

MESSAGE OUTLINE

True Self / False Self – Living from God's Love

Recognizing the False Self

Romans 7:15-25 (NIV)

¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.

¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

NOTES:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. -Romans 7:15

In Romans 7:15–25, Paul gives voice to the deep struggle between desire and action that marks the human experience. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Rom. 7:15). Paul is not excusing sin, nor is he dismissing moral responsibility; rather, he is describing life under the power of sin apart from the full freedom that comes through Christ. This passage exposes the limits of willpower and law to bring transformation, preparing the way for the hope of Romans 8, where the Spirit empowers what the self cannot accomplish.

True Self: The part of you created and loved by God, fully known, and designed to live in freedom, integrity, and love. It is who you are in Christ, grounded in God's unshakable love, joy, and purpose.

False Self: The part of you shaped by fear, shame, performance, or worldly pressures. Reactive, defensive, and disconnected from God's love. The False Self seeks approval, control, or safety outside of God's grace.

"In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable we ultimately learn that here, in this life, there is no finished symphony" -Karl Rahner

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these. -Mark 12:30-31

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! -2 Corinthians 5:17

*You are not what you have done
Or what has been done to you
You are something like the rising sun
Can't you see that you are new.*

-New Every Morning, Taylor Leonhardt, The Porters Gate

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

February 1, 2026 - Recognizing the False Self - Romans 7:15-25

As needed, refer to the Order of Worship and Resources at solanabeach.church for sermon video, message outline, resources and small group questions print version.

CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Before beginning your time in the passage this week, ask one another: What's a word or phrase that best describes how you're doing this week?

CONNECT WITH GOD (Use the below practice or select one from a previous week.)

Holding Opposites (Adapted from David Richo, *The Five Things We Cannot Change*)

This practice of "Holding Opposites" can help us as we explore the themes of True Self/False Self and the reality of both our Light and our Shadow, as we are held in the grace of Christ.

- Take a few deep, slow breaths and ground yourself in the awareness of God with you.
- Hold both hands out, cupped, palms upward, and imagine them holding these opposites:
 - the Light of you: hopeful desires to be like Christ, things I want to do but may not do, our "best selves."
 - the Shadow of you: actions that bring us despair & take us away from God and our True Self, the things I do but might not want to do, the things about us we want to hide.
- Feel the equal "weight" of both, since our hands are empty.
- Become aware that God is holding you and both the Light and Shadow in grace. Spend a few moments resting in that grace. Take your time.
- Consider if there is one small action or response that God is calling you to in this awareness of God's grace and the reality of Light and Shadow in you.
- Relax your arms and take a few more deep, slow breaths, grounding yourself in the awareness of God with you. As you are ready, return your attention to the group.

CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- **Alone:** Read 7:15-25 in both the NIV and Message translations. Reflect/journal on one or both of the following prompts:
 - What part of Romans 7:15-25 resonates most with you? Why?
 - Explore the use of paradox and contrast in the passage. How do you experience paradox/tension in your personal life and the world around you?
- **Together** Read the passage once more together. Then, share your own reflections from the prompts.

CONNECT WITH SCRIPTURE

If needed, read the passage again. Then select the best questions or customize the questions for your group.

- Review the sermon outline.
- What do you already know about Paul that may help you understand this passage better?
- How does Paul describe the role of "the law" in his struggle?
- In what ways do you relate to Paul's experience of wanting to do good but finding yourself doing the opposite?
- What is the overall mood or tone of Paul in this passage?
- How might the message of Romans 7:15-25 provide a framework for facing the contrasts between light and dark in our communities, in our country, and the world?
- How does our identity in Christ sustain us and motivate us in a broken world?

ENGAGE AND EXPLORE

Together: explore the quote below, in connection with the passage this week. *How does this topic help you consider the paradox within your own life but also how does it connect to how you walk in this world of paradox?*

"In one sense we are always traveling, and traveling as if we did not know where we were going. In another sense we have already arrived. We cannot arrive at the perfect possession of God in this life, and that is why we are traveling and in darkness. But we already possess Him by grace, and therefore, in that sense, we have arrived and are dwelling in the light. But oh! How far have I to go to find You in Whom I have already arrived!" -Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*

PRAYER

Close your time with a prayer of confession. This is a typical part of the liturgical rhythms of worship. In our daily life, though, we often lose sight of its restorative and reconciling power. A practice of confession is a declaration of holy trust in the God of grace who is at work in us and in others. After a time of personal examination, pray this prayer together:

Holy and merciful God, in your presence we confess our failure to be what you created us to be. You alone know how often we have sinned in wandering from your ways, in wasting your gifts, in forgetting your love. By your loving mercy, help us to live in your light and abide in your ways, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior.

Pause and receive the mercy of God. Pray together: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

In confidence, pray: The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. In Jesus Christ we have been forgiven. Amen.