

RWM Journal

Romans 8

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Reading, Writing and Meditating on
God's Word: Romans 8

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ISBN-13: 9798410967501

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To the faithful members of Church At The Square

*Your constant striving after the word with me for the last ten years means
more to me than you will ever know.*

-Pastor Bryan

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What is RWM?

For the last 10 years our church has celebrated Reformation Day (October 31st). We don't set aside the last Sunday in October, however. We take the whole month and saturate ourselves with the Word of God. After all, the point of the Reformation for protestants today is that we have access to God's Word. We can read the Scriptures in various translations or listen to it on our phones. You can purchase a bible in any size, color, or binding you desire. We have unprecedented access to God's Word, but how many people neglect their Bibles?

To counter our temptation to neglect the Word, we set aside the full month of October, 31 days, and dive into reading the Scriptures. The goal is to read as much of the Bible as possible. We have had many church members read all 66 books during our Reformation Month Challenge. We add up our individual chapters as a church to reach a reading goal. The first year we worked hard to read 4,000 chapters collectively as a church. Last year (2021) we easily passed our 20,000-chapter goal. To reach our reading goals, some people read 10 chapters a day. Some read more than 30 chapters a day. Many download an audio Bible and redeem their commutes. For everyone, the reading quantity and frequency increases dramatically during that month.

Every year someone asks me if reading the Bible quickly is actually a good way to read the Bible. Wouldn't it make more sense to take it slowly and study the context as you go? Reading the Bible slowly is an effective way to learn the Scriptures. I wouldn't deny that to anyone. But I believe that it is extremely helpful to read the Scriptures in a fast-paced way as well. When you read the Bible quickly, you see the stories in a powerful way. Consider how you watch a movie or a TV show. Our culture has coined a phrase to describe how we watch stories unfold:

binge-watching. I've been known to sit down with the kids on a lazy Saturday after a busy week and watch all three Lord of the Rings Extended Editions in one sitting. I know you can't pass judgment because you do the same thing, though maybe with a different movie or show. Consider the reverse. Would you sit down and watch those movies in 10-minute increments? It would take you a year. And when you finally finished the story, you wouldn't remember how everything was connected.

I'm not saying that we should always read the Bible in high volume, however. Your regular diet on the Word of God should be smaller meals. For Christians through the centuries a daily quiet time was the preferred method for reading the Bible. Some people read several chapters each day. Some people read a paragraph. Some only read a verse. It's not that there is a right and wrong speed or quantity for your Bible reading. These are just different tools that serve different ends. Reading large volumes helps you see the big picture and connect the dots. Reading slowly aids your understanding of specific teachings. Fast and slow, large and small are not the only two comparisons. There is another way to read the Word that also produces fruit.

This brings us to RWM. For the last several years I've felt like our Reformation Celebration needed a resurrection counterpart. After all, the resurrection of Christ is far more important than the reformation. Our church gets excited to celebrate the Word of God and its power for transformation. I wanted to stir up the same kind of excitement for the resurrection. It was during a conversation about our 2022 Resurrection Sunday plans that Yogi sparked an idea that led to this year's Resurrection Celebration. Instead of spending a month reading as much of the word as we can, what if we spent that month focusing on one text, the opposite of Reformation Month? RWM was born.

The three letters stand for read, write, and meditate. Reading the word of God is fundamental for every Christian as we develop our understanding of the faith and the mission God has placed on our faith family. The Scriptures command us to read the scriptures, both publicly as a church, and individually. The Apostle Paul said, "until I come, devote yourself to the **public reading of Scripture**, to exhortation, to teaching" (1 Timothy 4:13 emphasis added). John, exiled on Patmos, declared, "blessed is the one who **reads aloud** the words of this prophecy" (Rev. 1:3 emphasis added). Did you catch that? "Reads aloud." Reading out loud works differently from reading in your head. This year we are going to read Romans chapter 8 every day, out loud.

In addition to reading the Word we will write the Word. When God spoke to Moses in the wilderness, before the people entered the promised land, he gave him

specific instructions for when Israel had a king. Moses said that when the King was installed on his throne, he would be responsible to “write for himself in a book a copy of this law” (Deut. 17:18). His personal copy of the law would help him, “learn to fear the Lord his God” so that, “his heart may not be lifted up against his brothers” (verses 19 and 20). God required the king of Israel to write his own copy of law so that his heart would be guarded against sin. Romans 8 has 39 verses. That’s one for every day of our journey, plus one. Every day after reading chapter 8 out loud, you will write out the verse of the day, verbatim, punctuation and all.

After reading and writing the Word, we will spend the rest of our devotional time meditating on the word of God. Meditation has always been part of the Christian tradition. The Old Testament psalms are filled with both exhortations to meditate and examples of meditation. The writer of Psalm 119 says that God’s Word “is my meditation all the day” (verse 97). In Hebrew poetry, rather than rhyming the ends of phrases, the poets used parallelism, where a statement would be restated with different words. Psalm 51 has a good example of this. David says, “create in me a clean heart” and parallels that with “renew a steadfast spirit within me” (verse 10). Cleaning his heart and renewing his spirit are saying the same thing—it’s two ways of talking about purification after his sin. In the same way the psalmist of Psalm 119 uses meditation in parallel with delight. The psalmist says, “I meditate on your precepts” and in the next line, “I will delight in your statutes” (verses 15 and 16).

Meditation and delight aren’t usually synonymous in our culture. We think about meditation as emptying the mind. Biblical meditation is better understood as filling the mind. It is like when we enjoy a good book or new movie and spend the next hour thinking it over. When I finish a good book, I like to rehash the story in my mind. I like to think about the characters and why they did what they did. It’s the same thing when we meditate on God’s word. Rehash the story. Think about not only what the truth is, but how it works. Meditation is also the primary way we make meaningful application to our lives. After reading and writing the word, we will conclude each devotional time with a time of mediation.

The specific tool for meditation that we recommend is journaling. Writing down your thoughts forces you to solidify your thinking. Our minds can be very complicated, and our thoughts can be complex. Writing our thoughts on paper force our minds to clean up our thinking and pinpoint our ideas. In the guide that follows we have written a short paragraph to get your meditation started. After thinking for a few moments, we encourage you to write your thoughts down.

The following pages are a tool. I hope you will take advantage. I know that God's Word produces transformation. I look forward to this journey, and I hope you do too!

Instructions

For the next 40 days you will be spending time with the 8th chapter of Romans. Read through the following instructions to get an idea of when you need to do each day of this journey. Each day you will practice three disciplines:

Read the Word. Each day of this journey you will read Romans chapter 8, all 39 verses. We strongly encourage you to read the passage out loud, clearly, and slowly. The point is not to get finished quickly. Take the time to read it accurately. Once you have finished, check the box to mark it completed.

Write the Word. The scripture reference is given for each day. Open your Bible and copy word for word, letter for letter, punctuation, and all, to the provided section of your page. After copying the verse, spend time thinking through the content.

Meditate on the Word. We recommend this process. First, **Reflect** on what was said. Write it in your own words. Then, **React** to the word. Write out what comes to mind after reading this passage. Finally, **Respond** to the word. Write down what you need to do today to respond to what God is saying in the word.

You don't have to be rigid with your structure. Use this as a tool to grow in the word. Do your best to stick to a daily practice. Don't beat yourself up if you fall short and miss a day or two. Instead, dive back into the process. The goal is transformation, not perfection.

Write Romans 8:19

Thoughts for Meditation

Creation is eagerly waiting the day that you are fully redeemed in Christ. One day the sons of God will rule the earth, subduing it in the way God commanded Adam in the garden of Eden. Creation longs for the day when its rightful rulers are redeemed and fully and truly display the image of God to the universe. Why do you think creation is eager for our redemption?

Journal

Write Romans 8:20

Thoughts for Meditation

When Adam sinned in the garden, God cursed creation. Death and suffering entered the human experience. Corruption entered creation itself. God's plan for redemption included suffering. Suffering is the result of sin having dominion in creation. But one day that will end. Christ will reign and creation will be redeemed along with us.

Journal

Write Romans 8:21

Thoughts for Meditation

Our redemption is tied to the redemption of all creation. Just as we sin and are corrupt, creation itself is broken—death works in all life, not just in humans. From the plants to the animals, no life is free from death and corruption. But the day will come in Christ when not death and no corruption exists in any part of creation.

Journal

Write Romans 8:22

Thoughts for Meditation

Creation groans for redemption. The first time creation groaned in scripture was when Cain killed Abel. The ground absorbed the blood of Abel and cried out for redemption. We read several more stories in the Bible about the ground crying out for redemption for the bloodguilt of the land. We may not hear it with our ears, but creation calls out against the pollution our sins bring upon the world.

Journal

Write Romans 8:27

Thoughts for Meditation

The Father searches our hearts. He also knows the mind of the Spirit as they have perfect harmony. The Spirit, who resides in our hearts, graciously intervenes on our behalf. The Spirit comes to our aid, comforts us when we are hurting, and directs our hearts according to the will of God. (See Heb. 4:14-16)

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Write Romans 8:28

Thoughts for Meditation

The Spirit cares for us through intercession and the Father's providence comforts *those who love Him*. He works *all things together for good*. He is not a disconnected deist but actively involved in our daily lives. During life's most difficult times He reminds us that He has purpose for us and there is no cause for fear.

Journal

Write Romans 8:29

Thoughts for Meditation

Foreknowledge doesn't refer to God's knowledge of actions or events, but His "knowing" people intimately. God knew us before the world began and predestined us for redemption. He doesn't make mistakes or leave anything to chance. He knows His elect and loves them dearly. In fact, He loves them enough not to leave them as they are currently, but to conform them into the likeness of His Son. How are you being conformed to his likeness of Christ?

Journal

Write Romans 8:30

Thoughts for Meditation

God foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us, and one day will be glorified. This is what some theologians have coined "The Golden Chain." He has shown us His perfect plan of redemption. A plan that replaces fear and despair with hope and courage. How does this verse give you hope in your life? What are areas in your life that you can replace fear with hope?

Journal

Write Romans 8:31

Thoughts for Meditation

Seeing this marvelous plan of redemption, we are now challenged to see our Champion as unmatched. God's redemption is our security! Who or what could stand against Him? No one! Today we focus on this as fuel for our courage. What is God calling you to conquer in your life? How does this truth help you stand secure in Christ?

Journal

Write Romans 8:32

Thoughts for Meditation

God gave us Christ. He came to earth as a baby. He lived a perfect life, filled with suffering, betrayal, and discouragement, and ended with his death on a Roman cross. If God was willing to give us his beloved son to save us from our sin and his wrath, what possible thing would he be unwilling to share with us, especially if we needed it to pursue his calling on our lives. The answer is clear: nothing. What are the “all things” that you need from him?

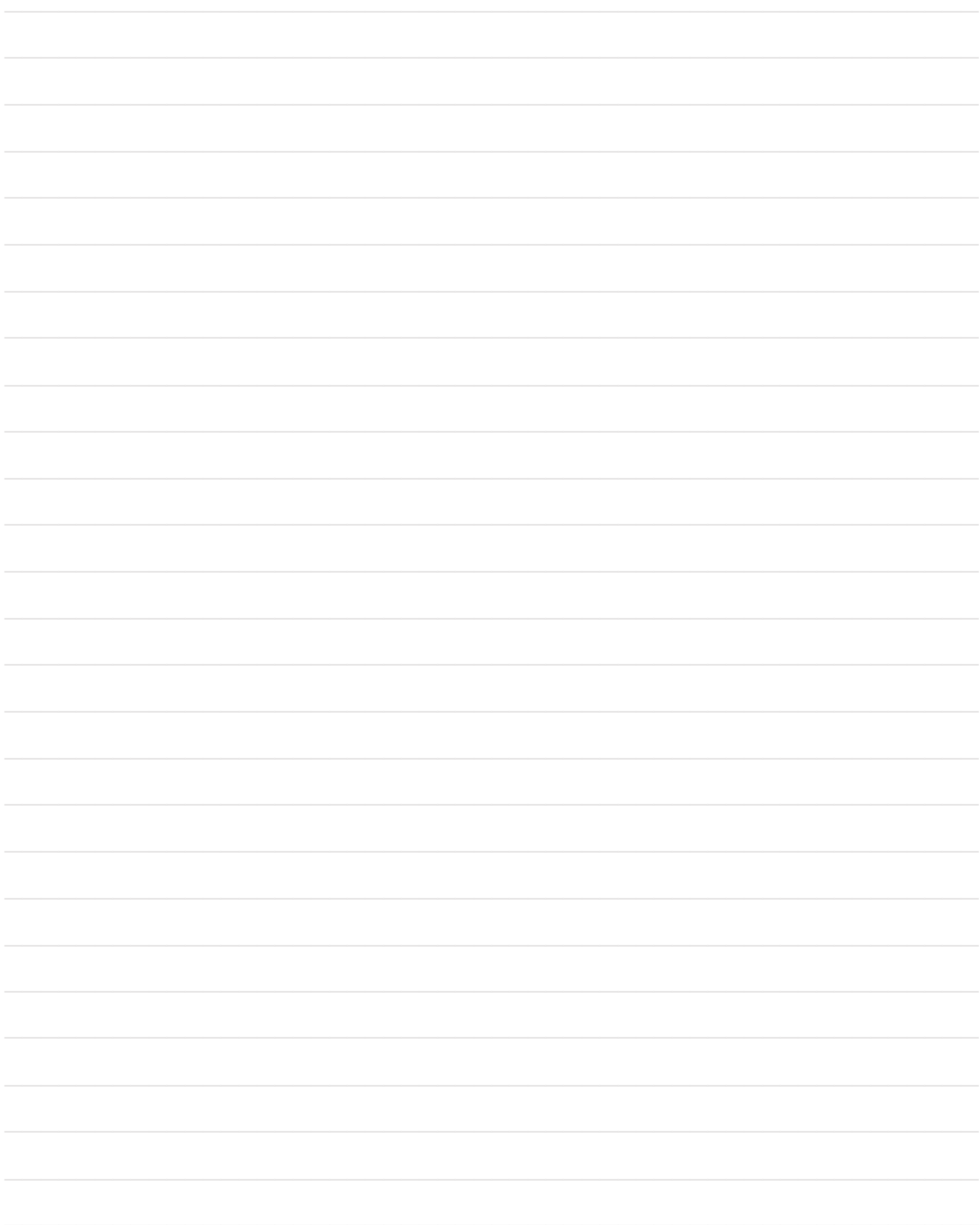
Journal

Write Romans 8:33

Thoughts for Meditation

God justifies his people by faith, not by works. Christ died for our sins for our justification. By the blood of Christ on the cross, and by the declaration of the Father there is absolutely no condemnation for God’s people. When Paul asks the rhetorical question, “Who shall bring a charge?” the answer is resoundingly clear: no one. Not you. Not Satan. Not your past, present, or future. You have been declared just.

Journal



Write Romans 8:34

Thoughts for Meditation

Not only was Christ crucified so that we could be declared righteous, he was also raised, and not just raised to life, but ascended back to heaven, where he sits in human form, at the right hand of God. The exalted Christ interceded on your behalf and declares your freedom from sin and from Satan boldly before his Father. What possible thing could speak against such a savior?

Journal

Write Romans 8:35

Thoughts for Meditation

As the Apostle Paul asks all these rhetorical questions, remind yourself that the answer is always negative. Nothing can separate us from God. Nothing in this list, and nothing in a list you might make on your own. Since Christ is for you, you cannot be separated from his love. His love is boundless. It's larger than the universe, overwhelms the very concept of infinity, and personally wraps your soul with peace.

Journal

Write Romans 8:36

Thoughts for Meditation

The last few verses have been very positive. But Paul reminds us in this verse that life is not always grand. He already alluded to this when he compared our present suffering (v.18) to the eternal glory that will one day be revealed. He also included suffering in the “all things work together for good” of verse 29. The New Testament never overlooks the reality that we can and will suffer while carrying the name of Christ.

Journal

Write Romans 8:37

Thoughts for Meditation

No? What does Paul mean but “no?” He certainly isn’t objecting to the reality of pain and suffering that he just referenced in verse 36. Instead, he is reorienting our understanding of those painful experiences. They do happen. They will happen. But they never have the final word. In every one of those scenarios, we are more than conquerors. We don’t just come out victorious in the end; we will find out that even the difficult times were part of God’s good plan all along.

Journal

Write Romans 8:38

Thoughts for Meditation

The last sentence of Romans 8 is beautiful. As we reflect on the first half of it today, consider the joy from which the Apostle is writing. He is about to head to Jerusalem, where he will be arrested, transported to Rome, and ultimately executed un the Emperor's direction. Can his death separate him from Christ? Can Emperor Nero? Can the spiritual realm thwart God's plan? He is safe and secure in the love of God not matter what circumstance comes his way.

Journal

Write Romans 8:39

Thoughts for Meditation

Nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God. Spend time meditating on that fact today. Your circumstances cannot separate you from God's love. Your sin cannot separate you from God's love. Your enemies, your.... Take a minute and write out the things that you may be tempted to think can separate you from the love of God. Then preach the Gospel to yourself from the this scripture and declare that nothing, especially those things, can separate you from the love of God.

Journal

FAQs

What does RWM stand for?

Read, Write, Meditate

Why are we reading the Bible out loud instead of just in our heads?

Reading out loud engages the brain in a different way than just reading silently. This aids your retention and understanding. Our hope is that reading out loud for 40 days will foster your memory. By the end of the journey, you will have memorized large portions of the chapter.