

ROMANS 6-11

THE FREE GIFT OF SONSHIP



8 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



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GORDON CHENG

 **matthiasmedia**

The Free Gift of Sonship

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» HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God's Word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of 'interaction'—interaction with the Bible, with the things we've written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

2. The format

Each study contains five main components:

- Short sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge.
- A set of numbered study questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning.
- Side-bars that provide extra bits of background or optional extra study ideas, especially regarding other relevant parts of the Bible.
- An ‘Implications’ section that helps you think about what this passage means for you and your life today.
- Suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study, reading the text, answering the questions about the Bible passage, and exploring the side-bars as you have time.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s Word, but respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learnt.

4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don’t need the formal structure of a ‘group’ to gain maximum benefit.

- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining the sections of text to emphasize and read out loud, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- If your group members usually don't work through the study in advance, it's extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the 'Implications' to focus on.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

5. Bible translation

Previous studies in our Interactive Bible Study series have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. For this reason, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.

» STUDY 1

WANTED, DEAD AND ALIVE

[ROMANS 6]

The story so far ...

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING we can learn in life—far more important than short-term success, or material or physical comfort, or even satisfaction in human relationships—is how to be right with God. And how to be right with God (or **'justified'**) is exactly what Paul has talked about in the first five chapters of Romans. Against the terrible black hole of our sin, and God's righteous anger against sin, Paul has set out the rescue mission of Jesus Christ. God sends his only son into the world as a man, to save us from our sin by his death on the cross.

The wonder of this is seen all the more clearly when we realize how desperate our situation was. Nothing we did, or could do, was able to save us. Even knowing God's law only highlighted wickedness.

God in mercy gave Jesus his son as the sacrifice for sin. He died in our place, turning us from enemies into friends. When we trusted him, we moved from death to life—a new life, characterized by continuing trust and joy.

That's the story so far in Romans.

But what does this mean for life now and into the future? We are standing on the mountaintop of God's grace, and it is time to take in the view.

'Justification'

The big idea in Romans 1–5 is 'justification' or 'righteousness'. 'Righteousness' and 'justification' come from the same word in Greek, and the basic meaning of the word is for something to be right and true, or to be declared right and true. Paul teaches us that the righteous God, who is righteously angry at my sin, tells me that because of Jesus' righteous work I can be declared righteous—that is, right with him, or 'justified'.

To refresh your memory about these majestic ideas, read back over Romans 3:21–26 and 5:6–9.

What does 'baptism' mean?

'Baptism' is from a Greek word meaning dipping, dunking, washing or plunging. It's something we do to dishes and dirty children, or ourselves after some hard digging in the garden. In the Gospels, John the Baptizer did it by plunging people into the waters of the River Jordan.

One significant clue to understanding Romans 6:3-4 is that in the baptism described here, no water is mentioned. Remember this as you answer question 2.

Read Romans 6:1-4.

1. Why might Romans 1-5 lead to the question in Romans 6:1?
2. What do you think it means to be **baptized** into Christ Jesus and his death (v. 3)?
3. What's the ultimate purpose of being "buried therefore with him by baptism into death" (v. 4)?

Read Romans 6:5-11.

4. What did the death of Christ achieve for us? How did it achieve it?

United with Christ

RIGHT AT THE HEART OF THIS passage, as with much of Paul's writing, is the idea of 'union with Christ'. The idea of 'union' here is a bit like the idea that we are all playing on the same team, with the Lord Jesus as our captain—but that is still too weak an illustration to describe the reality of 'union' with Christ.

You could also say that being 'in Christ' is like being in a new place, a new safe zone in the universe, where our sin has already been judged, and death has been defeated, and where we live forever. By being 'in Christ'—

through being united with him—we share in everything that he achieved. His death becomes our death; and his resurrection, ours as well. More importantly, as far as Romans is concerned, his righteousness becomes ours.

How are we joined to Christ like this? How do we become 'united with Christ'? The answer of Romans is 'faith'. By putting our trust in him.

If you want to chase this idea a bit further, compare Romans 5:12-21, 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, Ephesians 2:1-10 and Philippians 3:8-11.

5. From verses 5-11, when we are united with Christ:

a. What does our future hold?

b. How should we think about ourselves in the present?

RIGHTLY UNDERSTANDING OUR NEW status in Christ is first and foremost a great cause for thankfulness. Simply by trusting him, we've been put right with God. Knowing this may not make our personal struggles to live the Christian life any easier, but it sets us off on the right footing. There's no need for any anxiety or fearfulness about where we stand with God. We've been set free instead to consider how we are to live our new lives in Christ. The Christian

life is not lived in fear of falling under God's judgement, but with great confidence and hope for the future. You may even like to pause at this point of the study to give thanks to God for everything he has done for us in uniting us with his Son ...

But where next? Having realized where we stand with Christ, Paul invites us to consider what the Christian life will now look like from a moral point of view.

Read Romans 6:12-23.

6. What do you think is involved in being a slave to "sin" or a slave to "impurity" (vv. 6, 17, 19)?

7. What is involved in being a slave to "righteousness" or a slave of "God" (vv. 18, 19, 22)?

8. Now use the following table to summarize what you've read in Romans 6.

Life before becoming a Christian	Becoming a Christian	Life after becoming a Christian
e.g. enslaved to sin (v. 6)	e.g. died to sin (v. 2)	e.g. walking in newness of life (v. 4)

-
9. Looking back over the whole chapter, Paul is answering a basic objection to his gospel. If we have been saved by grace, completely forgiven, justified and set free, does that mean we can just keep sinning? Does the gospel of free grace lead to the freedom to sin as much as we want to?

Try to come up with a two or three sentence summary of Paul's answer to these questions.

» Implications

(Choose some of the following to think about further or to discuss in your group.)

- What is your own memory of what life was like before you were a Christian? How would you respond to someone who thinks this Romans 6 picture of the pre-Christian life is too harsh?

- Imagine someone asked you, "What does it really mean to be a Christian, and how do you become one?" And imagine that you had just been reading Romans 6 in your quiet time. How would you answer the question?



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It was in 1988 that we first started pursuing this mission together, and in God's kindness we now have more than 250 different ministry resources being distributed all over the world. These resources range from Bible studies and books, through to training courses and audio sermons.

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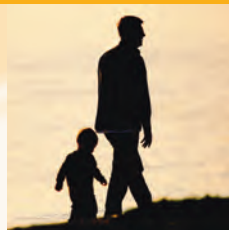
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THE FREE GIFT OF SONSHIP

Following on from **The Free Gift of Life** (Romans 1-5) comes this next instalment in Gordon Cheng's insightful studies on Paul's letter to the Romans.



The Free Gift of Sonship is your guide to the riches of Romans 6-11. You'll delve into the personally challenging teaching about obedience and righteousness in chapter 6; the demanding discussion about whether God has kept his promises to Israel in chapters 9-11; and the majestic teaching of chapter 8 regarding the Spirit, the Christian life and the hope of glory.

Whether we are male or female, the glorious gift of God through the gospel is that we are his adopted 'sons'—heirs of his kingdom and co-heirs with his Son, Jesus Christ.

