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### **Big Idea:**

Paul is providing the common ground for Christian Jews and Christians Gentiles to be able to eat together.

### **THE STORY SO FAR:**

The story of the Old Testament concludes with an unmet expectation that a king-like figure would appear and set up an eternal kingdom that would bless the entire world. The New Testament starts with the four Gospels, or proclamations of the good news, that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Jewish story and the king that was to setup an eternal kingdom.

In the Gospels Jesus fulfills this expectation in some very unexpected ways as he declares a new kingdom of God and is killed by the governing authorities. Jesus is then resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit and instructs his disciples or followers to go spread the good news of this new Kingdom and then he returns to heaven.

The news of this new Kingdom is spreading and some of the leading authorities, including a Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus, are trying to stop this because they see it as blasphemy against God. Saul has a powerful encounter with the risen Jesus as he is

going to persecute Jesus followers. He converts to become a follower of Jesus himself and spends the rest of his life traveling around the Roman world telling non-Jewish people about this kingdom of God and planting churches. Most of the New Testament books are letters to these churches written by Paul, (who was formerly Saul of Tarsus) answering questions from them and encouraging them to be faithful to Jesus in a culture that did not believe the message they heard about this new kingdom.

The book of Romans is a book to a church of both Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Jesus who are trying to understand how to live out faith in Jesus and how to live with each other in light of this new kingdom. The book is considered one of the best and fullest theological explanations of humanity's brokenness and need for a right relationship with God. This letter tells us how Jesus' work not only restores our relationship with God but gives us a new standing and status with God.

You can understand why Paul is writing the book of Romans if we start at the end and work backwards.

**Read:** Romans 16:1-27

### **Questions:**

What stands out to you in this list of names?  
What possible problems does Paul warn about?

With a diverse group of people like we see in chapter 16 there could be a number of problems that arise as the church works together to follow Jesus. Not only are there some language issues, but cultural backgrounds would also be different, a number of different people are listed from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds as well.

In chapter 14 and 15 we see some of the difficulties for Jewish Christians and Greek Christians working out this new faith together.

**Read:** Romans 14:1-13

**Questions:**

What are some of the difficulties these groups are having?  
Why are these issues important to them?  
Why is it difficult to be gracious over serious issues that are not essential issues?

Chapter 13 takes on the issue of submitting to governing authorities.

13:1 Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God.

The later appeal of the chapter is to love and mutual submission to each other.

**Question:**

Why would Paul encourage those in the church to respond to governing authorities both inside and outside the church with submission?

Paul shows us that following Jesus is about the mercy for everyone, both the Jews and non-Jews and our response to this great mercy.

**Read:** Romans 11:33-12:2

Jews at the time Paul understood that they had a unique relationship with God. He had promised to be faithful to his covenants and bless the entire world through a leader from the line of David. Paul address in chapter 9 how to understand Jews who do not follow Jesus as the promised fulfillment of the covenants. Paul points out that God carries on his promise through those that follow Jesus. The stories of pharaoh and the golden calf highlight that through people's rejection of the plan of God he still accomplishes his purposes.

One of the big difficulties in following Jesus is our own internal battle with sin. Paul through chapters 6-8 addresses how we deal with our continued struggle with sin as followers of Jesus.

**Read:** Romans 7:21-8:4

**Question:** What stands out to you in Paul's conclusion here?

The first several chapters of Romans can be difficult to follow and even seem like a series of disjointed ideas that Paul is putting forward. He is arguing in a traditional Jewish style where you make a point, talk around that point, and make another similar point and talk around that as well. The connecting thread through the first few chapters is that humanity is fallen, that their relationship to God and each other is broken. Paul points out that both Jews and Gentiles are not able to live at the holy standards of God. He uses the law to prove that no one can live up to the requirements that the law itself puts forward. So, in chapter six Paul answers the question if the law of God is something we can not live up to then is it still good. He answers with the law shows us the goodness of God and what his will looks like.

In Romans two we see a preview of the solution to people not being able to live up to is in fact God.

**Read:** Romans 2:1-4

**Questions:**

What does this passage tell us about our character?  
What does this passage tell us about the character of God?

It can be said that in the very first chapter Paul summarizes the rest of the book.

**Read:** Romans 1:16-17

**Question:**

What are some take aways from the book of Romans?