



GETTING STARTED

> *As your group time begins, use this section for very brief review prior to showing the video to help get the conversation going.*

**Let's do life together!/Opening Discussion:** Welcome everyone and ask how their week has been. **SHARE: Someone share how you have seen God working this week: in the good times and the bad times.**

**Our Subject Today:** We are beginning a new study called *Transformed*. How has God transformed you through the mercies of Jesus?

VIDEO NOTES/QUESTIONS

**INDUCTIVE STUDY / OBSERVATION:** Romans 1-11 explain the Gospel. Romans 12-16 tell how life changes after receiving Christ.

**INTERPRETATION:** See Commentary on pages 5-6

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:**

- 1) According to Pastor David, there are 3 indisputable facts about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Explain and discuss each:
  - a. The empty tomb (Mark 16:6)
  - b. The post-mortem appearances (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)
  - c. The faith of the early church (Acts 4: 32-33)

**SUGGESTED ANSWERS / DIGGING DEEPER: APPLICATION:** Pastor David said: "While people try to dispute a lot of things about Jesus, the early church, and even the Bible, they cannot dispute the 3 things I just mentioned. Make no mistake, it was the bodily resurrection of Jesus that radically transformed the lives of the disciples and even this man named Paul to boldly die, & more importantly to live for Jesus Christ until they died."

**Note** - please share in *1 Cor. 15:6* that Jesus appeared to over 500 and see *Acts 1:3* Jesus did this over a period of 40 days.

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS (cont.)

Read *Acts 9:1-22*

2) How does your story of transformation compare to Paul's conversation?

**SUGGESTED ANSWERS / DIGGING DEEPER:** The story of your conversion may not be as dramatic as Paul's but each of us have or should have a story about their conversion and transformation.

**Question** - Why do you think God brought about a radical transformation in Paul's life that we can read about and study today?

Read *Romans 12:1*

3) In this passage, what is "Therefore" there for?

**SUGGESTED ANSWERS / DIGGING DEEPER:** Pastor David said "It's like a bridge that connects two similar thoughts and ideas. The reason that Paul, you & I and every Christian on the planet ought to be willing, "...to offer up our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God..." is because of the mercies and the blessings that God pours out on us. Also because of the glory and the power that God possesses. We know these are the reasons because *Romans 11: 33-36* comes immediately before this word, "therefore" in *Romans 12: 1*.

Read *Romans 11:33-36*

4) What is Paul saying about God in these verses?

**SUGGESTED ANSWERS / DIGGING DEEPER:** Paul is expressing thankfulness for the wonder of how God transformed him, and all that God has done in his life, and all that God is going to do in the future.

**Question** - If someone asked you about the God you serve, what words would you use?

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS (cont.)

Read *Romans 12:1a* (again)

5) What are the mercies of God, and how does that compel us to live a transformed life for Jesus?

**SUGGESTED ANSWERS / DIGGING DEEPER:** The mercies of God are our salvation, forgiveness, peace, joy, confidence, hope, love, grace, the Holy Spirit. Because of these mercies, we are compelled to live for Jesus. Then, we can worship God in freedom with no condemnation or shame.

**Question** - Ask someone in your group to *Google* the meaning to the word **mercy**; then apply it to what God has done for you.

Read *Romans 12:1b*

6) How, as follower of Jesus today, can you present your body as a living sacrifice to become your spiritually true and proper worship to God?

**SUGGESTED ANSWERS / DIGGING DEEPER: SCRIPTURE** - When we sacrifice our life to Jesus, we put our life on the altar and put Jesus first, surrendering our life and our will totally to God. This will bring us to point in our life where we can truly worship God in spirit and truth. (*John 4:23*)

**Question** - What do you need to sacrifice in your life to live in the mercies of God and really have an influential life for the Kingdom like Paul?

## SUMMARY (My Take-Away for This Week)

**POSSIBLE SUMMARY/TAKE-AWAY:**

- I can know God's transforming power in my life through my faith in Jesus
- The mercies of God should compel me to live my life daily as a holy and pleasing sacrifice to God
- The power of the Holy Spirit can help me lay my own self centered desires down and live for the glory of God

WORK OUT (This Week's Assignments)

- This week, I will plan to get coffee, breakfast, or lunch with someone else in my LIFEgroup and share with them how God has been transforming me during the past few weeks of LIFEgroup.
- Start praying about leading a LIFEgroup next fall and then share that with my group next week.
- Start praying about your group meeting during the summer for serving together, parties, or just having a Bible study to stay connected.

MY NEXT STEPS FROM THE WEEKEND WORSHIP

1. This week, I will wake up quoting *Lamentations 3:22-23 (ESV)* - "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."
2. This week, I will take time each day to thank God for His mercy that He has shown me.
3. This week, I will look for ways to show His mercy to others (at work, in car line, at school, at home).
4. This week, I will read *Romans* chapters 1-11 to learn more about the beliefs that should be affecting my behavior.

HOW MY GROUP CAN PRAY FOR ME THIS WEEK

> [Record Group Prayer Requests Here:](#)

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## COMMENTARY

**Resurrection of Jesus Christ:** Historical event whereby Jesus came back from physical death to newness of life with a glorified body, never to die again. The bodily resurrection of Jesus is one of the central tenets of the Christian faith. His bodily resurrection validates the claim that He is both Lord and Christ. It substantiates the proposition that His life and death were not just the life and death of a good man but that He indeed was God incarnate and that by His death we have forgiveness of sin.

The four Gospels are selective in the events they report surrounding the resurrection. Each emphasizes the empty tomb, but each is somewhat different in the postresurrection appearances recounted. Admittedly, any attempt at harmonization of the accounts is speculative, and dogmatism must be avoided.

The oldest account of the resurrection is found in *1 Cor. 15*. In that passage Paul recounted a number of postresurrection appearances. He established that the believer's future resurrection is based on the historicity of Christ's bodily resurrection.

The evidence in favor of the historicity of the bodily resurrection of Jesus is very strong. The evidence for the empty tomb is weighty. First, the story of the empty tomb is found in all four Gospels and is implicit in the early church's proclamation of the resurrection. How could they preach the bodily resurrection of Jesus if everyone in Jerusalem knew that His body was still in the tomb? Second, it is difficult to believe that the early church would have fabricated the story of the resurrection and then made women the first witnesses to the empty tomb and the resurrection, since women were not considered reliable witnesses in Jewish culture (illustrated by the disciple's response to them). Third, something incredible must have taken place on that Sunday to cause Jewish believers to begin worshiping on the first day of the week instead of the Sabbath (*Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10*). Finally, nothing short of the miracle of the resurrection can explain the postresurrection transformation in the disciples. The biblical record indicates that at the time of Jesus' arrest they all fled (*Mark 14:50*). When the women reported that they had seen Jesus, the men did not believe (*Luke 24:11*), yet these same men were later willing to suffer persecution and martyrdom in order to preach Jesus as the resurrected Lord (Bill Cook, "Resurrection of Jesus the Christ," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* [Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003]).

**Mercy:** Characteristic and action that comes from the very nature of God. Mercy as given by God is the foundation of forgiveness. It is His faithfulness and steadfast love. God is not seen as displaying an emotion called mercy but as taking merciful action. This action was taken as Israel was in need: provisions such as manna in the wilderness (*Exod. 16:31–35*), protection such as the Shepherd who keeps Israel and does not sleep (*Ps. 121*), and deliverance (*Pss. 56:12–13; 107*) as Yahweh who delivered His people from Egypt (*1 Sam. 10:18*). Mercy has never been the benefit of God's people because of their merit but is always the gift of God (*Exod. 34:6–7* NASB).

God's justice and righteousness cannot be overlooked in this matter of mercy. *Exodus 34:7* makes it clear that God's judgment will override His mercy where man's sinful rebellion turns away from His righteousness and love. Here God's mercy is manifested in His slow action and deferred punishment, not in ignoring sin and refusing to act in wrath (*2 Pet. 3:9–10* HCSB). God's wrath is the resulting action against man's rebellion after His mercy has been exhausted.

In the greatest sense Jesus was the full expression of the mercy of God. No one embodies and personally illustrates the meaning of mercy as does Jesus. Like the Father, Jesus moved well beyond feeling compassion on the suffering. He always was "moved with compassion" and "showed mercy" when He encountered those hurting or down and out. Mercy from God is never deserved and is always generated by His character and not man's. Salvation is God's merciful act of withholding His wrath and eternal punishment as well as His grace in granting forgiveness and eternal life.

Mercy is not only a central focus of the ministry of Jesus and the Father; it is also to be the practice of all believers. Jesus made it an essential ingredient of the life and manner of the believer when He spoke the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount; "Blessed are the merciful, because they will be shown mercy" (*Matt 5:7* HCSB) (Dan Parker, "Mercy," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* [Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003]).

**Acts 9:1–22.** The first half of Paul's conversion account divides into three main sections: the appearance on the Damascus road (vv. 1–9), the ministry of Ananias to Paul (vv. 10–18a), and the final confirmation of Paul's conversion through his bold witness in the Jewish synagogues of Damascus (vv. 18b–22). Many attempts have been made to "explain" Paul's conversion, often in the form of rationalistic explanations, such as a thunderstorm outside Damascus, or an epileptic seizure, or psychogenic blindness as the result of repressed guilt. Others see Paul's conversion as a total rational experience, a coming to awareness of the correctness of the Christian views.

All such attempts to get into the mind of Paul are at base speculative, for Paul never provided us with such an analysis of his conversion, nor did Luke. Surely experiences with the Christians must have impressed Paul. Surely the Stephen incident made its impression. But Luke never drew such connections, nor did Paul. What both picture is a *radical conversion* experience. Paul the persecutor was stopped dead in his tracks on the Damascus road. The risen

## COMMENTARY

Jesus showed himself to Paul; and with this confirmation that the Christian claims were indeed true, Paul was completely turned from persecutor to witness. Only one category describes Paul's experience, a category not uncommon in Acts. It was a *miracle*, the result of direct divine action (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992]).

***Romans 11:33-36.*** God's providence at work in his redemptive relationship with all humans brought forth from Paul a doxology of praise and adoration. This doxology, thought by many to have been written by Paul himself, provides an appropriate finale for the theological portion of Romans and an effective transition to the more instructional nature of the chapters that follow.

How fathomless is the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Who but God could have conceived a plan that would turn disobedience into an occasion for mercy and in the process reach out universally to all who would believe? How inscrutable are his judgments. His decisions are beyond human ken. How unsearchable are his ways. His methods are mysterious and beyond our ability to grasp. No one grasps the mind of God or could ever serve as his counselor (cf. *Isa 40:13-14*). No one has ever advanced anything to him so as to deserve payment in return. God is debtor to no one. It is God who has set everything in motion by his creative word. Through him everything that exists is sustained and directed. All things exist for his glory. Therefore to him be praise and glory forever! Amen (Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995]).

***Romans 12:1-2.*** The "therefore" in v. 1 refers back not simply to the previous argument about God's mercy in bringing salvation to Jew and Gentile but to everything that Paul had been teaching from the beginning of the epistle. It marks the transition from the theology of God's redemptive act in Christ Jesus to the ethical expectations that flow logically from that theological base. We come now to what is usually called the "practical" section of Romans.

Only the Christian faith, rooted as it is in a supernatural act that took place in history (the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ), has the ultimate moral authority as well as the effective power to transform human life according to the divine intention. Theology in isolation promotes a barren intellectualism. Ethics apart from a theological base is impotent to achieve its goals.

In view of the many mercies of God, Paul exhorted his readers to offer their bodies as living sacrifices (cf. *6:13; 1 Pet 2:5*). The metaphor in the verse has as its setting the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. While sanctification is gradual in the sense that it continues throughout life, each advance depends upon a decision of the will. That the sacrifice is "living" reflects the voluntary nature of the act.

In view of God's acts of mercy it is entirely fitting that we commit ourselves without reservation to him. To teach that accepting the free gift of God's grace does not necessarily involve a moral obligation on our part is a heresy of gigantic proportions.

If v. 1 speaks of a specific act in which we offer ourselves to God, v. 2 tells us of two ongoing activities that carry out the intention of the living sacrifice. The first is negative; the second, positive. Believers are no longer to conform themselves to the present age (cf. *1 Pet 1:14*). Paul reminded the Galatians that the present age is evil (*Gal 1:4*). It cannot, and must not, serve as a model for Christian living. Its values and goals are antithetical to growth in holiness. The church should stand out from the world as a demonstration of God's intention for the human race.

Rather than allowing the world to "squeeze you into its own mold" (Phillips), Paul told believers to be "transformed by the renewing of your minds." From without there is a continuing pressure to adopt the customs and mind-set of the world in which we live. Although that influence must be rejected, that alone will never create the kind of change God has in mind for his followers. Real and lasting change comes from within. We must "let ourselves be transformed." The transformation of which Paul spoke in *Rom 12:2* is not a change effected from without but a radical reorientation that begins deep within the human heart.

A renewed mind is concerned with those issues of life that are of lasting importance. The mind renewed enables us to discern the will of God. Released from the control of the world around us, we can come to know what God has in mind for us. We will find that his will is "good, pleasing and perfect." It is good because it brings about moral and spiritual growth. It is pleasing to God because it is an expression of his nature. It is perfect in that no one could possibly improve on what God desires to happen (Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995]).

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