

(Simple advice: If you're new to these notes, here's my advice: **Do not be overwhelmed by these notes as another "home school" assignment, or even that you need to "do" all or any of this outline!** This is written to give you good things to enjoy, because look again at what Paul told Timothy (1 Tim 6:17-18)! I think he was thinking of us at the time: **17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be conceited and not to put their hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in God, WHO RICHLY PROVIDES ALL THINGS TO ENJOY. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share...**) The following ice breaker is just a starter for your group. The message comes after the second bar. Please enjoy!)

**CROWD BREAKER: How do you feel now that the mask mandate has been lifted? What does the thought of its return do to you? How does it feel to be able to "high five" your neighbor again?**

**Do you have a testimony from this week? Write the headlines for the coming week. What is going to happen? What will be your response? —The scribe**

Note: Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP. Remember the purpose is to unite, not divide; to fearlessly proclaim the freedom the gospel brings. Any part of these notes might be appropriate as a crowd breaker for your own group. The goal is to create memories on Sunday that will serve for a long time.** REMEMBER TO BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! **Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study. It's a great devotion, taken slowly through the week.**

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Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions raised by Pastor Mark's message this Sunday. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **Remember the purpose is to minister to one another.**

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Looking ahead: Sin nature is expressed like this: the things I want to do I don't do...the things I hate is what I do. **Does this fit your story?**

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**What do you know of Critical Race Theory?** We sang “God’s ways are not our ways. His thoughts are higher. His ways are better. Pastor Mark says, in order to understand key ideas, we have to have frameworks for understanding those ideas. CRT first appeared in the seventies. We’re putting human thoughts and human frameworks around a concept. Pastor grew up in an inner-city church. They picked up people from different lands, backgrounds and color. “I started to be more aware of differences. Am I being racist, and I don’t even know it?” **How are you reacting to the controversy? Has it affected you directly? Do you know of this happening in local schools?**

Pastor asked, “Why is that happening...” and then turned to Romans 7:

### **Freed from the Law**

**1**Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? **2**For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. **3**So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

You didn’t know you are driving too fast until you saw the sign. If you are living for the law, the law is your judge.

**4**Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

**How does this work? How did we die to the Law? Review Romans 6:11** **10**The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God. **11**So you too must count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires.... **Does this make sense? To what degree are we obligated to our old way of life, if we are dead to it? What does this do to our focus? If we are dead to sin and alive to Christ, what do we focus on? If the widow/widower remarries but always looks back to her/his late husband, describe the marriage.**

**5**For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. **6**But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter. **What do the words “but now” set up? Look at the contrast and describe what’s different now. Why is this so different? What does it mean to be “delivered from the law?”**

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## Sin's Advantage in the Law

<sup>7</sup>What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. (Pastor Mark: "For the Law only tells you what you're doing wrong." **Why is this so important to understand?**) For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." (**Think again of Mark's example: "For I would not have known the speed limit if the sign had not said, "Speed Limit 30." Why is this such a good example when you're driving at 50?"**) <sup>8</sup>But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead. <sup>9</sup>I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. **What do you do when you see the speed limit sign, and everyone else is going fifty?**

Mark explains, "Here is the connection: The law reflects on our wrongdoing, and then when we put attention on our wrongdoing it actually compels us to do the very thing we do not want to do." **Is that true for you? Does the sign make you WANT TO slow down?**

Mark continues, "CRT is saying that by nature we are racists. The burden is on the lighter hued because it is those with lighter pigmentation who have oppressed those of other hues, therefore we need to be taught that we are racist by nature. Everything must be taught from the construct that we are inherently racist. Woke theory claims that we are awakened to the realization that we have oppressed people throughout history, and therefore, we have to be held accountable for that. We are being forced to actually become the very thing we do not want to become. In order to eliminate racism, we must become the very racists we are trying to liberate ourselves from. **Do you agree? How does this work? Are we more race conscious today? Or less? Some would say this is a good thing. What do you think?**

Pastor Mark's black pastor friend said, "We're going about this all wrong. Race is manmade. Ethnicity is God made. God made the ethnic groups...God decided the pigmentation of each. Ethnicity talks about origin of birth. Race talks about a skin color or a group of people (with a common pigmentation). Ethnicity is your cultural background, your cultural beliefs, but race is limited again to skin color. Ethnicity unifies and celebrates differences...race only degrades the beauty of all races of all backgrounds. **What does this make you think?**

**What is the spiritual background of all of this?** Mark, quoting Ford Motor Company, says, "What we remember recognize and respect will move us forward." Sin nature produced oppression and every evil work. It's important to acknowledge the sin nature and how it has hurt people." **Does this make sense? Why is this so helpful, if we're seeking to resolve conflict?**

Romans 7:<sup>10</sup>And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death. <sup>11</sup>For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*. <sup>12</sup>Therefore

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the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. **And what do I become, as a lawbreaker?**

### Law Cannot Save from Sin

**13**Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. **14**For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. **Discuss this. What does it mean "I am sold?" Who is talking here? Was Paul sold? Did he struggle?**

**15**For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. **16**If then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. **17**But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. **What does this mean? What are the implications?** **18**For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. **19**For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. **20**Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. **He says the same thing twice. Why is that important?**

**21**I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. **22**For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. **23**But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. **How many "yous" are there? Which "you" do you agree with most often?** **24**O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? **How do you relate to this? Take a moment. Do you believe Paul had this struggle?**

**25**I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! **Read this last statement carefully? Is Paul answering the question? Or is he merely praising God? Look at the next sentence:**

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. **His conclusion seems to be saying, "To be continued." Not "problem solved." Care to comment?**

**Why does CRT make us become the very thing we do not want to become?** Mark says, "The law no longer defines you to captivate you compel you and judge you. Now the power of Jesus Christ allows you to rise above the Law and let the Love of Christ compel you further into Him." **What does this make you think?**

Mark says, "Whenever you look around and say, 'What is the world promoting? Is it godly or not godly?' What divides us today is from the pit of hell. If it's dividing people, it's not godly." **How does this help us understand the good, the bad and the ugly?**

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**Look up Proverbs 6: 16** There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to Him:

**17**haughty eyes,

a lying tongue,

hands that shed innocent blood,

**18**a heart that devises wicked schemes,

feet that run swiftly to evil,

**19**a false witness who gives false testimony,

and one who stirs up discord among brothers. **Go through this list. What does this list warn against that we are facing today? How many of these six things have we seen in the last week? How are we doing as a nation? How must we respond?**

**When Jesus says, "A house divided against itself cannot stand," what are the odds of success in a divided church? In a divided country? What are the tools Christ gave us to overcome?**

"Don't feed into anything that divides. Let's talk about Jesus, His saving grace, and what He has done. Realize that ethnicity is beautiful." **How does the Spirit of God bring unity?** Mark says, "Don't go politics. Go biblical." **How does that help? Can you think of practical ways to do this? Can you share a success story? What's missing with a human framework? Is it possible to navigate without a biblical perspective? Why is it so important we be armed with the Bible and informed?**

**What does the Bible say of ethnicity? What verses can you think of?**

**Look up Galatians 3:27-29** ...**27**For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28**There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29**And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise....**How are we different from where we first began? How do these verses become the end of the argument? If we are all "clothed with Christ," how does our original pigmentation figure into this statement?**

**Follow the truth wherever it leads you. What is your next step?**

**Take time to share. Talk about your biggest takeaway. What is the next step? Take time to pray for one another. Be blessed. —the scribe**