



MIND
session page

Non-Reactionary Love

Romans 5:1-11 | Session 9.12

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).
- Find web links for underlined items on this session's webpage at faithelement.net.

Context

Begin by asking:

- Think back to a time when someone intentionally did something against you. How was that relationship made right?
- If it was not, what do you think might have made it right?
- What steps do people usually need to take to make things right and who usually is expected to initiate this kind of reconciliation?
- Why is taking the first step to be reconciled and offer forgiveness such a powerful thing to do?

Content

Read [Romans 5:1-11](#), then watch the Bible Background Video

Then ask:

- As you look back over the language of this whole passage – what is God doing?
- What are we doing, and what is being done to us or for us?
- While Paul says we now “have peace with God” (v.1), how does Paul in later verses describe our relationship with God?
- Why might the term "enemies" be too strong a word?
- Why would Paul say that we rejoice even when we are suffering (verses. 3-5)?
- Paul faced serious dangers in his ministry spending many months in prison and nearly losing his life several times, so what kind of suffering is he really talking about??
- In what way does this compare to dealing with smaller, day to day difficulties?.
- Why is it important that Jesus died for us, even when we were not ready and what does this say about our part in the process of being made right with God?
- Look again at verse 10: What did Jesus accomplish and why do you think Paul makes this distinction?

Closure

Continue by asking:

- In this reading Paul talks a lot about what God has done to put us back in a right relationship, but what do you think Paul would say is our part?
- What kinds of things do people put in the way of being reconciled to God and what do you think Paul would say to this?
- If all of us were “enemies” before God put us right, who else might be capable of being saved and in what ways might this realization affect the way we tell others about God’s Good News?
- This passage is dense with theological words and concepts. If an unchurched person were to ask you what it’s about, how would you explain it to them in terms that they could understand?

Close with prayer.

Writer: Jon Parks



CURRENT

session page

Non-Reactionary Love

Romans 5:1-11 | Session 8.48

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

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- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media)
- Find web links for underlined items on this session's webpage at faithelement.net.

Context

Begin by talking with the group about how God loves people who may seem to have little value in the world. You might want to start by asking the group to think about someone they pass by regularly but pay little attention to, such as a grocery clerk, a traffic cop, a person on the street, or a hotel staff person. Share the story of the storm chasers who used GPS dots to honor Bill Paxton and ask:

- Jake DeFlitch drove to a point on the map to register his GPS dot. He “waited for the right moment to log his contribution,” he said. “I waited until all the letters lined up. I was part of the ‘P,’ right below one of the connections, where the half-circle came back and connected with the straight line.” What do you think it meant to him to be counted in this moment?
- If we saw one GPS dot on the map, it might be easy to overlook or ignore. Why does this tribute of many dots make an impact?
- In what ways does it matter to someone to know that they “count.”
- When you pass by people, how often do you stop and think about how this is a person God loves?
- Why is this often the last thing that might cross our mind?

Content

Read [Romans 5:1-11](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like these:

- Complete this sentence based on what we read in this passage: "We are ____."
- Think about Romans 5:8-9 and what these verses say about being known by God. How does God regard us?
- How might Paul see this as an invitation to change the way we regard others?
- What would Paul regard as a "right" relationship with God?
- In what ways are a person's individual struggles a reflection of their faith, as Paul suggests in this passage?
- What do you think terms like "justification" and "reconciliation" mean in this passage and why?
- In what ways might such terms be similar or different when applied to our relationship with other people versus with God?

Closure

Show this video about the [Human library](#) (Some groups may want to consider stopping the video at 2:50.). Remind your group that the human library "gives people a chance to tell their own story in a one on one conversation" and ask:

- How do you understand someone who has a different life experience from you?
- What could we learn about God's love for all people by understand more people from different backgrounds?
- Who would be someone you would like to "check out" from this "library" for a thirty minute conversation?
- In what ways is this picture what you think of when you consider the reconciliation described in Romans 5:1-11?
- How do these stories change the way you picture the body of Christ?
- In what ways are we part of a larger "human library" for others, and what does that suggest we do for and with others?

Pray together to end the session, using this version of The Lord's Prayer from Nadia Bolz-Weber:

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins. As we forgive those who sin against us.

Forgive us when we hate what you love.

Forgive us when we would rather anesthetize ourselves than feel anything.

Forgive us when we squander the grace and freedom you have given us.

Forgive us for our self-centered lives.

Forgive us for the pride we exhibit in our political life together.

Forgive us for how much we resent in others the same things we hate in ourselves.

Forgive us for the terrible things we think about our own bodies, bodies you have made in your image.

God we praise you that your grace and mercy and forgiveness toward us is our one true source of our forgiveness toward others. Forgiven people forgive people and God we thank you for guiding the way toward this kind of freedom. You who perfected enemy-love have given us your own heart. May we more and more become what we receive.

Amen.

Writer: Erin Hall



MYSTIC
session page

Non-Reactionary Love

Romans 5:1-11 | Session 8.48

Before the Session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).
- Prepare a poster or whiteboard with reflection instructions (See Reflection).
- Materials needed: pens and the "A Blessing from God" handout.
- Find web links for underlined items on this session's webpage at faithelement.net.

Context

Read aloud [Romans 5:1-11](#) then play the Bible Background Video.

In today's session, the group will share in engaging their reflective imaginations in interpreting the mountaintop experiences in their lives.

Reflection

Before the session, prepare a poster or whiteboard with the reflection instructions listed below.

Give each person two copies of the blessing (see download link on the webpage for this session) and invite the group to spend some time in personal prayer and to “listen” to the printed blessing. Remind the group that this is a time of contemplation and prayer that is not to be rushed, but should take as much time as they need to focus and listen. Have individuals write their names on the provided blank and tell them to imagine that God is speaking these words to them, as the group revisits these words four times, according to the following instructions:

FIRST READING: read slowly and silently through the whole blessing.

SECOND READING: pause at the end of each line of the blessing and see what thoughts/feelings/images come to mind. What, if anything, do you want to say to God? Pause as you feel led, to make a space for God to respond to you.

For the next two readings, choose someone from your life that you might bless with these same words and start by writing his or her name on the provided blank.

THIRD READING: Imagine speaking these words to that person. See what thoughts/feelings/images come to mind. What, if anything, do you want to say to God? Pause as you feel led, to make a space for God to respond to you.

FOURTH READING: Rest in the blessing as you imagine God speaking these words to all people.

Give the group sufficient time for full reflection (fifteen to twenty minutes, or until it appears that the entire group has finished) then invite people to share their prayer experience with the group, reminding everyone that they need not comment on, fix, or give advice with regard to anyone else's experience, but simply receive what is shared and hold it with respect.

Close with prayers of thanksgiving.

Writer: Joy Yee



MEDIA
session page

Non-Reactionary Love

Romans 5:1-11 | Session 8.48

Before the Session

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- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
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Context

Play the [Dear Kitten video](#) and ask:

- What does it mean to be a friend to someone?
- What makes someone your enemy?
- How would you describe friendship to a small child?
- What did you learn about friendship from the video?
- How would God describe friendship to us, and what parts of that description might most people understand?

Content

Read [Romans 5:1-11](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like these:

- In what ways does faith in Jesus Christ bring peace to us?
- How do we gain peace with God?
- What does the concept of relationship have to do with it?
- How would you explain peace with God to a person who unfamiliar with your faith?
- In what ways can grace give us hope in times of difficulty?
- How does suffering bring endurance?
- What benefits do we gain from suffering?

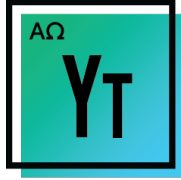
Closure

Play the [Interrogation movie clip](#) and ask:

- When have you made big mistakes like Newt?
- Just as “Albus” Dumbledore was so proud of Newt, what makes God so proud of you?
- What is so important about humanity that the Creator cares about us?
- How do we develop hope in our times of suffering even if they are sufferings caused by our own mistakes?
- What is it about us that make us feel unworthy of divine help and care?
- What can we do this week to remind ourselves that we are no longer enemies with God but friends?

Play the [Israel music video](#) and close in prayer.

Writer: Jon Self



YOUTH

session page

Non-Reactionary Love

Romans 5:1-11 | Session 8.48

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Have paper, pens and an envelope available for each person (See Closure)
- Listen to the FaithElement podcast for this session.
- Use the social media prompts on this session's webpage to help youth begin engaging the session ahead of their gathering.
- Find web links for underlined items on this session's webpage at faithelement.net.

Intro

Play the [John Cena video](#) and ask:

- How did you feel about what John Cena had to say and why?
- Why is it so hard to love those who are different from us?
- Why might God want us to love those who are different or disagree with us?
- What does it look like for us to love those we disagree with?

or

Play the Growing in Your Faith video and ask:

- Did this video make you think differently about growing in faith? If so... how?
- Why do you think the video suggests that caring for “the least of these” helps us grow in faith?
- The video also suggests that our sufferings and hardships can lead to growth in faith. How might that work?

Context

Play a game of “Never Have I Ever” by having everyone seated in a circle, with a volunteer in the middle and having the volunteer start by saying something they have never done by saying, “Never have I ever....” followed by an action. Once they have said something that they have never done, everyone else who has done what the volunteer has never done, must get up from their seat and try to find a different seat. The volunteer in the middle will also try to find a different seat. Whoever is left without a seat goes to the middle and says something they have never done, and the process continues. Remind the group to keep their “never have I ever” statements clean and respectful of others.

After playing for some time, ask:

- How did you feel about playing this game and why?
- In what ways were you surprised by the things that the others had never done?
- How would you evaluate your level of life experience based on the things you have done or never done?
- In what ways have your experienced helped to form you into the person that you are?
- How might God use your experiences, especially some of the more difficult experiences, to shape you?
- How might our sufferings help us to grow closer to God?

Content

Read Romans 5:1-11, then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask your group:

- Why would Paul tell the readers to rejoice in their suffering?
- What makes such rejoicing possible or impossible?
- What does suffering lead to according to this passage?
- What role does suffering play in giving us hope?
- Who in your life might you die for if an emergency situation called for it?
- What have they done that you would consider them worthy of that sacrifice?
- Why would Christ die for sinners and not just for the righteous?
- How should that affect the way we treat others around us who might not seem to be worthy of our acceptance?

Closure

Continue by asking:

- When have you experienced suffering in your life, whether personally or through someone close to you?
- In what ways has suffering contributed to making you who you are?
- How do you think you will handle it when you have to go through another tough experience?
- How do you see that tough experience shaping you when it happens?

Distribute pieces of paper, a pen, and an envelope to each person, and tell the group:

Unfortunately each of you will undoubtedly suffer through some tragic situation in your life. When you go through it, it will be tough to see God producing anything good, but God's word tells us that God will take suffering and produce perseverance, character, and eventually hope in that situation. Take a few minutes to write yourself a letter, to remind yourself when you are suffering that God can bring good through your suffering. Tell yourself to look up Romans 5:1-5 in your letter.

After each person has written their letter. Tell them to put it in their envelope, seal it, and write on it the envelope "Do not open until you need it." Instruct everyone in the group to put it someplace where they can find it when they need it to remind themselves of the hope that is in Christ.

Close this session in prayer

Writer: Don Breeden



MIX
session page

Non-Reactionary Love

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Context (From the Current Session Page)

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- Jake DeFlitch drove to a point on the map to register his GPS dot. He “waited for the right moment to log his contribution,” he said. “I waited until all the letters lined up. I was part of the ‘P,’ right below one of the connections, where the half-circle came back and connected with the straight line.” What do you think it meant to him to be counted in this moment?
- If we saw one GPS dot on the map, it might be easy to overlook or ignore. Why does this tribute of many dots make an impact?
- In what ways does it matter to someone to know that they “count.”
- When you pass by people, how often do you stop and think about how this is a person God loves?
- Why is this often the last thing that might cross our mind?

Content (From the Youth Session Page)

Read [Romans 5:1-11](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask your group:

- Why would Paul tell the readers to rejoice in their suffering?
- What makes such rejoicing possible or impossible?
- What does suffering lead to according to this passage?
- What role does suffering play in giving us hope?
- Who in your life might you die for if an emergency situation called for it?
- What have they done that you would consider them worthy of that sacrifice?
- Why would Christ die for sinners and not just for the righteous?
- How should that affect the way we treat others around us who might not seem to be worthy of our acceptance?

Closure (from the Media Session page)

Play the [Interrogation movie clip](#) and ask:

- When have you made big mistakes like Newt?
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- What is so important about humanity that the Creator cares about us?
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