

The  
New  
Testament  
in a Year

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Week 32

Matthew 26-28  
Romans 1-2

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*This week's reflector is  
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General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
- What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
- Is there something here I'd like to learn more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your prayer today.

Monday

Matthew 26

At the crux of its definition, a *parable* depicts an aspect of being *parallel*: one thing being laid down beside another. Yet, upon laying one thing beside another, the placement of the second alongside the first makes the first thing take on a greater meaning. Often this greater meaning is much more profound and reaches to new depths of understanding.

Although the parables in Matthew's text may have ended now by Chapter 26, it is striking that this chapter on a whole largely tells of the PEOPLE in relationship with Jesus leading up to his death. (Perhaps you may wish to make a list of them.)

Anyway, **notice** the people, because ultimately when Jesus' life is laid down in relationship with these people, Jesus' life takes on a greater meaning.

In other words, reflect on how the life of this holy man *Jesus* and that which he institutes (which is also prevalent in more than one place in chapter 26) is laid down. We hear it said that Jesus laid down his life *for* us. In the same vein his life was also laid down *beside* people (including you and me). Jesus laid down his life – there in lies an ultimate parable.

Tuesday

Matthew 27

How is this text about *death* a living word for you?

Although the weather this summer is at times spring-like, the Easter Event we celebrate in the springtime might be far from our minds – yet, are there aspects in our everyday lives this summer with which we have to wrangle and let die?

I once had a pastoral care mentor who suggested to his students that we must go through the “Good Friday experience” in order to “get to Easter.” Do you agree that this would help one to appreciate and celebrate Easter...its newness ...and healing?

As you read Matthew 27, you may wish to reflect on what happens when we try to skip the Good Friday experience. How does embracing “the Good Friday experience” change the power of the Good News?

Wednesday

Matthew 28

This passage may strike you as a short chapter. And it seems such: a short chapter with **eternal messages**.

One example of an eternal message might be: “Do not be afraid” (which is repeated twice in this chapter alone, and is said to be the most often repeated advice in the Bible as a whole).

The presence of the story about the soldiers being bribed here is interesting. In one way it is a statement about our human nature to search for a logical explanation for a missing body – yet too, the soldiers were bribed to engage in deceit and attempt to “cover-up” the truth that indeed the tomb is empty. Is there an eternal message here? In light of the circumstances of people playing God by wielding control over others and manifesting a public truth for themselves- an eternal message might be “Let God be God.”

There are certainly other eternal messages in this short chapter. Read this chapter more than once perhaps; taking the time to discern (reflect, pray and figure out) what eternal messages come out of this passage for you.

Thursday

Romans 1

A good friend once told me that Romans was especially helpful to her during times when life hurts. There is a lot in the Bible that is good for such, but why Romans?

One reason for this is that Paul discusses God’s virtue and encourages his listeners to keep God as God when other things in life overwhelmingly seem to take control. Remembering God first is a faith that keeps the overwhelming and fearful aspects of life in perspective.

Specifically in chapter 1, Paul illustrates this main point – Exchange your God for an idol and you will exchange your genuine humanness for an unauthentic version that will do you no good.

The tricky thing here is that in illustrating this main point, Paul draws on a specific practice of sexuality in order to make this statement about outward practice versus inner authenticity. Much ink has been spilled. Yet it is necessary to keep in perspective the main point which Paul is making; be yourself, the genuine article- and let God be God; the one who loves you as you are and keeps love and life in order accordingly.

This trust and confidence that comes from God first is freeing and healing especially when life hurts. This is the crux of what Paul is writing to the troubled church people of Rome.

Friday

Romans 2

The Biblical text remains a living word for a 21<sup>st</sup> century reader when considering that the often misinterpreted example in Romans 1 is followed at once by what is emphasized in Romans 2: an emphatic warning against a moral superiority complex.

Paul’s most damning condemnation is reserved, not for those who practice any given example of not being true to themselves, but for those who create a facade of their true-selves and especially take on a *fake* posture of inherent moral virtue.

In other words, our vocation is to be the light of the world in relationship with God by being who God made us to be – but our job is not to BE God.

Overall and yet again, the main point is similar here as to Romans 1. Maybe Paul could wear a T-shirt in the market place that on the front says:

*You Be You  
Let God Be God*

On the back it might say:  
*“Praise God”*

Any other ideas about designing a line of clothing Paul might wear to visit Rome?