

Losing Your Luggage

Finding Your Freedom

A study of Romans 8



By Rick and Linda Reed

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Travel Instructions For The Losing Your Luggage Study

Losing Your Luggage • Introduction

We're delighted you're along for this journey towards freedom. In the coming weeks you're going to learn how to get rid of some of the old baggage you've carried around with you for far too long.

As you start, we want to give you a few important travel tips that will get you started in the right direction.

1. **Start with a personal baggage check.** On pages 11-12, you'll be asked to identify the luggage you want to lose. Do these pages before you start Chapter 1.
2. **Complete one chapter every two weeks.** Each chapter has six lessons, so if you complete three daily lessons a week, you'll complete a chapter every two weeks. If you complete a chapter every two weeks, you'll stay up to speed.
3. **Don't travel alone.** Any journey is more enjoyable when you aren't alone. So join a small group and talk over what you are learning with some fellow travelers.

For Small Groups that meet every other week –

Simply do one chapter of study and discuss it at your group meeting
This study will then be completed over a ten-week period of time.

For Small Groups that meet weekly

Simply divide the chapters in half – doing three days of study per week
and have a deeper discussion of the homework at your small group. This
study will also be completed over a ten-week period of time.

4. **Listen to the Sermons Series.** The Losing Your Luggage Study Guide can be enhanced by listening to the sermon series that travels through Romans 8. You can listen to the Losing Your Luggage Series on **The Rick Reed Sermon Podcast** (available on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), or [Google Podcasts](#)).

Thanks for making this journey towards freedom with us,

Rick and Linda Reed

Losing Your Luggage • Romans 8 • In Context

Ever start watching a movie at the midway point? Pretty confusing, isn't it. You're not sure of the setting, the storyline or the cast of characters. You need to play catch up.

Losing Your Luggage is a study based on the liberating, life-giving truth of Romans 8. But chapter 8 is the midway point of the book of Romans. The first verse in chapter 8 begins with the word, "Therefore." That means it's building on what's already been said.

So here's a summary of what's gone on in the first seven chapters. It's brief, but it's designed to help orient you to the setting, storyline and characters in the book.

Author of the Book: The Apostle Paul. At the time of this writing (about 57 AD), Paul was writing from Corinth. He'd never been to Rome but was eager to visit (Romans 15:23-25). He's already had a number of Christian friends in the church (he lists some in Romans 16).

Recipients of the Book: Christians in the church in Rome, predominantly Gentile Christians with a mix of believers from a Jewish background. This led to some cultural tensions that Paul addresses near the end of the letter (Romans 12-15).

Summary of Romans 1-7: Paul begins his letter by highlighting a theme that is central throughout—the gospel. Martin Luther called Romans the "chief part of the gospel and the purest gospel." He reminds them that the gospel is from God (1:1), is about Jesus (1:3-4) and has the power to save all who believe (1:16-17). That's why Paul is not ashamed of the gospel!

Paul then begins to build a case that **everyone needs the gospel** (1:18-3:20). And he means everyone. He begins by showing that secular people need the gospel (1:18-32). They aren't stupid, but they are stubborn—choosing to suppress truth and elevate their own thoughts and desires. The results are tragic—twisted and broken people. But it's not just secular people that are in trouble, in chapter 2:1-16, Paul shows why moral, upright people need the gospel. Here he demonstrates that even the "good people" need God's salvation for they consistently overemphasize their own goodness, overlook God's kindness and underestimate God's coming judgment. Finally, Paul argues that religious people need the gospel (2:17-3:20). They may know God's laws, but they haven't kept them. So, like everyone else, they stand guilty before God. Paul concludes by affirming that "*no one will be declared righteous in His sight*" (3:20).

Having shown our need for the gospel, Paul moves to explain how **the gospel meets our need** (Romans 3:21-31). The heart of the matter is how a holy, righteous God can accept unholy and unrighteous people (like all of us). The answer is found in the cross. At the cross, God displayed His righteousness by judging sin. He poured out His wrath on His sinless Son, Jesus, who died in our place. He took the punishment we deserved as lawbreakers. Now, because of the cross, God now can declare us righteous when we trust in His Son.

All this still raises some questions. Questions like, “Is this idea that God declares sinners righteous simply because of their faith a new idea, or is it true to the teaching of the Old Testament?” Paul answers that question in chapter 4, showing how the idea of justification by faith is taught in the Old Testament. He proves that by explaining that both Abraham and David were justified by faith.

Having established that everyone needs the gospel and that the gospel brings God’s gift of righteousness to everyone who believes, Paul now moves on to **the benefits of the gospel** (chapters 5-8). These blessings include an unquenchable joy in the face of suffering (5:1-11) and new life in Christ in spite of our old life in Adam (5:12-21).

Now we come to Romans 6-7. In these chapters Paul highlights another blessing that comes to those who believe the gospel: freedom from the controlling, enslaving power of sin. These are the crucial chapters that form the background and basis for our *Losing your Luggage* study. So here’s an overview of Romans 6-7.

Romans 6 begins by telling you something you need to know if you hope to enjoy the blessing of being free from the enslaving power of sin. You need to know that, if you are connected to Christ, you’ve died to sin (6:1-7). Now that doesn’t mean you won’t struggle with temptation. And it certainly doesn’t mean you’ll live a sinless life. When Paul says you’ve died to sin he is saying you are no longer under sin’s controlling power. You are no longer a slave to sin. You have a new master—Jesus.

Not only have you died to sin, you’ve also been raised up to new life (6:8-10). You have a new identity in Christ. So now you need to see yourself in a new way—dead to sin and alive to God (6:11). And you need to choose to offer your body to God rather than to sin (6:12-14). Sin is no longer your master—Jesus is (6:15-23).

After finishing Romans 6, you may think that living a vibrant Christian life is simply a matter of knowing your freedom and choosing obedience to Christ. But that’s not the case, Romans 7 makes that clear. In Romans 7 Paul gives us the bad news that even though we’ve died to sin, sin still lives in us. Yes it’s true we have been made new in Christ; but it’s also true that we still have some of the “old” living inside of us.

Paul calls the leftovers from our old life the “sinful nature” (or the “flesh”). The sad and sobering truth about the sinful nature is that it constantly pulls us towards sin and away from God. That’s why you feel like there’s a spiritual civil war going on inside you at times. That’s why you resonate with Paul’s lament, “*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do*” (7:15). That’s why you sometimes despair that you’ll ever be free from the sinful luggage you haul around with you.

And that’s why you need to study Romans 8. In Romans 8, you will learn how you can deal with the sinful nature and lose your sinful luggage. Ready to find out? Let’s get started!

Your Personal Baggage Check

Losing Your Luggage • Personal Inventory

When you arrive at the airport, ready to head out on a flight, one of the first things you need to do is a baggage check. The folks at the airline counter want to know what bags you are bringing with you on the trip. The goal is that when you reach your destination, you'll have all the bags you started with.

The first thing on our journey in this series is also to do a baggage check. You need to know what baggage you are bringing with you as we journey through this study guide. However, your goal is not to keep your luggage but to lose it. God's desire for you is that you finish this journey with less bags than you began.

In just a bit, you'll be asked to take inventory and see what baggage you are currently hauling around on your journey through life. You'll see that the list is not all that inviting. This luggage is the kind you'll be happy and healthier to lose.

Let me highlight how you got this luggage in the first place. The Bible points to at least three ways we accumulate baggage in life. Here's a short summary of each.

From Adam: Some of the baggage we carry comes to us because we are sons and daughters of Adam. Romans 5:12 says that when Adam sinned, all of his descendants were affected. We are all born spiritually weighed down. What that means in practical terms is that we have certain sinful tendencies that we didn't choose.

From Early Years: Some of the baggage you picked up may have been second-hand. We are all influenced by our childhood experiences. We pick up habits and patterns from our parents and other significant people in our lives. Where do you think Isaac learned to lie about his wife (compare Genesis 20:2 and Genesis 26:7-9)? Where did Jacob's sons learn to be so deceptive (compare Genesis 27:19 and 37:21)? Some of what we pick up from our families are treasures; but some of it is just baggage.

From Our Own Choices: Much of the baggage we carry came as a result of our own choices. Whenever we choose to go against God's will there are consequences. The Bible says we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7). In other words, we accumulate luggage when we sin. We develop damaging habit patterns that become hard to lose.

The good news is that God wants to help you lose this luggage. It probably won't all disappear at once, but God is committed to helping you travel light and become like Christ (Romans 8:29).

This study guide will lead you through a study of Romans 8. As you go, you'll learn how God has made it possible for you to lose the luggage you've been carrying that needs to go. But, before you can lose it, you need to check it.

Doing a personal “Baggage Check”

Here’s how to do your personal baggage check. Carefully and prayerfully, look over the list and identify which of the areas you are carrying baggage in. You’ll notice that there are three suitcases in front of each topic. That’s to help you indicate how much baggage you carry in various areas. If you have an occasional problem in an area, check one bag (☒). If you have an ongoing, regular problem in that area, check two bags (☒☒). If you have a big problem in that area, check all three bags (☒☒☒).

If you want to really do a thorough baggage check, ask a family member or close friend to fill out the form about you.

The luggage list that follows is largely based on Romans 1 and Galatians 5. In these two chapters Paul catalogues some of the “acts of the sinful nature” (Galatians 5:19).

Self-centeredness: A life focused on pleasing yourself rather than glorifying God; a me-first attitude in life.

Sexual impurity: A degrading of God’s purposes for sexuality in thought or action.

Greed: A selfish desire to acquire (money, possessions, things); a continual discontent with what one currently has.

Envy: An unpleasant sensation when noticing the prosperity or success of another.

Murder: Before you skip past this one, remember that Jesus put anger in the murder category (Matthew 5:21-22). A quick and hot temper that flares up to scorch and damages others.

Strife: A tendency to be contentious; quick to quarrel.

Deceit: Intentionally misleading others; concealing the facts in order to cover the truth.

Malice: Bitterness that shows up in harsh, sarcastic words or cold, unkind actions.

Gossip: Passing along information about others that should be kept to yourself or disclosed only to those who are part of the solution.

Slander: Speaking against others to tear them down.

Boasting: Attempts to draw attention to yourself to gain approval or praise from others; an exalted estimation of yourself.

Disobedient to parents (for those still at home): A stubborn, resistant or defiant attitude towards parental authority.

Faithless: A lack of confidence in God, a disposition to worry or complain, a tendency to doubt God when life gets hard.

Heartless: A heart that is callous or insensitive to the needs and pains of others.

Ruthless: A determination to get ones way even when it means hurting others.

Approving of evil: Vicariously supporting evil by approving what is disapproved of by God.

Witchcraft/Occult: Dabbling or diving into the dark side of spiritual power.

Hatred: A settled, ongoing feeling of ill will towards someone.

Discord: An inclination to cause or contribute to relational friction; a history of leaving a trail of broken relationships behind you.

Factions: A tendency to divide up into cliques that intentionally exclude people who don't fit in with your group.

Drunkenness: Drinking to the point of being impaired—physically, emotionally, relationally or spiritually.

Other luggage (not on this list): _____

Other luggage (not on this list): _____

Choose the Luggage You Want to Lose: Now that you've done a baggage check, it's time to focus on the luggage you most need to lose. While your desire should be to lose it all—in fact, you won't have much success in losing *some* of your luggage until you want to lose it *all*—it's hard to focus on getting rid of all your sinful baggage at once. So prayerfully select one or two kinds of baggage you most want to lose. For some it may be envy and malice. For another person it may be sexual impurity and deceit.

The luggage I want to lose: 1. _____
2. _____

No Condemnation? No Kidding!

Chapter 1 • Day 1

Take off: Ever get pulled over by a policeman for speeding who showed you mercy and didn't give you a ticket? How did you feel when you were pulled over? How did you feel when you were shown mercy?

It's great to be pardoned by a policeman. But that doesn't compare to the sheer joy and wonder of being pardoned by God. Especially when you been feeling guilty about having a load of sinful luggage in your life.

In the introduction to this study you were asked to identify the spiritual baggage you've been carrying around on your journey through life. You may have felt pretty condemned as you worked through the check list of lousy luggage (pages 7 & 8). If you did, you're going to love what you find in the opening verse of Romans 8.

1. Write out Romans 8:1.

2. No condemnation. Zero. None. That's quite a claim. How convinced are you that there is now (right now) no condemnation for those who are in Christ? (1 = unconvinced; 10 = completely convinced).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. If there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, why do we sometimes feel so condemned by God?

4. To better understand what Paul means by the word “condemnation” read Romans 8:33-34.
 - a) Based on these verses, what is the opposite of being condemned?
 - b) Who is the one who justifies us? (“Justify” means to pardon)
 - c) On what basis can God justify us when we are guilty of sin? (check out verses 32 and 34)
 - d) Why does God’s justification outweigh any condemnation that others (including our own hearts) bring against us?
5. God defends us as both a righteous judge (Romans 8:33-34) and a loving Father (Romans 8:15-17). Think of how parents defend their own children. While we may point out their faults, if another person tries to condemn them, we come to their defense. After all, they are ours! How does it impact your heart to know that God is willing to defend you?
6. Some people fear that if Christians are told they are free from God’s condemnation, they will get spiritually careless and accumulate even more sinful baggage. How would you respond to someone who had this concern? (see Romans 6:1-2).

A true understanding of God’s amazing grace and our freedom from condemnation actually motivates us to deal with our sinful baggage. To put it theologically, knowing that we are justified (no condemnation) helps us become sanctified (less baggage)!

Write out Romans 8:1 on a post it note – and put it where you can see it this week.

In Christ Alone

Chapter 1 • Day 2

Romans 8 begins with an amazing assertion: No condemnation. That's welcome news to all of us who feel weighed down with condemnation over the sinful luggage we're carrying through life.

No condemnation is good news. But is it too good to be true? Are we missing some fine print at the bottom of the page that adds conditions to this promise? Well, there is no fine print at the end of bottom of the page, but there is some regular-sized print at the end of the verse that we need to understand. And that's what we'll be studying in today's lesson.

1. Finish this sentence (Romans 8:1). Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are _____.

2. So the promise of No Condemnation applies to a group of people: those who are "in Christ Jesus." What do you think it means to be "in Christ"?

3. The phrase "in Christ" is the apostle Paul's shorthand for "in union with Christ." Jesus gave us a word picture to help us understand what it means to be in "union with Christ". He spoke of a grape branch that's united to a vine (John 15:1-8). Read John 15:1-8 and answer the following questions:
 - a) What does it mean for a branch to be "in" the vine?

 - b) What does Jesus say are the evidences that a branch is truly in the vine?

 - c) So based on the picture of a branch and the vine, what does it mean for a person to be "in Christ"?

4. If you have to be “in Christ” to be free from God’s condemnation, then it’s vitally important to know how a person becomes “in Christ.” Take a walk down the “Romans Road” and see how you can be sure you are in Christ.

Romans 3:23

Romans 6:23

Romans 5:8

Romans 10:9-10

5. Have you personally believed with your heart and confessed Jesus as your Saviour resulting in your salvation?

yes (if “yes”, write out when you did this)

no (if “no”, write out what’s holding you back)

not sure (if “not sure”, write down what makes you unsure)

If you’ve received Jesus as your Saviour, YOU are in Christ. Take a moment to personalize Romans 8:1. Write *your own name* in the verse below:

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for _____ who is in Christ Jesus.”

6. What an encouragement to know that we are free from the condemnation of God. As you close today, can we encourage you to memorize Romans 8:1? Say it to a friend and tell them why this verse encourages you!

At The Cross

Chapter 1 • Day 3

There's a powerful scene in the movie, *The Mission* that shows Rodrigo Mendoza, a reformed Spanish mercenary trying to get rid of the baggage of his past. He goes to the priest to ask how to find forgiveness and freedom. The priest has him bundle up all the reminders of his past life as a fighter, swords, armour, shields. The penitent soldier ties this heavy burden to his back and is told to climb up the face of a steep waterfall. Somehow, he believes if he can do this superhuman task, his past sins will be atoned for and he will find freedom. It makes for great cinematography, but it's lousy theology.

Today we'll see that to get free from the burdensome baggage we carry from our past we don't need to climb a mountain, we just need to go to the cross.

1. Our focus verse for this lesson is Romans 8:3. Read it over several times and write down which words you think are "key" words in this verse.

2. We're told that the law, that would be the law of Moses, was unable to set us free from the downward gravity of sin and death.
 - a) According to verse 3, why was the law unable to help us find freedom?

 - b) What does Romans 7:12 tell you about the law?

 - c) What does Romans 7:14-19 tell you about people?

3. Can you see why the law can't set us free? It's holy, but we aren't. That means that just "trying harder" to lose the sinful baggage won't work. You may know what is right, but you can't consistently pull it off.
 - a) How have you found that "trying harder" to lose your luggage is so often a lost cause?

 - b) What would you say to someone who tells you that if you tried harder you'd succeed?

4. Since we couldn't set ourselves free from the downward pull of sin and death through our own self-efforts, God stepped in to literally save the day. According to Romans 8:3, what did God do to deliver us?

5. Jesus took on our humanity. But He also came to take on our sin. Romans 8:3 says He came to be a "sin offering", literally He came "for sin". When did Jesus become a sin offering for us?

6. Here's the crucial concept to remember. The basis of your forgiveness is always and only the death of Christ. Your union with Him, through repentant faith is what allows your sins to be free from God's condemnation and sin's domination. To the extent you hang on to that by faith, you will be able to lose your sinful luggage. If you revert to self-effort, your baggage will stay tied to your back.
 - a) How are you doing when it comes to remembering that Jesus' death on the cross is your only hope for forgiveness and righteousness?

 - b) What will you do when you are tempted to try and "scale the cliffs of self-effort" to earn your forgiveness?

 - c) How will you remind yourself to gratefully live "near the cross" as you go through this day?

For further help in getting clear on this concept, listen to the sermon entitled "Double Crossed". You can access this at www.metbiblechurch.ca.

Free At Last!

Chapter 1 • Day 4

Freedom. That's a wonderful word, isn't it? In many places in our world, people are dying to live in freedom. That's also true in the place we live. While we enjoy a great deal of freedom in our country, many people are still enslaved to fear and to destructive habit patterns. We still feel tied to the old baggage that weighs us down. Today we'll see the good news that freedom is God's design for all who are in Christ.

1. Read Romans 8:1-4, focusing attention on verse 2. Write it out below:
2. If you are "in Christ," from what have you been set free?
3. Initially, it may seem confusing to say you've been set free from "sin" and "death." After all, you still sin and you will die. So, let's do a bit more digging to discover what Paul means when he speaks of being free from the "law of sin and death."

The word "law" in verse 2 refers to that which regulates or rules our lives. So the law of sin and death refers to the "rule" of sin and death. (*The New Living Bible* uses the word "power", as in the "power of sin").

- a) How does sin "rule" over our lives before we come to Christ?
- b) How is sin's rule broken over our lives by the cross? (see Romans 6:1-2, 11)
- c) How is death's rule over our lives broken by the cross? (See Romans 6:4-5)

4. So the good news is that while sin can still seduce us, it no longer has to enslave us. We will still be attracted to sin; but we don't have to stay addicted to it! And while we will still die physically, death has lost its sting because we share in Christ's resurrection life and will live forever with Him (1 Corinthians 15:55-56).

a) How does knowing that you've been free from slavery to sin and from the sting of death help you?

b) Think of the sinful, old baggage you've been trying to lose. How does this verse give you hope?

5. Notice that verse 2 says that the law (rule) of sin and death was replaced by a new "law"—the "law of the Spirit of life."

a) How does the Spirit's rule over our lives lead to freedom?

b) Is freedom the same thing as "doing what you want"? Why or why not?

c) Why can it be said that being under the "law" (or rule) of the Spirit is still liberating?

6. Think of the luggage you want to lose. Based on the truth we just studied today, finish the following sentences:

Because I am in Christ, I have been set free from the baggage of _____
and _____ (write down the luggage you want to lose).

While these sinful patterns can still attract me, they no longer have to addict me, for Romans 8:2 says that in Christ, God's Spirit sets me free from the law of _____ and _____."

Living Under The Influence

Chapter 1 • Day 5

We're so thankful that you've been willing to embark on this study of *Losing Your Luggage*. We know it will take dedication and discipline on your part to keep at it. You may even be feeling a bit weary today. But rest assured, God's Spirit is able to help you. In fact, today we'll discover more about our need for the power God's Spirit brings to our lives. We'll learn what it means to live under the Spirit's influence as we journey towards freedom.

If you were to do a concordance study on the number of times the word "Spirit" shows up in Romans, here's what you would find in the first seven chapters:

Chapter	# of References to the Holy Spirit	Verse #
1	1	4
2	1	29
3	0	
4	0	
5	1	7
6	0	
7	1	6

1. Now do a count of how many times the Holy Spirit is mentioned in chapter 8. How many references to the Holy Spirit did you find in chapter 8?

2. What do you make of the fact that the Holy Spirit is mentioned so frequently in chapter 8?

3. The message that comes through clearly in Romans 8 is that you can't live a holy life without the Holy Spirit. You can't lose your luggage without the Spirit's help. According to Romans 8:4, what does the living by the Spirit enable us to do?

4. We have a favorite worship CD by Andy Rozier called *Songs for Sinners*. On one track, the words of Galatians 5:16-26 are read slowly and clearly. Hearing these verses read makes you reflect on the drastic difference the Holy Spirit can make in our lives. Take a few moments and read Galatians 5:16-26 OUT LOUD to encourage yourself.
 - a) How would you describe the results of NOT living by the Spirit?

 - b) What results when we do live by the Spirit?

5. It should be pretty clear that if you want to lose your sinful luggage, you'll need to live by the Spirit. The Bible compares being under the influence of God's Spirit to being under the influence of wine (see Ephesians 5:18). Intoxication shows. Being filled with God shows too. Have you shown the evidence of being under the Spirit's influence over the past few days? Why or why not?

6. Losing your luggage won't happen without the help of the Holy Spirit. Only as we live by the Spirit can we fulfill the God's righteous requirements (Romans 8:4). Take a few moments and invite God's Holy Spirit to cleanse and fill you today. Then step into the day, trusting Him to empower your life and enable you to lose your sinful luggage.

Traveling Together

Chapter 1 • Day 6

Airline travelers can tell you that it usually takes the “help” of other people to lose your luggage. Delayed flights may cause bags to miss the right flight. Baggage handlers can accidentally route suitcases to the wrong city. You could say that losing luggage is a team effort.

The same thing is true spiritually. Getting rid of your sinful baggage often takes a team as well. Today we’ll see how traveling closely with others is crucial to losing the luggage from your old life.

1. Carefully read over Romans 8:1-4 again. What evidence can you find in these verses that God wants us to journey towards freedom with other Christians rather than all alone?
 - a) Why might that be significant?
 - b) How could “living according to the Spirit” be something done in community and not simply in isolation?

3. The rest of the book of Romans confirms the truth that losing your luggage and finding spiritual freedom requires that you stay closely connected to other believers. Look up the following verses and note how living by God’s Spirit requires living in community with other Christians.
 - a) Romans 12:9-10

 - b) Romans 13:8-10

4. The book of Romans was written to a local church, a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile Christians. God's plan was that they would grow in their faith (and lose their luggage) in the context of their relationships with one another.
 - a) Do you see other Christians as vital to helping you lose your luggage and find your freedom? Why or why not?
 - b) Do you allow other Christians to get close enough to you to know about your spiritual struggles? Why or why not?

5. Many Christians would testify they were not able to lose their luggage on their own; they needed the help of God's Spirit and the help of God's people.
 - a) Read James 5:16 and summarize how other Christians can help us find healing and freedom from old sinful patterns?
 - b) Why is it so hard for us to do what James 5:16 tells us to do?
 - c) Why is it worth doing anyway?

6. In light of all this, we hope you've chosen to do this study in the context of a smaller group of believers. If you are not in a small group, we'd encourage you to find at least one or two other Christians with whom you can discuss this material. We really are better together.
 - a) Who will you open your life up to as you go through this material?
 - b) Pray that God would enable you to be helped by others and to give help to others.

It's All In Your Mind

Chapter 2 • Day 1

This week you'll be doing a lot of thinking about your thinking.

My mother (Linda) used to say "as a man thinks within himself, so he is." (Proverbs 23:7) She emphasized that our thoughts become what we do, and who we are. The longer I live, the more evident this becomes. Everything flows from what we think!

Take Off: On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you think your thoughts matter?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Researchers such as Dr. Carolyn Leaf (*Who Switched Off My Brain*) reveal that many of our problems result from our thinking. The Bible revealed this centuries ago.

1. Read Romans 8:1-11. According to verse 5, what are the two possible mindsets we can have?

a)

b)

2. What is the link between thinking and our actions according to verse 5?

3. According to the following passages, what is the relationship between our thinking and our behaviour?

Verse	Thoughts	Outcomes
a) Isaiah 26:3		
b) Romans 12:1-2		
c) Ephesians 4:17-20		

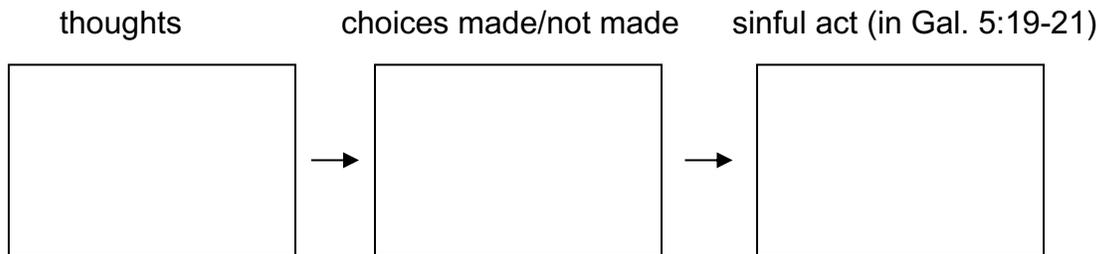
Stinkin' Thinkin'

Chapter 2 • Day 2

Our thinking starts to go south when we let our minds wander in the wrong direction, then our thinking starts to stink. It just comes naturally. Although it's an easy turn in the road, it leads to a dead end.

1. Read Romans 8:5-8. What are the results of our natural, sinful way of thinking?

2. Review the *“acts of the sinful nature”* recorded in Galatians 5:19-21. Pick one or two of these *“acts of the sinful nature”* and identify the thought processes that could have led to it:



3. How could the sinful action have been avoided if different choices were made?

4. James 1:13 also describes a similar progression. What evidences of wrong thinking do you find in this verse? How are the results similar to Romans 8:6?

By the way, we can't stop every wrong thought from entering our heads. However, we can choose not to allow them to stay in our minds. Martin Luther once quipped, "You can't stop the birds from flying around your head, but you don't have to let them build a nest in your hair."

5. There are times when we all suddenly speak or act in a way that's impulsive. But Jesus said we actually speak out of what already "*fills our hearts.*" (Matthew 15:18-19) Even our words flow out of our thoughts. When have you noted this in your own life?

6. There is good news! The mind that is set on God's Spirit will be filled with life and peace (verse 6b). We'll look at this in depth on Day 3 of this chapter. But before we do, let's identify where our thoughts really are.
 - a) List any thoughts that you regularly think about yourself (perhaps down on yourself or perhaps a bit of a high estimation of yourself):

 - b) List any thoughts that are down on others:

 - c) List any thoughts that are tempting you to stray from God's path:

 - d) List any thoughts that doubt some of the promises of God's Word as true:

Sobering isn't it? Who would think that these little thoughts could have such a big impact on our lives? Our thoughts are where it all begins.

Close your time with God today by praying the words of this song:

*Over every thought, over every word
May my life reflect the beauty of my Lord
You mean more to me, than any earthly thing
So won't you reign in me again.*

We have a friend who humbly admitted that sometimes she not only sings God "reign in me" but also "rein me in." Truly we need to let God help us in our thoughts!

In Your Right Mind

Chapter 2 • Day 3

As you awoke today, what was on your mind? What “station” did your mind play?

Each day, we need to get up and change the channel (unless you awoke thinking thoughts that were worshipping God!) Here are some great thoughts to play in your mind:

- I am loved by God, He died for me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20).
- I am a child of God. He adopted me and made me His own (Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:4-5).
- I am chosen and dearly loved by God (Col. 3:12).
- I am precious in His sight (Isaiah 43:4)
- God loves all the people in the world, and gave Himself for them—even my enemies (John 3:16-17).
- God has a wonderful purpose for my life today (Ephesians 2:10).

What difference does it make when your mind is playing one of these godly “stations”?

1. Open up your Bible to Romans 8 once again. What are the outcomes of a mind set on the Spirit?
 - verse 6b
 - verse 10
 - verse 11

2. Jesus was the one who provided the picture of what the Spirit would do in our lives. Read John 7:37-39. Ask yourself:

- a) When did this happen? (v. 37) and is that significant?

- b) What did He say would happen to those who come to Him?(v. 38)

- c) What would be the results (v. 38-39)

Jesus stood and spoke these words on the greatest and final day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast was celebrated with certain rituals, one of them being a gold pitcher filled with water from the Gihon Spring was poured out by a priest while the choir sang Isaiah 12:3 The Feast's seventh and last day was the greatest (Lev. 23:36).

When Jesus offered "Come to me and drink, he was offering salvation to all who would desire it. When he promised streams of living water to those who believe in Jesus He promised the Holy Spirit would flow through us giving us new life, guidance and power. (Source: *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, page 303)

As His Spirit flows through us, we'll have new thoughts, and new ways of looking at life. After all, Jesus was the One who put people back in their right minds (see Mark 5:15).

3. In order to have a right, Spirit filled mind:
- a) Ask God today to make you really thirsty for Him

 - b) Ask Him to fill you full with His powerful Holy Spirit

As we are filled with Him, it will show. Our thinking channels will be reset. Go today in His strength and believe in the power He has given to you. Set your mind on Him!

Changing Your Mind

Chapter 2 • Day 4

Changing our minds. Sometimes that is seen as a bad thing, but in today's study we'll see how changing our minds to be more like Christ is really a good thing.

Sometimes we don't want to change. Change just isn't comfortable. We once received wise counsel that "it's only out of pain that we change." For most of us, until we feel the pain of our own choices, we don't tend to change our direction. We would be wise to heed the advice of the Psalmist: *"I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free"* (Psalm 119:32)

1. Sometimes we are running so fast through life that we don't pause long enough to even ask ourselves, "What does God think about this?" What are God's thoughts like? (see Isaiah 55:8). How do they compare with ours?

God's Thoughts	My Thoughts

2. We'll never change our thoughts to God's thoughts if we already think we have a good thin(k)g going! Sometimes we don't even want to know what God really thinks – we've got it all planned. How does Romans 8:7 describe the person who won't ask God for directions (check all that apply):

- just having fun
- later God...I'll get back to you
- unsubmitive to God
- hostile to God

Power to Change has a wonderful diagram of two lives, one submitted to God and one that is not:



Self-Directed Life

Self is on the throne, directing decisions and actions (represented by the dots), often resulting in frustration. Jesus is outside the life.



Christ-Directed Life

Jesus is in the life and on the throne. Self is yielding to Jesus. The person sees Jesus' influence and direction in their life.

Which diagram is representative of the way you are presently living?

3. We need to realize that our basic sin struggle is putting ourselves in the place where only God belongs. We retain the final say in decision making for ourselves. But once we become Christians things change inside of us. According to Romans 8:9, what is true of those who are “in Christ?”

4. What could you tangibly do today to symbolize your complete submission to God, His thoughts and His ways?
 - a) Is there anything you need to destroy?

 - b) Is there anything where you need to yield to Him?

 - c) Are there any steps He would have you take?

Take some time and listen to God's Spirit speak to you about the above questions. Willingly offer your life back to God for His purposes. Take the steps He puts on your heart and know His joy!

The Power To Change

Chapter 2 • Day 5

Changing your mind is no easy thing. In fact, it may seem an impossible task. How can we get rid of old thought patterns and replace them with new ones? Where do we get the power to change? Today we'll see that we have the power to change inside of us if we have God's Spirit living in our lives.

1. Read over Romans 8:9-11 at least three times. From what Paul says in verse 9, who is in control of your life?

2. If you are a Christian, the Bible says you are not controlled by the sinful nature, but by the Holy Spirit.
 - a) Does that seem to be true in your life right now? Why or why not?

 - b) Does being controlled by the Spirit mean you won't struggle with temptation or sin anymore? Why or why not?

3. The good news that Paul is telling you in verses 9-11 is that you have more power inside of you than you may realize. Because of your union with Christ, you have died to sin and are now alive to God (Romans 6:11). On top of that, God's Spirit lives in you. He now has the rightful control over your life. And He brings the power needed for you to change in a big way.
 - a) According to Romans 8:10-11, what kind of power does the Holy Spirit bring into your life? (Hint: What did God's Spirit do for Jesus?)

 - b) In what ways does knowing that God's Spirit works with "resurrection power" give you hope that you could actually lose some sinful luggage and experience freedom in Christ?

4. Paul prays that believers would experience the Spirit's power in Ephesians 3:14-21. Read over this amazing prayer and answer the following:

a) What impact does Paul say the Spirit's power will have in our lives? (verses 16-19)

b) What does Paul say God's power can accomplish in verses 20-21?

5. God's Spirit can do more in us than we would dare to dream or imagine. He can enable us to change, to lose luggage that has been with us for years. As Romans 8:11 says, God can *"give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who lives in you."*

On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that God's Spirit can enable you to see change happen in your body when it comes to sinful baggage?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Close today by thanking Him for the power to live beyond yourself. Once again, offer your body to God (Romans 12:1), asking the Holy Spirit to take control of you as you go through this day.

Spiritual Mind Control

Chapter 2 • Day 6

Today we want to put together all we've learned over this past week and apply it in some practical ways.

1. Look back over the previous lessons in this week's lessons. Answer the following questions that help remind you of the key ideas:
 - a) What are the two possible mindsets we can have?

 - b) What are the results of having our minds set on what the sinful nature desires?

 - c) What are the results of having our minds set on what the Spirit desires?

Let's apply what we've learned to the baggage we want to lose.

2. What sinful actions or addictions do you most want to lose right now?

3. Now seek to identify any thoughts patterns that are buried deep behind these behaviours. It's helpful to pray the words of Psalm 139:23, "*Search me O God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.*" List any "stinking thinking" that God's Spirit reveals in the following areas:
 - unbiblical thoughts about yourself
 - faulty thoughts about God
 - ungodly thoughts about others
 - other wrong thoughts

How does your thinking contribute to your sinful actions?

4. This is a life and death matter here. As the Puritan pastor, John Owen, put it: “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” How do we “die” if we fail to put sin to death?

5. When Paul writes that we are to “*put to death*” the misdeeds of the body, he uses a present tense verb which implies ongoing action. You may be thinking putting sin to death is an impossible task. You may feel it’s a futile, losing fight. But that’s not the case. In fact, Jesus decisively dealt with sin at the cross. Remind yourself of what Jesus has done to your sin by looking up and summarizing the following verses.

Romans 6:1-2, 11

Romans 8:3

The reason you can put sin to death is because you have died to it. You died to the controlling power of sin. It no longer has a death grip on your life. Sin’s power was broken at the cross. Sin can still *tempt* you, but it no longer has to *trap* you. Because of what Jesus did for you at the cross, you can win the battle with temptation.

6. Think about the spiritual baggage you are seeking to lose. (The baggage you identified when you first began this study). Based on what you’ve studied today answer these questions.

a) Does this sinful baggage have to control you? Why or why not?

b) What are you to do to the sins that try to run (and ruin) your life?

You may be finishing today’s lesson thinking, “I know I am supposed to put sin to death when it tempts me, but exactly how do I do that?” That’s what we’ll discover tomorrow.

Spiritual Executions

Chapter 3 • Day 2

Putting sin to death is a cooperative venture between you and the Holy Spirit. It's both your work and His work. It begins in your thinking as you set your mind on what the Spirit desires, but it extends to your actions. Today we'll see how you work with the Spirit to eliminate sinful baggage.

1. Romans 8:13 has been our key verse so far this week: Just to reinforce it in your thinking, fill in these contrastive phrases:

IF you live according to the _____ you will _____

IF by the _____ you _____ you will _____ (v. 13)

2. The Greek word for “put to death” ($\theta\alpha\nu\alpha\tau\alpha\omega$) can mean to “execute or put to death.” It can also mean, “to hand over to be killed.” Read Matthew 26:59.

a) What did the chief priests want to do to Jesus?

b) Who actually carried out the crucifixion?

c) So did the chief priests or Romans soldiers put Jesus to death?

Since the Jews did not have the authority to crucify anyone (John 18:31), they “put Him to death” by handing Him over to Pilate and the Romans. Both Jews and Romans played a part in Christ’s death. The priests handed Him over and the Roman soldiers carried out the crucifixion.

3. This idea of “*handing over to be put to death*” fits well in Romans 8:13. Circle the correct answer for each of the following:

Who is it that decides to put sin to death? You God’s Spirit

Who must hand over sin to be put to death? You God’s Spirit

Who actually has the power and authority to put sin to death? You God’s Spirit

4. So losing your sinful baggage will take both your decision and God’s power. Here’s a warning. If you try to put sin to death in your own power (instead of “by the Spirit’s power”), you will wind up in one of two ditches: pride or despair.

a) How could trying to deal with sin in your own power lead to either pride?

b) How could trying to deal with sin in your own power lead to despair?

c) Which of the two ditches are you most likely to fall into?

5. Do you see how putting sin to death takes a combination of your choice and God’s power? You decide to get ruthless with sin. You choose to hand over sinful patterns to the Holy Spirit. He puts these sinful urges to death by His supernatural power. How will you seek to put what you’ve just studied into practice today?

Thoroughly Mortified

Chapter 3 • Day 3

Ever travel with luggage that embarrasses you? Suitcases that are old and worn. Maybe the latches are broken and you have to use a belt (or duct tape) to keep your clothes from tumbling out. As your beat up luggage comes down the baggage chute and onto the carousel, you are thoroughly mortified.

That's the way sinful baggage can make us feel as well. It can be embarrassing to be caught carrying the luggage from our old lives. We can feel thoroughly mortified. Today we'll discover that being "thoroughly mortified" is actually a good thing. It's part of the process of losing our luggage.

Romans 8:13 calls us to put sin to death by the power of the Spirit. The King James translation of this verse says we are to "*mortify the deeds of the body.*" You could say we are to be thoroughly mortified when it comes to our sinful baggage. If you ever hope to "mortify sin" you will need to be mortified by it.

1. Look up the following verses and record what each verse says about the attitude we should have towards sinful baggage.
 - a) Proverbs 8:13
 - b) Matthew 5:27-30
 - c) Romans 12:9

2. John Owen, a Puritan pastor, had it right when he wrote, "Hatred of sin as sin" lies at the "bottom of all true spiritual mortification." Which of the following best describes your attitude towards your sinful luggage?
 - a) It's not really that big of a deal
 - b) My luggage isn't nearly as bad as some other people's luggage
 - c) I'd like to get rid of it, if it's not too hard to do
 - d) I'm dying to lose this luggage; I hate it

3. To develop more of a godly hatred of sin, think about the damage it does.
 - a) How has your sinful luggage negatively impacted you over the years?
 - b) How has your sinful luggage adversely affected others around you?
 - c) How has your sinful luggage grieved the heart of the God who loves you? (see Ephesians 4:30)

As you've studied today, no doubt the Holy Spirit brought to your mind some areas of sin that if others knew (and they may!) you would be mortified. Spend a few moments humbling yourself before God and bringing these areas into the light of His mercy and grace (He already sees and knows them anyway).

4. Being thoroughly mortified by our sinful luggage shouldn't lead us to despair or to self-condemnation. Remember what Romans 8:1 says: *"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* The cross of Christ is sufficient to provide forgiveness for sin and acceptance before God!
 - a) Why is it crucial that you remember your "no condemnation" standing before God when you feel mortified by your sinful baggage?
 - b) Close today's lesson by reviewing Romans 8:1 (you should have memorized it already). Ask God's Spirit to keep this liberating truth in your heart and mind as you go through the process of becoming "thoroughly mortified."

5. Sin always leads us away from God. In grace, God always wants to lead us back to Him. What are some ways God has worked in your life to lead you back to Him?

6. How does God lead us to walk in His ways? (see Psalm 119:9-11)

God's leading is also good for us. His will is good, acceptable and perfect.
(Romans 12:2)

7. Being led by someone is directly related to "listening" to him or her. When have you been misled by listening to the counsel of someone who wasn't following God's Words? What was the result?

8. When God speaks to you from Scripture or through godly counsel...

- Are you really willing to be "led by Him?"
- Are you responsive in obeying God without delay?
- Are you humbly open to the wisdom of godly leaders around you?

Meditate on the truth of Psalm 27:11: *"Teach me Your way, O Lord and **lead me** on a level path."* Ask Your Faithful Shepherd to lead you today.

Hearing Loss

Chapter 3 • Day 5

Jesus' call to each of the twelve disciples was simply, "Follow Me." We often forget our path as disciples of Jesus is also one of following Him. Following Him is the same as being led by Him. And being led by God necessitates hearing His voice.

Henry Blackaby in *Experiencing God* notes: "If you have trouble hearing God speak, you are in trouble at the very heart of your Christian experience."

Sometimes we experience hearing loss. We used to hear His voice...but somehow over time the relationship has grown quiet or distant.

1. Jesus indicated His sheep (His followers) would hear His voice and follow Him (John 10: 14-16). Based on what Jesus says in the following verses, what might be the reason some people do not hear or follow Him?

John 8:47

John 10:25-27

2. According to John 14:21 when does God disclose Himself to us?
3. Silence is not always golden. Sin in our lives grieves God's Spirit and He will no longer speak to us. We will experience hearing loss. Are there any areas where His Spirit has become distant or quiet in your life? (see Ephesians 4:29-32)

Just a reminder: Job experienced silence from God as He waited for an explanation for His suffering. Jesus also felt forsaken by God. In times of silence we must continue to walk by faith and follow the truth of Scripture. In time, a sense of His presence will return.

4. So far we've seen that hearing God's voice takes belonging to God's Son and obeying His commands. But some may still be asking, "How can I know when God is speaking to me? How can I be lead by His Sprit?" Henry Blackaby, in his wonderful study *Experiencing God*, notes that God speaks to us by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church (counsel of godly Christians) to reveal His purposes and His ways to us. How has God been speaking to you through...

a) His Word

b) Prayer

c) Circumstances

d) The church (counsel of God's Christians)

5. What has God been saying to you as you've done this study on *Losing Your Luggage*?

While writing this day's study, we were trying to make a significant renovation in our home. Our hearts had been set on making this change for several years and so when complications to our plans set in we tried to ignore them. Finally we had to acknowledge that our plans, or at least our timing, were not God's plan. Sometimes it's hard to give up OUR plans. Yet we must listen for His leading.

Your circumstances today may be very different than ours, but God's sovereignty rules over all (Psalm 103:19). We all need to sing:

*All to Jesus I surrender
All to Him I freely give
I will ever love and trust Him
In His presence daily live*

*I surrender all
I surrender all
All to thee My blessed Saviour,
I surrender all*

Would you be willing to sing along?

For further study on this subject, we recommend the study "Experiencing God."

Let Me Call You Abba

Chapter 3 • Day 6

Daddy's girl or Dad and lad. Everybody wants a close relationship with his or her Father, but not everyone has had one.

1. When you think of the word "Dad" what comes to your mind? What did you enjoy most about your father?
2. In Romans 8:15, we find we are able to cry out to our Heavenly Father in a very personal way. What's the word used and what does it mean?

When God adopts us, He invites us to call Him *Abba*. *Abba* is equivalent of our word "Daddy" or "Papa" (Jesus called out to His Father as "Abba" in Mark. 14:36)

3. God has an incredible heart for the fatherless. What encouragement is given in the following verses for those who need a father?

Psalm 27:10

Psalm 146:9

Psalm 68: 4-6

4. Fathers may live a long life, but none live forever. What promise is given concerning our relationship with our heavenly father? (see Isaiah 9:6)

5. Our relationship to God is not one of bondage or slavery (see Romans 8:15). What difference does it make when we see ourselves as children of God rather than slaves of God?

6. When we are struggling with our sinful baggage, we may start to wonder whether or not God the Father really sees us as his beloved children. According to Romans 8:16 how does the Holy Spirit help us at these times?

7. Many of us need to learn new images of what the True Heavenly Father is like. Describe the features of Your Heavenly Father from the following verses:

Psalm 103:13

Isaiah 64:8

8. What do the following passages teach us about also receiving correction from our Heavenly Father?

Proverbs 3:12

Hebrews 12:9-10

9. One of the gifts a father can leave to his children is an inheritance. What does Romans 8:17 tell you about the kind of inheritance God has for you as His child?

Take a few moments and reflect on all that you have studied on God as our Abba, Father. Which aspect of His character has most impacted your heart today?

Groaning Forward

Chapter 4 • Day 1

Take Off: Describe a time when you over packed for a trip and groaned as you lugged around heavy luggage?

Do you ever groan as you lug your spiritual luggage through life? Do you wish you could travel lighter?

Today we'll discover that groaning is a part of journeying towards freedom.

1. Read Romans 8:18-27 and list who or what is said to be groaning.

_____ (v. 22)
_____ (v. 23)
_____ (v. 26)

2. As you read through the Bible you discover that many believers have had times of groaning. Look up any **two** of the following passages and fill in the chart below:

Passage	Who Is Groaning?	Why?
Exodus 2:24		
Job 23:1-2		
Psalms 31:10		
2 Corinthians 5:1-4		

3. How does it help you to know there are many (many more than these) passages that describe our "groaning" in life and before God?

4. If you were really honest, in what area of your life are you “groaning?” How do you long to be released from this burden?

5. Take a few moments and bring your “groaning” to God. Journal what’s on your heart to God (like the Psalmist often did)



6. How does Romans 8:18 give you a perspective that can give you hope and help in the midst of suffering and groaning?

God promises our groaning will one day give way to sharing His glory. In other words, the destination you are headed towards on this journey of faith is unspeakably glorious. It will be worth any of the hardships that made you groan along the way. Choose to thank the Lord for His goodness to you now and the glorious destination He has planned for you in the future.

Creation Groans

Chapter 4 • Day 2

What's the most beautiful spot you've ever seen? Maybe you're picturing a stretch of rocky shoreline along the coast or a trail through one of the Rocky Mountains out west. Perhaps you're thinking of place where a crystal-clear stream trickles through a quiet forest near your hometown. You get the idea, so go ahead and write the most beautiful place you've ever seen. (If you can't pick one, give your short list).

Did you know that you've never seen your favorite place at it's best? No matter how beautiful a place may look, it's still groaning. That's what we learn in Romans 8:18-22.

1. Verse 22 says the "*whole creation*" groans right up to the present time. According to verse 20, why is creation groaning with frustration?

2. Verse 20 explains that creation was subjected to frustration by the "*will of the one who subjected it.*" To better understand what Paul means, look up Genesis 3:17-18 and answer the following questions:
 - a) Who subjected the creation to frustration?

 - b) Why was the creation subjected to frustration?

The reason creation is suffering is because humans sinned. When our first parents rebelled against God's commands, it not only brought groaning to the human race, but also to the "whole creation."

3. According to Romans 8:19-21, when will creation experience liberation from its frustration? When will the curse be reversed? (see Revelation 22:3 for a clue)

4. Romans 8:22 makes a comparison between creation's groaning and a woman in labour. (All the mothers may like to share their stories here ☺) In what ways are the two similar?

5. How does the idea of "labour pains" help us understand what we often refer to as natural disasters or "acts of God"—earthquakes, famines, or floods? (see Matthew 24:7-8)

Labour pains tend to be painful but purposeful. They may be excruciating, but they are not everlasting! The extreme suffering produces an extremely valuable outcome!

6. How does knowing the creation will be groaning until the "*new heavens and new earth*" (Revelation 21:1; 22:3) help you endure your groaning on the journey towards heaven?

Here's your assignment to close today's lesson. Try to spend some time out in creation today, or this week. Maybe take a walk in the park or a drive through the country. As you do, reflect on the fact that creation is groaning. Ask God to help you keep on your journey, and to reflect beauty, in the midst of your groaning.

We Also Groan

Chapter 4 • Day 3

“Are we almost there?” That’s a question parents get asked by kids who are tired of traveling and ready for the trip to be over. Like kids in the backseat, we too can start groaning!

Today we’ll see how, as Christians making a spiritual journey, we also groan as we journey towards spiritual freedom.

1. Read Romans 8:23-25 several times. According to verse 23, why are we groaning?

2. While we have already been adopted into God’s family, we haven’t yet received the inheritance promised to us as God’s children (see verse 17).
 - a) What part of our inheritance as God’s adopted children does verse 23 say we are eagerly waiting for?

 - b) What does Paul mean by the phrase, “the redemption of our bodies”?

3. Based on what you read in Philippians 3:20-21, when can we expect to receive our new, glorious bodies?

4. Most of us, especially as we get older, find ourselves groaning as our bodies wear out. What do you most look forward to about having a new, glorified body?

Often we think of groaning in our earthly bodies because of aches, pains and illnesses. While these conditions do make us groan, Paul is not just focused on physical sufferings in Romans 8.

5. What “struggle” related to our bodies has been the focus of Romans 8? (review verses 13-14)

6. How has the baggage you’ve carried caused you to “groan inwardly”?

7. Even though we are groaning hard, we aren’t giving up. That’s because we have hope. Paul has a lot to say about hope in verses 24-25.

a) How many times does the word “hope” show up in verses 24-25?

b) Verse 25 says hope gives us patience. How does hope produce patience?

8. Our hope is that we will one day receive new bodies that will be free from sickness and sin. How does knowing this give you hope as you groan?

Close today lesson asking God to keep your *hope* strong, even as you groan in anticipation of having a body that is free from sickness and sinful baggage.

When God Groans

Chapter 4 • Day 4

All Christians will groan as we journey towards freedom. But we don't groan alone. We've already seen that creation groans because of us. Other believers groan around us. And today we'll see an even more amazing truth: God's Spirit groans for us.

1. Read Romans 8:26-27.

- a) Verse 26 says the Spirit of God helps us in our weakness. According to this verse, in what way are we weak?

- b) How have you felt weak when it comes to prayer?

- c) Why is it sometimes difficult to know what to pray for?

Lets put these verses in the flow of Romans 8. The emphasis in this chapter is how we can live godly, righteous lives (verse 4). In other words, this chapter is talking about losing our sinful baggage. We've already seen that freedom begins in our thinking—remembering our spiritual status (“No Condemnation”) and setting our minds on what the Spirit desires (verses 5-8). This will enable us, with the Spirit's help, to put to death the misdeeds of the body (verses 12-13). The process of doing this is not pain-free or instantaneous; so we groan as we anticipate the day we will have bodies that are free from both sickness and sinfulness. While we groan our way forward, we pray, asking God for help. But sometimes our prayers seem so inadequate and ineffective. We're not even sure what to pray about. It's here that the Holy Spirit comes to help us (again!).

2. What kind of help does the Spirit give to us in our weakness? (see verse 26)

3. Verse 26 says the Spirit intercedes for us with “*groans that words cannot express.*” How does the fact that the Spirit is interceding with groans show His concern and engagement with your needs?

4. We don’t always know what to pray for. But “*the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will*” (verse 27). How does that strengthen you to know that the Spirit prays for you in this way?

5. Does this mean you shouldn’t try to express your heart to God? Why or why not?

6. What do you think the Spirit is asking God for on your behalf when it comes to helping you lose your sinful baggage?

It seems only appropriate to end this day’s lesson in prayer. So pour out your heart to God, knowing that the Holy Spirit will translate your weak words into a powerful prayer that rises up to your Abba Father. If you don’t feel you can even pray today, you can at least groan.

A Theology Of Groaning

Chapter 4 • Day 5

Dr. Ajith Fernando is a Christian who knows a lot about groaning. Ajith ministers for Christ in his home country of Sri Lanka, a land that has been torn by civil war for many years. Though he lives in Sri Lanka, Ajith travels extensively in the United States and Canada. He's noticed a deficiency in the thinking of many Western Christians. He writes about this in his excellent book, *Jesus-Driven Ministry*.

The typical growing evangelical church today has a strong theology of the necessity for growth...the church also has a strong theology of praise...then our churches have a strong theology of power—of God's ability to meet the needs of people and defeat their foes...but theologies of church growth, of praise and of power can give rise to serious aberrations if they are not balanced with a theology of groaning" (pp. 140-1)

1. In Romans 8:18-27 we have a passage that can help us develop "a theology of groaning." Let's review what we've already discovered.

Draw a picture (stick figures count as pictures) of who or what is groaning?

(verses 18-22)

(verses 23-25)

(verses 26-27)

2. How much of creation groans according to verse 22?

none some most all

3. What percentage of Christians are said to "groan inwardly" in verse 23?

none some most all

4. C.S. Lewis wrote that “pain is God’s megaphone to rouse a deaf planet”. How does groaning remind us that things are not yet set right?

Groaning is an indicator that things are not yet the way they *should* be (or the way they one day *will* be). Creation groans because it isn’t yet free from bondage to decay. Christians groan because we aren’t yet free from the damaging effects of sin and death.

5. How do the verses that speak of our groaning keep us from expecting an easy, pain-free spiritual journey in life?

6. What’s deficient with “prosperity theology” that says Christians are to be healthy and wealthy in this world? What truth from Romans 8 is this teaching forgetting or ignoring?

7. How can having a “theology of groaning” help you keep going in your struggle to lose your spiritual baggage?

Your assignment today is to find a friend and tell him / her what you’ve learned about “groaning” this week. Write down who you will talk to and record how the conversation went.

*We recently read an excellent article by Joni Earickson Tada entitled “Borrowing God’s Smile.”
Joni, a quadriplegic for 40 years, smiles while still groaning.
(see Discipleship Journal, Issue 167, September/October 2008)*

Hope For Those Who Groan

Chapter 4 • Day 6

If you are like us, you may be groaning at the thought of another lesson on groaning! Sure, it's important we understand that groaning is part of the process of losing our luggage. But all this talk about groaning can weigh us down.

Take heart. We've got some good news. Today's lesson is filled with hope. That's because Romans 8:18-27 is filled with hope. So get ready to be encouraged as we take one more look at verses 18-27.

1. Before Paul discusses groaning, he reminds us of glory (see verse 18).
 - a) How does the glory God has in store for us compare with the sufferings we will go through in this life?

 - b) What is Paul talking about when he refers to the "*glory that will be revealed in us?*" (see verses 17 and 21 to help you answer).

 - c) How can the hope of glory give you the perspective you need to endure the suffering of groaning?

2. While it's true we groan, Paul reminds us in verse 23 that we already have the "*firstfruits of the Spirit.*" While we have not yet experienced all God has in store for us, He has already sent his Spirit to live inside of us (Romans 8:9). The Spirit is the "deposit" or "down payment" on the inheritance we will one day receive in heaven (Ephesians 1:14). How does having God's Spirit living in you give you hope for your journey?

3. How have you already experienced the Spirit's help when it comes to getting rid of some of your sinful baggage?

a) Over the past year:

b) Over the course of this study:

God's promises in the Bible combined with the Spirit's presence in our lives give us good reason to be filled with hope. That's why verses 24-25 brim with hope.

"For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." (Romans 8:24-25)

4. Circle each occurrence of the word "hope" in the two verses above.

a) How does hope relate to faith?

b) How does hope relate to patience?

5. Paul moves from talking about "hope" (in verses 24-25) to talking about "help" (in verses 26-27). The help comes from the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us, bringing our needs to our Heavenly Father in a way that lines up with God's will. How does the Spirit's help give you even more reason to have hope?

6. While it's true we will groan as we are growing, but that doesn't mean we need to grumble or complain. We can hang on to hope, knowing that glory awaits us and God's Spirit will help us.

God Has A Good Plan For You

Chapter 5 • Day 1

The journey towards freedom can seem long and difficult at times. We groan as we go and as we grow. There are times along the way when we wonder. We wonder what God is up to in our lives. What is He doing around us? What is He doing inside of us? Today, we'll be reminded that God is always up to something. And He's always up to something good!

Take Off: When is the last time God did something great for you?

1. Read Romans 8:28.
 - a) Why do think Romans 8:28 is such a well-loved verse among Christians?
 - b) Why is this verse hard to fully believe? What makes it seem like an exaggeration?
2. Paul begins verse 28 with the words "*And we know...*" Considering what we've studied about our minds, why is it so important that we "know" the truth in verse 28?
3. What Paul says we know is the stunning truth that "*in all things God works for the good of those who love Him.*"
 - a) In what situations in your life right now do you need to remember that God is working for your good?
 - b) Is Paul saying all things that happen to you are good? Why or why not?

The Greek term translated “works” (*sunergia*) gives us our English word “synergy.” Synergy speaks of a combined action where the effect is greater than the sum of the parts. In other words, God combines His actions with the events of our lives so that the ultimate outcome is a good one. Isn’t that amazing!

4. Give an example of a time you saw God work for good out of some painful or unwanted circumstances in your life?

5. Why does it give you courage to know that God can work for good in the midst of situations that are not good?

6. Notice that this promise is not given to everyone, but to a specific group of people. What two characteristics must be true of us before we can apply this promise?
 - a. We must _____ God
 - b. We must be _____ according to His purpose.

7. Of those two qualities, which one is your responsibility, and which one is God’s?

God is responsible for calling us (more on that in tomorrow’s lesson). We are to respond with loving—loving Him through our faith and obedience.

Close today by taking time to express your love for God and your trust that He is up to something good in your life right now!

You Will One Day Look Like Jesus

Chapter 5 • Day 2

Ever been told you look like someone else? Maybe a family member—your dad, mother, sibling, maybe a celebrity or athlete. Today you'll see that God plans for you to wind up looking like His Son, Jesus. Let's discover what that means and how that can happen.

Read Romans 8:28-30

Yesterday we were reminded that God is always up to something good; He is working in the midst of all the things that happen to us—good or bad.

1. Verse 28 ends by speaking about God's purpose in our lives. Verse 29 explains what that purpose is. Read verse 29 closely and write out what God's purpose is for His children.

2. What does it mean to be "conformed to the image" of Jesus?

3. Being conformed to Jesus image has a physical aspect to it; we will receive resurrected bodies that are like Christ's resurrected bodies (Philippians 3:20-21; Romans 8:23-24). Being conformed to the image of Jesus also has a spiritual aspect to it; we will share His holy character.
 - a) How does knowing this give you assurance that you will eventually lose your luggage and get free from the sinful baggage that weighs you down?

 - b) How does knowing that God purposes to conform you to the image of Jesus help you see yourself as "*more than a conqueror*"?

In verses 29-30, Paul gives you a theological reason for your confidence that you will wind up looking like Jesus. The reason he gives is based on five important terms. These terms may be confusing, so let's look at them one at a time and then see how Paul strings them together.

4. List the five key theological terms in verses 29-30

F _____

P _____

C _____

J _____

G _____

We'd encourage you to do some study on the meaning of each of these terms. They are rich in significance and worth the extra digging. You'll discover that God has made some plans for you long before you were born. He called you to Himself and declared you "righteous" when you responded with faith. His plan includes your salvation on earth and leads to your glorification in heaven.

5. If you are already a Christian, how many of the five terms have already happened in your life? Circle the correct number.

1 2 3 4 5

Explain why you circled the number you did.

6. If you circled the number four, you made a good choice. That's because if you are a Christian, you've already been foreknown, predestined, called and justified. But here's an important insight. Paul puts the word "glorified" in the past tense. In other words, he describes it as if it's already completed as well. Even though we won't be glorified until we get home to heaven (see Romans 8:17).

a) Why do you think Paul pictures your glorification as "a done deal"?

b) How does this give you further confidence that you will wind up looking like Jesus?

God Is For You Not Against You!

Chapter 5 • Day 3

Today we'll be reminded of another truth that will help you see yourself as a conqueror not just a struggler. This truth will give you confidence when the enemy tries to get you to feel condemned.

Read Romans 8:31-33

1. Paul begins verse 31 with the question, *“What, then, shall we say in response to this?”*
 - a) What is he referring to in this question? (What is the “this”?)
 - b) What kind of response is Paul expecting from us?
2. Paul answers his question (*“What, then, shall we say in response to this?”*) with a series of four rhetorical questions in verses 31-34a. Write out the essence of each question (use your own words)
 1. _____(v. 31)
 2. _____(v. 33)
 3. _____(v. 34)
 4. _____(v. 35)
3. *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* A few verses later in this chapter, Paul makes it clear that we can have a lot of people against us. (Read verses 35-36.) What point is Paul making when he says, *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”*

Paul is saying that if God is for us, it really doesn't matter who's against us. We will still be conquerors. We will make it to the end of the journey and wind up looking glorious, just like Jesus.

Some Christians have been troubled by the fact that Paul begins this question with the word “if.” He says, “*If God is for us...*” That makes some Christians uneasy. They wonder, “Maybe God isn’t really for me; maybe He’s just for some other Christians.”

- a) Do you ever wonder if God is really for you? When does that tend to happen?

 - b) What happens to your courage and spiritual stamina when you doubt that God is for you?
4. If you sometimes fear that God is not for you, then you need to focus your attention on the question that comes next in verse 32. How does the fact that God the Father gave His Son to die for you show you that God is for you in the fullest sense of the word?
5. Paul asks, “*Who will bring any charge against those who God has chosen?*” and “*Who is he that condemns?*” List some possible accusers you may have, who would bring charges against you?

1.

3.

2.

4.

A list of possible accusers could include other people, Satan and your own heart. All of these accuse you at times of having failed God and fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23). Your accusers may have some truth on their side, but they won’t have God on their side. “It is God who justifies.” Hang on to that.

Write out one key thought from today’s lesson and tell it to a friend today.

The Risen Christ Is Praying For You!

Chapter 5 • Day 4

This week we are learning why we can journey on with hope and joy, even as we groan through the process of losing our sinful luggage. We've already been reminded that God has a good plan for us; He's working all things together for our good, conforming us into the image of Christ. God is for us, no matter who may be against us!

Today, in Romans 8:34, we'll discover still another reason why we are "*more than conquerors*." It has to do with what Jesus has done and is doing for us!

1. Read Romans 8:34 and write it out in the space below:

2. In this verse, Paul reminds us of what Jesus has done for us and reveals what Jesus is doing for us right now!
 - a) What has Jesus done for us in the past?

 - b) What is Jesus doing for us in the present?

3. As Paul wrote in Romans 8:3, Jesus became our sin offering and He condemned (judged) our sin by paying the penalty for it. Since Paul already spoke about this concept earlier in the chapter, why do you think he brings the subject back up near the end of this chapter?

4. Why is it so important to continually keep Christ's death and resurrection in mind as we seek to lose our sinful luggage and move forward in our faith?

You Are Eternally Loved By God

Chapter 5 • Day 5

Today we come to the climax of Romans 8. The final verses in this chapter play out like the finale of a grand symphony. The tone is majestic and grand. The truth crescendos into a triumphant declaration: Nothing *“will be able separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

1. Read Romans 8:35-38. What question does Paul use to begin verse 35?
2. In verse 35, Paul lists a series of traumatic, painful experiences that would seem to indicate that we've been separated or cut off from Christ's love. Which of these troubles did Paul experience (at least to some degree)?
 - trouble
 - hardship
 - persecution (opposition because of one's faith in Jesus)
 - famine (lack of adequate food)
 - danger
 - nakedness (lack of proper clothing)
3. Which of these have you lived through (at least to some degree)?
 - trouble
 - hardship
 - persecution (opposition because of one's faith in Jesus)
 - famine (lack of adequate food)
 - danger
 - nakedness (lack of proper clothing)
4. Did these troubles cause Paul to doubt Christ's love for him? Why or why not?
5. Do your troubles (even your struggle in losing sinful luggage) cause you to doubt God's love for you? Why or why not?

Traveling Right; Traveling Light!

Chapter 5 • Day 6

Today we arrive at the final stop on our journey through Romans 8. It's been a joy to have you with us as we traveled through this amazing chapter in God's Word. Our hope is that you have a greater understanding of how God wants you to lose the sinful baggage from your old life.

Let's finish our journey by reviewing the key concepts and truths you'll need to remember and practice in the days ahead in order to keep losing your luggage and finding your freedom.

1. **No Condemnation! No Kidding!**: In Chapter 1 (Romans 8:1-4), we saw that in Christ we are cleared from all condemnation. We've been cleared for the journey towards freedom "in Christ" and "through the Spirit." Review Chapter 1 and then answer the following questions:
 - a) How are you doing when it comes to remembering that there is "*now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*"?

2. **Minding Your Mind**: In Chapter 2 (Romans 8:5-11), we learned that in order to lose our luggage, we need to mind our thinking. Freedom from sin takes the right mental focus. Review Chapter 2 before answering the questions below:
 - a) How has your mindset been in the past 24 hours? Spirit-led? Fleshly?

 - b) What have you put into your mind recently that has added accumulation to your baggage?

 - c) What have you put into your mind recently that has helped lighten your load spiritually?

 - d) What are your plans to stay faithful in reading, studying and memorizing God's Word in the weeks to come? (This will help your mindset in a major way!)

3. **Getting Rough with Sinful Baggage:** In Chapter 3 (Romans 8:12-17), we discovered that we must work with the Holy Spirit if we are to lose our sinful luggage. Look back over Chapter 3 and then answer these questions:
 - a) When have you had to deal with sinful behaviour in the past few days?
 - b) Did you immediately ask the Spirit to help you put it to death? What was the result?
 - c) How has the Holy Spirit been encouraging your heart as He leads you to deal with your sinful baggage?

4. **Groaning Forward:** In Chapter 4 (Romans 8:18-27), we had to face the fact that growing involves groaning. Losing our luggage is not a quick or painless process. But God's Spirit helps us as we groan and grow. Review the lessons in Chapter 4 and then respond to the questions below:
 - a) When have you groaned in recent days as you sought to lose your luggage?
 - b) How does it help to know the Holy Spirit intercedes for you "*in groans that words cannot express*" (Romans 8:26)?

5. **Stay Convinced You Are a Conqueror:** Finally, in Chapter 5 (Romans 8:28-39), we discovered good reasons to stay filled with hope as we journey towards freedom.
 - a) Which of this past week's lessons most encouraged you on your journey towards freedom? Why?

If you have made it to this page, you have fought a good fight and finished a good race.

We'd love to know how God has spoken to you during this study. Send us a note at reedmbc@magma.ca.

May God keep you journeying towards freedom!

Rick and Linda Reed

Romans 8 • Memory Verses

Two tracks

Highlights: One verse a week:

Chapter 1: 8:1-2

Chapter 2: 8:5-6

Chapter 3: 8:12-13

Chapter 4: 8:22-23

Chapter 5: 8:38-39

Whole Chapter

Chapter 1: 8:1-4

Chapter 2: 8:5-11

Chapter 3: 8:12-17

Chapter 4: 8:18-27

Chapter 5: 8:28-39

Personal “Baggage Check” Form

Self-centeredness: A life focused on pleasing yourself rather than glorifying God; a me-first attitude in life.

Sexual impurity: A degrading of God’s purposes for sexuality in thought or action.

Greed: A selfish desire to acquire (money, possessions, things); a continual discontent with what one currently has.

Envy: An unpleasant sensation when noticing the prosperity or success of another.

Murder: Before you skip past this one, remember that Jesus put anger in the murder category (Matthew 5:21-22). A quick and hot temper that flares up to scorch and damages others.

Strife: A tendency to be contentious; quick to quarrel.

Deceit: Intentionally misleading others; concealing the truth in order to cover the truth.

Malice: Bitterness that shows up in harsh, sarcastic words or cold, unkind actions.

Gossip: Passing along information about others that should be kept to yourself or disclosed only to those who are part of the solution.

Slander: Speaking against others to tear them down.

Boasting: Attempts to draw attention to yourself to gain approval or praise from others; an exalted estimation of yourself.

Disobedient to parents (for those still at home): A stubborn, resistant or defiant attitude .

Faithless: A lack of confidence in God, a disposition to worry or complain, a tendency to doubt God when life gets hard.

Heartless: A heart that is callous or insensitive to the needs and pains of others.

Ruthless: A determination to get ones way even when it means hurting others.

Approving of evil: Vicariously supporting evil by approving what is disapproved of by God.

Witchcraft/Occult: Dabbling or diving into the dark side of spiritual power.

Hatred: A settled, ongoing feeling of ill will towards someone.

Discord: An inclination to cause or contribute to relational friction; a history of leaving a trail of broken relationships behind you.

Factions: A tendency to divide up into cliques that intentionally exclude people who don't fit in with your group.

Drunkenness: Drinking to the point of being impaired—physically, emotionally, relationally or spiritually.

Other luggage (not on this list): _____

Other luggage (not on this list): _____