

SPOUT SPRINGS CHURCH

2021



Four Weeks in the Word: Paul

Welcome to **Four Weeks in the Word**. We invite you to come along on this journey with us as we read the Bible together and cooperate with God's Spirit with a simple goal: life change.

As you can guess, the journey begins with the Bible. There are 28 daily readings that we will all be doing. These readings will take us through the life of the Apostle Paul.

In addition to reading, we will go into each day with the expectation that God is going to teach us something. We will analyze each passage and listen for how we believe God wants us to apply the passage in our own lives. Then we will write down what we have learned. This practice is called journaling, and the next section will explain how journaling works.

While journaling is normally a private event, **Four Weeks in the Word** is not intended as a private undertaking. This is a community event. Each day will also include a video of a church member discussing what God showed them through that day's text.

Then, each Sunday we will gather either live or online to celebrate what God is teaching us. That Sunday's message will focus on that day's reading and the service may well include others sharing about what they are learning.

I truly believe that participating in **Four Weeks in the Word** will start a habit that will change your life now and positively impact the rest of your life.

How to Journal

Journaling, at its heart, is meditation. It is concentrating on a passage with enough intensity to see its depth and then writing down what we see. Or rather, what God shows us.¹

From Reading to Journaling

Journaling starts with understanding. And understanding starts with asking three questions of a passage: What does it say, what does it mean, and what does it mean to me?

Question One: What does it say?

At the most basic level, what is the author trying to communicate?

In 1 Samuel David slings a stone and a giant crashes to the ground.

In Genesis Moses describes an awe-inspiring image of God spinning the universe out of literally nothing.

In Romans 8 Paul says that God's love for us is so complete and powerful that nothing, including our own guilt, can separate us from him.

Asking what the passages says may seem basic—even obvious—but it's crucial. If we seek personal application separate from what the text says, we've detached the passage from its source. We can make it say anything and mean nothing.

For instance, the Bible says twice that there is no God. Of course, both times it prefaces the statement by telling us, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" What the context tells us is that a person who denies the existence of God is a fool in the big-picture sense, no matter how smart they are in other areas of life.

And here's the rule: A given text only says one thing. David fired off that rock, not his brother, not King Saul, and not some symbolic force. David did it. Our study may provide greater details into what the text says, but it still only says one thing.

Question Two: What does it mean?

What general principles does this passage teach us about God, how he works, and what he wants from people?

Things gets a little more subjective here, but only a little. While each text only says one thing, it can mean more than one. In the story of David and Goliath, what is says is simply and primarily the description of a battle. What

¹ This section is adapted from the book, *God's Big Story*.

it *means* is that God is in control of every battle. That it doesn't matter how big the enemy is, God is bigger. That God can reward faith that is willing to risk.

There is a list of principles this passage teaches, but it is a finite list. It doesn't mean that if we take risks for God we'll always win, because that separates us from what we learn in the rest of the Bible. It doesn't mean that God likes short people or doesn't like tall people, because what the text says makes it clear that the point is about the combatants' relationship with and attitude toward God, not their height.

Once we've isolated some basic principles, we can ask the big question.

Question Three: What does it mean to me?

Finally, the good part. Application. We know what it says. We know what it means. Now we can dig into how this text should impact our lives.

This is where the Holy Spirit steps to the forefront. He helps us turn principles into life-change.

It goes like this: I'm reading the story of David and Goliath. I see what it says (victorious teen, dead giant). I recognize what it means, the principles that underlie the text. Then, as I'm thinking about it (in other words, meditating on it), the Spirit points out a specific area of my life where one of the principles intersects my reality.

For instance, hypothetically let's say there is a ginormous pandemic sweeping the world, shutting down economies, and driving people to despair and anger. After yet another discouraging day, you come to the Bible certain that there is no reason for you to even try to accomplish anything.

But it "just happens" that you are on Day 8 of **Four Weeks in the Word**. You read about Paul and Silas being thrown in jail with the threat of even more harm to come. You then read about an earthquake that frees them, but also sets up the circumstances that enable them to introduce the jailer's entire family to faith in Jesus.

At this point the Holy Spirit brings you a reassurance: God can work in and through any circumstance for your good, his glory, and the ultimate advancement of his work on earth. Even if the circumstance includes a pandemic.

From Understanding to Journaling

One of the best ways to maximize the impact of asking these three questions is to write down what you believe God is saying to you. This booklet is designed to help you turn this process into a life-changing habit.

Before you start each day's readings, ask God what He wants to teach you that day. Then as you read, try to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting on what He wants you to focus on. It could be a phrase that seems to jump off the page at you, a verse that smacks right into the center of your present situation, or even a word or two that you weren't expecting, driving you to focus on them.

In the journal space for that day, first write down the verse or phrase and what you believe it means. Don't worry about being deep, just describe it. In the next section, speculate on the principles you see in the passage. Then, in the third section write down how you think one or more of those principles intersect with your life. Don't worry about being profound. Let your mind untangle the text as you pray and write. And don't be surprised if God reveals additional insights to you as you write. Finally, write a prayer expressing how you're going to attempt to apply what you've learned to your life.

As you read, journal, and review, you'll be amazed at the lessons you learn and how God uses this habit to help you grow. You may even find that you need more space than we've given to write down all you're learning. You may need an auxiliary notebook (or an online resource like Evernote) to record everything.

Does Journaling Work?

If you need additional encouragement, how about a personal story? I've been journaling for over 25 years. God still gives me new insights, challenges, and inspiration on almost a daily basis. A significant number of my sermons each year are developed from ideas I received while journaling. And almost all the daily Jumpstart videos I post on YouTube come straight from my journals.

So grab a Bible (or e-Bible), and a pen (or app). Then let God speak to you through his word and watch as he does amazing things in your life and the lives of those around you as we spend **Four Weeks in the Word**.

Introduction to Romans Chapters 6 - 8

Romans is one of the most important books in the Bible and chapters 6 through 8 are the heart of the book. As we prepare to dig into these chapters, here is a quick overview of the book and the chapters.

The first three chapters of Romans are one comprehensive argument. Paul works through various groups of people on earth in order to arrive at the conclusion that we are all hopeless before God without Jesus. The section (and possibly the whole Bible) climaxes with this section from chapter 3:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

In a real sense, the rest of the book of Romans is Paul working out the implications of this truth.

Chapter 4 takes us all the way back to Abraham and how his life is a testimony to the realities of chapter 3. Chapter 5 celebrates our salvation in Jesus, then draws the direct line from Adam's sin to our redemption in the Second Adam, Christ.

Chapter 6, where our daily readings begin, shows us how we were dead to our sins but made alive in Jesus; and how we were slaves to sin but are now able to gratefully serve God.

Chapter 7 takes a step back. In this powerful chapter, Paul confronts the reality of our lingering sinfulness, leading to the massive celebration that is Romans Chapter 8.

Many, many people consider Romans 8 the greatest chapter in the Bible. Chapter 8 digs into the joy that comes from the fact that there is now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. The next section shows how the suffering we endure--and the suffering of all creation--pales in comparison to the glory that is coming for us and the way God is using that suffering in us. The chapter culminates by reminding us that in Christ we are more than conquerors who cannot be separated from the love of God.

So get ready for God to speak powerfully and joyfully into your life as you spend Four Weeks in the Word in Romans 6-8.

Day 1 - Sunday, Sept. 26

Read Romans 6:1-4

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 2 - Monday, Sept. 27

Read Romans 6:5-7

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 3-Tuesday, Sept. 28

Read Romans 6:8-10

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 4-Wednesday, Sept. 29

Read Romans 6:11-14

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 5-Thursday, Sept. 30

Read Romans 6:15-18

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 6-Friday, Oct. 1

Read Romans 6:19-23

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 7-Saturday, Oct. 2

Read Romans 7:1-3

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 8-Sunday, Oct. 3

Read Romans 7:4-6

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 9-Monday, Oct. 4

Read Romans 7:7-8

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 10-Tuesday, Oct. 5

Read Romans 7:9-12

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 11-Wednesday, Oct. 6

Read Romans 7:13

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 12-Thursday, Oct. 7

Read Romans 7:14-20

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 13-Friday, Oct. 8

Read Romans 7:21-25

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 14-Saturday, Oct. 9

Read Romans 8:1-4

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 15-Sunday, Oct. 10

Read Romans 8:5-8

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 16-Monday, Oct.11

Read Romans 8:9-11

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 17-Tuesday, Oct. 12

Read Romans 8:12-13

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 18-Wednesday, Oct. 13

Read Romans 8:14-15

What does this passage say? _____

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 19-Thursday, Oct. 14

Read Romans 8:16-17

What does this passage say?

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 20-Friday, Oct. 15

Read Romans 8:18-21

What does this passage say?

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 21-Saturday, Oct. 16

Read Romans 8:22-25

What does this passage say?

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 22-Sunday, Oct. 17

Read Romans 8:26-27

What does this passage say?

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 23-Monday, Oct. 18

Read Romans 8:28-29

What does this passage say?

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 24-Tuesday, Oct. 19

Read Romans 8:30

What does this passage say?

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 25-Wednesday, Oct. 20

Read Romans 8:31-32

What does this passage say?

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 26-Thursday, Oct. 21

Read Romans 8:33-34

What does this passage say?

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 27-Friday, Oct. 22

Read Romans 8:35-36

What does this passage say?

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:

Day 28-Saturday, Oct. 23

Read Romans 8:37-39

What does this passage say?

What does this passage mean? What Biblical principles do you see in this passage?

What does this passage mean to me? How can I apply one or more of these principles to my life?

My prayer for today:
