

Cultivate Reflection Guide

When in Rome: Living in Denial January 23/24, 2021

If you missed this weekend's messages, watch at cultivate.sc/discussion

Following God in a culture that doesn't is easier said than done. The book of Romans is full of foundational gospel truth that will teach us how our faith can influence the world around us, instead of letting others tell us what to believe – especially in the places where Christianity and culture collide.

Use our Weekly Reflection Guide, in community or through personal study, to live out what we're learning on the weekends. *It's not about getting through the content, but getting the content through you.* Choose the questions that are meaningful to you, then be REAL with self, God or others as you reflect, respond and pray.

1. What are we in denial about? Pastor Fredo challenged us that we're suppressing the truth of who God is. Rather than live like we believe the evidence of God as revealed through His presence, His character and His word, we project our own ideas and images of who we think God is.

“Man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols. Man's mind, full as it is of pride and boldness, dares to imagine a god according to its own capacity; as it sluggishly plods, indeed is overwhelmed with the crassest ignorance, it conceives an unreality and an empty appearance as God.” John Calvin

- Are you “imagining God according to your own capacity?” Take inventory of your view of God. Who do you say He is? What do you believe about His character?
- How are your misconceptions about God impacting the way you follow Him?
- Ask God to search your heart and correct your thinking SO THAT you can see Him as He is really is.

2. Why do we live this way? Instead of offering our worship to our Creator, we turn our affection to what is created. Consider what it says about us that we would choose to bow down to empty, false idols, rather than adore the truth and fullness of our Jesus...

“²¹ Throughout human history the fingerprints of God were upon them, yet they refused to honor him as God or even be thankful for his kindness. Instead, they entertained corrupt and foolish thoughts about what God was like. This left them with nothing but misguided hearts, steeped in moral darkness. ²² Although claiming to be super-intelligent, they were in fact shallow fools. ²³ For only a fool would trade the unfading splendor of the immortal God to worship the fading image of other humans, idols made to look like people, animals, birds, and even creeping reptiles!” Romans 1:21-24 TPT

Be REAL as you reflect and respond to the following...

- Name your idols. What in your life are giving more honor and gratitude to than God? Don't leave any stone unturned. Consider your relationships, friendships, family, possessions, pastimes, work, service, ministry, political affiliations, physical habits, thoughts, attitudes, etc.
- How is this thing stealing your affection or attention? This could be sin (moral darkness/misguided heart) or it could be more subtle (discontent, distraction, pride). You may feel lead to justify or defend your idol – but keep in mind something can seem right and still be wrong.
- As you consider your idol, what deeper longing are you trying to fulfill? Are you looking for connection, contentment and safety? Are you seeking justice, validation, direction, or freedom? Do your best to identify what you're longing for so that you can begin to pursue that in God.

3. How do we move forward? We heal when we are REAL – with self, God and others. While our idols rob us of life, God wants us to live full and abundantly. The first step to freedom is confession. Confess your idols to God and turn from them toward Him. Ask Him to fulfill that deepest longing as only He can. Invite Him to renew your strength, heal your heart and fill you with His Spirit.

“So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death... ⁴ Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness.” Romans 8:1-2, 4 CEB