

When in Rome..?

Session 6: "Inseperable" Romans 8 : 35 - 39

Timing: 30-45 minutes, then leading into ministry

Buzz groups: Suggestions are boxed, pairs or groups of 3-4 will work best

Illustrations: Suggestions are noted, but your own ideas and stories are preferable

Focus: Major on the one or two points most relevant to your group

Icebreaker: The Beatles wrote "All you Need is Love" in 1967. What's your favourite song title or song lyric with "love" in it?

Introduction to the series

People often think of a journey through Romans as a trek in the Himalayas, or a visit to the Louvre Musee, Paris. In each session we'll go to some of the peak/masterpiece passages. We behave out of what we believe to be true. But are all our own beliefs correct? Is "our truth" *the truth*? In Romans Paul helps us review that. And with changed understanding, we adopt changed attitudes and new behaviours. We become more like Jesus.

Introduction to session 6

Romans 8:35 - 39 ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We all want to be loved. St Paul says nothing can stop God's love from reaching us. And in the end, nothing can top God's love winning the day.

Buzzgroups: When did you first fall in love? And what did it feel like?

Look at each of the potential problems St Paul lists in v.3. What does each mean for us today? *Go through the list giving personal examples for each one.*

- Trouble = stress, things go wrong, frustration, problems we're up against
- Hardship = lack of time, energy, money, especially if we're "spent" helping others
- Persecution = trying to do the right thing and only getting hassle in return. Caring for friends and relatives, parenting, refusing to gossip or fiddle work expenses.
- Famine = emotional starvation, lack of fulfilment, no refreshment, nothing feeding us. Lacking encouragement or support or help when we need it, missing friends, grief, hopelessness, loneliness or depression

- Nakedness = vulnerability, feeling exposed or weak
- Danger = fears, threats and risks, that tempt us to fear and turn back.
- Sword = conflict and hostility, harsh words, disagreements, emotional/ physical/ psychological abuse by others, separation from those we long to be reconciled to

Buzzgroups: Why do these things make us feel unloved? What should we do about that? What is the Bible's wisdom (or yours!) on how to respond?

We have a choice of two fundamentally different ways to respond to these things:

1. Accept defeat (v36)

Accept defeat. Be pitied or self-pity. Lose hope. Allow ourselves to be put down and devalued until we see ourselves as unproductive and fairly useless all round. Our self-esteem plummets, motivation for life deserts us, and we feel we deserve to be trampled on.

OR

2. Faith: deliberately recall God's love (v37)

Nothing can separate us from God's love. We may be going through hell, but even there God's love is with us. In fact it's there that God's love is especially with us – despite what it feels like, just as the greatest revelation of God's love and glory is actually found in Jesus' suffering and separation on the cross for us.

Tell a personal story of how you faced this choice very clearly in responding to a difficult thing in your own life. How you chose the latter way, and what happened.

“You can think of every terrifying thing that this or any other world can produce, not one of them is then able to separate the Christian from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ, Lord of every terror and Master of every world. Of what then shall we be afraid?”
(Theologian William Barclay)

- Jesus' death is the ultimate revelation of God's love for us
- Jesus' resurrection is the ultimate evidence of victory over death and– if we are “in Christ”, we are loved and victorious over death

Ideas for Ministry

- This session is deliberately shorter so that there is more time to pray for one another.
- Recap some of the main verses/messages during the series and ask people to pray in 3's for the thing that most stood out to them.
- Read Romans 8:35-39 again and remind everyone of Romans 5:5 – it's the Holy Spirit that pours God's love – that we all desperately crave – in to our hearts. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and do just that. Leave a time of silence for people to focus on God and receive his love.
- End by renewing our commitment to Jesus – to worship him, love him and follow him.