



Lesson 12 ~ Are We There Yet?

Romans 8:18-39

Discussion Starter

- When you are discouraged, what encourages you?

Introduction

What do you look forward to that helps you get through the routine of your daily life? A night out? An afternoon shopping? A trip over spring break? Lunch with special friends? Perhaps you are waiting for a more significant event like an empty nest, kids out of college, retirement or the birth of a grandchild. Whether we look forward to a small pleasure or an exciting major event, anticipating it often makes the not-so-exciting present a little more endurable.

Anticipation is a wonderful gift given to us by our Creator. The Bible calls it *hope* – that *confident expectation* of what is to come. Hope of a better future does, indeed, have the ability to comfort us and give us resolve in hard times.

The verses from **Romans 8** that we will study in this lesson are full of God-given *hope* – the *hope* that things will not always be as they are now and the *hope* of supernatural help given to us right now by the One who loves us and lives life with us.

Preparation

1. Before you read **Romans 8:18-39**, ask God to open your eyes so that you may see wonderful truths in his Word (**Psalm 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 8:18-39** 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.

3. Sum up the Scripture passage for this lesson in a short sentence, phrase or title.

Questions

- At the end of Lesson 11, we learned that the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, transforms our relationship with God the Father. Review **Romans 8:14-17** and summarize this new identity.
 - ♥ Do you feel like God's child? Slave? Something in between? How can you know you are God's child?
 - ♥ *Abba* is the equivalent to our English word *Dada* and is one the first words a Hebrew child learns to speak. It is a title of affection and intimacy reserved for a family relationship. Does this describe your relationship with God the Father? Why or why not? Could it? How? What would be the advantage?
- What are the privileges and responsibilities that belong to a child of God (**8:17**)?

- ♥ Why do you think sharing Christ's glory and suffering are linked? What is the suffering of Christ (**John 15:20; 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 5:8**)?
- ♥ What suffering are you experiencing right now? Do you see this as sharing in Christ's suffering? Why or why not?
- ♥ Do suffering and hardship usually draw you closer to God or drive you farther away? Why?

Read **Romans 8:18-25**

- Paul does not deny the pain of our present suffering. What, however, is his **purpose** when he compares suffering to future glory (**8:18, 24-25; 2 Corinthians 4:17**)?

- ♥ What are some things Paul had in mind when he mentions "present sufferings" (**8:20-23, 35**)?

- In the chart below, note the "glory" we will be given after our suffering is over.

Verses	Future Glory
Romans 8:21, 23	
Philippians 3:20-21 (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)	
2 Timothy 2:11-12 (Revelation 20:6) (Revelation 22:3-5)	
1 Peter 1:7 1 Peter 5:4	
1 John 3:2	

- ♥ When was a time when you were able to get through something difficult or unpleasant because you focused on some good things that would come later? How does this relate to **Romans 8:18-25**?
- ♥ How can learning about, thinking about and anticipating your future glory help you make it through your present suffering (**2 Corinthians 4:18**)? Does this "work" for you? Why or why not?

- ♥ How can Jesus' life experiences help us when we suffer (**Hebrews 5:7-8; 12:1-3; Philippians 2:5-9**)?
- 5. Christians are not the only ones who must wait for suffering to be over. **What** is creation (our earth) waiting for and **why** must it wait (**8:19-22**)?

- ♥ Why is creation frustrated and in bondage to death and decay (**Genesis 1:28; 3:17-19**)? When will it be liberated (**8:19, 21**)? What will its liberation look like (**2 Peter 3:10-13; Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalm 96:11-13**)?
- ♥ Give some specific examples of how creation is subject to frustration and in bondage to decay. How does sinful humanity add to the groaning of our planet? What do you imagine our world would be like if there were no sin, death or decay?
- ♥ How is the suffering and groaning of our lives and our world like the *pains of childbirth* (**8:22**)?

Read **Romans 8:26-30**

Father God knows that we need more than just the hope of heaven to get us through our difficulties now and, thanks be to God, he has amply provided for us! The rest of **Romans 8** is full of supernatural help that is available to us *in the meantime* as we wait for the day when God will make everything new – wiping every tear from our eyes and abolishing death, mourning, crying and pain once for all. *In the meantime*, we are not left to our own devices and resources. *In the meantime*, the Spirit **helps us**, the Father is **for us** and Jesus **loves us!**

- 6. How does the Holy Spirit help us in our present suffering, weakness and distress (**8:26-27**)?

- ♥ How is the groaning in **8:26** different from, yet the same as, the groaning in **8:22** and **8:23**? What does this reveal about the Holy Spirit and his relationship with you?
- ♥ Prayer is often viewed as something we do to God. Do you ever feel like you are all alone when you pray? Are you? How does **8:26-27, 34** change your view of prayer?
- ♥ How are you weak in prayer? Do you always know what to pray for? Does the Spirit (**8:27**)? Why is this important (**1 John 5:14-15**)? How will **Romans 8:26-27** change your prayer life?
- 7. What is the result of the Holy Spirit interceding for us according to God's will (**8:28**)?

- ♥ The first words of **8:28** are *we know*. What *five facts* in this verse can we *know* for sure?
- ♥ What is the most important "good" that God wants to work in your life (**8:29**)? Why?
- ♥ Does **8:28** mean that everything that happens to you is good? Why or why not? What is the difference between "God works all things for good" and "all things work out in the end?"
- 8. Read **Romans 8:29-30** in the *NLT*. What are the tangible things God has done to prove that he is *for us*?

- ♥ What is God's purpose in choosing and calling you (**8:29**)? How are you responding? How important is this goal in your life? How can you cooperate with God's call and purpose for you?
- ♥ How does it make you feel to know that God knew you before you were born and that he chose you, called you, gave you a right standing with himself and will someday share his glory with you?
- ♥ How are *foreknown* (pre-known) and *predestined* (chosen) different from *predetermined*?

Read Romans 8:31-39

In this section of verses, Paul wants to let his audience know, in no uncertain terms, that God's *love* and *help* are *sure* and *secure* and that God *will* accomplish his purpose in us, even in the midst of the groaning and suffering of this life. Paul makes this point by asking a series of rhetorical questions – questions whose answers are obvious, but the point is made by asking them. And, just in case we miss the point, Paul even provides the answers! As we let the questions resonate in our hearts, we too, will have no doubt that God is for us!

9. What is our biggest guarantee that God will, indeed, do everything that he promises to do (8:32)?
- ♥ Is this a convincing argument for you? Why or why not? If not, what would convince you?
 - ♥ What, in your life, makes you sometimes doubt that God is really *for* you? Which of Paul's questions and answers (8:31-35) helps you most? Why?
 - ♥ Paul began **Romans 8** with the forceful statement, "There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus." If you ever feel condemned by God, what in 8:34 should convince you otherwise? Ask the Holy Spirit to let you "see" the action of 8:34 with the "eyes of your heart". What do you see?
10. As an exercise to strengthen your faith, read 8:35, 38-39 in both the *NIV* and *NLT* and then write in the space below all the things that *cannot* separate you from Christ's love.

Why don't these things have the power to separate you from the love of Christ?

- ♥ What would be some of the consequences if these enemies *could* separate us from the love of Jesus?
- ♥ Of all the enemies listed in 8:35, 38-39, which is most real to you? Why? If you were writing this letter, what are the fears and enemies you would have listed? Can these things separate you from Jesus' love?
- ♥ Meditate on (spend some time thinking about) the fact that, even though these things may try, *nothing* in the natural or supernatural world is able to separate you from Jesus' love. What does this mean to you personally? What difference will it make in your relationship with God and how you live life?

Response

If we have ever doubted the absolute necessity of prayer, **Romans 8:26-27, 34** should convince us once and for all of its incredible importance because in these verses we see that **Father, Son and Spirit** are all involved in prayer. The Father receives the prayers of the Spirit and Son as they intercede for **us**. We dare not take this for granted! It's amazing to think that the Spirit and Jesus are praying to the Father for us!

Prayer is not a job God gives us to do; prayer is an activity of the **Triune God** that we are invited into! And, in the midst of struggle and suffering, **prayer is a crucial activity**. We know that our world is a far cry from the perfect, sinless earth that God originally created. Creation is groaning – and we are groaning and it doesn't take us long to figure out that we live in a world where God's will is *not* always done.

Prayer is important because prayer is the **primary, God-given way** in which we can help ensure that God's will **IS** done in our world. This is why Jesus taught us to pray, "Father, may your will *be done on earth* as it is *done in heaven*" (**Matthew 6:10**). James tells us that the prayer of a righteous person is **powerful and effective** (**James 5:16**). Prayer makes a difference – in our lives, in the lives of those we pray for and in our world. In the midst of a creation groaning to be released, prayer is an **all important** activity!

The Spirit promises to help us in our weakness when it comes to prayer. However, he cannot do that unless we pray! In the days and weeks to come, *will you join with the Spirit in praying that God's will be done in your life and the lives of those you love? Discuss with your group how you can do this.*