



my grandma time

...doing simple things together!

Week 50, Day 1 --- Romans 9-11

Week 50, Day 2 --- Romans 12-13

Week 50, Day 3 --- Romans 14-16

Week 50, Day 4 --- Acts 20:4-23:35

Week 50, Day 5 --- Acts 24-26

Week 50, Day 6 --- Acts 27-28

Week 50, Day 7 --- Philemon 1 - Colossians 1-4

Week 50, Day 1 --- Romans 9-11

Paul interrupts his discussion of the Christian walk to talk about his own people. This is a very emotional and personal part of the book. Paul is writing to Gentiles and he wants them to know how important the Jews are and have been. I'm thinking that the Gentiles are beginning to look down on the Jews, especially since some of the Jews are probably persecuting them. Paul wants to stop this and he expresses in the strongest word possible his desire for the Jews to come to know and accept Jesus.

There are principles in these 3 chapters that have been debated by Christian scholars for years. Many books have been written just on these 3 chapters and what they mean. What do you learn about God from these 3 chapters?

Week 50, Day 2 --- Romans 12-13

One of the things that you should have picked up from the previous 3 chapters is that God is merciful. To be specific, as you are reading this God has been merciful to us. So, Paul is appealing to us on the basis of God's mercy to be different. We become different by changing how we think.

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TITLE: Habits of the Mind: a Mind For God

AUTHOR: Charles Colson

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A few years ago, a professor at Pasadena City College led a class discussion on the famous story "The Lottery." In the story, a seemingly normal village carries out a bizarre ritual involving human sacrifice. The professor, Kay Haugaard, had taught the story many times over the years and was anticipating the usual shocked reactions from her students.

Instead, she found that she was teaching a room full of moral relativists who thought that the ritual might be all right "if it's a part of a person's culture ... and if it has worked for them." To Haugaard's horror, she realized that "no one in the whole class of twenty ostensibly intelligent individuals would go out on a limb and take a stand [even] against human sacrifice." The very mentality that Jackson's story warns us about — "the dangers of being totally accepting followers, too cowardly to rebel against

obvious cruelties and injustices” — had become the mentality of this group of intelligent college students.

Haugaard writes, “It was a warm night when I walked out to my car after class that evening, but I felt shivery, chilled to the bone.” James Emery White tells this story in his excellent new book *A MIND FOR GOD*. White, the new president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, wants us to understand just how dangerous it can be to live life without a worldview that teaches that “each person has value, and there is meaning and purpose to every life.”

To have such a worldview, White explains, we must believe that “there is Someone above and outside of our existence who stands over us as our authority.” Without that belief, our sense of morality can be based only on shifting values in the culture around us. And any sense of morality with such a weak foundation is doomed to erode — and create the kind of minds that are blasé about human sacrifice.

Even those of us who do believe in God can be endangered by a relativistic culture like the one we live in. White tells us of an encounter with a woman, who identified herself as a Christian, who informed him that Jesus “lived a long, full life, got married and had kids.” (And people said that *THE DA VINCI CODE* would not have any effect on anyone's religious beliefs?)

How do we shore up our faith against a corrosive culture and develop a true “mind for God”? White's book is designed to answer that question. He urges us to read, to study, to reflect on our faith and our culture, and he suggests books, websites, and other resources to help us get started. He encourages Christians to create what he calls “a rule for the mind” — a set of disciplines like those once followed by Christian monastics — to help us develop a pattern of Christian thinking that applies to all of life.

“Our minds are deeply spiritual,” White writes, “and so developing our minds must be a spiritual discipline.” I agree, and I can't think of a better place to start than in this book. Jim White is a gifted Christian thinker, but what I like best is that he writes for laymen at an accessible level. All of us need to learn the disciplines of thinking Christianly about all of life.

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Week 50, Day 3 --- Romans 14-16

As Jews and Gentiles came together as followers of Christ they began to worship and fellowship with each other. This was a real challenge because they came from completely different cultures. They had to sort out what issues were simply cultural and which were evil and needed to be left behind. This was especially difficult in the area of diet. The Jews had strict dietary regulations that had been made even stricter by almost 1500 years of tradition. The Gentiles had no dietary restrictions.

For example, Jews are not supposed to eat pork. Paul is saying that it would demonstrate a complete lack of love to invite a brand new Jewish believer who still felt called of God to follow the dietary restrictions of the Old Testament and then serve pork for dinner. In our time the equivalent might be serving wine at a dinner attended by a number of alcoholics.

Paul always warns against division. It is difficult to keep a group of people together. Our pride causes us to emphasize our differences when our faith in Jesus and our love for one another should bring us together.

Week 50, Day 4 --- Acts 20:4-23:35

Paul has one more journey to make and it is going to begin in Jerusalem. On the way he stops near Ephesus and calls the elders of the church there to come and see him. What does Paul warn them of? What does he pray for them?

Paul is warned about going to Jerusalem, but he goes anyway. The church had a long struggle between those who wanted to combine the gospel of the resurrected Jesus with the Law of the Old Testament. That struggle would end in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Paul is headed to Rome and he will have the opportunity to tell his story and preach the gospel many more times before he gets there.

Week 50, Day 5 --- Acts 24-26

Paul was in prison for several years. He was not guilty, but in spite of this he used the time well. While in prison he was protected from the Jews. He had limited freedom, but could be cared for by his friends. He used the time to write many of the letters that we read in the New Testament. Finally, he was able to testify about Jesus to the highest rulers in the land. Eventually, he would be able to testify before Caesar.

If you were on trial because of your faith what would your story be?

Week 50, Day 6 --- Acts 27-28

It is hard to imagine travel in the time of Paul. Most people traveled on foot and the trip from Jerusalem to Rome would take months. The wealthy and adventurous would travel by ship. Under normal circumstances this journey would take a few weeks, but Paul did not travel under normal circumstances. God wanted to speed Paul on his way, so a winter storm came and pushed Paul's ship toward Rome like modern speedboat. This must have been a large ship for this time because of the number of passengers. After a great adventure Paul arrives safely in Rome. While he is facing death he has a freedom to preach that he has rarely experienced. In one of his letters he tells us that many of his guards came to believe.

We don't know for sure how Paul died. As far as the New Testament is concerned this is the end of the story. We are fairly certain from other sources that Paul was killed by Caesar. We do not know if it was after this imprisonment or another.

Week 50, Day 7 --- Philemon 1 - Colossians 1-4

Paul writes several letters from his imprisonment in Rome. These two letters are very special. We would not have them if Onesimus, the slave, had not trusted God and returned to his master in Colossae. Onesimus was an escaped slave. If caught and returned to his master he was subject to any penalty the master wanted to carry out including death. He had become a believer sometime during his escape and was now freely providing some valuable service to Paul. Paul would have liked to keep him, but the right thing to do was for him to return to his master. Paul's desire, expressed in his letter to Philemon, is that Onesimus would be freed and returned to him.

There was no postal service, so Onesimus must carry these letters that Paul wrote back to Colossae. If he chooses to run away, then the letters would have been lost. That would have been a tragedy. The letter to the Colossians is one of the simplest and clearest letters that Paul writes. The church has few problems so Paul is able to challenge them and encourage them in a very positive way. Like most of us today they are struggling to know how to become more like Jesus. They are beginning to replace a relationship with Jesus with religion, the practice of rituals.

Chapter 2:9-14 is one of the best explanations of what happens in baptism. Is baptism something that you do or something that is done to you? What happens in baptism? Who is working when a person is baptized into Christ?