



Indwelt

THOSE WHO TRUST JESUS ARE INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
WHEN THEY ARE ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD.

Scripture Passage: Romans 8:14-27 Memory Verse: Romans 8:15

As a child, my dad represented everything I wanted to be. He had played minor league baseball. So, when I was old enough to qualify for the team, he signed me up for t-ball. That's when I got my first baseball glove. When it was new, it was stiff and didn't quite close all the way. But the longer I used that glove, the more comfortable it became.

But baseball gloves are useless without a hand inside of them. You could put nine gloves on the field, but none of them would catch a ball on their own. The glove and hand serve as a great metaphor for our relationship with the Holy Spirit. Without Him, we are like a glove on the field. However, when we trust Christ, the Spirit indwells us. At first, we may be stiff and resistant to His leading. But the longer we walk with Him, the more comfortable we get yielding to Him. The Holy Spirit indwelling us is that perfect fit.

As you dig into this session from Romans 8, think about how the Spirit "fits" into your life. Ask God to show you areas where you've been stiff and resistant. Seek to be more pliable and comfortable with Him. Encourage the adults in your group to examine the Spirit's work in their lives and to thank God for sending His Spirit to us.



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A happy family always makes space for everyone. During holiday gatherings, the house might feel packed, but no one worries about being left out at bedtime. Beds fill up fast, and cozy spots on the floor become welcoming places to sleep. Come breakfast, there's plenty for all—because the kitchen never runs out of pancakes. (PSG, p. 64)

When you picture a happy family, whose family do you think of?
How does being a part of God's family shape your sense of belonging?



Understand the Context (Romans 8:1-39)

Writing to a church he longed to visit, Paul organized the message of the gospel and its effects on those who believe it perfectly. He started with the universality of sin in the first few chapters before moving into the subject of justification. God declared believers righteous by the sacrificial death of Jesus. Then, he described reconciliation. Because God justified us, He also reconciled us to Himself.

In chapter 6, Paul introduced sanctification, the continuing work of God to set us apart and transform us for His service. Lest anyone think that sanctification is merely a product of human effort, Paul included Romans 8. In that chapter, he reminded the Romans that sanctification was a work of the Spirit and that God would never leave them unfinished. He would complete His work in them and make them more like Christ. His primary method of sanctification was the work of the Spirit in the believer's life.

“Holy Spirit” occurs in that fashion only twice in the Old Testament (Ps. 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11), but He does appear throughout those books. The Hebrew word for “spirit” is the same word for wind, so the Holy Spirit often reveals Himself in that context. For example, through the Spirit, God exercised authority in creation (Gen. 1:2), parted the Red Sea for Israel (Ex. 14:21), and provided refreshing rain (1 Kings 18:45).

The Holy Spirit also filled people for specific tasks in the Old Testament. Joseph relied on the Spirit to interpret dreams (Gen. 41:38). The Spirit inspired Bezalel and Aholiab as they built the tabernacle (Ex. 31:1-3). Moses received the Spirit to lead and judge the people in the wilderness (Num. 11:25), as did Joshua in the promised land (27:18).

Judges (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6) and kings (1 Sam. 10:10; 16:13) received the Spirit. The prophets were empowered by God's Spirit (Isa. 59:21; Ezek. 2:2; Dan. 4:8; Mic. 3:8). While the Spirit filled people, He could also leave them (Judg. 16:20; 1 Sam. 16:14).

The new covenant changed the relationship between God's people and the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, the Lord's Spirit fell on all those who believed (Acts 2:1-13). An appropriate question to help people understand whether they were following Christ became, *Have you received the Holy Spirit?* (see Acts 19:2).

Those who do not have the Spirit do not belong to God (Rom. 8:9). He is the down payment or pledge that God places in believers to sanctify and seal them, meaning He will complete His work in them (Eph. 1:13; Phil. 4:6). The Holy Spirit fills all believers, and He will never leave them.

Read Romans 8:14-27 in your Bible and record some key thoughts about the Holy Spirit's importance in your life.
(PSG, p. 65)

ENGAGE



PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 4** (Poster: Key words in Romans) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: Romans Time Line) and **Pack Item 13** (Handout: Adoption in the First Century) for the group.

ASK:

When you picture a happy family, whose family do you think of? (PSG, p. 64)

READ:

Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 64 of the PSG. Encourage adults to suggest images or ideas that represent family or home to them.

REVIEW:

Note that Paul used the idea of family to illustrate the Christian life for his readers in Rome. Note that this family isn't connected by DNA but the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul used the image of adoption to highlight the believer's secure relationship with God. Living by the Spirit rather than the flesh proves that one is truly God's child—a relationship marked by intimacy and guaranteed inheritance. Those who belong to God by faith are "heirs of God and coheirs with Christ" (8:17). . . . Through the Spirit's presence, Christians live with hope, anticipating the full redemption at Christ's return. Positionally, believers already belong to God's redeemed family, even as they battle the flesh in this life. Practically, the Spirit empowers them to resist sin and live according to God's will. (PSG, p. 65)

ASK:

How does being a part of God's family shape your sense of belonging? (PSG, p. 64)

TRANSITION:

Sometimes, the Bible's teachings about the Holy Spirit can make believers uncomfortable or confused. But Romans 8 makes it clear that the Spirit's work in our lives is a blessing and evidence of our family relationship with God.



Group Activity Option

Music

Distribute copies of the lyrics to "Family of God" (Baptist Hymnal, 2008, No. 393). Enlist a volunteer to sing the chorus for the group, then lead everyone in singing it together. Discuss: **How do you become a part of the family of God? What does it mean to be in the family of God?** Share that today's session examines our adoption into God's family and how the Holy Spirit plays a role in reminding us that we are God's children.

Relationship (Rom. 8:14-17)

14 For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons. **15** For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!" **16** The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, **17** and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

(vv. 14-15) In Romans 8:12-13, Paul continued to speak of the battle between our flesh and the Holy Spirit. He responded to this dilemma with a reminder that the ones **led by God's Spirit are God's sons**. To be *led* by the Spirit implied more than direction. It also involved governance or close care, as a shepherd leading sheep. Jesus mentioned such care (John 14:26), as did Paul (Gal. 5:16). This leadership of the Spirit enables believers to die to sin and live free in a new relationship with God marked by His grace.

The Spirit's presence in our lives also underscores our identity as *God's sons*. As unbelievers, people are ruled by a **spirit of slavery**. This bondage is two-fold. We cannot overcome sin, and we cannot keep the law. Since we can't establish a relationship with God through our own merit or effort, we live in a constant state of **fear**. This fear of judgment hangs over the heads of everyone who tries to please God in the flesh. However, God provided freedom from this slavery to fear through **the Spirit of adoption**. The Holy Spirit replaced fear with family acceptance and adoption.

Adoption was prominent in the Greco-Roman world, so Paul's audience would have related to his illustration. Those who were adopted severed all previous relationships. The birth parents had no rights because the child was now part of a new family. Adoption also led to a new father who exercised authority in the child's life. Adoption was an amazing example of the salvation experience.

The apostle declared that spiritual adoption was a sovereign act of God (Eph. 1:5) and that it granted believers full status as children of God (Gal. 4:5-7). Just as with physical adoption, children of God enjoy all the privileges of an heir. Our heavenly Father chooses to extend His family name, which should prompt us to **cry out, "Abba, Father!"** *Abba* was the Aramaic term of endearment for a father. How wonderful to be adopted into God's family!

(v. 16) One way the Holy Spirit leads us is by providing the inward witness that we have experienced adoption from the Father. The **Spirit himself testifies** with the redeemed **spirit** of believers that we are **God's children**. This is courtroom language. Old Testament legal proceedings required the presence of two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6). The Holy Spirit joined together with our spirit is proof enough that we have come to faith in Christ.

(v. 17) One great blessing of adoption is that **children** brought into the family become legal **heirs**. Elsewhere, Paul reminded the Galatians that they were now sons, not slaves, and heirs to all of God's abundance (Gal. 4:7). He also told Titus that justification by grace means Christ followers are heirs with the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7).

As **heirs of God**, Paul's readers (including us) are also **coheirs with Christ**. All that God had planned for His beloved Son, He also promises to His adopted children. However, along with sharing in the riches of Christ, we also **suffer with him**. Suffering is the path to glorification, both for Christ and for us. Those who suffer with Christ also are **glorified with him**. Suffering involves more than persecution. In the context of this passage, it fits better within the battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

Bible Skill

Use a Bible Dictionary to learn more about the Holy Spirit.

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit. Reflect on these questions: *How did the Holy Spirit's work differ in the Old and New Testaments? What kind of work does the Holy Spirit do in the life of a believer in the New Testament?* Note any findings about the Holy Spirit that were new for you.

EXPLORE Romans 8:14-17



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can confidently approach God as Father.

CONTEXT:

Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Romans Time Line*). Remind adults that Paul likely wrote this letter during his third missionary journey. Use **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Key Words in Romans*) to review key words in the letter.

READ:

Read Romans 8:14-17 aloud as the group listens for changes that occur when a person turns to Christ in faith. Allow volunteers to share what they noted.

ASK:

According to these verses, what are some key differences between a believer and an unbeliever? (PSG, p. 67)

REVIEW:

Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: Adoption in the First Century*). Encourage adults to scan the article and to note how ancient adoption compares to spiritual adoption. Briefly explain that “Abba” is a term of endearment that emphasizes the tender relationship between a father and child.

DISCUSS:

How does calling God “Abba, Father” impact your understanding of prayer and intimacy with Him? (PSG, p. 67)

HIGHLIGHT:

Summarize this content from page 67 of the PSG to explain what it means to be an heir with Christ:

“As members of God’s family, we have access to all of God’s riches. Paul was not proclaiming a prosperity gospel here—he was stating that God’s resources are enough to meet our every need. Paul also reminded the Romans that being coheirs with Christ can involve suffering with Him. . . . However, if we suffer with Christ on account of our faith, we can be sure that we will ultimately be glorified with him.”

SAY:

Any struggles in this life cannot compare to the blessings of eternity.

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Group Activity Option

Cross Reference

Divide the group into teams of two to four people. Direct each group to read and discuss John 1:12-13 and Galatians 3:26-4:7. After a few minutes, lead a brief discussion on how God's adoption of believers demonstrates His love. Encourage adults to share what they discovered from the verses as part of the discussion.

Hope (Rom. 8:18-25)

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. **19** For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. **20** For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of him who subjected it—in the hope **21** that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children. **22** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. **23** Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. **24** Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? **25** Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

(v. 18) Paul said suffering was part of being an heir in God's family, but he also emphasized that the *sufferings of this present time* can't compare with the *glory . . . to be revealed*. This was the first of three encouragements God offers suffering believers. Paul reminded the Romans that God would reveal His glory (Rom. 8:18-25), that God provides the Holy Spirit (8:26-27), and that God works for our good (8:28-30).

This *glory* revealed by God was not compensation for their suffering, but the result of it. Like a diamond placed against a dark backdrop, God's glory shines in comparison to present suffering. Believers should *consider* this glory in suffering just as they consider themselves dead to sin (6:11). Both lead to God's glory.

(v. 19) God deemed creation “very good” (Gen. 1:31), but sin had taken a toll on it just as it had with humanity. Now, Paul said the created order *eagerly waits* for this revelation of God's glory. The picture is of a person excitedly leaning forward to see God reverse the curse. All of creation longs for *God's sons to be revealed*. Creation looks forward to the unveiling of His fully redeemed children, completely freed from sin.

(vv. 20-21) At the fall, *creation was subjected to futility*. The Greek term rendered *futility* corresponds to a similar Hebrew word used throughout Ecclesiastes. Creation is not a willing partner in this chaos, but a victim *of him who subjected it*. While some have attributed this phrase to Adam or Satan, God is the One who subjected creation *in the hope* that things would change.

Creation longs to *be set free* from sin's curse. This is the content of the hope found in verse 20. It has seen the *freedom of God's children* and longs to experience its own transformation.

(vv. 22-23) The *whole creation* joins humanity in *groaning*. This is not whining, but *labor pains* pointing to the return of Christ (Mark 13:8), when God's children are fully redeemed.

Until that day, believers have *the Spirit as the •firstfruits*. In the Old Testament, *firstfruits* were the initial portion of the harvest that belonged to God (Ex. 23:19; Lev. 23:9-14). Likewise, the Spirit carries a promise that God would complete His work in His people with the *redemption of our bodies* at the final resurrection. Until then, the battle between flesh and Spirit will continue.

(vv. 24-25) Believers *hope* for the final redemption and glorification that began when they *were saved*. This settled their eternal destiny, even as they experienced sanctification and awaited glorification. One day we will see our hope fulfilled, but this requires *patience*. Faith means we don't see it yet, but we still believe it will happen.

Key doctrine

Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. (See 2 Corinthians 4:17; Revelation 21:1.)



READ:

APPLICATION POINT: The indwelling of the Spirit and the promise of what is yet to come motivates believers to live with hope.

Direct the group to read silently Romans 8:18-25, noting the hope expressed in these verses.

SHARE:

Use information for Romans 8:18 on page 82 of the Leader Guide to highlight the three encouragements God offers to those who suffer as believers. Explain why Paul indicated that creation also suffered when Adam sinned. Read Genesis 3:17. Note that Romans 8:19-22 shares how creation will be set free from the curse of sin, while verses 23-25 affirm that God's "adopted children" will be redeemed as well. Point out that both creation and believers suffer because of sin, and both look forward to a future hope thanks to Jesus.

REVIEW:

Highlight Paul's description of nature's groanings and his illustration of labor pains:

Paul emphasized that creation lives in hope—a hope far deeper than wishful thinking. Biblical hope is confident expectation grounded in God's promises. When God subjected creation to futility because of human sin, He also guaranteed that redemption would extend beyond humanity. As believers are freed from corruption through Christ, so creation will be liberated from decay. To illustrate his point, Paul used the image of childbirth. Creation groans under the weight of sin like a woman in labor, longing for delivery. These labor pains signal that renewal is near. When the time of suffering ends, creation will be reborn—restored to its intended glory. (PSG, pp. 68-69)

ASK:

How does the hope expressed in these verses help you in times of adversity? (PSG, p. 69)

DISCUSS:

Read Romans 8:23 aloud. Explain the significance of "firstfruits" using commentary for Romans 8:22-23 in the Leader Guide (p. 82). Encourage adults to share how the Spirit serves as the firstfruits in our hope for escaping the power of sin.

TRANSITION:

The Holy Spirit gives us the confidence we need to know that we are God's adopted children. His presence also reminds us that there is more to life than what we are experiencing here on earth. Those assurances should fill us with hope for the future and offer security until that day comes.

Help (Rom. 8:26-27)

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with *inexpressible groanings*. **27** And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

(v. 26) *In the same way* that hope sustains believers as they wait patiently for the final resurrection and the fulfillment of the hope they have through Jesus, the Holy Spirit also *helps us in our weakness*. With the hope of God's promises and the help of the Holy Spirit, believers can patiently endure the devastating effects of sin and the fall.

While the Greek word translated *weakness* can refer to a physical illness or ailment, Paul was pointing back to humanity's ongoing battle with sin. His words here expound a topic he had been unpacking for the past three chapters of Romans. Specifically, he reminded his readers that the Holy Spirit helped them in their weaknesses related to prayer.

Living as sinners in a fallen world, believers may sometimes reach a point where they *do not know what to pray for* or how to pray as they should. How should you pray for the person who has a serious illness? How should you pray for an addiction that you struggle with in your life? How do you pray for a wayward child? Sometimes, we have prayed so long and so hard that we feel overwhelmed. We long to see the return of Christ when all things will be made right. We speak as the bride of Christ, begging Him to come quickly to usher in His kingdom (Rev. 22:17).

In the moments that we do not know how to pray, *the Spirit himself intercedes for us*. The anonymous writer of Hebrews noted that Jesus has been praying on behalf of His people since His ascension to heaven (Heb. 7:25). Like Jesus, the Spirit also has a ministry of intercession. When we do not know how or what to pray, He prays on our behalf.

Believers are weak in that they often do not know what to pray according to God's will. Since the totality of His will remains unknown to us, we need the Spirit to intercede for us and to fill in our gaps. Since He is God, the Spirit has access to perfect knowledge, and He can pray in a way that we cannot.

Paul wrote that the Spirit carries on His ministry of intercession with *inexpressible groanings*. The Greek wording suggests sighs that are the result of pressing circumstances. In the book of Acts, the same term was used to describe the *groanings* of the Israelites when they suffered as slaves in the land of Egypt (Acts 7:34). These are emotional moans that one cannot hear, but they reflect a heavy burden in one's heart.

The Spirit joins us in carrying our burdens and supports us by bringing prayer to the Father on our behalf. We can have hope that God always hears and answers the prayers of the Spirit because the Spirit's prayers always align with the Father's plans.

(v. 27) While the Spirit prays for us, the Father is the One who *searches our hearts*. God understands both what the Spirit desires and so much that we do not know. Thankfully, His knowledge is not dependent upon our ability to vocalize our needs adequately. God discerns the *mind of the Spirit*, so we don't have to worry that the Holy Spirit's prayers will go unheard. As God the Father heard the prayers of His Son, He also hears the prayers of His Spirit.

As noted, God hears the prayers of the Spirit *because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God*. God's will is ultimately what matters. Believers can take hope in the fact that the will of God is fulfilled in their lives, despite their weakness related to prayer.

Paul followed this up with a reminder that God is always working for our good and His glory. Those who love Him and trust Him will see His good purposes worked out in their lives (Rom. 8:28). Admittedly, the Lord may not always answer our prayers as we want, but He will answer them according to His perfect will for us, which is better than we can imagine.

**READ:**

APPLICATION POINT: Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit is interceding to the Father for them.

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 8:26-27 as the group listens for how the Holy Spirit supports the hope we have in Christ.

ASK:

When was the last time you didn't know what to pray? What practical difference does it make knowing that the Holy Spirit intercedes for you? (PSG, p. 71)

SHARE:

Point out that as humans we can feel overwhelmed by our circumstances, which makes it hard to articulate our heart to God. Note that this is why we need the Spirit's help in prayer.

We can be especially thankful for [the Spirit's] help in moments of weakness. Weakness often shows up as confusion or uncertainty that leads to frustration. In those times, even knowing what to pray for can feel overwhelming. We simply don't know what to ask. When we face such perplexing situations, we can rejoice in the Spirit's help. He intercedes for us when words fail. He carries our burdens to God when we cannot express them ourselves. (PSG, p. 70)

ASK:

How does knowing that God understands both your heart and the Spirit's intercession give you peace? (PSG, p. 71)

SAY:

Between the Holy Spirit praying for us and God the Father searching our hearts, we have many reasons to rejoice. We can be confident that we have access to the Father through Christ, hope for the future, and the Holy Spirit supporting us when we feel weak.

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Cane

Bring a cane or a similar mobility device to the session. Explain that getting around after an accident, following surgery, or as we simply get older can be problematic. Note that many people rely on crutches or something similar to feel safe and confident in walking. Share that this support is a great illustration of how the Holy Spirit helps us overcome our weaknesses as we walk with Christ. Discuss: ***How are you relying on the Holy Spirit to support your walk with Christ today?***

CHALLENGE

HIGHLIGHT:

Review these bullet points from Apply the Text on page 72 of the *Personal Study Guide*.

- *Believers can confidently approach God as Father.*
- *The indwelling of the Spirit and the promise of what is yet to come motivates believers to live in hope.*
- *Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit is interceding to the Father for them.*

EVALUATE:

Lead the group to evaluate their own response to the following statements on a scale of 1-5, with one being “seldom” and five being “often”:

- *I approach God confidently as my Father.*
- *The presence of the Holy Spirit motivates me to live in hope.*
- *I recognize that the Holy Spirit is interceding for me.*

DISCUSS:

Direct adults to read and respond to the first set of questions on page 72 of the PSG. Lead a brief discussion on what it means to be part of God’s family.

ASK:

How much do you depend on the Holy Spirit to help you when you pray? (PSG, p. 72)

PRAY:

Encourage the group to reflect on this question regularly during the week. Challenge them to depend more on the Holy Spirit’s leadership, especially when they don’t know how to pray. Close in prayer, thanking God for His Spirit’s work in our lives.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by sending the group a text or email that reminds them the Holy Spirit is praying for them. Encourage them to spend time meditating on Romans 8:15, this session’s memory verse. Challenge them to consider their adoption and to ask God to help them live it out in practical ways each day.

LEADER EXTRAS



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