

**READING
ROMANS
WITH
LUTHER**

FOR SMALL GROUPS

Chapter 1: Exposed

1. People are good at hiding the bad in their lives - whether that be on social media or in a simple response of “Good,” to the question, “How are you?” Why do you think people are so good at keeping the mess of life hidden from the rest of the world?
2. In your own experience, have you experienced more of this or less of this in your interactions with other Christians? Why do you think that’s the case?
3. Luther wrote, “The chief purpose of this letter is to break down, to pluck up, and to destroy all wisdom and righteousness of the flesh.” Why do you think Paul writes a letter that sets out to expose us in this way?
4. Why do shame and guilt lead us to hide our sin?
5. Luther wrote, “Christ wants our whole disposition to be so stripped down that we are . . . unafraid of being embarrassed for our faults and also do not delight in the glory and vain joys of our virtues.” Do you have people in your life that you don’t have to hide your worst from? Describe that kind of relationship.
6. Read Romans 1:16-17. How does not being ashamed of the Gospel relate to the shame and guilt we experience when we stay in hiding?
7. Read Romans 8:33-34???. What in your life makes it difficult for you to believe this?
8. Jesus is *for you*. His life, his death, his righteousness, his grace, his presence - it’s all for you. What gifts of Jesus do you most need to be reminded of right now?

Chapter 2: The Human Condition

1. Do you believe that you are a good person? Why or why not?
2. Give some examples of how you see selfishness in our world. Why do you think Luther uses the phrase “curved inward upon himself” to describe this human condition?
3. “We aren’t sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners.” Explain the implications of this phrase.
4. Read Romans 5:6-10. What in the verse resonates with you the most?
5. Why do you think so many people think Christianity is more about a God who cares about the godly instead of a God who would die for the ungodly?
6. Luther wrote, “Therefore, if anyone looks down on another man as a sinner, sin still rules him doubly.” How might understanding the human condition influence our relationships with other people?
7. What makes it so difficult to not look down on someone who sins in a way that you don’t struggle with?
8. Read Romans 6:1-5. Sin doesn’t rule over us, yet at the same time we are in sin until the end of our life. Describe this tension in your own life.

Chapter 3: A Worship Problem

1. Sin, in its essence, is the worship of self. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. Describe some examples of how your sin ultimately is an act of worship to yourself.
3. Luther teaches that this problem begins at the level of ingratitude, what are some areas of your life that you often forget to be grateful?
4. Read Romans 11:1-6. What are the most prevalent false gods in our world today?
5. Read Romans 1:21-32. Man routinely exchanges worship of the Creator in order to worship the created. How is sin worshipping the created?
6. When you choose to go against God's will, what does that say about who you fear the most? Who you trust the most? Who you love the most?
7. If you follow the trail of your time, affection, energy, and money - what's at the end of it?

Chapter 4: The Old Man

1. The Bible isn't a book of heroes who've got it all together. Who are some of your favorite heroes of the Bible? How does God use them despite themselves?
2. Read Romans 6:6-11. How would you define the term "old self" or "old man"?
3. What are some of the differences between the old man and the new man? Describe how you see the two battle each other.
4. A "spirit of fear" is what you experience when you don't trust that God has your best interest in mind. When have you experienced that?
5. Why is it difficult for us to believe that God has our best interest in mind?
6. Luther writes, "God accepts no man's merits but has free mercy." Why is this so important in our understanding of the new man and how God relates to us?
7. Read Romans 6:15-23. How does being adopted as sons and daughters of God expand the way you understand the Gospel?
8. Why does the old man choose the slavery of the law? How do you respond when the old man in you runs out of steam?

Chapter 5: Law and Gospel

1. Do this. You're not doing it. Try harder... Have you heard that kind of sermon before? What does it do in you?
2. What's the problem when we only hear about what we should be doing and nothing more?
3. How would you define the terms: law and Gospel?
4. Read Romans 10:13-15. Who was influential in bringing the good news to you when you needed it?
5. What do you think people need to hear more in our culture - law or Gospel? Why?
6. Luther writes, "The Gospel supplies a longed for remedy to people in anguish." What gifts does the Gospel bring to people who are in anguish over their sins?
7. How do Law and Gospel work in partnership with one another. How does losing one create problems for sharing the other?

Chapter 6: The Bad News

1. The Law doesn't solve the problem, it only diagnoses the problem. Why is this an important distinction?
2. What are some ways that people misuse the Law?
3. Luther writes, "It is simply impossible for us of ourselves to fulfill the Law, and [it] is of no value to say that we can fulfill the Law." Why do you think Luther describes the Law this way?
4. What are some ways people dumb down the law in order to make it attainable? How does this affect the Law's primary function (exposing sin)?
5. Read Romans 4:7-12. If righteousness does not come from obedience, where does it come from?
6. Luther writes, "The Church is the inn and infirmary for those who are sick and in need of being made well." How does this impact the mission of the Church?
7. What's wrong with the a Church existing to make Christians more well-behaved? What might be some signs that a Church has the wrong mission?
8. Read Romans 4:13-15. Law and faith deserve opposite things, what do each deserve?

Chapter 7: The Power and Primacy of the Gospel

1. Instead of being brought to life, many people are walking out of churches bloodied, bruised, and crushed. How do churches misuse and abuse the Law to create this result?
2. What power does the Law have on a person? What power does the Gospel have? What are the challenges in knowing what words to speak to a person?
3. Read Romans 5:1-5. What is the primary message of the Church? Why should that message be primary?
4. What is the problem with “do more” and “try harder” versions of Christianity?
5. Luther writes, “Why does man take pride in his merits and works, which in no way are pleasing to God?” How would you answer that question?
6. Read Romans 15:8-9, 13. How does God give to you his hope when things seem hopeless? Besides, “God of hope” what are some other descriptions of God that describe his love for us?
7. Luther describes God’s gifts by writing, “He gives good things which are hidden, joy in sadness and personal affliction, peace in the midst of tumult and outward persecution.” Describe a time when God gave to you his hidden gifts.

Chapter 8: Righteousness

1. What is righteousness?
2. Luther writes, “When I acknowledge that I cannot be righteous before God... then I begin to seek my righteousness from Him.” What is most helpful in reminding you that you cannot be righteous before God?
3. Read Romans 3:9-12. How is the truth that “none is righteous” counter-cultural? Why is this so important?
4. How does recognizing this change the way we talk and think about ourselves?
5. What’s the difference between a joy-filled obedience and begrudging submission to rules? What is the primary motivator of these?
6. How does faith connect to works done in joy-filled obedience?
7. Read Romans 8:1. When is there no condemnation? For who is there no condemnation? When is it most difficult for you to believe this?
8. Luther writes, “The whole root and origin of of our salvation lies in God who sends.” Who did God send to bring to you his gift of righteousness? Who might God be sending you to?

Chapter 9: Sinners, Saints, and the Simul

1. Christians are simultaneously saint and sinner. What are some other parts of the Christian life where a Christian is “both...and?”
2. Saints always see themselves as sinners. How does growth in your relationship with God reveal this to be true?
3. Hypocrites are always seem themselves as saints. How does this affect the way they live?
4. Luther writes, “How wonderful and sweet is the mercy of God, who at the same time considers us both as sinners and nonsinners.” Describe the tension in this statement.
5. Read Romans 7:15-25. Where do you see this in your own life?
6. The fruit of the Spirit’s work in us as saints is that we become more and more like Christ. What ways has God been teaching you to be more like Christ?
7. Because we are sinners at the same time, this fruit doesn’t come with struggle. Why does Christian growth so often seem to be filled with failing?
8. Growth isn’t about needing the cross less. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Chapter 10: Suffering

1. Life is hard. What kind of suffering have you had to endure in recent months?
2. Read Romans 5:3-5. How does this verse give you hope in the midst of suffering?
3. How does suffering reveal both the good and bad qualities in a person's character?
4. Read Romans 8:18-27. In the midst of suffering, what kind of hope do you need the most?
5. Have you ever experienced suffering that made it difficult for you to pray? How might the Spirit's interceding be good news for you in those moments?
6. How does difficulty teach us to depend on God?
7. Luther writes, "We are capable of receiving his works and his counsels only when our own counsels have ceased and our works have stopped and we are made purely passive before God." Describe a time when you have experienced this.
8. God is hidden, yet at work. Where do you need to be reminded that God is working even if you don't see him?

Chapter 11: Grace that Changes

1. What is sanctification? Who's responsible for it?
2. Why is it so important that God's grace and our ethics are connected?
3. Read Romans 12:1-2. What do you think about when you hear the word "worship"? How does Paul define it here?
4. What transformations have you seen in your life because of the work of God?
5. What's the purpose of being a "living sacrifice"? How do you make a sacrifice that is holy and pleasing?
6. Grace never saves us without also changing us. What problems happen when we focus more on our transformation than our justification?
7. How would you answer the question Luther asks, "What would you wish done to you by him?" What situations would your answer to this question be the most difficult to do?

Chapter 12: Gifts

1. When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
2. Read Romans 12:3-8. What are some of the gifts you see in the other people in your group?
3. What other things do Christians get caught up in that distract us from using our gifts?
4. Of the gifts listed in Romans 12, do any in particular resonate with you? How so?
5. Read Romans 15:1-7. Who is a neighbor that God has placed in your that God is calling you to “bear with”?
6. How does the judgment of others often get in the way of loving others in the way God has called us to?
7. Luther writes, “[God] is glorified when sinners and the weak are received.” Who is someone in your life that you can receive like Christ receives?
8. What are some ways that your gifts can be used for the benefits of somebody else?