

Romans Lesson 11

Reading: Romans 14:1 – 15:13

Memory Verse: Romans 15:1-2

Definitions:

Failings – convictions that are self-made rather than based on Scripture

Build up – edify, strengthen, encourage another believer

Fall – to entrap, to entice to sin, to hurt or harm

After reading the lesson, answer the questions using the following link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdNDgiwaz7Y8NtGTFuwJwtRykMre3kPrJdEx8LYdhcCeSpMAA/viewform?usp=sf_link

“Jacob, you gotta help me.” Nicole’s voice came over the phone line. “Right at this very minute, channel seven’s running a documentary on teen pregnancy. I need you to record it. Please, please, please.....:

“What do I get out of it?” Jacob asked.

“I don’t know, Cookies... brownies... anything. Please?”

“I suppose... if there’s cookies involved.”

“Thanks, I gotta go.”

“So, what was the big deal?” Jacob asked when Nicole got home later that evening.

“First, did you get the program?”

“Yep. Make those cookies chocolate chip.”

“I figured. Anyhow, I’m doing a paper on teen pregnancy for my sociology class. I heard that documentary was supposed to be extremely well-done with a lot of statistics. I planned to watch it at Carters’ while I was babysitting. Usually, Jessica is asleep by seven, but tonight she didn’t feel good. She came downstairs and sat on my lap. Right away I turned off the TV. The program was way over Jessica’s head. At age 6, Jessica doesn’t know about teen pregnancy. She shouldn’t be seeing that kind of stuff, nor should she be listening to the things they were saying. The program was great for teens and adults, but not for a kid.”

“That’s it!” said Jacob.

“That’s what?” Nicole looked puzzled.

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“Last night Michael and I were discussing Romans 14. I was trying to explain to him how a situation could be right for one person, but wrong for someone who wasn’t as mature. You just gave me a terrific illustration. Thanks a lot.”

“You’re quite welcome.” Nicole Smiled. “And since I’ve already been so helpful, forget the cookies.”

Do not go to extremes

In chapters 14 and 15, Paul explained further that the inward relationship that we have in Christ should be evident in our daily lives.

It is possible for Christians to go to two extremes in their daily living. One extreme is the attitude that there is no difference between the way Christians live in the way the world lives (Philippians 3:17-19). The other extreme is the attitude that everything is wrong. People with this attitude sit around judging what everyone else is doing and thinking of themselves as superior (Colossians 2:20-23). We need a balance. Justification in Christ did not give the Romans, nor does it give us, the freedom to do what we want to do. But how do we figure it out? How do we know what is right and what is wrong?

What does the Bible say (14:1-21)?

Paul explains. First, we must consider what God says (14:12). He is Lord. We all must answer to him. Obviously, the more we study God’s Word, the better prepared we will be to discern right from wrong. God also gives us certain commands; they are spelled out clearly in the Bible. For example, read Galatians 5:19-21 and Colossians 3:5-9. Other things, however, are not clearly explained, and people have different opinions as to whether those things are right or wrong. Paul gives a couple examples. Some people honor one day above another (14:5-6). Some people feel it is wrong to eat certain foods (14:2-4).

But it is not so much what we do in certain situations as it is our attitude toward others (14:3-4). Paul wrote about the “weak” Christian who has a problem choosing what is right. The “weak” person tends to yield to temptation and therefore easily falls back into sin. He or she needs to stay away from tempting situations. Paul also wrote about the “strong” Christian. The “strong” Christian is the one who is mature in his or her faith and stands firm against temptation.

Paul wrote that the “strong” Christians were to encourage rather than to judge the weaker Christians (1 Corinthians 8:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:14). The spiritually strong person is not to look down on the weak person. The illustration of Nicole and Jessica is simplistic. Nicole could have watched the documentary without a problem, but it would have been wrong for Jessica to watch it. Jessica did not have the intellectual or emotional maturity to watch a documentary about teen pregnancy. Spiritually, decisions

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such as these might be harder to determine. You might have the spiritual maturity to go somewhere or do something that your “weaker” Christian friend could not handle.

For instance, Joe read pornographic magazines before he became a Christian. Now, not only does he stay away from the bookstore where he used to purchase those magazines, he doesn't even go to the mall where the bookstore is located. He knows the temptation is still there, and he does not want to put himself in a position where it would be easy for him to yield to that temptation. Yet his Christian friends shop at the mall all the time and never think about or have any desire to go into that particular bookstore.

On the other hand, the weak person, who is strict in a certain area, should not judge the strong person who can handle the situation. Our main concern should be whether our decisions are right in God's eyes.

What does your conscience say (14:22-23)?

Do you think an activity is wrong? Do you have uncomfortable feelings about it? Paul wrote: *Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves (14:22)*. When we live the way the Lord wants us to live, then we are at peace. Our conscience is clear. (But remember, not all Christians will necessarily agree with you concerning your choices.)

Sometimes you make a wrong decision. You go somewhere or do something and then wish you had not. Use that experience to help you make the right choice for next time.

What do other people think (15:1-11)?

You decide a situation is all right, but another Christian thinks it is wrong. Are you going to make that person fall (cause to sin) by going ahead and doing it? For the good of the other person, would it be better to stay away from that activity (15:2)? Even though an activity might not hurt you, what value is there in harming someone else so that you can have your own way?

Fast Fact

Paul sums up the subject in Romans 14:19: *Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace into mutual edification*. Let us look at this verse phrase by phrase.

Let us therefore make every effort - this means we should seek eagerly.

Do what leads to peace - things or situations that would not harm a weaker Christian.

Mutual edification - to build a house, or in the spiritual sense, to help someone grow in wisdom and grace.

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Eagerly, we are to seek those things and situations that do not hurt a weaker Christian. Rather we are to seek those things that help another person grow in wisdom and grace.