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THE RADICAL DISCIPLE



SERIES INTRO

John Stott has a great little book entitled *The Radical Disciple*. In this book Stott explores the impact Jesus makes in the lives of those who embrace him. Stott's thesis is that Jesus creates radical disciples because Jesus isn't selective about the areas of life where he calls us to be trained. Jesus doesn't choose areas of life in which commitment to him suits us nor does he stay away from those areas in which discipleship will be costly. Because Jesus is Lord of all, the proper response of a disciple is whole-life obedience to Jesus. This doesn't nullify grace. Our obedience to Jesus flows from the grace of God that we receive in Jesus, not the other way around.

The title for Stott's book is fitting for this next section of Romans because in Romans 12–14, Paul explores the impact that belief in Jesus makes on the believer. Paul's point in Romans 12–14 is what he displayed with his own life: to follow Jesus is to let him direct the agenda for our lives. In other words, to follow Jesus is to become a *radical disciple*.

The word *disciple* speaks of the process by which a pupil becomes more aligned to his or her teacher. Discipleship implies a relationship of trust and surrender of student to teacher. During Jesus' three years of public ministry, the Twelve were called disciples before they were called apostles, pastors, teachers or even Christians, and as disciples they submitted every area of life to Jesus.

The word *radical* speaks to the all-encompassing impact that Jesus intends to make as we follow him. Radical conveys the idea that to follow Jesus is to let him direct and change as he sees fit. Radical implies the liberal offering of ourselves to Jesus as a living sacrifice. Radical is what Jesus demonstrated in the Garden of Gethsemane when he said to the Father, "Your will be done," and radical is what Jesus invites us to when he says, "Follow me."

The purpose of this section in Romans is to consider the radical implications that Jesus makes on our everyday lives. As we study this section of Romans, our prayer is that the seeds of God's Word that have been scattered in Romans 1–11 would take root and produce fruit. May we never hear from Jesus, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46). Instead, may we hear Jesus say, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am" (John 13:13). In other words, may we become radical disciples of Jesus.

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SMALL GROUPS

AT FAITH

What is a small group?

Small groups at Faith are small gatherings of people who meet regularly for friendship, prayer and Bible study.

Each small group is unique because it is shaped by the people who attend. However, at the heart of each small group is a desire to see tight-knit community form that is marked by a growing love for Jesus and for the other people in the small group.

Why should I join a small group?

We are made for friendship with God and others. When we are not known and loved by others, we suffer because we are not experiencing all that God created us to experience. Additionally, life is too difficult to journey alone. Therefore, small groups are a place where we can connect in friendship with other people through the ups and downs of life.

How do I get connected to a small group?

The easiest way to get connected to a small group is to click on “Small Groups” in the Faith Church app or go to faithchurchfortcollins.org/smallgroups. You can also sign up on Sunday by filling out the Connect Card or stopping by the Connection Center. Finally, if you would like to join a small group, you can call the church at **970-226-2095**.



MAR
13

**RADICAL
WORSHIP**

Main Passage:
[Romans 12:1–2](#)

Worship isn't just for those people whose hobby happens to be God. Everyone pours out their money, energy, time and resources for someone or something. Everyone worships.

For some, it is a political party. For others, it is a career, success, someone's approval, comfort or a sports team. People have enthusiastic, religious zeal for all kinds of things—money, pleasure, power. The list is endless. The Bible tells us that the human heart was made to worship, and because of sin the human heart is prone to idolatry. Idolatry is taking good things and making them into ultimate things that drive and control us. Often, this happens when we believe someone or something holds the key to our happiness. The result is we pursue that person or thing with passion and fervor.

In this section of Romans, Paul helps us see that one impact Jesus makes in the lives of those who follow him is that they worship him. Jesus talked about this when he said that his followers would pick up their cross and follow him. In other words, the result of following Jesus is that we believe the key to happiness is found in him, and daily we sacrifice to follow where he leads.

The Christian life is to be a daily giving of our lives and our bodies in obedience to Jesus. Jesus radically reorients our aim in life. We no longer seek to please ourselves; we seek to please Jesus because we believe happiness is found in him.

OPENING QUESTION

- What sacrifices do people make as they go through life?

INTO THE BIBLE

- Read [Romans 12:1–2](#). What stands out to you from this passage?

- What do you think it means to present your body as a living sacrifice?

- Why do you think it is important to keep the mercies of God in view when being obedient to Jesus?

- What leads to a renewed mind?

INTO YOUR LIFE

- What comes to your mind when you think about the call to be a living sacrifice to Jesus?
- How does the idea of being a living sacrifice impact your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus?
- What helps you remember the mercies of God?
- Identify several ways that you have been transformed by Jesus. How has that transformation been good for you and the people around you?
- Identify one area of your life where you feel Jesus is inviting you to become a more radical disciple. Where is Jesus inviting you to greater devotion, worship, consecration or sacrifice? What would it look like to offer this area of your life to Jesus in the coming months?

NOTES AND PRAYER



MAR
20

**RADICAL
BELONGING**

Main Passage:
[Romans 12:3–13](#)

In this passage, Paul uses the analogy of the body to describe the church. His point is simple: those who follow Jesus experience radical belonging in the church. Jesus' church is a body, and within the body there are many interdependent parts. We need each other, and we are better together.

Paul also points out that part of God's grace is distributing spiritual gifts that are to be used to benefit the body.

Different people have different spiritual gifts and different degrees of gifting. But every Christian has been given a gift, and every Christian is a gift to the church.

A good summary of [Romans 12:3–13](#) is that every Christian is called to serve, love and belong to a local body of believers. When a church is marked by service, love and belonging, it is strong and healthy.

OPENING QUESTION

- Share a memory you have about the church that was encouraging and still impacts you today.

INTO THE BIBLE

- Read [Romans 12:3–13](#). What stands out to you from this passage?

- What does this passage reveal about God and his plan for the church?

- How does this passage impact the way you think about yourself?

- How does this passage impact the way you think about the church?

INTO YOUR LIFE

- Do you know your spiritual gifting? If so, how are you using it to benefit others? If not, what steps will you take to better understand the gifts Jesus has given you?

- What is one story from your life of a moment when you found a meaningful place to serve and belong to the church? If you can't think of a story, what step will you take to better belong to the church?

- Write down the name of each person in your small group. Next to each person's name write down a word or phrase that captures the contribution that person makes to the group. Take some time to thank and encourage each person of your group for the contribution they have made to your life and your small group.

NOTES AND PRAYER



MAR
27

**RADICAL
MERCY**

Main Passage:
[Romans 12:14–21](#)

In a fight, punches and counterpunches get thrown. The world we live in is basically in a fight. Everything from politics to media to interpersonal relationships are various kinds of fights. The results are painfully obvious—no one is winning, and everyone is wounded.

In this section, Paul teaches us how to apply the gospel of Jesus to our most difficult relationships. The Christian should not punch and counterpunch as the world does.

Instead, empowered by Jesus, Christians are called to respond to difficult people and situations just as Jesus would. We are to bless those who hurt us. If possible, we are to live at peace with all people. There is never a time when we should avenge ourselves. We are to overcome evil with good. This is a hard path to walk, but this is the path Jesus calls his believers to follow.

OPENING QUESTION

- Did you ever get into a fight when you were a kid? If so, share the story with your small group.

INTO THE BIBLE

- Read [Romans 12:14–21](#). What stands out to you from these verses?
- [Romans 12:15](#) says we are to *rejoice with those who rejoice* and *weep with those who weep*. What does this reveal about being present with people?
- What strategy does this passage give for dealing with difficult people?
- What strategy does the world give for dealing with difficult people?
- Why is it so hard to respond to evil with good?

INTO YOUR LIFE

- Is there someone in your past or present who has been evil to you? What responses are you tempted to have toward that person?
- What would it look like for you to overcome evil with God's help in that specific situation?
- We don't often consider that we may have been the person who hurt someone. Is there anyone whom you have hurt? Who has done a good job at responding to you with good? Explain.

NOTES AND PRAYER



APR
03

**RADICAL
CITIZENS**

Main Passage:
[Romans 13:1-7](#)

We live in a cancel culture. As such, it's common to complain about our political leaders. It seems like everyone has something negative to say about the government. There is something deep in the human heart that pridefully thinks, "If I were in charge, things would be so much better." This attitude creates a culture of dishonor and disrespect.

In Romans 13:1-7, we find that Christians are called to honor and submit to the people who are in authority over them. This includes political leaders.

In this cultural moment, to follow Jesus is to live with tension because we are under the authority of both God and government. This tension exists because there are a lot of things that the government supports that God's people don't support.

Here is the sad truth. In our fallen, sinful world, we need laws and people in authority to maintain order. Without the government working, human life would quickly become chaotic and destructive. The problem is that imperfect people create imperfect laws and imperfect governments. When Jesus returns, all of this will be put right. Until then, God's people are to honor and submit to those in authority until they can no longer honor Jesus.

OPENING QUESTION

- What's your overall response to authority? Do you tend to embrace authority or push against it?

INTO THE BIBLE

- Read [Romans 13:1–7](#). What stands out to you from this passage?
- What does this passage reveal about God's role in instituting governing authorities? How does it change your perspective on political leaders, knowing that God sovereignly established them?
- What does this passage reveal about how Christians should relate to governing authorities?
- Why is it better to have an imperfect legal and political system than anarchy?
- The governing authorities in Paul's day hated Christians. How do you square that reality with Paul's statement that the governing authorities are God's servants for our good?

INTO YOUR LIFE

- How similar is your attitude toward governing authorities to the one Paul commands in [Romans 13:1–7](#)?
- Make a list of the many authorities God has placed over you. According to the truths of Romans 13, what might obedience and honor to each of these authorities look like in both your actions and your heart?
- Are there areas where you should be submitting to governing authorities and you are not? Why are you not?
- What could you do to thank and honor a soldier, police officer, first responder or local leader who works in our community to preserve order and peace?
- How are you doing at honoring people in authority over you and helping establish an honor culture in your home, work and church? What could you do this week to further honor someone whom God has placed in authority over you?
- What is the difference between godly and ungodly civil disobedience? When should you not submit to a governing authority? Is there ever a time not to honor someone in authority?

- Are there any ways in which you are being called by God to courageously disobey a human authority so that you can obey God? How can you still honor that human authority as you seek to obey God?

NOTES AND PRAYER



APR
10

**RADICAL
LOVE**

Main Passage:
[Romans 13:8–10](#)

What does God want from us? Sometimes boiling something down to its essence is helpful. If you boiled God's law down to its essence, it would be this: *Love your neighbor as yourself.*

Most of the time, we love ourselves freely and unconditionally. This helps us see that God doesn't want us to love people because they have worked to earn love. God wants us to love people as if love is a debt that we owe. The reason for this is simple: people deserve love because people are made in the image of a loving God. The opposite of loving people is using people or withholding love until someone has proven themselves worthy. The result of using people and withholding love is relational distance and dysfunction.

In [Romans 13:8–10](#), Paul reveals that Christians are called to love people freely and unconditionally. This is the sum of God's entire law. The only way to do this is to embrace God's love for us. In short, we love because we have been loved by Jesus ([1 John 4:7–8](#)). In light of [Romans 13:8–10](#) here are three keys to radical love:

1. Ask God, "What can I appreciate and enjoy about this person?"
2. Ask God, "What can I do to make this person's life better?"
3. Embrace Jesus' love for you.

At the end of the day, God wants you to build relationships that are loving. That's his goal for your life. So remember the rule of love and go where love takes you.

OPENING QUESTION

- What are some common misconceptions people have about love?

INTO THE BIBLE

- Read [Romans 13:8–10](#). What stands out to you from this passage?
- What is the one debt we owe to other people?
- In what sense is love a debt that we owe? Why is love something that people deserve?
- What happens when we treat people as if love is something they must work to earn?
- Why is love a fitting summary of God's entire law?
- How is God's view of love different from our culture's view? (See also [John 3:16](#); [1 Corinthians 13:1–13](#); and [1 John 4:7–21](#).)

INTO YOUR LIFE

- What motivates you to love others?
- What tends to prevent you from loving others?
- In what ways do you demonstrate love for other people?
- Think of a person in your life who needs to be loved. How can you demonstrate love to that person?

NOTES AND PRAYER



APR
24

**RADICAL
CHRISTLIKENESS**

Main Passage:
[Romans 13:11–14](#)

In [Romans 13:11–14](#) Paul helps us see that something special happens when we become a Christian. We get to take off our old self, and we get to put on Jesus. The language Paul uses in this passage is that of getting dressed and putting on clothes.

For special moments in our lives, we put on special clothes to signify the change that is taking place. For example, at a graduation ceremony we put on a cap, gown and tassel.

Those things reveal that life is changing and we are entering a new season.

The same thing happens when someone gets married. Special outfits are chosen to signify a new beginning and a change in our reality.

The same thing happens when a soldier begins basic training. When a soldier puts on the uniform for the first time, he or she enters a new reality.

The same thing happens when we become a Christian. Paul says we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. This week we are going to explore what that means for our lives.

OPENING QUESTION

- What is one of your favorite outfits? Why do you love it so much?

INTO THE BIBLE

- Read [Romans 13:11–14](#). What stands out to you from this passage?
- What do you think Paul means by saying that salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed?
- What do you think it means to cast off *the works of darkness*?
- Paul lists several *works of darkness* in verse 13. Which one are you most tempted to embrace?
- What do you think it means to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*?

INTO YOUR LIFE

- What steps is Jesus inviting you to take to put on the *armor of light*?

- Who are you in the flesh, and who is God inviting you to be in Jesus? Talk as a small group about what parts of the flesh Jesus is inviting you to take off and leave off and what parts of Jesus God is inviting you to put on and keep on.

NOTES AND PRAYER



MAY
01

**RADICAL
FREEDOM**

Main Passage:
[Romans 14:1–12](#)

In [Romans 14:1–12](#) we find that there is going to be a wide variety of people and options in the church. This should not be a cause for concern or division. Christians are free to disagree on secondary matters of belief and behavior.

Paul's examples of secondary matters of belief and behavior include dietary choices, what day someone worships in church and other opinions that are prone to cause unnecessary and unhelpful quarrels. In our current context, secondary matters of belief and behavior include what political party best represents God's heart, how to respond to COVID, worship music, the consumption of alcohol and a host of other preferences that can quickly become petty prejudices.

[Romans 14:1–12](#) pulls us away from our petty prejudices that lead to legalism. This passage also draws us to Jesus who leads us to freedom and unity. Paul is clear: as Christians we do not judge one another for secondary matters of belief and behavior. Our priority must be to stand united in Jesus and extend to other Christians the freedom that Jesus offers.

This week we will learn about the radical freedom we have in Jesus and practical skills for using that freedom to build unity in the church.

OPENING QUESTION

- What is one of your pet peeves?

INTO THE BIBLE

- Read [Romans 14:1–12](#). What stands out to you from this passage?
- What were some of the issues causing division among believers in Rome? Do these issues seem significant to you? Why or why not?
- What practical strategies did Paul give to deal with these issues?
- Why does Paul encourage his audience to avoid a judgmental attitude?
- How is it freeing to know that each of us will give an account of our lives to God?
- Why is it important to give people the freedom to follow Jesus according to their own conscience?

INTO YOUR LIFE

- Romans 14 raises an important idea—the freedom we all have in Christ allows for differences of opinion in many instances. What are some areas where Christians can agree to disagree?
- What are some areas where Christians should not be willing to compromise?
- Identifying where you may be a weaker believer may take great self-awareness, but it's a good exercise. What are some secondary issues that are so important to you that you are tempted to judge others who do not see those things as important? Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of ways you previously have discouraged others in the body and “torn down” the work of God (14:20), even if it was unintentional. What are some practical steps you can take to “build up” someone with whom you disagree on a particular issue?
- How can you and your small group listen well to each other and honor the Lord in areas where you might have differences of opinion? (Possible areas of discussion could include worship styles, political involvement, financial commitments, education choices or other preferences.)

NOTES AND PRAYER



MAY
08

**RADICAL
EMPATHY**

Main Passage:
[Romans 14:13–23](#)

The main point of [Romans 14:13–23](#) is that we are not to use our freedom in Jesus to hurt other believers. When it comes to secondary issues, people matter more than issues, and relationships matter more than getting what we want. As such we should have deep empathy and compassion for people. We should seek to understand their weaknesses, and we should use our freedom in Jesus to build up the body of Christ.

OPENING QUESTION

- Who is someone who has used their freedom in Jesus to build you up?

INTO THE BIBLE

- Read [Romans 14:13–23](#). What stands out to you from this passage?
- When should a Christian defer to a fellow believer's beliefs?
- How do you see Paul balance the idea that believers are free in Jesus but still have responsibility to show love to other believers through their actions?
- Why is it more important to maintain unity than to maintain personal freedom?
- Why is empathy essential to maintain unity in the church?

INTO YOUR LIFE

- What helps to cultivate empathy and unity in the church?
- How can you grow in sensitivity and compassion toward other Christians?

- Is there anyone you are causing to stumble into sin by your actions or the pressure you put on them? How can you apologize to them and start helping rather than hindering them?

- Is anyone causing you to stumble into sin by their actions? Is there anything you are participating in that you need to reject because it violates your conscience or does not grow your faith in Jesus?

NOTES AND PRAYER



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