

Cultivate Reflection Guide

When in Rome: How to Overcome Discouragement June 12 & 13, 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 – in the places where Christianity and culture collide.

Use our Reflection Guide for personal study throughout the week, to start a REAL conversation with friends or under the direction of your community group leader. Choose the questions that challenge you to reflect and respond as you live out what we're learning on the weekends. Remember...it's not about getting through the content, but getting the content through you!

Reflect/Respond: Discouragement is an inevitable fact of life that no one is immune from. It's what we do with our discouragement that makes all the difference. Be REAL with self – what is your first response when something discouraging happens? Are you a “why God?” person or a “we've got this, God!” person?

Overcome Discouragement: At the root of much of our disappointment and discouragement are unhealthy expectations of people. While it's a good thing to believe the best about others, people do not belong on pedestals. Our efforts and our faith need to be spent on pursuing God, not man.

“Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts.” 1 Thessalonians 2:4 NLT

“Don't put your trust in mere humans. They are as frail as breath.” Isaiah 2:22 NLT

- Think back on a time you were discouraged by someone. What was your original expectation versus the actual outcome? What most discouraged you?
- Be REAL with God and invite Him to examine the motives of your heart. Were your expectations healthy and reasonable? Or were you unrealistic, critical or easily offended? Were you trying to please a person, control the outcome or dictate the circumstances rather than trust God?
- We can't change others, but when we know better, we do better. What did you learn about yourself [*your choices*], God [*spiritual battle of discouragement*] or others [*people you surround yourself with*] that can help you to be more wise, kind or healthy?

Pay Attention: What we give our time, thoughts and energy to dictate the direction of our life. We need to stop paying attention to what we're against and decide what we're for. Philippians 4:8-9 shows us how to do that...

“⁸Keep your thoughts continually fixed on all that is authentic and real, honorable and admirable, beautiful and respectful, pure and holy, merciful and kind. And fasten your thoughts on every glorious work of God, praising him always. ⁹Put into practice the example of all that you have heard from me or seen in my life and the God of peace will be with you in all things.” Philippians 4:8-9 TPT

- What stands out to you about the way we're instructed to manage our thoughts?
- Verse 9 is a call to action – to live out what we're thinking. How do you need to live out these verses today? Be specific – I want to stop thinking about _____ and instead fix my mind on what is _____.
- Discouragement happens, but God is with you in all things. Invite Him into your life right now by praying back verse 8 and asking Him to help you fix your thoughts on what is real, right and true.
- Who else in your life is a source of encouragement? How can you invite them into your life in a meaningful way – whether that's asking for support, expressing gratitude or sharing what God is doing in your life?

We're here to help! If you need prayer to overcome discouragement, connect with us using our prayer link at cultivate.sc. If you're ready to invite God's people into your life, it's time to get connected in community. Visit cultivate.sc/community to learn how you can find, join or start a community group today!