

ROMANS

Week 7: Romans 8:1-11

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APRIL 27: DO NOT FEEL CONDEMNED

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

There's a lot to learn when going to another country, such as traffic laws and dress code. A person could travel from a very strict culture to one much more relaxed, or vice-versa.

Becoming a Christian is like traveling to a new country. We're just conditioned to follow the rules of the old country. What happens when we break those rules? The rules that no longer apply to us?

If there is no condemnation in Christ, why is it that we sometimes feel condemned or shamed?

Habits, or culture, are hard to break. Romans 8:1 mentions two *different* ways of existing. Most people spent years living under the law of sin and death (and condemnation) before they were saved. Many Christians have spent much of their post-saved lives also under the law of sin and death (and condemnation). So where does condemnation come from? Simply put, the enemy. We have been set free from that law to live under the law of the Spirit of life. And those are two different ways of thinking, feeling, believing and existing: dead or alive.

APRIL 28: LIVING IN GOD'S COUNTRY

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

We, as Americans, don't want to eat fish for breakfast. We, as Americans, don't have to try to get frustrated over spilled milk. While these kinds of decisions seem natural, culture is taught.

Other peoples, like the Japanese, don't have to try to like fish for breakfast. And the Inuit don't have to try not to get frustrated over spilled milk. For them these decisions seem natural. But like ours, their culture is taught.

The first way to assume a new culture is to realize how it's different from our own even in subtle ways. Culture, as evidenced by the world, is both teachable and learnable. We can choose to learn a new culture, one that is life-giving.

People in other cultures think differently, feel differently and act differently - even when confronted with similar circumstances. Walking into the Kingdom of Heaven could be compared to going to France, Ecuador or Holland. Live in it and you'll learn the differences. Start talking to the natives and you'll understand their way of thinking. Compare their ways to your own, and decide what are more life-giving ways you can think, feel and act.

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:1-2

What do you consider to be the law of sin and death? What do you consider to be the law of the Spirit of life?

When you became a Christian, do you feel that you moved from a strict country to a free country or vice versa? Why do you think that is?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You for who You are, and thank You for who You are not. Remind me whenever I feel condemned that it is not You, that it is never You. Condemnation will only take me away from You, and I ask that You would show me how to be freed from any thoughts that are more life-draining than life-giving. Continue to help me see myself in the same way You see me. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers).

Read: Matthew 3 & 4 (Week 32, Day 1)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:5-6, MATTHEW 9:17

What are some of the big (and subtle) ways the culture of the Spirit is different than our own?

How would you start to integrate into another culture, such as French or Dutch? How will these strategies help you to pursue a Spirit culture?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, Thank you for a new country and a new culture. Show me what my culture is currently in my day-to-day life. Help me to notice my reactions, thoughts and feelings to the mundane things and to the serious things. I'm asking You to teach me your culture and give me the peace to let mine go. In Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

APRIL 29: CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

Romans 8:7-8 reads, *For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.*

Let's make this a little more understandable. 'A mind that is set on Nigerian culture is hostile to other cultures/countries for it does not submit to their laws; indeed, it cannot. Those who are part of another culture cannot please his or her countrymen. We, however, do not belong to the culture we once lived in. We belong to a life-giving culture.'

Culture is all-encompassing, inescapable and part of every thought, emotion and decision. God wants His children to be encompassed by His culture so much so that it would automatically and reflexively affect every thought, emotion and decision. Becoming accustomed to a culture is trial-and-error, understanding your old perspective, and realizing a new perspective - it's generally not easy. But for those people who live and learn that culture, pleasing God becomes easy, automatic and thoughtless - because that's what culture is.

APRIL 30: IT'S NOT ABOUT 'RIGHT' AND 'WRONG'

(Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence)

We are conditioned to think in terms of right and wrong, correct or incorrect. Changing our culture means noticing the way we think - and changing it. Instead of right and wrong, let's talk about life and death. What are you doing and believing that's bringing life to you, to your relationship with the Holy Spirit and to your friends and family? What are you doing and believing that is harming you, your relationship with Holy Spirit and your friends and family?

In the culture of the Kingdom of God, it's not only about using biblical terminology but truly understanding the meaning of these words. One word in particular is, *righteousness*. In the Bible, the first example of righteousness is Abraham. When the Bible says that Abraham was considered righteous because of his faith, we need to remember that he was not following the law. There was no law to follow. He was following, and trying to follow, the Spirit. He did some life-giving things and he did some things that did not bring life. Nonetheless, he was considered righteous not because of what he did but because of the One he believed in, and the One he chose to follow.

MAY 1: JOURNALING

How regularly do you think about the fact that you now live in another culture, the Kingdom of God? How do you think your relationship with God would change if you more fully understood God's culture? Be specific.

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 8 (Week 32, Day 5)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:7-9, ROMANS 12:2

Are you resistant to the idea that pleasing God could be easy? Do you see God as difficult to please?

What aspects of your culture - way of thinking, feeling and behaving - would you want to change for a better way of thinking, feeling and behaving?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You for coming to earth to usher us into a new Kingdom and a new culture. Please help me to better understand what You think, and how and why it's life-giving. I want to desire Your culture to be mine. As I pursue it, I ask that You would bless the pursuit and that this pursuit would be pleasing to God, with all the ups and downs it will undoubtedly bring. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 6 (Week 32, Day 3)

READING & JOURNALING:

ROMANS 8:10, GENESIS 15:6

What actions have you been doing that you've considered arbitrarily "wrong"? How do your feelings and thoughts change if you label those actions as "not life-giving" instead?

What did Abraham believe that made him righteous? Be specific.

PRAYER:

Today, write out your own prayer to God. Share with Him any thoughts, feelings, or opinions you may have.

(End with 1-2 minutes of silence)

F260 READING: (A Scripture Reading Plan for Busy Believers)

Read: Matthew 7 (Week 32, Day 4)

