



“Filled or Flavored?”

Romans 8

Small Group Plan

The label on the bottle says just what you want it to say ...

“100 Percent Juice, All Natural”

There’s even a big juicy picture, of whatever fruit you happen to be looking for, right in the middle of the label.

But the list of ingredients tells another story: *“Filtered water, pear juice concentrate, apple juice concentrate, grape juice concentrate.”* Where is the blueberry, or the cranberry, or the pomegranate, or whatever fruit is boldly pictured on the front? After careful reading you eventually find them, fifth or sixth in a list of nine or ten ingredients, after the mysteriously unspecified *“natural flavors.”*

Food ingredients are listed in descending order of weight. In other words, a product contains the greatest proportion of the first ingredient on the list, and successively less of the items further down the list. Usually, somewhere in small, easy-to-miss type, there will be the telltale words: *“Flavored juice blend with other natural ingredients.”*

Great picture, clever label, diluted product, convincingly disguised to look like something it isn’t.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- What is your favorite kind of fruit juice?
- How would you describe the difference between being “filled with Jesus” and “flavored with Jesus?”

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— MY CIRCUMSTANCES —

Romans 8:28a (New Century Version)

²⁸ We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him ...

- A generation ago, the British writer, Leslie Weatherhead suggested a triune way of describing the will of God:
 - **STAGE ONE His Intentional Will** – the garden of Eden, his plan from the beginning for humanity to understand, accept and follow his way.
 - **STAGE TWO His Circumstantial Will** – the post Eden world, spoiled by circumstances we have created, but nevertheless a world in which he works his will in spite of our sin.
 - **STAGE THREE His Ultimate Will** – heaven, God wins and in the end all of his goals are accomplished.
- Since we currently live in Stage Two, how does God use “everything” within the circumstances created by humanity to accomplish his will?
- Why must we “love him” to be able to see the good he is working in our lives?

— MY CALLING —

Romans 8:28b-29a (New Century Version)

²⁸ They are the people he called, because that was his plan. ²⁹ God knew them before he made the world, and he chose them to be like his Son ...

- Reflect on the amazing foresight, that God knew of our failure and devised a “plan” before the world began. Why didn’t he simply terminate the whole human idea?
- Why does God want to be in relationship with us?
- God chose us “to be like his Son.” Do most people believe they can follow Jesus and become like him? Explain.

— MY COMMUNITY —

Romans 8:29b (New Century Version)

²⁹ ... so that Jesus would be the firstborn of many brothers and sisters.

- Why did God want to create a human community?
- Why did he create a faith community within the human community?
- Some relationships do not look to “the firstborn” Jesus. What other relationship patterns to they follow?

— MY COURSE —

Romans 8:30 (New Century Version)

³⁰ God planned for them to be like his Son; and those he planned to be like his Son, he also called; and those he called, he also made right with him; and those he made right, he also glorified.

- Notice the parts of God’s course of action:
 - “He planned” for us to think, talk and live like Jesus ...
 - “He also called” each of us individually to follow the way of Jesus ...
 - “He also made (us) right” due to the willing sacrifice of Jesus ...
 - “He also glorified” us and made us joint-heirs with Jesus.
- Which parts listed above stand out to you? Explain why?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- What is the difference between having information (even correct information) about Jesus, and transformation by Jesus?
- Discuss how each of the following spiritual disciplines play a role in following God’s transformation plan of action:
Scripture, Prayer, Meditation/Reflection, Silence/Solitude, Fasting, Service, Study, Simplicity, Worship, Confession, Celebration
- Why do we need relationships?
- How have your Christian relationships fed and deepened your faith?
- Close with prayer together following a time of personal prayer.