

## BIG IDEA

**The blood reminds us that we cannot save ourselves.**

## WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO KNOW?

Has there ever been a time when you did something you KNEW that you shouldn't? Or didn't do something that you KNEW you should? Why do we do this?

***Today we will be exploring a unique passage in the book of Romans by reading two versions of the text (which we have provided on the next page). In each section, read the NIV passage first. Then, read the paraphrase of that passage from The Message. Your LG Leader will ask some key questions to help the group process these Scriptures together.***

**Read Romans 8:1-4.** What does Paul mean when he says "weakened by the flesh?"

*The law God gave us was good, but humans in our brokenness could never live up to it completely.*

### **Romans 8:1-4 (NIV)**

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup>because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

### **Romans 8:3-4 (The Message)**

<sup>3-4</sup> God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

How did God address this problem in Jesus?

*In Jesus, God met the requirement of the law on our behalf, setting us free and enabling us to live in relationship with Him.*

**Re-read Romans 8:1-2.** What are the implications (practical/eternal) of this incredible passage?

How does Romans 8:1-4 deepen our understanding of this week's big idea?

*People tend to want to "save" themselves. Romans 8:1-4 shows us that God is the initiator and deliverer in our relationship with him. Our job is to respond to what he has already done by simply embracing what the Spirit is doing.*

## WHAT IS MY INITIAL REACTION?

**Read Romans 7:21-25.** How can you relate to Paul's struggle in this text?



### Romans 7:21-25 (NIV)

<sup>21</sup> So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God's law; <sup>23</sup> but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. <sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Do you often think of the Apostle Paul as someone who struggles with sin in this manner? Does this encourage you? Discourage you? Explain your answer.

The fact that Paul struggles should really prove to us that no person, no matter how religious our righteous, can attain salvation for themselves. This may be encouraging to fellow strugglers, or discouraging to those of us with the "do-it-yourself" mentality toward salvation.

## WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

**Read Romans 7:15-20.** Where in your life have you been relying on yourself (for healing, salvation, rightness with God, etc.)?

### Romans 7:15-20 (NIV)

<sup>15</sup> I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. <sup>16</sup> And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. <sup>19</sup> For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. <sup>21</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

**Read Romans 8:5-6.** What is Paul's encouragement to believers in this passage?

What would it look like for you to set your mind on the Spirit? How will you put this into practice this week?

If you have time at the end of your study, you may want to read Romans 7:15-8:6 all at once as a way to reflect with your group. Doing something like this will help your group to see all they have learned in context. You could even read the text aloud while your group members prayerfully listen. End your group by asking them what their biggest takeaway will be for the week.

### Romans 7: 21-25 (The Message)

It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

<sup>24</sup> I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?

<sup>25</sup> The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

### Romans 7:15-20 (The Message)

What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary. But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

