

Leader Guide

What Now

Spring 2026 | Week 2

Message Date 4/12/2026

THE GOAL

This week we had Dr. Jackson come and challenge us to live in the reality of Easter. Romans 8 teaches that if we belong to Christ, the Spirit of God now lives in us. That means our identity has changed, our power has changed, and our future has changed. We are no longer controlled by our sinful nature—we are now spiritually alive. Because of that, we are called to actively live differently: putting to death old patterns, walking by the Spirit, and embracing our identity as sons and daughters of God. By the end of this discussion, group members should identify what it means to be fully alive in Christ and take steps toward it.

MY STORY

- 1) If someone followed you around this week, what would they assume matters most to you?
- 2) What's something in your life that took time before it finally clicked for you?

QUICK REVIEW

- 3) What caught your attention from Sunday's message?

DIGGING DEEPER / TAKING IT HOME

Romans 7:1–17 (NLT)

¹Now, dear brothers and sisters—you who are familiar with the law—don't you know that the law applies only while a person is living? ²For example, when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. ³So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.

⁴So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God. ⁵When we

were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death. ⁶But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.

⁷Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "You must not covet." ⁸But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power. ⁹At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, ¹⁰and I died. So I discovered that the law's commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead.

¹¹Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. ¹²But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.

¹³But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commands for its own evil purposes.

¹⁴So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. ¹⁵I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. ¹⁶But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

- 4) What does it mean to be dead to sin, and how does this practically play out in our lives?

Being dead to sin means that it no longer owns me. It does not have ownership over my life. I am owned by God through the work of Christ. However, being dead to sin means that I do not have to bow to it as master, it has lost the power to control me. If you're anything like me though, and you read this and you get discouraged. Take heart; being dead to sin is a process as well because we all struggle with it at some level.

- 5) According to the passage, what is defining evidence that summons belonging to Christ?

It's the Spirit of God living inside of us. While that is not necessarily clear from the outside, what will happen is the attitudes and actions of the person who has the indwelling of the Spirit will begin to look different. We will begin to look more like Jesus; we have more fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. That doesn't mean we're perfect, but the Spirit of God inside a person is the evidence that we belong to Christ.

- 6) Where are you experiencing tension between your old nature and your new identity right now?

For me (Justin) tension always arrives when I am too busy. When I have too much on my schedule and my plate is overwhelmed. My old nature comes out quickly. I am very impatient and I wrestle with anger. When I slow down and take time and I don't overload my schedule, I am much more connected to Jesus.

- 7) What does it actually look like in real life to be 'controlled by the Spirit' instead of yourself?

For me (Justin) it comes down to the pace of my life. When I spend too much time scrolling, I haven't sat with Jesus enough. When I sit with Him I have a much greater capacity to love, to be patient. All the fruit of the spirit are much more accessible in my life.

- 8) How does viewing God as 'Abba, Father' challenge the way you currently relate to Him? Does your relationship or did your relationship with your own father ever impact or influence how you viewed God?

This might be a little different for everyone depending on the relationship with their dad. Seeing God as Abba creates a kindness that I can approach and an approachability without any fear. However, this isn't always the case for me. My own personal relationship with my dad clouded that idea of what a father is like to my heavenly father. In fact, there was a season in my life when I would sin, and I would think that God did not want to talk to me. But that was a byproduct of my relationship with my earthly father. This is not intended to blame my dad, but a truth of how we superimpose our earthly relationships over our heavenly ones.

- 9) If you were fully living out this passage, what would be noticeably different this week?

I think I would have a greater sense of peace. I would have greater joy. My schedule would look differently.

CHAIR TIME TOOLS

Reflection Questions for Chair Time: think about the following questions and pray through them with Jesus.

- 1) Where are you still living under your old nature instead of your new identity?
- 2) What is one step you will take this week to follow the Spirit more intentionally?
- 3) Ask God to show you what 'fully alive' looks like—what stands out?