is Paul's point in choosing this sin as his example?

♥ Why is it important that we recognize sin and our sinful behavior?

♥ When did you become aware of your sin? Did God's law have anything to do with this awareness?

7. How does sin use the law for its own purposes (7:8)? What does this say about the character and power of sin?

♥ Because sin uses the law for its own purposes, does this make the law bad? Why or why not?

♥ Why is it wrong to blame the law for our sinful behavior?

St. Augustine gives a good example of the dynamic described in 7:8 in his *Confessions*:

One night, at the age of 16, in company with a gang of "naughty adolescents," he shook a pear tree and stole its fruit. His motive, he confesses, was not that he was hungry, for they threw the pears to pigs. "I stole something which I had in plenty and of much better quality. My desire was to enjoy not what I sought by stealing, but merely the excitement of thieving and the doing of what was wrong. Was it possible," he asked himself, "to take pleasure in what was illicit for no reason other than that it was not allowed?"

♥ How is Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden an example of the dynamic described in 7:8? When was a time when you found the dynamic described in 7:8 to be true in your life?

8. In what way does the good law bring *death* instead of *life* (7:9-11)?

9. The analogy of the law being like a mirror is often used. A mirror can show us our dirty face, but it can do nothing to make our face clean. How is the law like a mirror (7:13)?

♥ How would you explain in your own words the following statement:

The law results in death, but death is not due to the law.

♥ What is the role of the law in the life of a Christ-follower? What can it do? What can't it do?

Read Romans 7:14-25.

10. In a sentence or two, summarize the dilemma expressed in these verses (7:14-25).

- ♥ Can you relate to this dilemma? Why or why not?
 - ♥ What are some of the areas of your life where you have been caught in this dilemma?
11. These verses from **Romans 7** have always raised the question of exactly who Paul was referring to in his description of the person struggling with sin. Is Paul describing a born again Christ follower or a non-believer? What clues do you see in this passage that might lead you to believe that Paul was talking about someone who **has** experienced new life in Christ?
- ♥ How does a non-believer usually view themselves when it comes to sin and God's law? Have you ever known a non-believer to be in this kind of anguish over their sin?
 - ♥ What help does **Galatians 5:17** give in understanding the struggle Paul describes?
12. Why doesn't knowing God's law (thus knowing right from wrong) and having the desire to do the right thing able to prevent us from sinning (7:14, 17, 18, 20, 21-23)?

What is the solution to this dilemma (**Galatians 5:16-18**)? (More about this in **Romans 8**!)

- ♥ By what means are you trying to live a life pleasing to God? What are the results?
13. In spite of his conflicted feelings, why is Paul thankful (7:24-25)? What does he mean by this?
- ♥ How can a person's anguish and struggle with sin be beneficial (7:24-25)? In our human bodies, will we ever be free from this struggle? Why or why not? Can we expect victory? Why or why not?

Response

Imagine you are driving down a straight, deserted road in South Dakota. No other vehicles are in sight. You haven't seen any speed limit sign and you gradually increase your speed until you are comfortably cruising along at 90 mph. Then you pass a sign that says the speed limit is 75 mph. What would be your reaction? How is God's law like the speed limit sign? Were you breaking the law before you saw the sign? Why or why not? What are some possible reactions you might have after seeing the sign? How might "human nature" reveal itself now that you know the speed limit? If you get caught speeding, is the speed limit sign in any way responsible for your behavior? Why or why not?

Discuss with your small group how this analogy applies to **Romans 7**. How is this analogy helpful to you in understanding the role of God's law in your life and the relationship between law and sin?