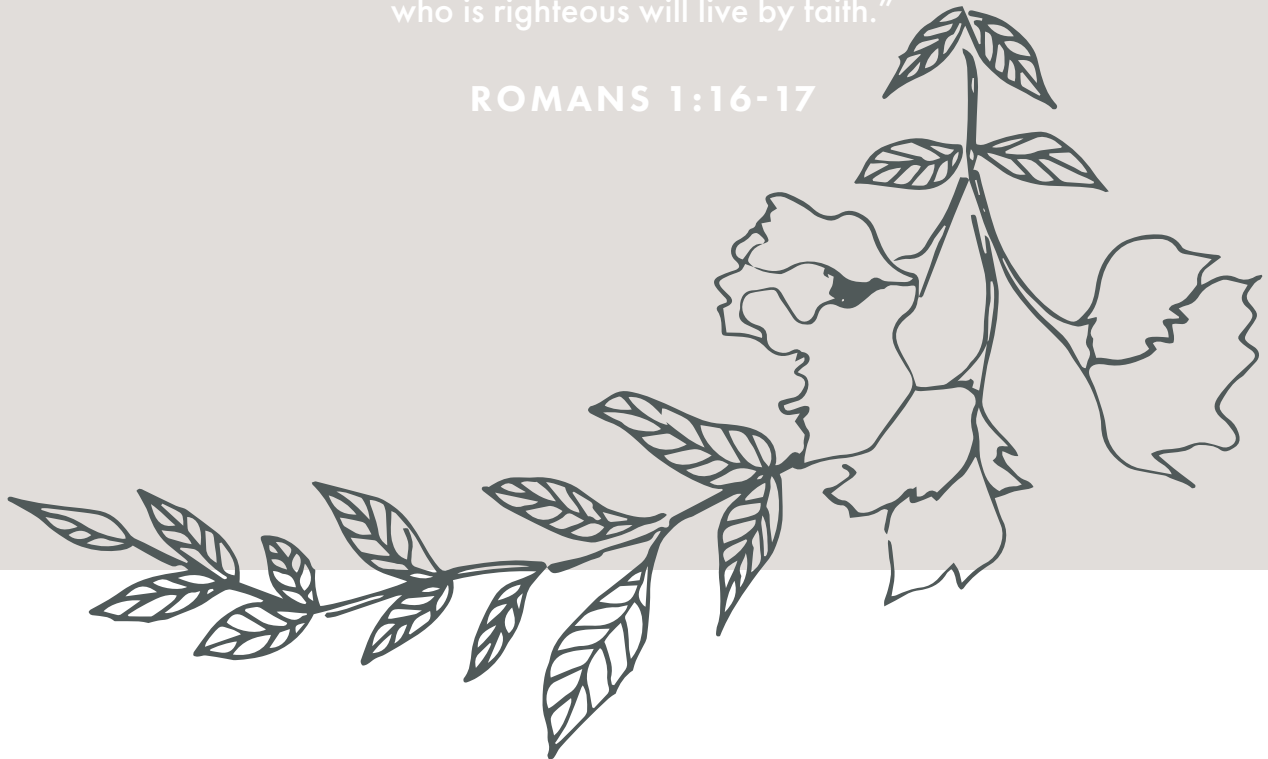




For I am not ashamed of the gospel;
it is the power of God for salvation
to everyone who has faith,
to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
For in it the righteousness of God
is revealed through faith for faith;
as it is written, "The one
who is righteous will live by faith."

ROMANS 1:16-17



"I've always wanted to do a Bible study with a group of young moms," she said, looking up at an older woman who was long past the stage of juggling journals and juice cups. "But I'm new to the area and I only know two women who might join me."

"Then you have a group," said the older woman firmly, with a triumphant smile. "Absolutely. That's a group."

And it is. Where even two women are gathered, He is there, delighted to be invited and eager to bless.

Whether you are gathering with one friend in a dorm room at 10:00 every Wednesday night or you're gathering ten women and thirty children at the park on Friday mornings, He's there. And He's so glad you asked. (Matthew 18:20)

1. Keep it simple. Begin and end the gathering with the same prayer/scripture reading so that no matter who is hosting the gathering, the format remains simple and clear.
2. Have an established leader for your gathering time. It can be a different individual each meeting, but it helps to have one person to lead the study session.
3. Set a beginning/ending time for the gathering. Encourage promptness in arrival so that you can utilize the full amount of time you may have to gather. Start on time, even if you have stragglers. They can join in when they arrive. Always be respectful of the hostesses time.
4. When it comes to personal sharing, having an egg timer set is a huge help. It may sound rather silly, but when you have a specific amount of time to gather, you want to be respectful of each person present and to not have one voice override the rest.
5. Send out a reminder 48 and 24 hours in advance, especially if the group is filled with young mothers who are at times easily overwhelmed with the details of daily life and need a little encouragement to leave the house and spend time filling their own hearts and minds with the Word and good fellowship. You may also want to try and get a headcount 24 hours before to assist the hostess for the evening to be properly prepared.
6. Have someone in the group bring the dessert/snack so that the hostess is simply preparing her home and providing drinks. It makes it easier all the way around to divide up the tasks so no one person carries the full burden.
7. Remember that people are coming to share in prayer and community, not to judge the state of tidiness in your home. Don't let the clutter stop you from hosting. Simplicity is your friend. You have a spot for sitting and having a productive conversation. If there is a basket of laundry next to the sofa, don't stress. The women gathering are there for you, not your home.
8. Treat this gathering like a vault. What is shared in small group, stays in small group. This is a place of trust among your spiritual sisters. You must treat the struggles shared and prayers asked for with the utmost respect and discretion.

9. Keep your eye on the numbers. With a larger gathering (more than five) you will need to break up into smaller groups to discuss the scripture so everyone has an opportunity to share how God is working in their life.

10. Always try to remain positive in your small group responses. Life is difficult and sometimes one (or more) in your small group may be experiencing a crisis. Remember to listen with your heart and hold judgment, especially in a group setting. If there is something the Holy Spirit has placed on your heart to share with this individual, make time after small group to share it privately. You always want to lift up and encourage each other.

11. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Bible studies and small groups take time to cultivate. It's OK if there is fluctuation in attendance. We must strive to meet each other right where we are in life. God is pleased that you are making the effort to know Him better, so just keep going friends.

Week 1:

As we start this study, how is your faith life? Do you feel like you're flourishing, or floundering around in the dark? Does God feel close to you, or distant? Journal or share your current spiritual state, and what you hope to gain from this study, as a way to set a baseline for yourself. In thirty days, where would you like to be in your spiritual life?

Are there sins that continually cause you to stumble, even though you know you should give up this act? Offer this sin to God, and pray in a particular way this week to have him change your heart and give you the strength to avoid this sin.

Consider a time when the thought of God's love drew you back to His arms when you had strayed. Describe how our Heavenly Father affectionately drew you back to Him.

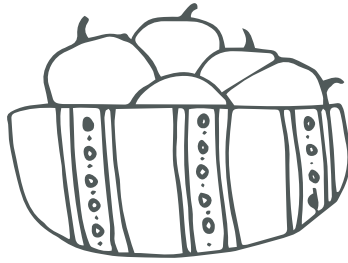
Look at the sin you focused on yesterday. Today, pray to God in your own words, specifically repenting of this sin and asking God to help you avoid this sin, to truly circumcise your heart and allow him to fully enter your heart.

Do you resist that peeling back the layers of your heart to really allow God's grace to enter in? What is something that could be causing that resistance to God's grace?

Do you feel like prayer only "counts" if you do it perfectly—in perfect silence, with perfect words and intentions as you kneel beside your bed, or in a pew?

Have you recently entered a new season of life that has caused a shift in your previously practiced prayer life? Has this been a source of frustration rather than an opening to grace? Consider how the Lord might be calling you to "conversation" with Him that might look a bit different now. Pray for the grace to find peace in this.

What secret wish do you have in your heart, a longing you'd like to have met? Can you turn this over to God, and ask for His help in achieving that wish or longing?



And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

ROMANS 5:3-5

Week 2:

Are there areas in your life where you feel that God's love can't reach? That you have to do everything yourself? Today, begin to pry your fingers off that area, and place it in God's hands.

Do you allow God into your suffering? Or do you inwardly attempt to combat the pain yourself? What could happen if you fully allowed Him in?

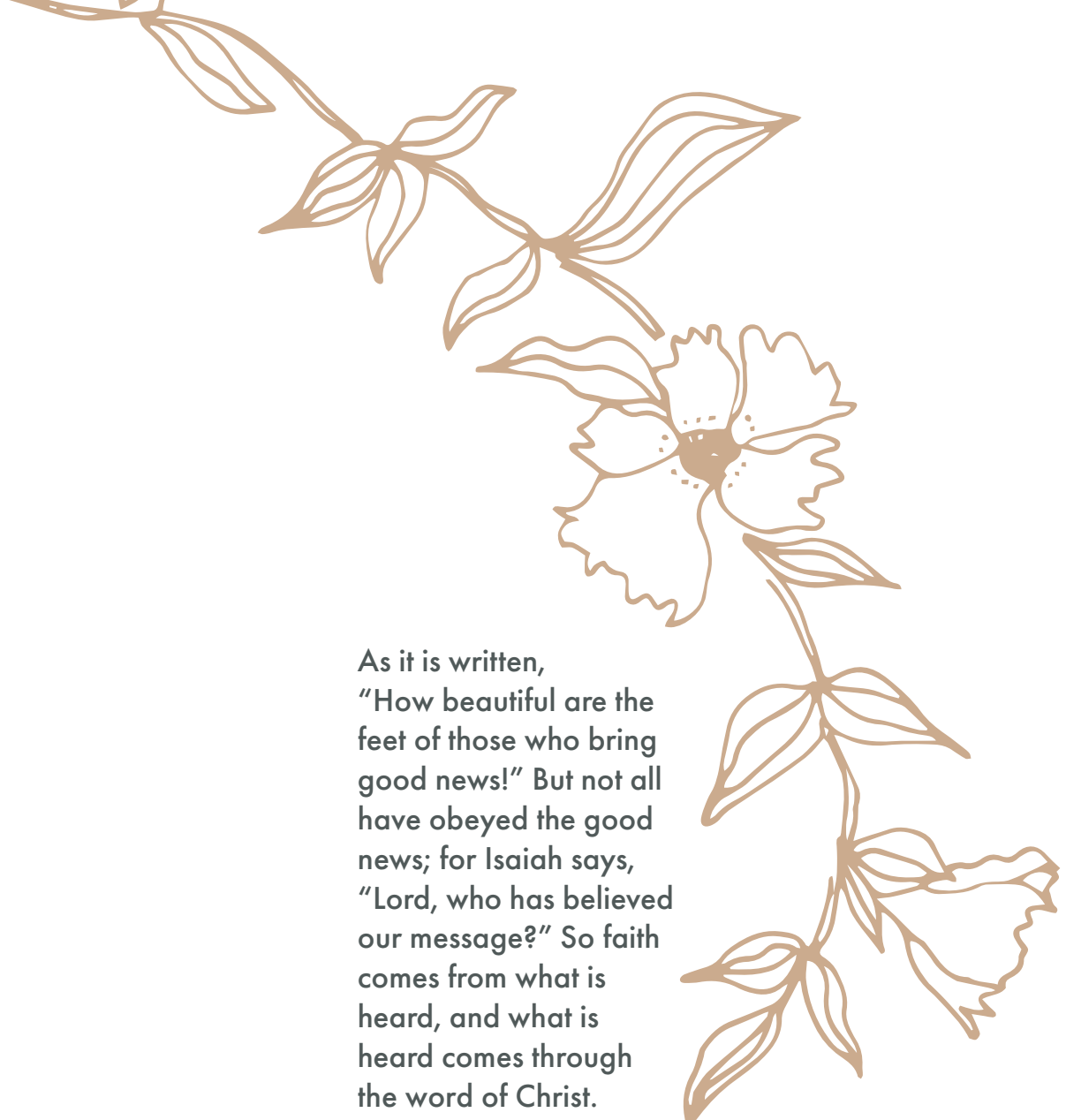
Have you experienced a profound moment of conversion in your life? Explain how you became 'dead to sin and alive in Christ'.

Is concupiscence a source of frustration or a springboard of hope for you?

Do you attempt to carry alone your crosses instead of placing them in the arms of our Lord?

Do you trust your human father more than you trust your heavenly one? Do you view your relationship with God the Father through the lens of your earthly one? Does this make it difficult to trust in the plans He has for you? Does this inhibit your ability to truly feel loved by God? How could your relationship with the Father change if you were able to "free-fall" into His arms?

You are a child of God, and He is one hundred percent FOR you. Steep yourself in that thought for a few moments. Do you find joy in this fact? What can that mean for your life?



As it is written,
"How beautiful are the
feet of those who bring
good news!" But not all
have obeyed the good
news; for Isaiah says,
"Lord, who has believed
our message?" So faith
comes from what is
heard, and what is
heard comes through
the word of Christ.

ROMANS 10:15-17

Week 3:

Do you think that you have to be “worthy” of mercy? Do you deny yourself Christ’s mercy because you don’t feel you deserve it?

How do you preach the Gospel in your daily life?

Does the Word of God truly *live* in you? What are some concrete ways you could better live the Gospel in your life—being a preacher and a doer of the Word?

What are you certain of?

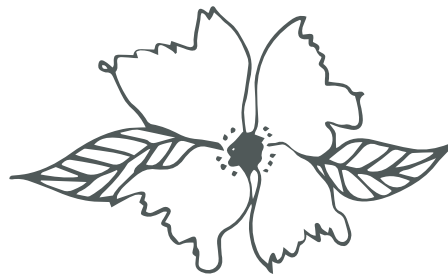
Is there a person in your life whose relationship with God makes you “jealous”? What is it about their life that drives your desire to relate to God similarly?

How can you better return that jealous love God has for you?

Do you feel like there’s something you’ve done that God can’t forgive? Are you holding something back from Him because it seems too big to forgive? Or perhaps there is something you feel you just can’t release? Pray to him today, speaking openly and freely, and ask him to forgive this sin. Then go to confession and hear the words of absolution and let them bring life to your heart.

What gifts has God given you that make you who you are? How can you be more like the person God created you to be?

Do the rules offered by Christ feel like an imposition to you or a gateway to true freedom? Why? How can they lead to true freedom?



May the God of hope
fill you with all joy
and peace in believing,
so that you may
abound in hope by
the power of the
Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 15:13

Week 4:

Is love the overarching influence in all you say and do? Do you find it difficult to balance obedience to civil authority, but always putting God first? Why?

Where is God giving you the chance for mutual upbuilding, for fellowship and community among believers? Thank him for this gift today.

Are you afraid of differences between you rather than relishing in the things that connect you? Or how have you set aside differences so that your friendship(s) could flourish?

Where have you found harmony or unity with fellow pilgrims on this earth? Was there something happening there in community that you could not have achieved individually? When have you witnessed mutual aid really grow a community closer to Christ?

Do you have hope in your fellow Christian brothers and sisters?
Do you live in the light of the truth that the Holy Spirit is at work in you for the good of the Church?

As you look back on this study, how have you grown in faith? What practices and prayers can help you flourish in your daily life? What is God asking you to do in your life to help others flourish in faith?