

# ROMANS SEASON 4 PEOPLE OF THE GOSPEL

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## CONNECT *BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING*

- How have you tried to stay motivated over the past week? Is it working?
  - Do you have the kind of personality where you're comfortable disagreeing with people openly or not?
  - Describe a time when you had a lengthy conversation with someone over something you disagreed on.
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## TRUTH *UNDERSTAND AND DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURE'S MEANING*

The more we read Paul's letter, the more we learn some of the reasons for tension and division among the Roman Christians. In chapter 11, we saw some people looking down on Jews in the church like they were lesser Christians. Now, in chapter 14, we'll see that there were divisions over issues of conscience. Our issues of conscience might be different today than they were back then, but the tendency for how to treat people who differ from us is very much the same. If we're going to be the people of the gospel, we need to know how the gospel calls us to handle issues of conscience for ourselves, and how we should react to others who differ.

### What Are Issues of Conscience?

**READ:** Romans 14:1-9

**DISCUSS:** What are some issues of conscience you see debated among Christians today?

In the west, we love it when the Bible says not to judge another person. But what should we make of it when Paul says something like this in 1 Corinthians 5:12: "Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?" The difference is the kind of issues being judged. In the Corinthians' case, it was an issue of outright sin. Among the Romans, they were issues of conscience—whether or not to abstain from food that may have been offered to idols, or considering certain days more sacred than others. As the people of the gospel, we need to know the difference between outright sin and issues of conscience (which means getting to know our Bible well).

### How To (and How Not To) Handle Issues of Conscience

**READ:** Romans 14:10-23

**DISCUSS:** What stands out to you from this passage and why?

Here's what you mustn't do about issues of conscience—despise those who disagree with you, or act in such a way to intentionally disregard their convictions. Rather, decide to love them. Each of us is accountable to God on issues of conscience. That means we should have a focus on our own faithfulness to God. As Paul says, "The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God." That doesn't mean we can't have a meaningful conversation about an issue of conscience, but it does mean we need to be pump the breaks when we find ourselves trying to

control another person's choices and opinions. That's between them and God. Focus on what's between you and God. That enables you to love others well, even and especially those who disagree with you.

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## **GRACE** *SEE HOW THE PASSAGE CONNECTS TO JESUS*

### **Where We Find the Power for This Love**

**READ:** Romans 15:1-13

Here's something we all have in common—Jesus was and is far more holy than we are. And yet he drew close to us in love. He is the Exemplar of the kind of love Paul describes in these passages. He was strong and we were weak, but he didn't judge us. He was right and we were wrong, and yet he drew close to us. We will give an account to God for our issues of conscience, but Jesus settled the account for our sin. Now he calls the people of the gospel to a humble, self-giving love for one another.

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## **CHANGE** *APPLY THE PASSAGE TO OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS*

- How does this passage of Scripture impact the way you think about love for other believers?
  - What other ways do you see these verses shaping your thoughts and actions?
  - Are there any conversations you need to have or steps you need to take to repent?
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## **PRAYER** *RESPOND TO THE PASSAGE IN PRAYER*

- Pray for a deep revelation of Jesus's humble, self-giving love for us.
- Pray for a Christlike attitude toward those who disagree with you.
- Continue to pray for the containment of COVID-19.

### **Discipleship Check-In**

- Have you read your Bible consistently the past week?
- Who is someone you're praying to share Jesus with this week, and what's one way you can love them well?