



EXPLORE **THE BIBLE.**
Adults

Romans

QuickSource

Fall 2026



ONE ROAD

“All roads lead to Rome.” It’s a familiar phrase. We understand it to mean that no matter what problem we’re facing, there’s probably more than one way to achieve a solution. Of course, thousands of years ago, it meant something much different.

During the days of the Roman Empire, the capital city was the hub of economic and cultural power. That included transportation. Justifiably, the Romans were proud of their roads. What’s more, many of those roads originated from a single spot, the Milliarium Aureum, the “Golden Milestone.” This large column was set up in the Roman Forum and served as the starting point for a vast network of highways that branched across the known world. As a result, all roads quite literally led to Rome.

Midway through the first century, the apostle Paul was hoping to take one of those roads and visit the church in Rome. In preparation, he wrote them a letter, an extensive explanation of humanity’s sin and God’s salvation. In it, Paul shared the meaning of the gospel and how Christ followers should apply it to their lives each day.

While many roads led to Rome, Paul was adamant that Jesus was the only road to God. He said that Jews and Gentiles alike were helpless to save themselves. Everyone needs Jesus as Savior. Things haven’t changed. We all still need Jesus if we’re hoping for a new relationship with God. If that’s where you find yourself today, here’s what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God’s Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross. Jesus also rose from the dead, making a new, eternal life possible for us.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

MEET THE WRITERS



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A WORD FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**



Photos. Wedding invitations. Save the dates. Birth announcements. Our refrigerator doors often showcase important people in our lives and significant events. I put announcements on my refrigerator so I won't forget them and sometimes photos of past events are purposely left up because they bring me so much joy. Exciting milestones and photos of everyday moments are captured in one spot like a special collection to be reminded of and enjoyed over and over.

Good news and big announcements are hard to keep to ourselves. In the book of Romans, Paul wrote to believers meeting in Roman house churches telling them of the best news ever shared—the gospel. Paul expounded on who needs the gospel (we all do) and where we can find salvation (only in Christ!). Jesus, through His life, death, and resurrection, made salvation possible for us. We are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). The gospel truly is the best good news.

I hope this quarter of study brings a deeper appreciation of God's gift of grace and the new life we are offered in Christ. May this lead you to tell others this good news!

In Him,

Amber Vaden

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Explore

Discover



Teaching to Share the Gospel

G. Dwayne McCrary

God gifted each of us differently. Paul pointed out that God gifts “some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). Some take this to mean we need to stay in our lane, let the evangelist do his work while we do our work as a shepherd or teacher. However, this same Paul directed his protégé, Timothy, to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). Paul’s direction to Timothy would be consistent with the Great Commission in Matthew 28, where Jesus directed all His disciples to make disciples, which includes evangelizing. Those gifted as teachers may do evangelism in a different way from those gifted with service or hospitality, but we are all tasked with evangelism in some way.

Here are five things we can do to be more intentional about sharing the gospel when we lead a Bible study group.

1. Be prepared to share. We all need to be able to share how we became followers of Jesus and how others can do the same. If we need help, we can always refer to the information on the inside

front cover of the Lifeway resources that explains how to respond to the gospel (admit, believe, and confess). We may have a favorite verse (John 3:13; John 14:6; Rom. 6:23) or set of verses (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10; Eph. 2:1-13) we can point to when sharing the gospel. The key isn’t so much which verse or verses we use, but that we’re prepared to share when the opportunity arises.

2. Invite people to share their stories. The people in our groups have stories to tell if we give them an opportunity. Some won’t share their story unless we invite them to share how they came to Jesus. This also helps those in our groups improve as witnesses for Christ and get more comfortable with sharing the gospel as they listen to others and share their own stories with the group.

3. Look for opportunities. In Lifeway resources, at least one lesson each quarter is marked as evangelistic, but that doesn’t mean the others do not offer occasions to share the gospel. Most, if not every, Bible study session provides an opportunity to share the gospel. A lesson on the use of money can open a door by reminding the group that we use our money not to secure our salvation but in response to the salvation Jesus already secured for us. Subtle, yet still an opportunity to share the gospel. Many times, we pass over those openings without thinking about it.

4. Include a way to respond. Telling a person about Jesus and His offer of salvation is only half the work. We need to offer them a way to respond. Asking them in front of the group may not be the



best approach. We are asking them to make a big decision that requires careful thought. We can make ourselves available after group time or share our cell numbers in case anyone wants to talk more about what it means to follow Jesus. However we do it, we need to make sure no one is left wanting to know more or wanting to respond without an opportunity to do so.

5. Encourage the group to pray for, invite, and bring along people who are far from God. One reason we may not always feel an urgency to share the gospel as we teach is that we are leading the same group of people week in and week out. In effect, our groups become functionally closed.

By encouraging participants to pray for opportunities to share the gospel, invite people not currently involved in a Bible study group, and bring the people they invite with

them, we might find ourselves more intentional about sharing the gospel when we teach.

Notice that “invite” and “bring” are listed separately. We need to remind our groups that we can invite people to attend, but if we invite them and offer to pick them up or meet them in the parking lot, they will be more likely to say yes to the invitation.

Review the lessons for this quarter and note those specifically identified as evangelistic. Encourage your group to make special efforts to bring guests with them on the weeks these lessons are taught.

G. Dwayne McCrary is the manager of Adult Ongoing Bible studies at Lifeway.

HOW TO USE QUICKSOURCE

Using **QuickSource** as your primary resource for preparing to lead a small Bible study group (with the group using the **Personal Study Guide**).

1. Read the core passage, using the Key Words as a quick commentary on the passage.

2. Review the outline provided on the Talking Points page (page two of each session) to organize your thoughts and identify the key points in the passage.

Tip: You can record your notes on the second page if you desire, giving you a way to remember insights gained.

3. Review the questions with response prompts on the Discussion Plan page (page three of each session), recording your response to the questions as you do so.

Some questions/prompts are included in the *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide*. The corresponding PSG page numbers for these questions are noted. These page numbers correlate to the regular print version of the PSG and may differ from large print versions. The prompts are adapted from the comments in the *Personal Study Guide*.

Tip: Additional “Bonus” questions are also provided in the Discussion Plan, along with the For Further Discussion QR codes. These extra questions are found only in *QuickSource*.

4. Consider ways of using the Bible Skill and Object Lesson ideas to lead your group.

Look for ways of using these ideas, in addition to the questions included on the Discussion Plan page.

5. Read the Dig Deeper feature (page four of each session), looking for ways of using that information when leading the group.

The information found in the Dig Deeper feature is available only in *QuickSource*.

6. Review and refine.

- Add transition ideas to move from one question to the next.
- Consult the *Explore the Bible* Extra page (goExploreTheBible.com/leaderextras) for an idea about using a current news event to begin and end the group time.
- Listen to the weekly *Explore the Bible* adult podcast to gain further insights about this week’s study. The podcast can be found on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training, or on MinistryGrid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

7. Gather the items needed to lead the group.

If you plan on using a visual from the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack* or creating your own (see p. 65 for a listing of items and suggested sessions for using them), do so early in the week. Be sure to have extra copies of the *Personal Study Guide* on hand to be given to guests.

8. Arrive early.

The group time starts when the first person arrives. Make sure you are that person so you can set the tone and direction for the group Bible study time.

9. Lead the group in a time of Bible study, following your plan.

10. Evaluate the group time.

Note what you learned about the people in the group as well as things you may need to work on to improve as a teacher. Also make sure any follow-up actions promised to the group are carried out.



Using QuickSource as a Supplement.

Leader Guide + QuickSource

As a supplement to the *Explore the Bible Adult Leader Guide*.

After completing your study using the commentary provided in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, consult the Key Words section, the Talking Points page, and the Dig Deeper feature for additional insight or as a review. Reflect on the “Bonus” questions in the Discussion Plan and the extra questions provided in For Further Discussion, and add those to your plan as appropriate.

Daily Discipleship Guide + QuickSource

As a supplement to the Leader Helps in the *Explore the Bible Adult Daily Discipleship Guide*.

Look at the Key Words section to identify additional key words not included in the *Daily Discipleship Guide*, the Talking Points page, and the Dig Deeper feature for additional insight or as a review. Reflect on the “Bonus” questions in the Discussion Plan and the extra questions provided in For Further Discussion, and add those to your plan as appropriate.

Other resources that might be helpful.

Leader Guide

Explore the Bible Adult Leader Guide provides extensive group plans and additional Bible commentary that builds confidence when preparing to lead a group. Additional teaching options based on learning styles are also included. Available at goExploreTheBible.com

Pack

Explore the Bible Adult Leader Pack provides ready-made posters and handout masters that add to the learning experience and make it easier on the teacher. DOC files of the Leader Guide commentary and Leader Guide group plans are also included as a digital download. Available at goExploreTheBible.com

Commentary

Explore the Bible Adult Commentary provides an extensive Bible commentary written by recognized conservative Bible scholars. Available at goExploreTheBible.com.

Find out more or order at goExploreTheBible.com

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The apostle Paul identified himself as the writer of Romans (Rom. 1:1), and this is largely unquestioned since the style fits other letters attributed to Paul, such as Galatians and the epistles to the Corinthians. Paul did indicate that he had the help of a secretary, who penned the letter as Paul dictated it (16:22). His name was Tertius, and he supplied his own greeting at the end of the letter.

The recipients of Paul's letter were the Christians in Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. Though Paul had not founded or even visited the church there, he knew several of its prominent members. His beloved coworkers, Prisca and Aquila, were in Rome at the time of writing (16:3). Throughout the last chapter, he listed many more people that he already knew who were part of this diverse congregation.

The date of Paul's letter to the Romans is an educated guess based upon the situation he described. The apostle had finished his work in the eastern regions of the empire. He noted that his ministry over the years had taken him from Jerusalem to Illyricum, which is identified as the area of modern-day Albania and other nations along the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea (15:19). Having covered much of that region, he planned to go west and visit Spain after he visited Rome (15:24).

Before he could continue his missionary endeavors, however, Paul first had to deliver contributions for a famine relief offering. The apostle had received gifts from Gentile believers in support of their Jewish brothers and sisters in Jerusalem (15:25-26).

Taken together, all of these factors suggest a date near the end of Paul's third missionary journey. This would place the letter sometime in the AD 50s.

In addition, many scholars believe that Paul wrote the letter from the city of Corinth around this time. The greetings in Romans 16

also indicate a connection to Corinth. Phoebe, a "servant of the church at Cenchreae" (a port city just east of Corinth) is commended to the church in Rome, possibly because she carried the letter to them (16:1-2). The letter also contains a greeting from Gaius and from Erastus "the city treasurer" (v. 23). Though Gaius was a common name, Paul did baptize a man named Gaius in Corinth (1 Cor 1:14). Also, a paving stone dated to the AD mid-50s identifying an Erastus as a city official has been found in Corinth.

The combination of names and circumstances mentioned in Romans provides another strong indication that the letter was written from Corinth in the 50s.

PURPOSE

Since Paul had not personally traveled to Rome—even though he had felt a desire to do so on several occasions (Rom. 15:22)—he wrote one of the most comprehensive explanations of the gospel in the entire New Testament. His desire was to show both Jews and Gentiles in the Roman church that everyone stands on common ground before Jesus. All people are sinners, so all people need a Savior. And those who are saved by the grace of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus are expected to pursue holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit. The appeal is both theological (chaps. 1-11) and practical (chaps. 12-16).

After presenting his thoughtful and logical doctrine of sin, salvation, and justification in chapters 1-11, Paul shifted his focus to practical issues in chapters 12-15. He shared how believers—both Jews and Gentiles—could apply their faith in the real world. As noted, chapter 16 primarily contains a series of greetings and personal connections between the apostle and his readers.

As he prepared to take the gospel to Spain, Paul eyed a visit to Rome on his way toward the unreached communities of Spain.



He wrote the letter in preparation for his visit and to encourage the Romans to partner with his ministry efforts.

Of course, Paul did arrive in Rome eventually, though he did not know that his visit would not come of his own free will. After his arrest in Jerusalem, he appealed to Caesar (a right he enjoyed as a Roman citizen in the empire) to ensure a fair trial. Since Scripture is silent on the matter, we can only speculate as to whether or not Paul finally made his way to Spain.

MAJOR THEMES

1. The Righteousness of God. In Romans 1:16-17, Paul delivered the thesis of his letter. He said he was not ashamed of the gospel because it was the power of God for salvation to all who believed. God offered righteousness as a gift to those who believed in Christ and accepted His sacrifice on the cross as the payment for their sins.

2. The Universality of Sin. Both Jews and Gentiles are born under the dominion of sin. No one is exempt, so no one should rely on their own merits for salvation. Sin produces death, and sinners cannot save themselves from the consequences of their sin.

3. Justification by Faith. Believers are pardoned and declared righteous before God, not by works but by faith. A legal term, justification implies that an authority has canceled the debt of sin. For believers, God performed this work because of their faith in Jesus and made them right with Him (Rom. 3:28; 5:1).

4. Life in the Spirit. Though salvation is completely a work of God, believers are called to engage their flesh in the battle against the temptation to sin (6:1-14). More precisely, Christians are called to consider themselves dead to the power of sin in their lives. This does not mean that sin ceases to be a powerful and destructive force, but it does mean

that believers have the power to overcome sin through their restored relationship with God. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, who lives in all believers (8:1-17).

5. God's Sovereignty and the Nation of Israel. Even though many Israelites rejected God and His Messiah, He still desires they be saved. As a fellow Jew, Paul prayed for the salvation of Israel, just as he prayed for the salvation of the Gentiles (Rom. 9-11). He noted that God's work among the Gentiles was not a rejection of the Jews, but an opportunity for them to see their need and return to Him.

6. Practical Christian Living. Believers should offer themselves to God as living sacrifices and have their minds renewed so they can be transformed into the image of Christ. This is a daily process of sanctification, and it has practical results in the lives of those who are following Jesus (Rom. 12-15). For example, as men and women transformed by God, believers can identify and make use of spiritual gifts for the church and approach their relationship with governing authorities with a new perspective.

Romans presents readers with a monumental work. It combines profound theological insight with pastoral instruction and a passion for missions. Its wisdom has blessed the church for generations. And a careful study of its pages still holds the promise of blessing to readers today.



ROMANS

- **I. Introduction** (Rom. 1:1-15)
- **II. The Universal Need of Righteousness** (Rom. 1:16-3:20)
- **III. Justification: The Imputation of Righteousness** (Rom. 3:21-5:21)
 - A. The righteousness of God in justification (Rom. 3:21-26)
 - B. Justification by faith excludes boasting (Rom. 3:27-31)
 - C. Justification and the Old Testament (Rom. 4:1-25)
 - D. Justification involves reconciliation (Rom. 5:1-11)
 - E. The Christ-Adam analogy (Rom. 5:12-21)
- **IV. The New Life in Christ** (Rom. 6:1-8:39)
 - A. The old self/new self and sin's dominion (Rom. 6:1-23)
 - B. The old self/new self and the Mosaic law (Rom. 7:1-25)
 - C. The old self/new self and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-39)
- **V. The Mystery of Israel** (Rom. 9:1-11:36)
 - A. Israel's unbelief and the gospel (Rom. 9:1-10:21)
 - B. Israel's rejection is not final (Rom. 11:1-36)
- **VI. Exhortations about the Christian Life** (Rom. 12:1-15:13)
 - A. Living sacrifices and spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:1-8)
 - B. Christians and non-Christians (Rom. 12:9-21)
 - C. The believer's obligation to the state (Rom. 13:1-7)
 - D. The Christian's motivations (Rom. 13:8-14)
 - E. The strong and the weak in the church (Rom. 14:1-15:13)
- **VII. Epilogue: Greetings and Travel Plans** (Rom. 15:14-16:27)

True Power

THE GOSPEL ALONE HAS THE POWER TO REMOVE
THE GUILT OF HUMANITY'S SIN.

Romans 1:13-25

13 Now I don't want you to be **unaware**, **A** brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a **fruitful ministry** **B** among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles. **14** I am **obligated** **C** both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. **15** So I am eager to preach **the gospel** **D** to you also who are in Rome. **16** For I am **not ashamed** **E** of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the **righteousness** **F** of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith. **18** For God's **wrath** **G** is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness **suppress** **H** the truth, **19** since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. **20** For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen **since the creation of the world**, **I** being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are **without excuse**. **21** For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. **22** Claiming to be wise, they became fools **23** and **exchanged** **K** the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles. **24** Therefore God **delivered them over** **L** in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. **25** They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.

Exploring Key Words

- A** "Ignorant" (KJV). The Greek wording relates to understanding more than intellect, especially in terms of spiritual matters.
- B** Paul had no real history with the church in Rome, but he wanted to minister to them as he had with other churches around the empire.
- C** Paul felt a strong "debt" to all people, regardless of background. This came from his own encounter with God's grace and the universal need for salvation.
- D** Greek, "evangelion." The word means "good news" and refers to the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- E** Though offensive to some, Paul affirmed that he was prepared to confess the gospel publicly and bear witness to its saving power.
- F** Brought back into a right relationship with God. This is not the result of human effort, but a gift granted by God based on faith in Jesus.
- G** God's just and measured response to human sin. Through His judgment of sin, God maintains moral order in the world.
- H** While truth does not change, sinful humans tend to ignore, reject, or restrain God's truth. This results in moral decay and collapse.
- I** God reveals His existence through His creation. Theologians call this "general revelation." See "Dig Deeper" feature.
- J** God's revelation of Himself in nature ensures humans have no excuse for denying Him.
- K** Satan's deception led humans to worship the creation instead of the Creator (v. 25).
- L** "Gave them up" (KJV; ESV; NIV). God allowed humans to follow their own path and to suffer the consequences of their choices.



Gospel Power (Rom. 1:13-17)

- Paul assured the Romans that he had longed to visit them for quite some time because he wanted to invest in their lives.
- He also shared that he felt compelled to share the gospel with them because it held the key to salvation for everyone, both Jews and Greeks. Through the gospel, God reveals His righteousness and nurtures faith that leads to salvation.

Divine Revelation (Rom. 1:18-20)

- The consequence of ignoring the gospel is facing God's wrath. Paul stated that God has revealed His wrath against those who refuse to acknowledge that He has made Himself known through creation.
- Because God has revealed Himself so clearly in what He has made, human beings are without excuse. No one can claim ignorance of His presence or work in the world.

Worthless Thinking (Rom. 1:21-25)

- Those who refuse to acknowledge God fall into a spiral of depraved thinking and actions. While they pursue the foolishness of their own desires, God allows sin to work its natural consequences in their lives.
- With twisted logic and darkened hearts, unbelievers accept a lie and choose to worship the creation rather than the Creator.

Summary Statements

The gospel alone has the power to remove the guilt of humanity's sin.

- Believers seek opportunities to share the gospel's power with those who need it.
- We can point others toward God through what He has revealed in His creation.
- Rejecting God ultimately leads to devastating consequences.

Memory Verse

Romans 1:16

Key Doctrine

Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. (See Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.explorethebible.com).

ENGAGE

What's a memorable good news moment you've had? How did it affect you? (PSG, p. 10)

- All of us have experienced the power of good news. Perhaps it was when you got the report that you passed an exam. Or when you were told that you got the job. Maybe you received the blood test results and learned that nothing's wrong.
- Good news has a powerful impact on us. It turns an ordinary day into an extraordinary event that we will always remember.

Bonus: Which is better: Getting good news or sharing good news? Why?

EXPLORE

GOSPEL POWER (ROM. 1:13-17)

Bonus: When have you been eager to visit someone? What sparked that enthusiasm?

- Paul was eager to visit the Christians in Rome. But so far, his work prevented him from going there. He had many friends in the church (Rom. 16:3-16), but he also wanted to have a "fruitful ministry" among them.
- Paul considered himself obligated to people who had not heard the gospel, regardless of their ethnicity or background. Jesus had changed Paul's life, and he felt compelled to take the gospel to them.
- The good news about Jesus is the power of God that changes lives and brings salvation to everyone who believes. Paul's testimony reminds us that we should never be ashamed to share that message with others.

How does remembering that the gospel is "the power of God for salvation" change your confidence in sharing it? (PSG, p. 13)

DIVINE REVELATION (ROM. 1:18-20)

Bonus: What is the difference between human anger and God's wrath?

- Having affirmed the power of the gospel, Paul explained why people need to hear the gospel: God's wrath against sin. God's wrath doesn't mean He loses His temper. Rather, His wrath is His appropriate response to sin.
- While people may try to suppress or ignore the truth about God, His presence cannot be denied. The reality of His existence screams at us from everywhere.
- God makes Himself known through the extraordinary and ordinary circumstances of each day. Theologians have a name for the everyday evidence of God's presence: general revelation. The most obvious evidence of general revelation is creation.

- God makes His invisible attributes known through what we see. This revelation means human beings have no excuse for denying God's presence and work in the world.

What does creation teach us about God's attributes? (PSG, p. 15)

WORTHLESS THINKING (ROM. 1:21-25)

Bonus: How would you define a "fool"? When have you caught yourself acting like a fool?

- When people refuse to see God in His creation, they begin to spiral downward spiritually. They begin to foster notions about themselves and the world that are worthless. With their minds closed to the certainty of His presence, their hearts turn cold toward Him.
- Humans who deny God show their foolishness in what they worship. Ignoring the immortal God, they bow to idols of their own design. They also worship the creation (birds, animals, reptiles, heavenly bodies) rather than the Creator.
- In response to their foolish choice, God hands them over to their pagan passions. He allows them to follow their hearts and to sink deeper into spiritual darkness. Eventually, they suffer the consequences of replacing the truth with a lie.

How do people exchange truth for lies today—and how might you be tempted to do the same? (PSG, p. 17)

CHALLENGE

As a group, focus on people in your lives who do not know Jesus.

Agree with your Bible study group to pray together for these people and to ask God for opportunities to share the gospel with them. (PSG, p. 18)

On a personal level, look at your own determination to share the good news of Jesus.

How do you exhibit your confidence in the power of the gospel? What will you do this week to demonstrate your eagerness for others to hear it? With whom will you start a gospel conversation? (PSG, p. 18)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 17)

Use a Bible dictionary to better understand a theological concept.

Paul emphasized that God reveals Himself through nature (“natural” or “general” revelation) as well as through His Word and through Jesus (“special” revelation). Read a Bible dictionary article on “Revelation” to learn more about these two forms of divine revelation. Record your thoughts about their similarities or differences.

Write “general revelation” and “special revelation” on the board. Encourage the group to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 17 of the PSG. After a few minutes, lead a brief discussion on general revelation as described in Romans 1. Allow volunteers to share the differences between general revelation and special revelation. Record their responses under the appropriate headings. Emphasize that both are important because both point lost people toward God.

OBJECT LESSON: ELEMENTS OF CREATION

Gather several items or images that represent God’s creation. (*Examples: pine cone, flowers, pictures of a sunrise or sunset, a vacation picture from a national park, and so forth*) Display the items and affirm that it can be easy for us to take God’s creation for granted.

Ask: **How often do you take a long look at God’s creation around you? Where is your favorite place in His creation to meet with Him?** Note that while creation points unbelievers toward God, it also reminds Christ followers of God’s love, grace, power, and faithfulness.

Briefly share the information from the “Dig Deeper” feature on general revelation below. Allow a few volunteers to share their insights. Remind adults that general revelation is not sufficient for salvation. Say: *It proves that God exists, but we cannot know Him fully apart from Jesus and His Word.*

DIG DEEPER

GENERAL REVELATION

In Romans 1:19-20, Paul introduced the concept of general revelation, the doctrine that God has made Himself “evident” through the created world. This revelation doesn’t require a Bible, a missionary, or a sermon. It’s available to everyone, everywhere. The beauty and order of creation, the vastness of the universe, the rhythm of seasons, the complexity of the human body, and even our moral awareness all point to a Creator who is both powerful and divine.

Paul argued that people are not ignorant of God, but they are ignoring Him. Creation makes God’s power and nature clear, yet many suppress this truth (v. 18). The problem isn’t a lack of evidence, but a refusal to respond to what God has made plain. Rather than worshipping the Creator, people choose to worship created things like idols, animals, nature, or even themselves (vv. 22-23). This rejection leads to moral confusion, spiritual darkness, and God’s wrath (vv. 24-25).

General revelation is important because it shows that God is just in holding all people accountable. No one can claim ignorance of His existence. As the *Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) affirms, “There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ

as Lord.”¹ God’s self-revelation in nature should stir human hearts to respond to Him. General revelation alone cannot provide salvation, but it leaves no excuse for disbelief.

In addition, general revelation should prompt humility, awe, and a hunger to know the God behind the glory of the skies and the order of the earth. That’s where special revelation—God’s truth shown through the person of Jesus Christ and His Word—comes in. Still, Paul’s message in Romans 1 is clear: God has already spoken through creation. The question is not whether He has revealed Himself. The question is whether we are willing to see Him and respond.

1. *Baptist Faith and Message* 2000. Available at bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000.

BONUS CONTENT



Paul's Letters

Scan here to learn more about Paul’s letters in the New Testament and why he wrote them.

Coming Judgment

GOD WILL JUDGE EVERY PERSON ACCORDING
TO THEIR RESPONSE TO HIM.

Romans 2:1-13

1 Therefore, every one of you who **judges** **A** is without excuse. For when you judge another, you **condemn yourself**, **B** since you, the judge, do the same things. **2** Now we know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the **truth**. **3** Do you **think** **C**—anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same—that you will escape God's judgment? **4** Or do you despise the riches of his **kindness**, **D** restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to **repentance**? **5** Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of **wrath**, **E** when God's righteous judgment is revealed. **6** He will repay each one **according to his works**: **F** **7** eternal life to those who by persistence in **doing good** **G** seek glory, honor, and immortality; **8** but wrath and anger to those who are **self-seeking** **H** and disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness. **9** There will be affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek; **10** but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does what is good, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. **11** For there is **no favoritism** **I** with God. **12** For all who sin without the law will also perish without the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. **13** For the hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the **doers** **J** of the law will be justified.

Exploring Key Words

- A** Not just saying something is wrong. This represents a pride and arrogance that expects God's judgment on someone.
- B** Warning against hypocrisy. Some in the Roman church were condemning behavior, yet participating in the same activities.
- C** Unlike human judgments, God's verdicts are accurate and just in every way.
- D** "Suppose" (ESV). Generally, a term from arithmetic that relates to calculation or deliberation. In Romans 4, Paul used it to describe God crediting righteousness to those who demonstrate faith.
- E** "Goodness" (KJV). Not an approval of sin, but an element of God's character, along with restraint and patience, that moves individuals toward repentance.
- F** A changed heart that turns from sin. Without it, people store up judgment for themselves.
- G** Not human anger, but divine justice. God's wrath represents His appropriate response to sin.
- H** God's judgment is not capricious or unjust. He will judge every human being by the same standard: their response to His Son, Jesus.
- I** Not works-based salvation, but good works performed as the result of a life transformed by Jesus and aligned with God's values.
- J** "Contentious" (KJV). The Greek wording suggests one who seeks divisions, having no concern for others or for God.
- K** Whether Jew or Gentile (vv. 9-10), every person is accountable for how they respond to truth.
- L** True righteousness is demonstrated through action. Hearing is not sufficient (see Jas. 1:22-25).



NOTES

No Excuses (Rom. 2:1-5)

- Paul emphasized that human logic is skewed. The hypocrisy of condemning others only leads to one's own condemnation for the same sins.
- In contrast, God's judgment is always impartial and based on His character. Therefore, no one who rejects His grace will escape His wrath.

Perfect Standard (Rom. 2:6-11)

- People's response to God's grace will determine where they spend eternity. Those who follow Him will experience eternal life. Those who pursue their own ways will face His wrath.
- Everyone will be judged by this standard because God does not play favorites.

One Way (Rom. 2:12-13)

- Paul affirmed that the eternal consequences of sin are universal. Those who "keep" the law and those who "reject" the law both face judgment apart from Christ.
- Hearing the gospel is not sufficient for salvation. The first step toward being made righteous before God is obeying Him by accepting His offer of salvation.

Summary Statements

God will judge every person according to their response to Him.

- We should focus on our own sin rather than judging others.
- Our eternal destiny is based on our response to God in this life.
- Unbelievers need to understand that good works will not justify them before God.

Memory Verse

Romans 2:11

Key Doctrine

Man

In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. (See Genesis 3; Psalm 51:5.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

What does a speeding ticket teach us about accountability? (PSG, p. 19)

- Standing before a judge can be a sobering experience, even if it's only for the speeding ticket in your hand.
- When a police officer pulls you over and gives you a ticket, you might set it aside and get back on the road. However, from that moment on, you know that one day you will be accountable to a judge.
- On that day, the ticket testifies to your accountability.

Bonus: When have you been held accountable for something? What were you grateful for at that time? What made you nervous about it?

EXPLORE

NO EXCUSES (ROM. 2:1-5)

Why do individuals tend to judge others while overlooking their own sin? (PSG, p. 22)

- Most Jewish people in Paul's day considered themselves spiritually superior to non-Jews. They viewed Gentiles as spiritually unclean. But Paul asserted that they were without excuse and had no right to judge others.
- Those who were judging others were under God's judgment themselves. God's judgment is always just, impartial, and based on His character, while humans are usually prejudiced and hypocritical.
- Some presume upon God's kindness, believing that He won't judge sinners. Others think God's kindness applies only to them. Paul already established the universality of sin and the fact that all people stand guilty before God apart from His grace. Now he explained that the kindness of God moves people toward repentance.

Bonus: How does knowing you are accountable to God affect the way you see Him and your sin?

PERFECT STANDARD (ROM. 2:6-11)

Bonus: What are some ways people try to measure success in our culture?

- Paul said that all people will belong to one of two categories at the final judgment. One category includes everyone who receives eternal life. They devote themselves to doing good in response to what God has done for them. They live to bring glory and honor to Him.
- The other category includes the misguided people who have deceived themselves. Instead of eternal life, they will face God's wrath.
- Jews and Gentiles alike will be judged by the same standard. If they submit to Christ, they will be blessed. However, if they reject Christ, they will face God's wrath. Christ is the standard.

- No one can count on favoritism with God to give them a right relationship with Him.

Based on these verses, what is the key to a healthy relationship with God? (PSG, p. 24)

ONE WAY (ROM. 2:12-13)

Bonus: Why is it important to remember that God doesn't play favorites? How can you avoid playing favorites spiritually?

- As Paul emphasized, God does not play favorites. He applies the same perfect standard of judgment to each person. His judgment is based on how people respond to Him.
- The same truth applies to us: those who have God's Word cannot treat it as nothing more than a keepsake. Both the Jew and the Gentile were condemned if they stood apart from Christ, whether they knew the law or not.
- Again, Paul divided his listeners in two categories: "hearers" and "doers." For anyone to be righteous before God, they need to do more than just hear the words of Scripture. They must act on it. People are justified—that is, declared innocent, upright, or righteous—by faith in Christ alone. God has no other plan.

In what ways might you be relying on knowledge rather than obedience in your own spiritual life? What practical steps can you take to move from hearing God's truth to actively doing it? (PSG, p. 26)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss some opinions you have heard about how people are justified before God.

How can you use this week's passage to give a biblical answer? (PSG, p. 27)

As you apply this Bible study to your own life, think about your personal response to God.

How have you responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ? How are you responding to the gospel message today—how is your life being changed? (PSG, p. 27)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 26)

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.

People have used Romans 2:13 and other passages to claim that salvation is achieved by works that are needed in addition to faith. Read the following passages and determine what the Bible teaches about salvation by faith: John 6:28-29; 11:26; Acts 16:31; Romans 1:17; 4:6-8; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 3:9. ***How do these verses relate to Paul's words to the Romans about the universality of judgment?***

Assign each adult one of the verses from the Bible Skill on page 26 of the PSG. Direct them to read and reflect on their assigned verse, identifying what it says about salvation. After a few minutes, allow each person to share their findings. Emphasize that works do not have the power to save anyone, though God does expect us to perform good works as a result of our salvation.

OBJECT LESSON: MIRROR

Display a mirror. Encourage adults to share something they noticed about themselves the last time they looked in a mirror. Explain that sometimes it's easier to ignore things we don't want to see by turning the mirror on others.

Share that in Romans 2, Paul warned the Jews not to think of themselves as superior to the Gentiles but to take a good look at themselves. Note that contemporary believers also need to make sure they are evaluating their lives honestly before God.

Say: *Every person has sinned, so every person is accountable before God. But we can find mercy and forgiveness through Jesus.* Remind adults that God does not play favorites, so we need to see things as He sees them. Encourage them to let God be the mirror for their lives in the week ahead.

GOD'S WRATH

In Romans 2:1-3:20, Paul addresses a sobering truth: God will judge every person according to their response to Him. This judgment is not rooted in favoritism or emotion, but in the perfect, impartial justice of a holy God. While we often think of wrath as uncontrolled anger, Scripture describes God's wrath as His settled, righteous opposition to evil, His necessary and just response to human rebellion.

Paul began by exposing hypocrisy: we tend to judge others while excusing our own sin (Rom. 2:1-5). However, our selective standards will not exempt us from God's righteous judgment. He alone is qualified to judge, and He does so without bias.

Paul moved on to reveal the standard: every person will be judged "according to his works" (2:6). This isn't works-based salvation. Rather, it's a reflection of how we've responded to God's grace. The root issue is not religious knowledge, but our response to God's revealed truth.

In Romans 1, Paul explained that God's wrath is already being revealed and that He delivers sinners to their own desires when they reject Him (1:24,26,28). So, God's judgment includes both present (as people experience the consequences of their rebellion) and future (when all will stand before Him) aspects.

Romans 2:12-13 ties Paul's argument together. Regardless of our background, no one escapes accountability before God. We all will answer for our actions. Those who sin under the law will be judged by it, while those without the law will be judged by what they knew. Yet, God's wrath does not have to be the final word. His kindness leads people toward repentance (2:4). His wrath is meant to awaken us, not destroy us.

God's wrath is real, but so is His mercy. The gospel reveals not only the justice of God but also the rescue He offers through Jesus. We can choose to respond in humility. The Judge also offers Himself as our Savior and will redeem us if we refuse to harden our hearts.

Saving Faith

A RIGHT STANDING WITH GOD COMES BY FAITH ALONE.

Romans 3:21–4:5

3:21 But now, apart from the law, the **righteousness of God** **A** has been revealed, attested by the **Law and the Prophets**. **B** **22** The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who **believe**, **C** since there is no distinction. **23** For all have sinned and fall short of the **glory of God**; **D** **24** they are justified freely by his **grace** **E** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. **25** God presented him as the **mercy seat** **F** by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God **passed over** **G** the sins previously committed. **26** God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and justify the one who has faith in Jesus. **27** Where, then, is **boasting**? **H** It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith. **28** For we conclude that a person is **justified by faith** **I** apart from the works of the law. **29** Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, **30** since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. **31** Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

4:1 What then will we say that **Abraham**, **J** our forefather according to the flesh, has found? **2** If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God. **3** For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was **credited** **K** to him for righteousness. **4** Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. **5** But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.

Exploring Key Words

- A** God's perfect justice, which makes people right with Him. It is revealed apart from the law and is available only through faith in Jesus.
- B** The Old Testament Scriptures. While the Mosaic law could not save anyone, it did point people toward the Messiah, along with the messages of God's prophets.
- C** To fully trust Jesus for salvation. The verb in Greek is similar to the noun translated "faith" earlier in the verse (*pistis*) and refers to an acceptance beyond intellectual agreement.
- D** God's majesty, perfection, and holiness. This stands in sharp contrast to human sinfulness.
- E** The unearned and voluntary kindness of God. He gives grace freely, not out of obligation.
- F** The cover built for the ark of the covenant (see Ex. 25:17-22). This is where the priest applied the blood on the Day of Atonement. Through His blood, Jesus becomes the place where God's justice and mercy meet.
- G** "Left" (NIV); "remission" (KJV). God postponed His final penalty for sin until Jesus fulfilled His plan for redemption.
- H** No human can claim credit for salvation. It is the work of Christ alone and cannot be earned.
- I** Paul affirmed that salvation comes from trusting in Christ, not keeping the law. This was good news for both Jews and Gentiles since neither could keep the law perfectly.
- J** The founder of the Jewish nation and the original recipient of God's covenant. See "Dig Deeper" on page 24.
- K** An accounting term, signifying an asset added to an account. Abraham did not earn favor with God by works. The Lord made the "deposit" by His grace based on Abraham's faith.



NOTES

Falling Short (Rom. 3:21-26)

- After addressing the law (Rom. 3:1-20), Paul stated that God has revealed salvation apart from the law.
- While everyone is guilty of sin, everyone has the opportunity to be saved by the grace of God demonstrated through Jesus's death. Christ's blood paid the penalty for our sin, and we can be justified through Him alone.

Finding Hope (Rom. 3:27-31)

- Paul made it clear that no one has room for spiritual arrogance because no one can become righteous before God in his or her own power.
- Whether Jew or Gentile, all must put their faith in Jesus and accept His offer of salvation. Everyone is justified by faith apart from the law.

Following Faith (Rom. 4:1-5)

- As the patriarch of the Jewish nation, Abraham would have been a logical candidate for salvation by good works. However, Paul quoted Genesis 15:6 to establish that faith always has been God's standard for being made right with Him.
- Unlike wages paid for doing a job, individuals cannot earn righteousness through works. Righteousness comes only as a gift of God's grace through faith.

Summary Statements

A right standing with God comes by faith alone.

- Everyone falls short of God's standard, so everyone needs Jesus.
- We can never be "good enough" to make ourselves right with God.
- God calls all people to accept His offer of salvation through faith in Jesus.

Memory Verse

Romans 3:23-24

Key Doctrine

Salvation (Justification)

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 2:16.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

In whom or in what have you been placing your trust lately? What factors can make trusting others challenging? (PSG, p. 28)

- We put our faith to work every day. When we sit in a chair, we trust it to hold us up. We entrust our lives to a bridge across a river.
- In our daily routines, we put our faith in people around us. We trust that the sun will rise in the morning and set in the evening. However, we often struggle to trust the Lord.

Bonus: If a friend asked why you believe Jesus is trustworthy, how would you respond? Why?

EXPLORE

FALLING SHORT (ROM. 3:21-26)

Bonus: When have you felt satisfied by a job you completed? Why do you sometimes feel like all your hard work isn't enough?

- Good works do not make anyone right with God. The law reveals sin, but it can't fix it. God has revealed His way of being right with Him. The Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament declared it. Faith in Jesus alone makes people right with God.
- All of us share a common reality. We all sin and fall short of God's perfect standard. But He justifies those who have faith in Jesus. When God justifies us, two things happen. First, we are declared no longer guilty of sin. Second, we are declared righteous.
- God offers this gift freely. But what is free to us was not free to God. He presented Jesus as the "mercy seat" by His blood. Other translations render the Greek term (*hilasterion*) as "propitiation" or "the sacrifice of atonement." This is language of the Old Testament sacrificial system. Jesus's blood made Him the atoning sacrifice for everyone who places their faith in Him.

Why can't good works lead to salvation? (PSG, p. 31)

FINDING HOPE (ROM. 3:27-31)

Bonus: How does it feel to be left out? How do you respond to those feelings?

- If we could earn salvation by working for it, we would have a reason to boast. But because salvation is by faith alone, boasting is "excluded." Works are a result of salvation, not a cause of salvation (see Eph. 2:8-10).
- The Jews believed they had a unique and exclusive relationship with God. For that reason, they considered themselves to be superior to Gentiles. But Paul emphasized that God offers His gift of forgiveness to anyone who places their faith in Jesus.

- Being pardoned through Christ does not nullify the law. On the contrary, what God did through Christ upheld the law. The penalty of the law still had to be paid—and Jesus accomplished that on the cross.

What does it mean to be justified by faith instead of works? (PSG, p. 33)

FOLLOWING FAITH (ROM. 4:1-5)

Bonus: What are some things you might boast about? How much credit do you really deserve for those things?

- For the Jews, Abraham personified their conviction that a person could earn justification by works. They believed he had received God's favor through his good works. Paul, however, argued that Abraham had no reason to boast before God.
- Quoting Genesis 15:6, Paul noted that Abraham was made right with God because of faith—not his works. Abraham became a righteous person when he believed God.
- The word "credited" comes from the world of accounting and meant to deposit or to place in the positive ledger column. However, this credit did not happen because of work performed but grace freely given. Paul went on to affirm that God will give the same gift to anyone—even the most ungodly person—who turns to Him in faith.

In what ways do you sometimes try to "earn" God's favor through your actions? (PSG, p. 35)

CHALLENGE

As a Bible study group, discuss issues people might have in accepting God's gift of forgiveness.

What prevents people from accepting His offer of salvation? Do they struggle with faith, or do they doubt the sacrifice of Christ? (PSG, p. 36)

As you reflect on God's gift of salvation, reflect on times when you've boasted about your spiritual accomplishments.

What place does grateful humility have in your personal relationship with God? In what ways do you demonstrate your concern for others who need Jesus? (PSG, p. 36)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 35)

Use Bible study tools to learn about key words in Scripture.

Read Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:1-20. Use a Bible dictionary and other Bible study tools to learn more about the meaning of a “covenant.” Read and reflect on Genesis to identify the various elements of a covenant. Answer these questions: ***How did this covenant ceremony highlight the faith of Abraham? Why do you think that Abraham needed this covenant ceremony to remind him of the promises of God in Genesis 12:1-3?***

Distribute some Bible study tools and encourage adults to work in groups of two or three to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 35 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they learned about covenants in the Bible. Review the questions in the activity to connect Abraham’s covenant with Paul’s teaching in Romans 4.

OBJECT LESSON: AWARD

Display a trophy, ribbon, or certificate recognizing an outstanding achievement. Encourage adults to share awards and prizes they have won over the years. Lead a brief discussion on what makes winning an award so special.

Point out that we often collect items that prove we won some special recognition because that recognition makes us feel good. Say: *But that’s not how God works in our spiritual lives. Instead of our individual performances, He holds people to another—and higher—standard.*

Explain that God has made Jesus the standard for our salvation, and faith in Him is the only way we can have a relationship with God. Note that we all fall short of God’s standard of perfection, so Paul made it clear that no amount of good works or human achievements can make a person right before God. Remind adults about the importance of salvation by faith.

DIG DEEPER

ABRAHAM

In Romans 4:1, Paul introduced Abraham not as a symbol of law-keeping, but as the ultimate example of faith. Paul’s aim was clear: Even Abraham, the founding patriarch of Israel, was made right with God through faith, not by anything he did.

Paul quoted Genesis 15:6 to validate his argument. Abraham wasn’t declared righteous because of his actions. Righteousness was credited to him by God because he trusted in God’s promise. That happened before the institution of circumcision and centuries before Moses received the law on Mount Sinai.

This is crucial. If Abraham was justified before any rituals or commands, then righteousness can’t be about external performance. Paul makes it personal. If anyone could boast about their works, it would be Abraham. But even he couldn’t (Rom. 4:4-5).

Douglas Moo explains it this way: “Paul appeals to Abraham . . . to prove that even in the Old Testament, righteousness came through faith, not through works.”¹ Paul never twisted the story. He revealed what was always true, now seen clearly in Christ.

Abraham became the blueprint for all who wanted a new relationship with God, whether Jew or Gentile. He wasn’t defined by law or lineage, but by absolute trust in God. He believed God could do what seemed impossible—give life where there was only barrenness. That kind of faith is what God counts as righteousness.

Even today, Paul’s message cuts through religious pride and spiritual performance. Righteousness isn’t earned—it’s received. God’s initial plan has never changed, and Abraham’s story proves that. Thankfully, through Christ, the same offer still stands open to all.

Faith, not works. That was true for Abraham. And it’s still true today.

Sources:

1. Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 128

Restored Relationship

CHRIST DIED FOR SINNERS, MAKING RECONCILIATION
WITH GOD POSSIBLE FOR ALL.

Romans 5:1-11,18-21

1 Therefore, **A** since we have been justified by faith, we have **peace with God** **B** through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in **the hope of the glory** **C** of God. **3** And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces **endurance**, **D** **4** endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. **5** This hope will not disappoint us, because **God's love** **E** has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. **6** For while we were still **helpless**, **F** at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. **8** But God proves his own love for us in that while **we were still sinners**, **G** Christ died for us. **9** How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. **10** For if, while we were enemies, we were **reconciled to God** **H** through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. **11** And not only that, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation. [. . .] **18** So then, as through **one trespass** **I** there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone. **19** For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the **one man's obedience** **J** the many will be made righteous. **20** The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, **grace multiplied even more** **K** **21** so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Exploring Key Words

- A** Paul had spent four chapters focused on humanity's need for justification. Based on that, he shifted to reconciliation in Romans 5.
- B** The objective position of believers since God has ceased hostilities and has reconciled them to Himself.
- C** Rather than wishful thinking, the Greek word for "hope" (*elpis*) indicates utter confidence in God's promises.
- D** "Patience" (KJV); "perseverance" (NIV). This is a steadfastness produced by suffering. It includes the capacity to remain faithful through difficulty.
- E** This is not an abstract consideration of God's love, but a reality demonstrated through action—particularly in Christ's death for sinners.
- F** "Without strength" (KJV); "weak" (ESV); "powerless" (NIV). Humans are unable to redeem themselves from sin.
- G** Christ met us where we were. We did not have to "clean up" for Him. He paid the price for our sins while we were still under God's wrath (v. 9).
- H** The Greek wording suggests two opposing sides coming to the same conclusion. However, God alone initiated our reconciliation to Himself through Jesus. We receive it as a gift as part of our justification by faith.
- I** A reference to the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Their rebellion corrupted the entire human race.
- J** Jesus's death on the cross reconciles people to God. He reversed the curse of sin and made righteousness possible by faith.
- K** "Grace abounded" (ESV); "grace increased" (NIV). God's lavish gift of forgiveness and reconciliation is more than enough to cover every sin of every person who comes to Him.



A New Peace (Rom. 5:1-5)

- Summarizing his message to this point (“Therefore”), Paul affirmed that those who are justified by faith in Jesus now live at peace with God, escaping His wrath. Grace gives them a new standing with the Father and hope for eternity.
- In addition, Christ followers can rejoice because even their afflictions are used to nurture their spiritual maturity.

A Proven Love (Rom. 5:6-11)

- The sinless Savior died as a substitute for the ungodly.
- While this defies human logic, Jesus’s death served as a perfect sacrifice for sin and a perfect demonstration of His love.
- His death rescues people from judgment and reconciles them to God. They are no longer His enemies.

A Growing Grace (Rom. 5:18-21)

- Jesus reversed the curse of Eden. While Adam’s disobedience led humanity into condemnation, Christ’s obedient sacrifice leads to justification and reconciliation for all who accept Him in faith.
- Sin creates a universal problem, but it cannot compare to the overwhelming grace of Jesus. He has brought sin’s reign of death to an end, offering reconciliation and eternal life to everyone who believes.

Summary Statements

Christ died for sinners, making reconciliation with God possible for all.

- Believers should embrace their new relationship with God.
- Individuals can be reconciled to God thanks to the loving sacrifice Jesus offered on the cross.
- Our lives can be transformed by the matchless grace of Jesus.

Memory Verse

Romans 5:19

Key Doctrine

Salvation (Justification)

Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God. (See Romans 3:28; Titus 3:5-7.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

When have you seen reconciliation in action lately? With whom have you sought reconciliation? (PSG, p. 37)

- Reconciliation paints a picture of love at work. Imagine two children in trouble with their mom. When their mother confronted them about their disobedience, their responses were tinged with disrespect. Their bad behavior built a wall between themselves and their mother.
- Yet, she knew that something had to be done. Because she loved her children, she took the first step toward making things right. So did God when He sent Christ to die for us.

Bonus: What is the relationship between being justified by God and being reconciled to God?

EXPLORE

A NEW PEACE (ROM. 5:1-5)

Bonus: Where do you go when you're looking for peace? What makes that place special?

- "Therefore" looks back to everything Paul had said up to this point about justification (chaps. 1-4). The phrase "since we have been justified" indicates Paul was now turning his attention to those who have placed their faith in Christ. Because we have been justified, we have peace with God.
- Peace with God through Christ gives way to other blessings, such as access to Him, grace that extends beyond mere forgiveness, and hope that anchors our lives now as we look toward eternity.
- Peace with God does not always mean freedom from suffering. We will suffer afflictions in this life. However, those afflictions lead to endurance among believers, which leads to proven character.
- The hope we have as Christians is rooted in God's love. For this reason, our hope in Him will not disappoint us. It is secure in the work of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

How does "peace with God" affect your life today and in eternity? (PSG, p. 40)

A PROVEN LOVE (ROM. 5:6-11)

Bonus: In one word, how would you describe your life before you came to Christ? Why?

- Before being justified through Jesus, we were helpless spiritually. Earning our salvation was not possible. Yet, despite our helplessness, Christ died for the ungodly.
- Dying for ungodly people does not make any logical sense. Someone might die for a "good" person, but never for a sinner. But that's exactly what God did. Christ's death for us can be traced to one motivation: God's love. He demonstrated that love when Jesus died on the cross.

- Paul used the word "reconciled," which points to something that was broken being fixed. In this case, it was our relationship with God. We were enemies of God, displaying hostility, hatred, and animosity toward Him and living under His wrath. But we are reconciled to God through Jesus.

How does Jesus's death prove His love for humanity? (PSG, p. 42)

A GROWING GRACE (ROM. 5:18-21)

Bonus: What are some things that are known for multiplying quickly?

- In verses 12-17, Paul set up a contrast between the sin of Adam and the sacrifice of Jesus. In verses 18-21, he expanded on that contrast. While one act of disobedience (by Adam) led to condemnation, one man's righteous act (Jesus's death) made justification and reconciliation possible for all who respond in faith.
- God's law clarified what sin looked like, which "multiplied" sin in the sense that it increased awareness and accountability. But while the reality of sin grew more troubling, the presence of grace became even more amazing as He lavished His forgiveness on us.

How do I know Jesus's death was meant for me? (PSG, p. 44)

CHALLENGE

As a group, identify the promises given to believers in today's focal passages.

Which of these truths is hardest for you to embrace right now? How can your group encourage one another to live in that promise? (PSG, p. 45)

This week, find a quiet place to reflect on reconciliation with God. Write your thoughts in a journal or in your PSG.

How has the truth about being justified through Christ influenced your attitude about yourself? What difference has knowing that you've been reconciled through Christ made in your daily life? (PSG, p. 45)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 44)

Study the life of a key character in Scripture.

Use a Bible dictionary and other Bible study tools to learn more about the life of Esau, focusing on the reconciliation of Esau and Jacob. Identify the events that prompted Esau to hate his twin brother Jacob. Read Genesis 33 and reflect on the brothers' reconciliation. Consider: ***What anxiety did Jacob feel about reconciliation? What had to happen before the two brothers could be reconciled? How did Jacob try to reconcile with gifts and good works? Why was reconciliation ultimately dependent on Esau's grace?***

Write "Esau" on the board and encourage adults to share what they know about him. Lead them to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 44). After a few minutes, lead a brief discussion on their findings. Highlight how reconciliation with God differs from reconciliation between two people.

OBJECT LESSON: NO TRESPASSING SIGN

Display a "No Trespassing" sign. Encourage the group to suggest places where they might see such a sign. Affirm that the primary purpose of the sign is to warn people to stay away.

Explain that since the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, the entire human race has been trespassing against God. Point out that this trespassing has nothing to do with property rights and everything to do with obedience and submission to our Creator.

Ask: ***What happens to people who are caught trespassing?*** Highlight the legal consequences of trespassing. Share that our trespasses against God are much more serious because they make us enemies of God and place us under His wrath. Discuss how the truth of Romans 5:8 offers hope for those who are guilty of trespassing against God.

DIG DEEPER

SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

Christ died in our place, bearing the penalty for our sins so that we might be reconciled to God. This doctrine is not a theological side issue. It is foundational to the gospel message and held firmly by those who trust in the authority of Scripture.

According to the Bible, all humanity is sinful and stands guilty before a holy God. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The just penalty for sin is death (see Rom. 6:23), which entails both physical and spiritual separation from God. But in His love and mercy, God provided a way for sinners to be saved. Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, took our place. He became our substitute.

Isaiah foretold this substitution hundreds of years before Christ: "But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities, punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds" (Isa. 53:5). In the New Testament, Romans 5:8 declares, "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Substitutionary atonement means more than Christ dying for us in a general sense. It means He actually took on Himself the very punishment that

we deserve. First John 2:2 teaches that Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. This is sacrificial language, meaning Jesus became the blameless Lamb and provided the ultimate sin offering for us.

God does not ignore sin. He judges it fully. Yet in Christ, He takes that judgment upon Himself. Second Corinthians 5:21 explains, "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

This doctrine upholds both the holiness of God and the richness of His grace. It reminds us that we are not saved by our efforts, but by trusting in the finished work of Jesus. He took our place so that we could be forgiven and made right with God.

BONUS CONTENT



Salvation

What does it mean that we have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved according to Scripture? Scan here to learn more.

Freedom

BELIEVERS ARE FREED FROM THE POWER OF SIN.

Romans 6:1-14

1 What should we say then? Should we **continue in sin** **A** so that grace may multiply? **2 Absolutely not!** **B** How can we who **died to sin** **C** still live in it? **3** Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death?** **D** **4** Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the **likeness of his resurrection.** **E** **6** For we know that our **old self** **F** was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be **enslaved** **G** to sin, **7** since a person who has died is freed from sin. **8** Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him, **9** because we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, **will not die again.** **H** Death no longer rules over him. **10** For the death he died, he died to sin **once for all time;** **I** but the life he lives, he lives to God. **11** So, you too **consider** **J** yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. **13** And do not offer any parts of it to sin as **weapons for unrighteousness.** **K** But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. **14** For sin will not rule over you, because you are not **under the law** **L** but under grace.

Exploring Key Words

- A** Ongoing, willful sin. Some argued for more sin as a way to experience more of God's grace.
- B** "God forbid" (KJV); "By no means!" (ESV; NIV). Paul was adamant in his denial that believers should continue in sin to promote grace.
- C** Not the elimination of sin, but a resistance to temptation. Sin no longer controls believers.
- D** Baptism symbolizes one's death to sin in Christ and resurrection to new life in Him (v. 4). See "Dig Deeper" on page 32.
- E** Believers experience new life because they share in Christ's resurrection, not just His death.
- F** "Old man" (KJV). Before Christ, believers were dominated by sin and rebelling against God.
- G** Slaves have no option beyond serving their masters. Believers have been released from the bondage of sin and are free to serve Christ as their new Master (see v. 7).
- H** Others have been raised from the dead, only to die again. Jesus, though, destroyed the power of death and will never die again.
- I** Jesus's sacrifice on the cross was final. His death is the sufficient payment for our sin. Nothing more is required to make salvation possible.
- J** "Reckon" (KJV); "Count" (NIV). An accounting term in Greek, Paul used it to emphasize a transformed mindset that recalculates the position of sin in one's life.
- K** "Instruments" (KJV; ESV). The Greek word typically relates to tools or implements used to fight a battle. See also 2 Corinthians 6:7; 10:4.
- L** The law multiplied the power of sin and death, while grace produces new life (Rom. 5:20-21).



Dead to Sin (Rom. 6:1-7)

- Paul asked rhetorically whether believers saved by grace should continue to sin so that grace may be demonstrated more.
- He emphatically said “no.” He explained that believers in Christ have died to sin and been raised to walk in newness of life.

Alive in Christ (Rom. 6:8-11)

- Paul emphasized that neither death nor sin have power over believers because of the resurrection of Christ. Through His death, we have died with Him, so we are able to live for Him.
- Jesus robbed sin of its power. Because Jesus died for us, we are called to consider ourselves dead to sin.

Instruments of Righteousness (Rom. 6:12-14)

- Paul admonished the believers in Rome to surrender themselves to God rather than to sin. In Christ, believers no longer have to yield themselves to the power of sin.
- He reminded them that they live not under the law but under grace, and God’s grace broke sin’s dominion over them. Therefore, they are free to serve God in every way.

Summary Statements

Believers are freed from the power of sin.

- Believers need to understand that they live in union with Christ and act accordingly.
- Believers are to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.
- Believers are to offer themselves to God for the accomplishment of His righteous purposes.

Memory Verse

Romans 6:11

Key Doctrine

Baptism

Baptism is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. (See Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

In what ways would the promise of freedom make you happy? (PSG, p. 46)

- “Debt free” makes a happy sound in our hearts. So do the words “cancer free.” Each phrase brings up different realities. However, they share one word in common: free.
- Being liberated from debt can be a game changer. And anyone with cancer would be ecstatic to know it was gone. Of course, being freed from sin’s power brings the greatest joy.

Bonus: What comes to mind when you think of freedom? When have you felt most free?

EXPLORE

DEAD TO SIN (ROM. 6:1-7)

Bonus: Why do you believe baptism is an important part of the Christian life?

- Earlier, Paul affirmed that God’s grace multiplied in response to multiplied sin (Rom. 5:20). Here, he raised a probing question: *If believers wanted God’s grace to be multiplied, should they sin more?*
- Paul’s terse answer keeps us from pondering it for even one second: “Absolutely not!” The reason for such a stern response drives home the truth about the reign of sin in a believer’s life. When we gave our lives to Christ, we died to a way of life controlled by sin.
- Baptism serves as a reminder of our liberation from sin. It reminds us that giving our lives to Christ involves being buried with him and being raised to a new life in Him. Baptism is a picture that we have been changed by Jesus.
- Paul illustrated new life with the picture of slavery. Slaves to sin do not have the ability to liberate themselves from sin’s tyranny. Liberty from the reign of sin occurs only when a person turns to Christ by faith.

In what ways might people today misunderstand or misuse the concept of grace? (PSG, p. 49)

ALIVE IN CHRIST (ROM. 6:8-11)

Bonus: How do you deal with temptation? What helps you overcome tempting situations?

- Jesus’s death was only one part of the story. His crucifixion reflects our death to sin, but His resurrection means life for us. Because of Jesus’s resurrection, we are free from the power of sin. We are both justified (declared righteous) and sanctified (set apart for God’s purposes).
- Jesus’s resurrection was unique in the sense that He would not die again. Others had been raised from the dead (Luke 7:11-15; 8:49-55; John 11:38-44), but they all died again. Jesus would never die again, and those incorporated into His resurrection will not die spiritually again.

- Believers must consider themselves “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” The word “consider” is an accounting term. It could be translated as “count, credit, or think.” It carries the challenge to accept God’s words as true. We are dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus.

What does it mean to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God? What does this look like practically in your life? (PSG, p. 51)

INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (ROM. 6:12-14)

Bonus: What are some weapons or tools a soldier needs to fight a battle effectively? What do believers need for spiritual battles?

- Along with eternity, salvation has practical implications for our lives now. Paul portrayed sin as a cruel taskmaster. Sin dominates those who live under its authority. But Christ ends the reign of sin in the lives of believers. Christians can serve God with their lives instead of surrendering to the evil desires of sin.
- Because sin no longer rules over us, we no longer need to worry about satisfying the demands of the law—or being condemned by it. We live under grace. By God’s grace, the penalty of death was satisfied in the death of Jesus on the cross.

In what ways do you still act as if sin is your master? How can you practically “offer” yourself to God today? (PSG, p. 53)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss the importance of baptism.

How does it symbolize your new life in Christ? How does recalling your baptism encourage you to remain focused on devoting yourselves to God? (PSG, p. 54)

Spend some time examining your personal walk with Christ.

How do you exhibit your new life in Him with your thoughts, words, attitudes, and actions? Where does God’s grace fit into your life as you try to devote yourself to Him each day? (PSG, p. 54)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 53)

Create a compare/contrast chart.

On one side of a vertical line, identity words and phrases that describe life that is lived with sin as the monarch or ruling authority. On the other side, note words and phrases that describe life that is lived with God as the monarch or ruling authority. Use the first six chapters of Romans that we've covered so far to inform the list you make.

On the board, draw two columns ("Sin as Monarch" and "God as Monarch") as shown in the Bible Skill activity on page 53 of the PSG. Encourage the group to complete the activity by suggesting words and phrases for each column. Allow volunteers to share why those words and phrases are so significant to them. Remind the group that God has called His people to consider themselves dead to sin and to live in the power that only comes from Jesus's resurrection.

OBJECT LESSON: PASSPORT

Display a passport. Ask the group to describe the purpose of a passport. Talk about other forms of photo identification we might need in certain situations. (*Examples: driver's license or badge at work*)

Explain that photo identification helps us demonstrate who we are and where we live. Note that it provides a sense of belonging. Encourage adults to compare that to what Paul wrote about revealing our identity in Christ. Emphasize that, as followers of Christ, we should live as citizens of God's kingdom. Say: *Our identity should be rooted in our relationship with Jesus, and people should be able to tell that we belong to Him.*

Challenge adults to consider how well they are living out their "citizenship" in the world. Offer a brief prayer, asking God to show each adult what they need to do to die to their old way of living and to start living as kingdom citizens now.

BAPTISM

Baptism is not a step in the process of salvation. Rather, it serves as a public response to one's salvation. Scripture consistently presents baptism as an act of obedience that follows an individual's decision to follow Jesus Christ by faith. It is a believer's public testimony of dying to sin and being raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

The New Testament pattern is clear: those who hear the gospel, repent, and believe are then baptized (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:47-48). Baptism is for believers, not infants. It is not a cultural tradition or a religious ritual. It is a declaration of personal faith and a symbol of a spiritual reality.

Baptism by immersion best reflects this truth. The Greek word *baptizō* means "to immerse" or "to dip," and that is the consistent practice demonstrated in the New Testament. Immersion portrays burial and resurrection. Going under the water symbolizes the death and burial of the old self. Rising out of the water represents new life in Christ. Without immersion, the powerful symbolism of Romans 6 is lost.

Though baptism has no power to save anyone, it is not optional. Jesus commanded it (Matt. 28:19), and the early church practiced it immediately after conversion. The outward act carries inward significance. It is a visible sign that someone now belongs to Christ. Refusing baptism is not a small issue. It implies resistance to the first command given to those who believe.

Baptism also identifies a believer with the body of Christ. While faith makes someone part of the universal church, baptism often marks entrance into a local fellowship. It signals a break from the old life and a commitment to follow Jesus alongside His people.

To summarize: baptism is by immersion, for believers only. It is done after salvation, as a symbol of union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Finally, it reflects an act of joyful obedience, not to earn salvation but to testify to it.

Struggle

BECAUSE SIN REMAINS A POWERFUL FORCE, BELIEVERS SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED WHEN DOING RIGHT IS A STRUGGLE.

Romans 7:4-6,14-25

4 Therefore, my **brothers and sisters**, **A** you also were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ so that you may **belong to another**. **B** You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may **bear fruit** **C** for God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful **passions** **D** aroused through the law were working in us to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the **newness of the Spirit** **E** and not in the old letter of the law. [. . .] 14 For we know that the law is **spiritual**, **F** but I am of the flesh, sold as a slave under sin. 15 For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but **I do what I hate**. **G** 16 Now if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17 So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. 18 For I know that **nothing good lives in me**, **H** that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. 19 For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one that does it, but it is the sin that lives in me. 21 So I discover this law: When I want to do what is good, evil is present with me. 22 For in my inner self I delight in God's law, 23 but I see a different law in the parts of my body, **waging war** **I** against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body. 24 What a **wretched man** **J** I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 **Thanks be to God** **K** through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am serving the law of God, but with my flesh, the law of sin.

Exploring Key Words

- A** While Paul had never visited the Roman church, he emphasized their shared relationship as children of God and spiritual siblings.
- B** Through Christ's death, believers are no longer bound to the law. Instead, they belong to Jesus, serving Him as Master and Lord.
- C** Jesus emphasized the importance of bearing fruit as a sign of one's true relationship with Him (see John 15:1-7).
- D** Likely from the Greek word *pathos*, it relates to strong emotion. In Scripture, it often refers to a negative experience, like suffering or affliction.
- E** The transformed life empowered by God's Spirit, in contrast to the futile efforts of trying to obey the "old letter of the law."
- F** Rather than diminishing the Mosaic law, Paul affirmed that it had served a proper purpose in salvation history.
- G** Despite dying to sin, believers still struggle with an internal tug-of-war between sinful desires and devotion to God. In some cases, they fall into the very sins they want to reject.
- H** Paul admitted that he had no power on his own to effect spiritual transformation in his life. He wanted to do right, but had no ability to follow through on his good intentions. He expounded on this dilemma in verses 19-21.
- I** Believers wrestle with an inner conflict between our redeemed minds and the sinful tendencies still present in our bodies.
- J** A raw cry of frustration from the apostle. The wording suggests a person trapped in misery and the frustration of moral bankruptcy.
- K** Despite his personal limitations, Paul praised God for providing Jesus as the answer to his spiritual struggles.



NOTES

Freed (Rom. 7:4-6)

- Applying the illustration from marriage in verses 2-3, Paul explained to the Roman believers that they had died to the law and now belonged to Christ.
- The new life they had in the Spirit resulted in the fruit of a righteous life.

Conflicted (Rom. 7:14-23)

- Paul acknowledged a struggle between his old way of life and his new commitment to Christ. He explained that the problem was not with the law but with human nature.
- As evidence, he pointed to the ongoing battle with sin in his own life. At times he did what he knew to be wrong and failed to do what he knew to be right.

Hope (Rom. 7:24-25)

- Paul lamented his struggle with sin and called himself a “wretched man.” Rhetorically, he wondered who would rescue him from this spiritual tug-of-war.
- He answered his own question by expressing gratitude to God for the deliverance that comes through Jesus.

Summary Statements

Because sin remains a powerful force, believers should not be surprised when doing right is a struggle.

- Believers bear fruit for God when they live in the Spirit of God.
- Believers need to recognize that the struggle with sin is real, and they need help.
- Believers can express gratitude to God that they do not have to battle sin in their own power, but that Christ provides the victory.

Memory Verse

Romans 7:4

Key Doctrine

Sanctification

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. (See Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

What is your favorite “rescue” story? Who comes to mind when you are asked to name the first person who ever rescued you? (PSG, p. 55)

- Everyone loves a good rescue story. Some rescues are dramatic, like a firefighter pulling an elderly couple out of a bedroom window just before their house collapses in flames.
- Others are less dramatic but no less inspiring, like the teacher tutoring students who are struggling in class. Ultimately, nothing compares to the way Jesus rescues us.

Bonus: When have you felt pulled in the wrong direction? How did you respond?

EXPLORE

FREED (ROM. 7:4-6)

Bonus: When have you planted seeds? What did you expect from those seeds?

What practical difference should it make that a believer belongs to Christ? In what ways does it change your identity and purpose? (PSG, p. 58)

- Paul wanted his spiritual siblings to know that he shared a new relationship with them because they all belonged to Christ. Because of Jesus’s death, believers have died to the law. Likewise, because He rose from the dead, we are given new life when we put our faith in Him.
- In their lives before Christ, the Romans had lived to indulge their own pleasures. They lived under the destructive control of sinful passions. Like seeds, the sprouts became plants that produced fruit for death.
- The old letter of the law did not have the power to create true spirituality. It told us how to live, but we could never meet that standard. In Christ, though, we have both the desire to obey and the power to obey.

In what ways are you bearing fruit for God in your daily life? (PSG, p. 58)

CONFLICTED (ROM. 7:14-23)

Bonus: If you had a magic wand, what habit or characteristic would you change about yourself? Why?

- In verses 7-13, Paul said that the law was not sinful in itself. Without the law, we couldn’t recognize sin. For example, we know coveting is sin because the law forbids it.
- In verses 14-16, Paul explained that the problem was not with the law but with human nature. As evidence, he pointed to battles in his own life. At times, he did what he knew was wrong. Other times, he failed to do what he knew was right. He consistently made wrong choices.

- Paul did not understand why he continued to be enslaved to sin when he had trusted Christ to die to sin. This was the conflict. Paul found himself battling between the new nature and old nature. As believers, we still battle the power of sin even though Jesus has set us free from it.
- Because of the Holy Spirit in his life, Paul still had the desire to do good. He just lacked the ability in his own strength. Sin was still a formidable enemy that waged war against his godly intentions.

How does recognizing sin’s presence in you change the way you depend on God? (PSG, p. 61)

HOPE (ROM. 7:24-25)

Bonus: When have you experienced the power of gratitude in your life? What is it about gratitude that empowers us to move forward?

- Like Paul, we agonize over our inner conflict. The frustration over the endless battle within ourselves compels us to echo his one-word description of himself: wretched. We need someone to rescue us from our struggle.
- The answer to our dilemma is Jesus. Paul praised God for the help and guidance He provided through His Son. Like Paul, we trust Christ to help us as we manage the inner conflict with sin. Our hearts and minds will continue to serve the law of God, even while our flesh tries to nudge us toward obeying the law of sin.

In what ways can you live more consciously in the freedom Christ provides? (PSG, p. 62)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss some common conflicts with sin each person in the group might face.

What approach do they take in dealing with it? How does the conflict make them more productive and grateful believers? (PSG, p. 63)

Spend some time reflecting on sins that are a particular problem for you.

How do you show your gratitude to God for helping you to be victorious through Christ? (PSG, p. 63)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 62)

Summarize the argument.

Read through the entirety of Romans 6:15–7:25 to summarize the argument Paul made regarding the ongoing effects of sin. First, make an outline of the argument. Second, write a one-sentence summary of this argument. Consider how sin affects a believer's life and the significance of dying to sin. Respond to these questions: ***How does this argument encourage you? Does it discourage you in any way?***

Encourage each adult to find a partner and give each pair a sheet of paper and a pencil. Direct the pairs to complete the Bible Skill activity page 62 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow volunteers from each pair to share their outlines and their summary statements. Lead a brief discussion on the impact of sin on a believer's life. Include the questions at the end of the activity as part of the discussion.

OBJECT LESSON: ALARM CLOCK

Ask: ***What time did you get up this morning? Did you use an alarm or did you just wake up on your own?*** Allow volunteers to share their responses.

Display an alarm clock. Point out the “snooze” button and find out how often adults use that feature to get a little more sleep. Ask: ***What kinds of problems can the snooze button cause?*** Note that, in some ways, the snooze button represents a battle between getting up and staying in bed.

Talk about other situations where adults experience a tension between two options. Discuss how knowing what is right and doing what is right is often a struggle. Direct the group to read Romans 7:14-23 silently and to develop a summary of how Paul described this struggle between right and wrong.

Read Romans 7:24-25. Ask: ***Do you ever feel “wretched” because you can’t get things together in your walk with Jesus?*** Highlight the role Jesus plays in helping us overcome the dilemma Paul described.

SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is not about earning salvation. Rather, it's about living out the new life God offers through Christ. It is the ongoing process where believers are made more like Jesus, set apart from sin, and shaped by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sanctification begins at the moment of salvation. When individuals are justified by faith in Jesus, they also are declared holy in God's sight. But it doesn't stop there. It continues through life as the believer grows in obedience and maturity. Human beings join God in this work by seeking to obey Jesus and to become more like Him each day.

This process is not about behavior management but heart transformation. The Holy Spirit works through Scripture, prayer, suffering, and the church to renew our minds and to change our desires (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). The truth is that holiness does not happen by accident. It's not something that just happens. You can wander into trouble, but you can never wander into purity. It takes effort, focus, and a lot of spiritual discipline.

Sanctification does not mean perfection in this life. Believers will continue struggling with sin, but the direction of their lives will change. They no longer live under sin's control. Instead, they live by the power of the Spirit, with growing victory over sin and deeper love for God and others (Gal. 5:16,22-23).

Sanctification is both a divine gift and a daily fight. God provides the power, but we participate with effort and intentionality (Phil. 2:12-13).

To summarize, sanctification is the Spirit-powered process of becoming more like Christ. It begins at the moment of salvation and continues as believers grow in grace, obedience, and holiness. It is not optional, and it will not be complete this side of heaven. It is the daily evidence of saving faith.

Indwelt

THOSE WHO TRUST JESUS ARE INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
WHEN THEY ARE ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD.

Romans 8:14-27

14 For all those **led by God's Spirit** **A** are God's sons. **15** For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the **Spirit of adoption**, **B** by whom we cry out, "**Abba**, **C** Father!" **16** The Spirit himself **testifies together** **D** with our spirit that we are God's children, **17** and if children, also **heirs** **E** —heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. **18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are **not worth comparing** **F** with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. **19** For the **creation eagerly waits** **G** with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. **20** For the creation was subjected to **futility** **H** —not willingly, but because of him who subjected it—in the hope **21** that the creation itself will also be set free from the **bondage to decay** **I** into the glorious freedom of God's children. **22** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with **labor pains** **J** until now. **23** Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. **24** Now in this **hope** **K** we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? **25** Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience. **26** In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but **the Spirit himself intercedes** **L** for us with inexpressible groanings. **27** And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Exploring Key Words

- A** Following the Spirit's guidance. This is an indication of a genuine relationship with Christ.
- B** Rather than slaves, God adopts believers into His family. Through the Spirit, they enjoy the full rights of sons and daughters.
- C** An Aramaic term that reflects an intimate cry to God, showing a close, trusting relationship like a child with a loving parent.
- D** "Bears witness" (ESV). The Holy Spirit confirms that believers are true children of the Father.
- E** As God's children, Christ followers share fully in the inheritance of the Son. Ultimately, this includes eternal life in the glory of God.
- F** Because of sin, suffering is part of our experience on earth. However, these temporary hardships pale in comparison to the glory of our future state with the Father in heaven.
- G** Like us, the created order suffers the effects of sin. But when God frees His children, creation also will be freed from the impact of sin.
- H** "Vanity" (KJV); "frustration" (NIV). Through Christ, the emptiness of creation will be replaced with hope and life.
- I** Jesus will reverse the curse of Genesis 3. The broken state of sin will be replaced by freedom.
- J** "Pains of childbirth" (ESV; NIV). Just as a woman's pain in labor is not without hope, our groaning in the present age points us to eternity and our ultimate redemption (see v. 23).
- K** Not wishful thinking. While we do not see the fulfillment of our salvation in this life, we have confidence that God is working to that end.
- L** The Holy Spirit prays for believers. His prayers are effective because they align with the will of the Father.



NOTES

Relationship (Rom. 8:14-17)

- Paul reminded his readers that believers are adopted into God's family and no longer need to fear slavery to sin.
- The Holy Spirit reassures believers that they are not only children of God but also His heirs.

Hope (Rom. 8:18-25)

- Paul reminded believers that the inheritance awaiting them was greater than any suffering they faced on earth.
- He also pointed out that all creation was touched by humanity's sin and waits to be set free from sin's consequences. Just as creation awaits its redemption, so too do believers.
- The anticipation of the final redemption of our bodies produces hope.

Help (Rom. 8:26-27)

- Sometimes believers struggle with their prayer life because they aren't sure what to pray for. Paul reminded his readers that the Holy Spirit helped them in their weaknesses by interceding for them.
- The Spirit's prayers are effective because they align with God's will.

Summary Statements

Those who trust Jesus are indwelt by the Holy Spirit when they are adopted into the family of God.

- Believers can confidently approach God as Father.
- The indwelling of the Spirit and the promise of what is yet to come motivates believers to live with hope.
- Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit is interceding to the Father for them.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:15

Key Doctrine

Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. (See 2 Corinthians 4:17; Revelation 21:1.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

When you picture a happy family, whose family do you think of? (PSG, p. 64)

- A happy family always makes space for everyone. During holiday gatherings, the house might feel packed, but no one worries about being left out.
- Beds fill up fast, and cozy spots on the floor become welcoming places to sleep. Come breakfast, there's plenty for all—because the kitchen never runs out of pancakes.

How does being a part of God's family shape your sense of belonging? (PSG, p. 64)

Bonus: What word would you use to describe your family's holiday gatherings? Why?

EXPLORE

RELATIONSHIP (ROM. 8:14-17)

Bonus: How do you know you are a member of your extended family? Why is that important?

- When we receive God's gift of salvation, we join all those who enjoy the blessings of salvation. This includes the indwelling of God's Spirit. Paul reminded the Romans that we follow the Spirit's guidance. This is not simply about obedience. It is also about identification. We know we are God's children because we walk with the Spirit.
- Paul contrasted two spirits. A spirit of slavery brings the fear of punishment according to the law. In contrast, the Holy Spirit assures believers that God has adopted them. "Abba, Father" is the language of a child running into the arms of a loving father.
- Believers may wrestle with doubts about their salvation. In those moments, the Spirit serves as a decisive witness to confirm an individual's place in God's family.
- As members of God's family, we are heirs and have access to all of God's riches. Paul was not proclaiming a prosperity gospel. He was stating that God's resources are enough to meet our every need. While our lives on earth will include suffering, we also will experience glory in heaven.

How does calling God "Abba, Father" impact your understanding of prayer and intimacy with Him? (PSG, p. 67)

HOPE (ROM. 8:18-25)

Bonus: How often do you think about heaven? What are you looking forward to the most?

- Paul had endured ridicule, beatings, imprisonment, and even near-death encounters. But he kept his focus on eternity. He stated that the sufferings of this world could not compare with the blessings of heaven.
- A day is coming when Christ will restore all things in a new heaven and new earth. Using personification, Paul

pictured creation straining with anticipation for that moment. Just as sin corrupted the entire universe, Christ's return will bring complete renewal.

- Until that day, believers can depend on the Holy Spirit to produce firstfruits. This word picture depicts a bountiful harvest. Believers will experience the complete joy of their adoption and the redemption of their bodies. This produces hope in the midst of patience.

How does the hope expressed in these verses help you in times of adversity? (PSG, p. 69)

HELP (ROM. 8:26-27)

Bonus: How do you handle doubts about God?

- The Spirit helps us walk with Jesus. His presence now is the guarantee—the down payment—of what is to come. By dwelling in us, He keeps our hope in Christ alive.
- Weakness often shows up as confusion or uncertainty that leads to frustration. In those times, even knowing what to pray for can feel overwhelming. Thankfully, the Spirit intercedes for us when our own words fail.
- God always hears the Spirit's prayers. Just as God the Father listened to the prayers of His Son, He also hears the prayers of His Spirit. The Spirit's prayers are heard because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

How does knowing that God understands both your heart and the Spirit's intercession give you peace? (PSG, p. 71)

CHALLENGE

As a group, reflect on being children of God.

Share with your Bible study group what being in God's family means to you. (PSG, p. 72)

During the week, spend time confessing to God just how much you need Him in your life.

What effect does your personal relationship with God as your Father have on the durability of your hope? How much do you depend on the Holy Spirit to help you when you pray? (PSG, p. 72)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 71)

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about the Holy Spirit.

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit. Reflect on these questions: ***How did the Holy Spirit's work differ in the Old and New Testaments? What kind of work does the Holy Spirit do in the life of a believer in the New Testament?***

Note any findings about the Holy Spirit that were new for you.

Encourage adults to share which member of the Trinity they understand best. Note how many (or few) mentioned the Holy Spirit. Affirm that the Holy Spirit can seem mysterious, but He plays an important role in our spiritual growth. Divide adults into teams and give each team a Bible dictionary. Direct them to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 71 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they learned about the Spirit in their research.

OBJECT LESSON: CANE

Bring a cane or a similar mobility device to the session. Write "Holy Spirit" on the board. Encourage adults to share what they know about the Holy Spirit from the Scriptures. Use the "Dig Deeper" feature below to supplement the conversation. Affirm the Spirit is an invaluable partner as we become more like Christ and make a difference for the kingdom of God.

Show adults the cane or other device. Explain that getting around after an accident, following surgery, or as we simply get older can be problematic. Note that many people rely on crutches or something similar to feel safe and confident in walking.

Share that this support is a great illustration of how the Holy Spirit helps us overcome our weaknesses as we walk with Christ. Discuss: ***How are you relying on the Holy Spirit to support your walk with Christ today?*** Encourage adults to reflect on the Spirit's work in their lives and to avoid overlooking the impact He has on our walk with Jesus each day.

DIG DEEPER

THE HOLY SPIRIT

In Romans 8:14-27, Paul emphasized the central role played by the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. The Spirit is not an impersonal force or feeling. Rather, He is the third Person of the Trinity, fully God and equal with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19). For Christians, the Spirit serves as God's constant presence, confirming their adoption into His family. As Paul noted, the Holy Spirit testifies along with our own spirit that we belong to God (Rom. 8:16). He guarantees our personal relationship with the Father through the Son.

The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin, points them to Christ, and lives within every believer from the moment of salvation (John 16:8-13; 1 Cor. 6:19). He seals us for the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13-14), and He works daily to make us more like Christ. The Spirit reveals the active work of God the Father in the world, especially in and through the ministry of His church.¹

Romans 8 explains that the Spirit leads Christ followers away from fear and into a close relationship with God. He moves us to cry out, "Abba, Father," showing that our relationship with God is warm and

personal (Rom. 8:15). In addition, the Spirit helps us when we do not know how to pray, interceding for us according to the will of God (8:26-27). We are not left to figure things out on our own. God provides the Spirit to help and guide us.²

Walking by the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit is the normal model for the Christian life. He is our Helper, Counselor, and Comforter. The Spirit frees us from sin's power, assures us of our hope, and strengthens us in our weakness. And He shows us that we truly belong to God. This is why Jesus sent Him to believers after He returned to heaven (John 14:15-17), and this is why the Spirit is so vital to our ability to fulfill God's mission on earth.

Sources:

1. Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Zondervan, 1994), 634.
2. Stott, John. *The Message of Romans*. (InterVarsity Press, 1994), 237.

Believe

EVERYONE WHO CONFESSES AND BELIEVES IN
JESUS WILL BE SAVED.

Romans 9:30–10:3,9-17

9:30 What should we say then? Gentiles, who **did not pursue righteousness**, **A** have obtained righteousness—namely the righteousness that comes from faith. **31** But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not achieved the righteousness of the law. **32** Why is that? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the **stumbling stone**. **B** **33** As it is written, Look, I am putting a stone in Zion to stumble over and a rock to trip over, and the one who believes on him will **not be put to shame**. **C** **10:1** Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God concerning them is for **their salvation**. **D** **2** I can testify about them that they have **zeal** **E** for God, but not according to knowledge. **3** Since they are **ignorant** **F** of the righteousness of God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. [. . .] **9** If you **confess with your mouth**, **G** "Jesus is Lord," and **believe in your heart** **H** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. **11** For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame, **12** since there is **no distinction** **I** between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. **13** For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. **14** How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear **without a preacher?** **J** **15** And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. **16** But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? **17** So **faith comes from what is heard**, **K** and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

Exploring Key Words

- A** Gentiles did not keep the law. They received God's favor by faith. In contrast, the Jews could never find righteousness in the law.
- B** Literally an obstacle that causes one to trip. For many Jews, Jesus was a stumbling block to earning God's favor through the law of Moses.
- C** Paul referred to Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 to show that God sent Jesus as Messiah to remove Israel's shame and turn the nation back to Him.
- D** Paul's deepest desire for Israelites was for them to accept Jesus and find new life in Him.
- E** The Greek wording suggests boiling heat or intensity. Sometimes it was used to describe jealousy. The Israelites were passionate about God, but their passion was misguided.
- F** Not an intellectual ignorance. Rather, the Jews lacked a proper understanding of God's plan for salvation. As a result, they blindly pursued their own path to Him through the law.
- G** The Greek word translated "confess" means to "speak the same" or "agree." It aligns the speaker with the reality that Jesus is Lord. This suggests a submission to God's plan for salvation over any human plan.
- H** Faith in the finished work of Jesus. Confession and faith work together to bring individuals into a personal relationship with God through Christ.
- I** Jews and Gentiles are equal before God and come to Him the same way. He redeems all who call on Him (see v. 13).
- J** Believers are responsible for sharing the gospel with those who have not heard.
- K** Saving faith becomes active when one hears and accepts the gospel. The content of the gospel is the "message about Christ."



Righteousness through Faith (Rom. 9:30-33)

- Paul explained that the Gentiles never tried to keep the law of Moses, yet they obtained the righteousness of God that comes through faith.
- Meanwhile, the Jews pursued a righteousness based on works. Yet, they had not achieved it no matter how well they kept the law.
- Paul cited two verses from Isaiah to explain that the Jews stumbled over God's plan of salvation through the Messiah.

Misguided Zeal (Rom. 10:1-3)

- Paul revealed that his heart's greatest desire and prayer was for the salvation of the Jews.
- He testified that the Jews had zeal for God—but this zeal was misguided. As a result, they rejected God's way of righteousness that comes only through faith in Christ. They had attempted to establish righteousness in their own way and failed.

Salvation Available to All (Rom. 10:9-13)

- Paul explained that the message of salvation rests on the convictions that Jesus is Lord and God raised Him from the dead.
- The apostle affirmed that any person who makes the choice to believe and confess Christ will be saved.

Go Tell (Rom. 10:14-17)

- Paul used a series of rhetorical questions to urge believers to share the gospel with all people. He noted that people cannot respond to the gospel unless they hear its message.

Summary Statements

Everyone who confesses and believes in Jesus will be saved.

- All people need to understand that true righteousness comes through faith not by works.
- Believers can follow Paul's example by praying for the salvation of lost people.
- Any person who has not yet believed and confessed Jesus can do so and be saved.
- Believers must tell others the gospel message and send missionaries throughout the entire world.

Memory Verse

Romans 10:9

Key Doctrine

Salvation

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.
(See John 14:6; Acts 4:12.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

What's the connection between confessing to a crime and believing that you broke the law? (PSG, p. 73)

- When people hear about confessions, they think about the justice system. That makes sense. When a person confesses to a crime, it usually means the law has been broken and justice will be served.
- In the legal system, confession confirms guilt and results in punishment. But when it comes to the gospel, confession of Jesus acknowledges our need for Him and leads to freedom and salvation.

Bonus: What are some negative things people might confess? What are some positive truths people could confess?

EXPLORE

RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH (ROM. 9:30-33)

Bonus: When have you seen two ways to solve a single problem? When have you struggled to find one way to get a job done?

- Instead of pursuing the Mosaic law, Gentiles tended to wander in darkness until they came to Christ by faith.
- In contrast, the Jews worked hard to keep the law, but they were just as lost. They stumbled over Jesus and salvation by faith.

Why might people stumble over the message of the gospel? (PSG, p. 76)

MISGUIDED ZEAL (ROM. 10:1-3)

Bonus: How much weight do you give someone's good intentions? Why?

- Paul longed for the Jews to accept Jesus. As a former Jewish leader, he understood their zeal for God. But as a Christian, he understood their zeal was misplaced.
- They had passion, but they didn't have a solid understanding of God's plan for salvation. As result, they tried to make their own rules—and failed miserably.

How can religious zeal get in the way of knowing God? (PSG, p. 77)

SALVATION AVAILABLE TO ALL (ROM. 10:9-13)

Bonus: What's the best deal you've ever seen? Were there any limits or "strings" attached?

- Paul made clear God's way of salvation. It involves confessing Jesus is Lord. Confessing Jesus as Lord is the same as acknowledging that He is God. This would have

been difficult for the Jew and a primary reason they were rejecting Jesus. But salvation is not possible without confessing, "Jesus is Lord."

- Faith also demands that you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. Salvation involves both believing (heart) and outwardly confessing (mouth).
- God does not want anyone excluded from the opportunity to hear the good news of salvation and to call on the name of the Lord Jesus to be saved. He wants every person to hear it and accept it.

What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord? (PSG, p. 78)

GO TELL (ROM. 10:14-17)

Who shared the gospel with you when you invited Christ into your life by faith? Who in your world needs you to share the good news of Christ with them? (PSG, p. 80)

- In light of the truth that the gospel is for all people, Paul raised four questions. Each question began with the same word: *How*. In a nutshell, the questions affirmed people's need to hear and believe the gospel and Christ followers' responsibility to share the message of Jesus.
- Paul's words challenge us to support missionaries and other vocational ministers. However, they also remind us that we have been sent to share the gospel in our neighborhoods and communities.

What hinders people from calling on Jesus for salvation? What role do believers play in removing these hindrances? (PSG, p. 80)

CHALLENGE

As a group, share some accounts of your most recent conversations about Jesus with lost people.

Have several members share their testimonies about how they gave their lives to Christ. (PSG, p. 81)

Reflect on how you came to put your faith in Jesus and receive His gift of salvation.

What kind of difference does He make in your life right now? (PSG, p. 81)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 80)

Use other Scripture to help understand another Bible passage.

Read Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14-41. List all the main points that you see in his sermon and compare it to what you find in Paul's teaching from Romans 9-10. Peter's message and Paul's writings make up what has been called Christianity's "kerygma," or the preaching of the apostles. Consider how you can share these truths with those around you. Evaluate your effectiveness in sharing the gospel with those in your sphere of influence.

Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 80 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their work. Ask: ***What are the most important truths to convey when sharing the gospel?*** Discuss responses. Challenge adults to find ways to share these truths with someone else this week.

OBJECT LESSON: HUMAN HEART

Write "heart" on the board. Encourage adults to suggest different ways the word is used today. Record their responses on the board.

Display a model or picture of a human heart. Explain that the heart pumps blood throughout the body, which provides oxygen and needed nutrients, while also removing waste.

Direct a volunteer to read Romans 10:9-13. Note Paul's emphasis on the heart. Lead a brief discussion on how this spiritual use of heart is similar and different from discussions about our physical hearts. Ask: ***What does it mean to "believe in your heart"? How are our hearts changed when we confess Christ as Lord?***

Remind adults that faith is the key to becoming a member of God's family. As time allows, walk through the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover of the PSG. Let adults know that you are available to speak with anyone who wants to know more about giving their heart to Jesus.

DIG DEEPER

FAITH ALONE

"Salvation by faith alone" (*sola fide*) is the core truth that people are made right with God only by trusting in Jesus Christ—not by works, religious effort, or moral performance. This doctrine is not just a Reformation idea. It is anchored in Scripture. Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Paul left no room for human works. Instead, he made sure his readers understood that salvation was the result of faith in what Jesus did on the cross.

As noted, salvation is not something we can earn through our own efforts, as noble as those efforts may be. It is a gift we receive on the basis of faith alone. We acknowledge who Jesus is (Messiah) and trust that His way to God is the only way to God.

In Romans 9:30-10:3, Paul explained how Gentiles, who were not striving for righteousness by the law, received it instead by faith. At the same time, Israel pursued righteousness through the law and failed. Their problem was not in pursuing righteousness itself, but in pursuing it apart from Christ.¹

Romans 10:13 reinforces this point: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Salvation is open to all, regardless of background. This would have run contrary to understanding of many Jews in the first century, but God consistently emphasized His universal offer of grace in His Word. Our redemption depends entirely on God's mercy. Faith in Jesus is the only path to righteousness because only He fulfilled the law perfectly.²

Faith is not just agreeing with facts. Paul tied belief with confession (Rom. 10:10). True faith involves personal trust and public allegiance to Jesus as Lord.

To be saved by faith alone means giving up any confidence in ourselves and leaning completely on Christ. Salvation is about submitting to the righteousness of God and receiving it through humble faith.³ This is the heart of the gospel.

Sources:

1. Schreiner, Thomas R., "Romans," *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 1994), 556.
2. Moo, Douglas J., "The Epistle to the Romans," *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1996), 628.
3. Stott, John R.W., "The Message of Romans," *The Bible Speaks Today* (Intervarsity Press, 1994), 284.

Kindness

GOD'S PLAN FOR REDEMPTION INCLUDES ALL PEOPLE.

Romans 11:11-24

11 I ask, then, have they **stumbled so as to fall?** **A** Absolutely not! On the contrary, by their transgression, **salvation has come to the Gentiles** **B** to make Israel jealous. **12** Now if their transgression brings riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more will **their fullness** **C** bring! **13** Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Insofar as I am an **apostle to the Gentiles**, **D** I magnify my ministry, **14** if I might somehow make my own people jealous and save some of them. **15** For if their rejection brings reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? **16** Now if the **firstfruits** **E** are holy, so is the whole batch. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. **17** Now if some of the branches were broken off, and you, though a wild olive branch, **were grafted** **F** in among them and have come to share in the rich root of the cultivated olive tree, **18 do not boast** **G** that you are better than those branches. But if you do boast—you do not sustain the root, but the root sustains you. **19** Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” **20** True enough; they were broken off because of unbelief, but **you stand by faith.** **H** Do not be arrogant, but beware, **21** because if God **did not spare the natural branches,** **I** he will not spare you either. **22** Therefore, consider God’s kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen but God’s kindness toward you—if you remain in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. **23** And even they, if they do not remain in unbelief, **will be grafted in,** **J** because God has the power to graft them in again. **24** For if you were cut off from your native wild olive tree and **against nature** **K** were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these—the natural branches—be grafted into their own olive tree?

Exploring Key Words

- A** Earlier, Paul told the Romans that Jesus and salvation by faith were stumbling blocks for the Jews (9:32). The logical question was, *Could they recover from this stumbling?*
- B** The Jews’ rejection opened the door to salvation for the Gentiles. This would make Israel “jealous,” creating a spiritual longing that could move God’s people back toward Him.
- C** “Their full inclusion” (ESV; NIV). Paul argued that while Israel’s rejection of the gospel brought blessings to the world, their eventual restoration would be even greater. (See v. 15.)
- D** Though a Jew and eager to minister to Jews, God had called Paul specifically to share the gospel with Gentiles (see Acts 9:15).
- E** An offering taken from the initial reaping at harvest (see Num. 15:17-21). The holiness of the firstfruits (early Jewish believers) sanctified “the whole batch” (future Jewish believers).
- F** When branches from one tree are joined to a different tree. Gentiles were like wild branches grafted into a cultivated olive tree, representing God’s family. See “Dig Deeper” on page 48.
- G** Paul warned the Roman Gentiles to avoid arrogance. They depended on Israel’s root, not the other way around.
- H** Gentiles were grafted only because they had faith in Christ. Their belief sustained them as members of God’s family.
- I** God judged the Jews’ lack of faith, and He would do the same in regard to Gentiles (see v. 22).
- J** Jews who turn back to God will be redeemed. They are not beyond hope.
- K** Grafting is not a natural event. Likewise, God would move outside what might be considered normal to restore His people.



NOTES

Rejection (Rom. 11:11-16)

- Many Jews, the people God first entrusted with the gospel message, had rejected God. As a result, the gospel was shared with the Gentiles, who accepted it.
- Paul said that salvation among the Gentiles could serve to make the Jews “jealous.” Though they had “stumbled” (v. 11), they could one day be restored if they turned back to God.

Grafted (Rom. 11:17-22)

- Paul explained that the Gentiles did not replace the Jews in God’s plan. Using an agricultural illustration, he said the Gentiles were like wild olive branches grafted into a tree that represented God’s family.
- Salvation is by faith. The gospel message should produce a heart of humility and evangelism, not a spirit of boastfulness.
- The Gentiles needed to remember that just as God would judge Jews for their unbelief, He also would judge Gentiles who turned away from Him.

Restoration (Rom. 11:23-24)

- Unbelieving Jews can repent and be saved by faith in Christ. God is able to restore the “natural” branches to the tree.
- God can work in the hearts of Gentiles and Jews, bringing both into His family.

Summary Statements

God’s plan for redemption includes all people.

- We can be assured that the gospel is for all people.
- As members of God’s family, believers should embrace humility and resist spiritual pridefulness.
- Believers can take comfort in knowing God has the power to save those who repent.

Memory Verse

Romans 11:33

Key Doctrine

God’s Purpose of Grace

Election is the glorious display of God’s sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. (See Ephesians 1:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

When was the last time you received an unexpected invitation to something? (PSG, p. 82)

- Who should be included on the invitation list? That question often puts event planners in a tough spot. They must determine how many invitations can be sent based on the event's purpose and the budget available.
- Ultimately, these planners are forced to wrestle with the difficult decision of who will receive an invitation and who will not. They would never simply declare that everyone is invited. In most cases, someone has to be left out.
- In contrast, God never closes the door on anyone who will come to Him by faith. His invitation is open to all.

What has God shown you about His open invitation to everyone? (PSG, p. 82)

Bonus: When have you felt excluded? When have you enjoyed being included?

EXPLORE

REJECTION (ROM. 11:11-16)

Bonus: When can rejection be a good thing?

- Paul considered whether or not the Jews had gone too far in their rejection of God's gift of salvation. He answered the question decisively: Absolutely not! While they had stumbled over Jesus, their rejection opened the gospel door for the Gentiles. Paul said the Gentiles' acceptance of Jesus would make the Jews jealous and would lead them back toward God.
- Instead of pouring cold water on the fire of the gospel, Israel's rejection of Christ fueled the blaze. Gentiles everywhere experienced reconciliation with God. Paul pondered what would happen when Jews actually returned to God. He compared it to a resurrection where life is sparked from death.
- The early Jews who did believe (like Paul) were the "firstfruits" of a larger revival to come (see Num. 15:17-21). The holiness of this initial group of Jewish believers set the stage for the holiness of those who would believe one day.

What may cause someone to reject the gospel? (PSG, p. 85)

GRAFTED (ROM. 11:17-22)

Bonus: How hard is it to fit in when you're the "new kid"? What makes the transition easier?

- Paul compared Gentiles to a wild olive branch. God grafted them into a cultivated tree (Jewish believers) so they also could thrive as His people. The grafted branch flourished because it enjoyed the privilege of receiving the same nourishment that had enriched the cultivated olive tree.

- Gentiles might have been tempted to brag about their acceptance of the gospel compared to the rejection by the Israelites. But Paul said boasting would show that Gentiles had forgotten the central truth about salvation. It's not about the branch, but about the root. The applause over salvation belongs to God.
- God made no distinction regarding who would be saved. But neither did He exhibit any distinction regarding His severity. He would judge anyone who had fallen into the trap of spiritual arrogance.

When might we feel boastful of our spiritual blessings? How can we turn from spiritual pride to genuine care? (PSG, p. 88)

RESTORATION (ROM. 11:23-24)

Bonus: When have you felt like you crossed a "point of no return" in life? How did it feel to know that second chances are possible?

- The stumbling of the Jews did not represent a permanent rejection by God. If they would return to God and accept His offer of salvation through Jesus, they would be saved.
- God has the power to restore broken Jewish branches just as He grafted in Gentile believers. God's ways are motivated by His love, not by what makes sense to others.

What do you learn about God's heart from His willingness to restore those who previously rejected Him? How might that influence the way you view people who have walked away from faith? (PSG, p. 89)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss practical ways you can include everyone in hearing the gospel message.

In what ways would a lack of humility prevent you from sharing the good news of Christ? (PSG, p. 90)

As you reflect on this week's verses, identify at least one person you might be tempted to consider "unreachable."

Commit to pray for that person's salvation. What barriers do you need to remove so you can share the gospel with that person? (PSG, p. 90)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 89)

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.

This session emphasizes a Christian's eternal security once he or she has accepted Christ as Savior. Paul's teaching refutes the idea that true believers are in jeopardy of losing their salvation. Read the following Bible passages and note what each one teaches about the security of the believer: Matthew 10:22; 24:13; John 5:24; 6:37; 10:27-28; Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:6; 1 John 2:19; 3:9; Jude 1:24-25.

Write "security" on the board and allow adults to share words or images that come to mind when they see that word. Direct volunteers to read the passages listed in the Bible Skill activity on page 89 of the PSG. Lead a brief discussion on what those verses teach regarding "eternal security" and why it's so important for believers to understand and accept.

OBJECT LESSON: OPEN DOOR

During the session, open the door completely, then close it firmly. Open the door and leave it ajar. Point out that whether a door is open or closed—or how far it is open—sends a particular message. Encourage adults to share times when they walked through a door they wished they hadn't and why.

Explain that in Romans 11, Paul stated that the door of the gospel is still open for all people to approach Christ in faith. Say: *It might seem like the Jews have closed the door, but God is still at work, meaning the door is ajar until a spiritual awakening comes to fruition.* Highlight how the rejection of the gospel by the Jews opened the door wide for the Gentiles to hear and accept the gospel.

Emphasize that from God's perspective, the door is always open. Say: *He is always ready to welcome anyone who will come to Him in faith.*

DIG DEEPER

GRAFTED INTO GOD'S FAMILY

In Romans 11:17-24, Paul used the image of an olive tree to explain how Gentiles became part of God's covenant people. The metaphor would have shocked some of his audience. Wild olive branches (Gentiles) were added to the cultivated tree and thrived by drawing nourishment from its root (the promises given to Abraham). This is more than an agricultural illustration. It is a powerful picture of spiritual adoption.

Once outsiders, Gentiles are now full participants in God's family through Christ. Their inclusion is not based on lineage, law, or heritage, but on His mercy and grace (vv. 17-18). While the church has not replaced Israel, believers are still called God's children.¹

At the same time, Paul warned Gentiles not to boast or to assume superiority. If God did not spare the natural branches (unbelieving Israel), He will not spare arrogant Gentiles either (v. 21). The grafting metaphor humbles us. It reminds us that we are not the root, and we stand by faith alone (v. 20).

This passage is not just about proper theology. It is also about our identity as people of God. Believers are adopted into a story that began long before us, yet we are fully accepted. In His grace, God has done

something that seems completely unnatural. But considering His character, it makes complete sense for God to include all who come to Him in faith.²

Grafting is not just about belonging. It's also about becoming. God does not call any believer—Jew or Gentile—to simply sit on the tree. Rather, we receive life from it. We are nourished by God's promises, His Spirit, and His people. Adoption is not a second-class status. It is full inclusion by grace, through faith, into the rich heritage of God's redemptive plan.

Sources

1. John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, The Bible Speaks Today, (InterVarsity Press, 1994), 301.
2. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Baker Academic, 1998), 614.

BONUS CONTENT



God's People

Paul compared Israel to a cultivated olive tree, with Gentiles as wild olive branches grafted onto the cultivated tree.

Sacrifice

THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER IS ONE OF SACRIFICE AND COMMUNITY.

Romans 12:1-13

1 Therefore, **brothers and sisters**, **A** in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as **a living sacrifice**, **B** holy and pleasing to God; this is your **true worship**. **C** **2** Do not be **conformed** **D** to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. **3** For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, **think sensibly**, **E** as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. **4** Now as we have **many parts in one body**, **F** and all the parts do not have the same function, **5** in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. **6** According to the grace given to us, we have **different gifts**: **G** If **prophecy**, **H** use it according to the proportion of one's faith; **7** if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; **8** if **exhorting**, **I** in exhortation; giving, with **generosity**; **J** leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness. **9** Let **love** **K** be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. **10** Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another. **11** Do not lack diligence in zeal; **be fervent in the Spirit**; **L** serve the Lord. **12** Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. **13** Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality.

Exploring Key Words

- A** Despite Paul's words for both Jews and Gentiles, he affirmed their relationship through Jesus.
- B** Under the law, sacrifices were slaughtered and burned. In Christ, sacrifices are living and active in service to God. See "Dig Deeper" on page 52.
- C** "Reasonable service" (KJV). Worship through personal sacrifice is a logical response to the mercy God demonstrates in salvation.
- D** Taking on the shape or pattern of something. The alternative to being shaped by the world is to be transformed by the inner working of God.
- E** "Think soberly" (KJV); "think with sober judgment" (ESV). Focusing on God promotes humility and proper perspective in the church.
- F** Paul used the human body to illustrate the church. Believers are individuals, yet they are unified under Jesus, their Head (see Col. 1:18).
- G** Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, but no one has every gift. So, believers need each other to build the church into what God desires.
- H** A Spirit-inspired proclamation. It can relate to future events (prediction), but it often deals with practical application of truth (preaching).
- I** "Encourage" (NIV). Depending on context, the Greek word can mean to comfort or to challenge. It is translated "urge" in verse 1.
- J** "Simplicity" (KJV). The Greek term suggests sincerity. Generous people give freely to honor God and help others without an agenda or ulterior motive.
- K** Paul taught the Corinthians that spiritual gifts are worthless without love (1 Cor. 13:1-3).
- L** Central to his list of practical ways to display faith, Paul challenged the Romans to lean into the Holy Spirit and to let Him fuel their efforts.



Living Sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2)

- Paul urged his readers to become “living sacrifices.” Offering their lives to God served as an appropriate and fitting act of worship.
- He also warned them to avoid being shaped by worldly influences. Instead, they should renew their minds. This would allow them to grow in godliness and to better understand and act on God’s will.

In the Church (Rom. 12:3-8)

- Each believer is a part of the body of Christ and has a purpose within His body.
- Though given different gifts by the Holy Spirit, each Christ follower is called to exercise his or her gift faithfully.
- In this way, the whole body is equipped to serve and make a difference in the world.

In Relationship (Rom. 12:9-13)

- Next, Paul challenged the believers in Rome to love one another sacrificially. They were to love deeply and show honor, giving themselves to kingdom work.
- The Romans were urged to demonstrate hope and perseverance, along with persistent prayer. Believers were to be generous and hospitable.
- By living out their faith in practical ways, the Romans would give evidence of the grace God had given them.

Summary Statements

The life of a believer is one of sacrifice and community.

- As believers, our lives are to be shaped by God, not by worldly influences.
- Believers are to serve alongside each other, exercising their God-given gifts.
- As believers practice sacrificial love in their relationships, their lives give evidence of God’s grace.

Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2

Key Doctrine

The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. (See Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:7.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

Bonus: *What are some skills you would share for free just to help someone else? Why?*

- What's in it for me? It's a question we've all heard—and probably asked.
- When we give our time, money, or abilities, we feel entitled to know what benefit we'll receive in return. But when we shift from being consumers to being participants, a different question emerges: *What can I do to help?*

Which question—“What's in it for me?” or “How can I help?”—tends to shape your thinking most, and why? (PSG, p. 91)

EXPLORE

LIVING SACRIFICE (ROM. 12:1-2)

Bonus: *How do you feel about “sacrifice”? Why?*

- “Therefore” connects Paul's previous theological teaching with the practical application he was about to explain. He also addressed the Romans as “brothers and sisters.” This emphasized both his affection for them and their connection to one another in God's family.
- Believers should present themselves as “living sacrifices” to God in light of His grace. For both Jews and Gentiles, sacrifices were slaughtered and burned. But true worship of God involves complete surrender and service to Him.
- Paul distinguished between being conformed to the world and being transformed by Christ. Rather than letting the culture shape us, we should renew our minds, aligning our thoughts with God's thoughts. By doing this, we can identify and obey God's will better.

What obstacles might prevent us from offering our lives to God as “living sacrifices”? (PSG, p. 94)

IN THE CHURCH (ROM. 12:3-8)

Bonus: *What are your strongest talents and abilities? How do they compare to your spiritual gift(s) as a believer?*

- Paul emphasized humility as we labor together. Humility protects us from falling into selfish pride. Rather than yielding to arrogance, we exercise wisdom when we think and act with sober judgment.
- The church is made up of individuals who share a common testimony of salvation through faith in Jesus. Yet, we differ in our abilities and backgrounds. We are “one body,” united and depending on one another. But we are given different gifts by God so we may serve Him together.
- The Lord has entrusted some with the gift of prophecy, speaking His Word with clarity and conviction. Others are gifted more for service than speech. Christians also

may exercise gifts like teaching, exhorting (encouraging), leading, giving, and showing mercy.

- Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, and no believer has every gift. So, we need each other to fill in the gaps. When we faithfully use our spiritual gifts in cooperative service, the church matures and grows strong.

How does your exercise of spiritual gifts contribute to the overall spiritual maturity of the church? What steps can you take this week to intentionally build up another believer through your gifting? (PSG, p. 96)

IN RELATIONSHIP (ROM. 12:9-13)

Bonus: *How do you want people to treat you in the church? How should that affect the way you treat others?*

- As we exercise our spiritual gifts, it's important to remember that we serve alongside fellow believers in the church. For this reason, Scripture provides us with a series of imperatives that guide our collaboration. The first imperative is to do all things in genuine love.
- Part of showing love is avoiding what is evil. It also involves showing honor and respect for others. We serve diligently, trust the Spirit's guidance, nurture hope, endure persecution, and demonstrate hospitality.

How can you be more diligent and intentional in your service to the Lord and His people? (PSG, p. 98)

CHALLENGE

As a group, encourage adults to share their approach to presenting themselves as a living sacrifice to God.

Discuss the difference between worshipping God—which is true worship—and worshipping worship itself. (PSG, p. 99)

Spend some intentional time this week reflecting on your love for the Lord.

In what ways do you reflect your love for Him in your love for others in the church? What changes do you need to make so you can demonstrate your love for them? (PSG, p. 99)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 98)

Memorize a verse and apply it to a real-life situation.

Memorize Romans 12:1-2 in your preferred translation. Paraphrase the verse to meditate on the meaning. Evaluate ways that you are offering yourself as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Also evaluate ways the world is trying to conform you to its image. List ways your mind can be renewed to the will of God.

Divide the group into teams of two or three and direct them to create their own paraphrase of Romans 12:1-2 as mentioned in the Bible Skill activity on page 98 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow a volunteer from each team to share their paraphrase. Lead a brief discussion on ways believers can pursue God's will by avoiding the temptation to conform and to nurture transformation through a renewed mind. Close the activity in prayer, asking God to make Himself known to each adult in a special way.

OBJECT LESSON: TOOLBOX

Gather a toolbox and several everyday tools such as a hammer, screwdriver, and wrench. Show adults the tools and encourage a few volunteers to share their funniest home repair stories. Share how you feel about your own repair skills and why.

Explain how Romans 12:3-8 reveals the need for all types of tools (gifts) to build up the church. Say: *Each tool in the box is needed for a specific application, just as each God-given spiritual gift supports the body.* Emphasize that God is an expert builder, and He will equip us to use the tools He provides.

Note that all the gifts are needed at different times and in different situations. Discuss why it is important to have all the tools in the box to be prepared for any circumstance. Remind adults that God has spread out the gifts across the church so that believers have to depend on one another. Urge them to avoid the temptation to work on their own when they can find others who will supplement their weaknesses.

TRUE WORSHIP

Paul's words in Romans 12:1 go to the heart of what worship truly entails. It is not a moment in a church service or a song performed on Sunday morning. Worship is the daily offering of yourself to God. It is presenting your whole being, body, mind, and spirit to the Lord in gratitude for His mercy.

When Paul called the Romans to become a "living sacrifice," he was picturing a life continually given over to God. In the Old Testament, sacrifices were offered once and consumed on the altar. They were here one minute and gone a few moments later. For the follower of Christ, though, sacrifice is ongoing. Every choice, every action, and every attitude becomes part of the offering, an expression of "true worship."

This worship is both deeply personal and profoundly practical. It begins with the heart's response to what God has done in Christ. We remember His mercy, His forgiveness, and His love. That remembrance should move us toward surrender. Worship flows from gratitude, not from obligation.

Paul also connected worship to spiritual transformation. Refusing to be shaped by the world's values requires renewed thinking. As our minds are reshaped by God's truth, our lives begin to reflect His character. Worship is not only what we say, but it also involves what we choose to do with our lives.

From verse 3 onward, Paul demonstrated that worship naturally overflows into the way we treat others. We serve in the body of Christ using the gifts God has given. We love sincerely, honor others above ourselves, meet needs, and show hospitality. These are not random acts of kindness or pious displays of legalistic obligation. Rather they are central to what it means to worship God.

In the end, worship is not confined to sacred spaces or special times. It is the stuff of life for believers, those who are surrendered to God, transformed by His truth, and committed to loving Him and others well.

Represent

BELIEVERS REPRESENT CHRIST WELL BY HONORING CIVIL LEADERS
AND LOVING THEIR NEIGHBORS.

Romans 13:1-14

1 Let everyone submit to the **governing authorities**, **A** since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are **instituted by God**. **B** **2** So then, the one who resists the authority is **opposing God's command**, **C** and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. **3** For rulers are **not a terror to good conduct**, **D** but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. **4** For it is **God's servant** **E** for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not **carry the sword** **F** for no reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. **5** Therefore, **you must submit**, **G** not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience. **6** And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's servants, continually attending to these tasks. **7** **Pay your obligations** **H** to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor. **8** Do not owe anyone anything, **except to love one another**, **I** for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. **9** The commandments, Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet; and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: **Love your neighbor as yourself**. **J** **10** Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law. **11** Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to **wake up from sleep**, **K** because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. **12** The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. **13** Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. **14** But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, **L** and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

Exploring Key Words

- A** "Higher powers" (KJV). For Paul and the Romans, the highest human authority was the emperor. Many authorities would be skeptical, or even adversarial, toward Christianity.
- B** No human authority rules apart from God's sovereign rule.
- C** Since God established rulers, rebellion against them without cause is like rebelling against Him.
- D** Along with family and the church, government is one of the primary institutions established by God. Government protects civil order in society.
- E** God even used pagan leaders like Nebuchadnezzar (Hab. 1:6), Cyrus (Ezra 1:1), and Augustus (Luke 2:1) to fulfill His plans.
- F** Part of the government's role is punishing those who do evil. Ideally, it is "an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong."
- G** Submission does not mean obeying authority when it is wrong. But God does expect His people to serve as agents of peace.
- H** Civic responsibility includes paying taxes that are due (v. 6), but also showing respect and honor to those in positions of authority.
- I** Scripture often equates debt with slavery (see Prov. 22:6). However, the debt of love will never be repaid fully.
- J** Both the Mosaic law (Lev. 19:8) and Jesus (Matt. 22:39) affirmed this truth. Loving others fulfills the spirit of the Ten Commandments.
- K** When living with a heavenly perspective, believers should shake off spiritual lethargy and remain alert to God's leadership.
- L** Jesus provides the only true pattern for Christian living. Believers should reject "deeds of darkness" (vv. 12-13) and reflect Christ.



NOTES

Honor Authorities (Rom. 13:1-7)

- Paul directed his readers to submit themselves to the governing authorities because those authorities had been established by God.
- Christians are to pay taxes to whom they owe taxes, give respect to whom they owe respect, and show honor to whom they owe honor.

Honor Each Other (Rom. 13:8-10)

- As believers, we owe a debt of love to others.
- The teachings of the Ten Commandments can be summarized in the call to love others. Since love seeks the best for everyone, loving our neighbors fulfills the law.

Honor Christ (Rom. 13:11-14)

- As the end of the age approaches, believers should “wake up from sleep” as our salvation is “nearer than when we first believed” (v. 11).
- We should avoid sins like spiritual lethargy, drunkenness, sexual impurity, quarreling, and jealousy. Instead, we are called to display Christlikeness outwardly in our daily lives.

Summary Statements

Believers represent Christ well by honoring civil leaders and loving their neighbors.

- Believers should honor civil authorities.
- Believers are to love our neighbors.
- Believers are to display Christlikeness so that their lives reflect Jesus.

Memory Verse

Romans 13:14

Key Doctrine

Religious Liberty

Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God.
(See 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-17.)



For additional commentary,
see the Leader Guide
or Adult Commentary,
available for purchase at
goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

How have the expectations you grew up with shaped the choices and relationships in your adult life? (PSG, p. 100)

- Live up to your family name. It's a charge many parents give their sons and daughters early in life, and over time it becomes ingrained in their children.
- As those children grow into adults, that calling shapes their decisions and guides their relationships. In the same way, believers have been entrusted with the responsibility of honoring the name of Jesus.

Bonus: What is the story behind your name? How is it related to your family's history?

EXPLORE

HONOR AUTHORITIES (ROM. 13:1-7)

Bonus: What are some privileges of living in a civil society? What are our responsibilities?

- Paul said Christians are responsible to submit to the governing authorities. Such submission reflected their recognition that all authority ultimately resides with God.
- Our Christian faith does not give us the freedom to flaunt the legal system. Anyone opposing governmental authority is, in effect, resisting the divine order established by God and will be held accountable by Him.
- At some point, we may be forced to choose between the rule of government and the principles of God. In those cases, we still are subject to the law and must endure the repercussions that accompany civil disobedience.
- God established government to provide an environment in which individuals could engage in good conduct and refrain from bad conduct. Within such an environment, citizens would have no reason to fear those in authority. However, authorities do wield a "sword" to administer justice against those who do evil.
- Believers demonstrate integrity as citizens by putting their conscientious convictions into practice. One clear expression of this is paying their taxes and tolls, along with showing honor and respect to those in authority.

How does Paul's teaching that rulers are God's servants for your good challenge or affirm your perspective on government? (PSG, p. 104)

HONOR EACH OTHER (ROM. 13:8-10)

Bonus: Who are the people you find most easy to love? Who can be difficult at times?

- Beyond taxes, Paul pointed to a larger debt believers owe—loving others. Unlike financial debts, the debt of love will never be paid in full. We are always under an obligation to love others.

- Loving others fulfills the Ten Commandments and other laws from the Old Testament. Love for others is a recurring theme throughout the New Testament. In fact, Jesus taught that His followers would be identified by their love for one another (John 13:34-35).

What are some ways you can practically show love to those around you? (PSG, p. 104)

HONOR CHRIST (ROM. 13:11-14)

Bonus: What are some things that keep you alert? Why are they so important?

- Paul turned his attention to Christ's return. While Paul did not know when Jesus would come again, he knew that the day was coming. So, he urged the Romans to wake up spiritually and to act properly because the day was near.
- Paul used "night" and "day" to contrast the darkness of the world and the light of faith. He challenged readers to shine as lights in their communities, discarding the deeds of darkness and putting on the armor of light.
- Paul shared examples of how some people attempt to dull their pain. The only remedy for this cycle of emptiness is Jesus. Those who "put on" Christ discover healing, genuine community, and lasting hope.

How aware are you of Christ's return, and how does that awareness—or lack of it—shape your daily choices? (PSG, p. 107)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss why submitting to governing authorities qualifies as a meaningful way to represent Christ.

Share the challenges you face as you try to show His love to the people around you. Pray for one another so that each will represent Him well. (PSG, p. 108)

Reflect on your relationships with people around you.

What significance do you place on honoring Christ by being a person who strives to live with integrity? Who's holding you accountable for behaving in ways that others can see Christ in you? (PSG, p. 108)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 107)

Identify the imagery in a verse or passage and discover what it communicates.

Compare Romans 13:11-14 with Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:10-12. ***What does this imagery communicate to you about the old life before Christ and the new life in Christ? How does this imagery help you in understanding how God would want you to respond when you battle the flesh, the old person you were before you came to know Christ?***

Prior to the session, print some “before and after” pictures from the internet. During the session, show adults the pictures. Ask: ***What makes these images so powerful?*** Highlight the contrast between what was and what is (or could be). Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 107 of the PSG. After a few minutes, discuss what kind of “before and after” images appear in these verses and why they are powerful ways to illustrate our life in Christ.

OBJECT LESSON: COIN

Encourage adults to pull out a coin and examine its primary features. Allow them to suggest what sticks out and record their responses on the board.

Note the words on each side of the coin. Point out that one sign suggests loyalty to country (“United States of America”), while the other highlights a loyalty to the Lord (“In God We Trust”). Lead a brief discussion on when those two loyalties might conflict.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud Mark 12:13-17. Discuss why the Pharisees were amazed at Jesus’s response. Compare Mark 12:13-17 to Paul’s words in Romans 13:1-7. Lead the group to reflect on how a believer’s response to civil authority serves as a testimony to his or her faith. Affirm that believers may face times when they need to choose loyalty to God over obedience to human authorities; but, in other situations, they are called to honor authority as a way to honor God.

JESUS’S RETURN

In Romans 13:11 Paul wrote, “Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.” Paul’s words remind believers that Christ’s return is a pressing reality, rather than some distant idea. The nearness of salvation refers not to conversion in the past but to the final deliverance when Christ returns. Every day that passes brings the church closer to that climactic moment.

The awareness of Christ’s imminent return requires urgency. Paul compared spiritual complacency to sleep and called the church to wake up. Sleep is comfortable, but it dulls awareness. Likewise, passive Christians risk losing sight of the seriousness of their calling. Christ’s return could come at any time, which should shake believers out of spiritual drowsiness.

Paul also contrasted the “deeds of darkness” with “the armor of light.” Darkness represents the sinful patterns of life before Christ, while light describes the holiness, transparency, and readiness that should

characterize God’s people. Putting on the armor of light is preparing for spiritual battle in daily life and expecting Christ to appear at any moment.

The heart of Paul’s command is summed up in verse 14: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and don’t make plans to gratify the desires of the flesh.” Putting on Christ implies adopting His character and living in such close fellowship with Him that His presence shapes every decision. Rather than living as though we have endless time, believers should live each day as if Christ could return before the sun sets.

Christ’s return is not meant to foster fear but to inspire faithfulness. Knowing that the final chapter of God’s story is approaching motivates believers to holiness, service, and love. The certainty of His return calls the church to remain awake and alert, clothed in Christ. That way, when He does return, He will find His people ready.

Unity

BELIEVERS PROMOTE UNITY BY ACCEPTING AND
EDIFYING ONE ANOTHER.

Romans 14:5-20

5 One person judges **one day** **A** to be more important than another day. Someone else judges every day to be the same. Let each one be fully convinced **in his own mind**. **B**

6 Whoever observes the day, observes it for the honor of the Lord. **Whoever eats**, **C** eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; and whoever does not eat, it is for the Lord that he does not eat it, and he gives thanks to God. **7** For none of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself.

8 If we live, **we live for the Lord**; **D** and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. **9** Christ died and returned to life for this: that he might be Lord over **both the dead and the living**. **E** **10** But you, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or you, why do you **despise** **F** your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the **judgment seat** **G** of God. **11** For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God. **12** So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. **13** Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a **stumbling block or pitfall** **H** in the way of your brother or sister.

14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that **nothing is unclean in itself**. **I** Still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to that one it is unclean. **15** For if your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not **destroy**, **J** by what you eat, someone for whom Christ died. **16** Therefore, do not let your good be slandered, **17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness, peace, and joy** **K** in the Holy Spirit. **18** Whoever serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and receives human approval. **19** So then, let us **pursue what promotes peace** **L** and what builds up one another. **20** Do not tear down God's work because of food. Everything is clean, but it is wrong to make someone fall by what he eats.

Exploring Key Words

- A** Some Roman believers, likely Jews, viewed Sabbath and holidays as sacred. In contrast, Gentiles treated "every day . . . the same."
- B** Paul sought unity within the body, but not uniformity. Believers needed to leave room for grace in areas of conscience and conviction.
- C** Dietary restrictions (possibly related to Old Testament laws or meat offered to idols) were another potential point of tension between Jews and Gentiles. Again, grace is the response.
- D** In "disputed matters" (v. 1), believers must not judge the efforts of others to please God. Everyone is accountable to God personally.
- E** Because He lived, died, and rose, Jesus is Lord and Judge over all. His authority is unlimited.
- F** "Set at nought" (KJV); "Treat them with contempt" (NIV). More than a passing dislike, but seeing someone as nothing or without value.
- G** Not a judgment of salvation, but accountability for the quality of one's works (v. 12).
- H** Obstacles and snares that cause one to fall. Paul already had established the obligation of love (Rom. 13:8-10). Love avoids demanding one's rights at the expense of another's faith.
- I** Jesus declared all things clean (Mark 7:17-19) and reaffirmed it to Peter (Acts 10:9-16). But believers still must respect others' convictions.
- J** Abolish, ruin, or make helpless. In Luke 15, Jesus used a similar verb to describe a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son.
- K** God's kingdom isn't defined by physical rituals, but by deeper spiritual realities.
- L** The goal of Christian conduct includes building unity within the body and encouraging the faith of individuals.

**Disagreement** (Rom. 14:5-8)

- In Romans 14:1-4, Paul addressed the dispute between Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome over the issue of food regulations and the keeping of sacred days. He instructed them to refrain from judging each other.
- Their personal convictions, and corresponding faith practices, were to be based on love for the Lord.

Accountability (Rom. 14:9-12)

- Christ died and rose to be Lord and Judge of all. His authority extends over both those who are living and those who have died.
- One day, each Christian's works will be judged by God. Therefore, Christians should not judge one another. Instead, they should be prepared to stand before God's judgment seat and give an account for their own actions.

Love (Rom. 14:13-18)

- Believers should help one another grow in spiritual maturity. They do this by not hindering others' progress or being a stumbling block.
- Mature believers do not violate the conscience of the weaker believer, since the kingdom of God is about a lot more than simply "eating and drinking" (v. 17).

Edification (Rom. 14:19-20)

- Paul provided the reason for his instruction in this passage: It is wrong to use your freedom to cause another believer to stumble spiritually.
- Instead, believers were to pursue peace and strive to build up one another.

Summary Statements

Believers promote unity by accepting and edifying one another.

- Believers should allow other believers to express their love for God as God directs them.
- Every person will be held accountable for their actions and choices.
- As members of the body of Christ, we're to spur on each other to spiritual growth.
- Believers are to build up one another, pursuing peace in our relationships with other believers.

Memory Verse

Romans 14:19

Key Doctrine

The Church

Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. (See Ephesians 2:19-22; Colossians 1:18.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

When have you found yourself needing to disagree with someone in a respectful way? What made it challenging? (PSG, p. 109)

- One day a teacher invited her students to debate an issue in class. The students immediately began sharing their views, and the discussion quickly grew intense.
- When the teacher noticed that the disagreements were becoming disrespectful, she challenged the students to disagree agreeably. Paul did the same for the believers in Rome—because of Christ.

Bonus: What are some common points of contention in our culture? In our church?

EXPLORE

DISAGREEMENT (ROM. 14:5-8)

Bonus: Would you say you're a judgmental person? Why or why not?

- Paul addressed tensions in the Roman church, especially over disputable matters such as food laws and holy days.
- While not all believers hold the same convictions, every believer must honor the Lord. Unity in Christ does not mean that we must agree on every issue, but our rights do not allow us to trample the convictions of others.

What kind of spiritual practices might believers disagree over today? How can we implement Paul's instruction when we encounter disagreements like these? (PSG, p. 112)

ACCOUNTABILITY (ROM. 14:9-12)

Bonus: Who holds you accountable in life?

- The faith that united Paul's readers was greater than the secondary issues that divided them. No Christian has the right to judge another believer on secondary issues.
- Jesus is the only One qualified to judge anyone's relationship with Him. Paul reminded the Romans that one day everyone would stand at God's judgment seat—not for salvation, but to evaluate faithfulness to the Lord.

When you disagree with another believer, how does the gospel factor into your response and attitude? (PSG, p. 113)

LOVE (ROM. 14:13-18)

Who has been instrumental in helping you grow spiritually? (PSG, p. 115)

- The practical application of verses 1-12 is that we must not judge one another nor put a stumbling block or pitfall in others' way. A stumbling block is an obstacle that causes one to fall. A pitfall refers to a snare that offends people.

- Paul believed that nothing was unclean in itself, but he also knew that his liberty in some areas could offend others. He was willing to forego that liberty out of love for his fellow believers.
- God's kingdom is not focused on petty things like eating and drinking. Rather, Jesus cares about righteousness, peace, and joy. A life acceptable to God focuses on helping others grow spiritually instead of winning arguments.

What practical things can we do to spur on others and not be a stumbling block? (PSG, p. 115)

EDIFICATION (ROM. 14:19-20)

Bonus: What does peace between two people look like?

- Paul urged believers to pursue what promotes peace and builds up one another. We promote peace when we do everything possible to build up others in God's family.
- The opposite of building up is tearing down. Overlooking our responsibility to edify one another damages God's work. Instead of focusing on doing His work together, we pit ourselves against one another in petty disagreements.
- Moving forward as Christians means handling disagreements in a way that respects others. Mature believers don't want to do anything that causes a brother or sister in Christ to stumble or stunt their spiritual growth.

Why is peace so significant in the body of Christ? What might we forfeit if strife or dissension are allowed to grow? (PSG, p. 116)

CHALLENGE

As a group discuss "hot button" topics in today's church.

How can your group handle these differing convictions in a way that promotes unity and builds one another up, rather than creating frustration or division? (PSG, p. 117)

Take time to consider ways you can prioritize the spiritual growth of someone else over your own preferences.

What is one practical step you can take this week to build up another believer in their walk with Christ? (PSG, p. 117)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 116)

Use another Bible passage to understand the focal passage.

Read Acts 10:9-16. Summarize the vision Peter had about clean and unclean foods. ***How did God use the vision to help Peter understand that he should also take the gospel to Cornelius and the other Gentiles in Caesarea (see Acts 10:1-8)?*** Compare that with Galatians 2, where issues of circumcision and eating with the Jews caused division in the church. ***How did Paul respond to each of these issues?***

Direct adults to work in pairs to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 116). Assign Acts 10:9-16 to one person in each group and Galatians 2 to the other person. Encourage them to share insights with one another. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they learned from the passages. Lead a brief discussion on how these verses relate to Romans 14.

OBJECT LESSON: BUILDING BLOCKS

Stack six building blocks on top of each other and five or six more in a line in front of the stack. Explain that sometimes disagreements encourage us to build walls or draw lines in the sand. Share that Paul was concerned about walls being built in the church at Rome. Point out that the church was diverse, with Jews and Gentiles coming from different backgrounds that could have created tension points and threatened unity.

Say: *In Romans 14:13-18, Paul challenged the believers in Rome to respond to others in love, even in the midst of conflict.* Lead a brief discussion on why this could be difficult, but also why it would be beneficial to all the parties involved.

Encourage adults to suggest issues in churches today that could parallel the “days” and “food” issues in ancient Rome. Lead a brief discussion on how those issues threaten unity and how believers can respond to each potential conflict with grace and love.

UNITY IN CHRIST

Romans 14:5-20 brings the conversation about freedom, conscience, and love into sharp focus by pointing believers to the higher goal of unity. Paul was writing to a diverse church in danger of being divided along cultural and religious lines. Jews wrestled with food laws and holy days that had shaped their identity for centuries, while Gentiles felt no obligation to observe them. The tension was real, but Paul’s aim was to show that the church must unify around Christ rather than splinter over “disputed matters” (v. 1).

Paul shared that each believer is personally accountable to God (v. 5). Unity does not mean forced uniformity. Instead, it calls for mutual respect and a shared recognition that everything belongs to the Lord. Whether one observes a day or not, whether one eats or abstains, the key is to honor Christ. This perspective shifts the focus away from proving who is right to glorifying the same Lord.

Paul also warned against using freedom carelessly. When a believer’s choices injure the conscience of

another, unity suffers. Placing a stumbling block in a brother or sister’s path undermines the very community Christ died to create. True love values the spiritual good of others above personal preference.

Paul summarized this truth by pointing to the essence of God’s kingdom: “Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (v. 17). These are the marks of a united church. External debates about food and drink or special days pale in comparison to the deeper reality of God’s reign. Where peace and joy abound, unity takes root.

Romans 14 calls believers to a radical posture: laying aside pride and selfishness, showing grace in lesser disputes, and pursuing what builds others up. Unity does not require agreement on every issue, but it does commit to honor Christ by honoring one another. In a divided world, the church displays the power of the gospel when it chooses unity over division, love over personal liberty, and Christ over self.

Purpose

BELIEVERS ARE TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT MAKING CHRIST
KNOWN TO ALL PEOPLE.

Romans 15:14-21,30-33

14 My brothers and sisters, I myself am **convinced** ^A about you that you also are full of **goodness**, ^B filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. 15 Nevertheless, I have written to remind you **more boldly** ^C on some points because of the **grace given me** ^D by God 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, serving as a **priest** ^E of the gospel of God. God's purpose is that the Gentiles may be an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 17 Therefore I have **reason to boast** ^F in Christ Jesus regarding what pertains to God. 18 For I would not dare say anything except what Christ has accomplished through me by word and deed for the obedience of the Gentiles, 19 by the power of **miraculous signs and wonders**, ^G and by the power of God's Spirit. As a result, I have **fully proclaimed** ^H the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to **Illyricum**. ^I 20 My aim is to preach the gospel **where Christ has not been named**, ^J so that I will not build on someone else's foundation, 21 but, as it is written, Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand. [. . .] 30 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to **strive together with me** ^K in prayers to God on my behalf. 31 Pray that I may be **rescued from the unbelievers in Judea**, ^L that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 and that, by God's will, I may come to you with joy and be refreshed together with you. 33 May the God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

Exploring Key Words

- A** "Persuaded" (KJV); "satisfied" (ESV). It implies absolute confidence. Paul used the term earlier to describe his belief that nothing separates believers from God's love (Rom. 8:38-39).
- B** Moral excellence and virtue that is lived out in a meaningful way. The word emphasizes action.
- C** Paul's boldness on some points would reinforce truths the Romans already knew and needed to put into practice.
- D** Paul's authority was the result of God's grace, not anything he earned or achieved on his own.
- E** Priests brought offerings to God. Paul's offering included Gentiles who had been redeemed by Jesus and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- F** Paul would never boast in his own accomplishments. Rather, he boasted in what Christ had done through his ministry (v. 18).
- G** The supernatural things God accomplished through Paul validated the gospel, as well as his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles.
- H** "Fulfilled the ministry" (ESV). While Paul's ministry was far-reaching, he provided the whole truth of the gospel at every location.
- I** A region along the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea. This marked the northeastern extent of Paul's travels and includes modern-day Albania.
- J** Paul was setting his sights on pioneer regions. He wanted to minister to unreached people.
- K** Paul recognized the value of spiritual partnerships and asked for the Romans' prayers for his work.
- L** The apostle had a sense that he would face stiff persecution in Judea. This opposition eventually would bring him to Rome.



NOTES

Joint Ministry (Rom. 15:14-16)

- As Paul assessed the Roman believers' readiness for ministry, he was confident they were marked by goodness, knowledge, and the ability to teach one another (v. 14).
- The apostle stated that his purpose was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He viewed this as an appropriate offering to Christ. Paul explained his calling to encourage the Christians in Rome to join him in fulfilling this mission.

Spirit's Power (Rom. 15:17-21)

- Paul refused to take credit for any good that came from his past ministry. Christ had accomplished it using him, as evidenced by signs and wonders.
- In the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul had preached the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum. His next goal was to preach the gospel where it had not been preached before.
- He wanted to avoid building on what others had done. Instead, he longed to expand the boundaries of God's kingdom by sharing the gospel with unreached groups.

Focused Prayer (Rom. 15:30-33)

- Paul asked the Christians in Rome to pray for him and his upcoming ministry in Jerusalem. Sensing likely opposition there, he asked them to pray for deliverance from unbelieving Jews in Judea.
- He also asked them to pray that his ministry would be acceptable to the believers in Jerusalem and that he would complete his journey to Rome. In the end, the persecution in Jerusalem eventually brought him to the capital of the empire.

Summary Statements

Believers are to be intentional about making Christ known to all people.

- Believers are to join with others in ministry.
- Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit empowers us to share the gospel.
- Believers need to pray for the spread of the gospel.

Memory Verse

Romans 15:30

Key Doctrine

Cooperation

Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. (See Philippians 1:5; 4:15-16.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

Which areas of your life come more naturally when it comes to being intentional, and which areas require more effort or discipline? (PSG, p. 118)

- We recognize the importance of being intentional about our health—brushing our teeth, watching what we eat, and staying active. We try to show that same focus with work by getting up when the alarm goes off and arriving on time.
- Likewise, as believers we are to be intentional about making Christ known to all people.

Bonus: What makes self-discipline so difficult? How have you seen it pay off in your life?

EXPLORE

JOINT MINISTRY (ROM. 15:14-16)

Bonus: When have you needed to be bold toward someone else? How did that make you feel?

- Paul expressed appreciation for his brothers and sisters in Rome. He was convinced they were full of goodness and knowledge. They also knew how to teach and reflected their spiritual growth and the character of Christ.
- Still, Paul recognized room for further growth, which was why he had been so bold in reminding them about areas that could help them become more like Jesus.
- God had called Paul to be a minister to the Gentiles. He compared this ministry to the work of a priest. His goal was to present as many Gentile believers as possible to God as an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

What is our responsibility in becoming spiritually ready to minister to others? (PSG, p. 120)

SPIRIT'S POWER (ROM. 15:17-21)

Bonus: When have you tried something that others hadn't tried? How did that work for you?

- Paul never bragged about his ministry. He knew that Christ worked through him, so he only had "reason to boast in Christ." He wanted the Romans to know that if they chose to support him, they would be supporting Christ's work.
- Paul's ministry had been marked by "signs and wonders," along with preaching empowered by the Holy Spirit. He had served from Jerusalem, where Christianity began, to Illyricum, a Roman province along the Adriatic Sea. Wherever he went, he "fully proclaimed the gospel."
- Paul's next goal was to preach to unreached people groups. He wanted to minister in places where Jesus had not been named. While some were called to build on the foundation laid by others, Paul's passion was to break new ground, serving as a pioneer missionary.

- Paul knew that many would respond to the gospel if they were given the opportunity. He wanted to be God's instrument for giving them that opportunity.

Where do you sense God's Spirit inviting you to attempt something that will fail unless He supplies the power? What is the first step of obedience? (PSG, p. 123)

FOCUSED PRAYER (ROM. 15:30-33)

Bonus: What are some things you pray for regularly? What makes those things so important to you?

- Paul planned to carry the gospel to Spain, and he hoped the Romans would partner with him (Rom. 15:22-24). Before that, however, he needed to deliver a financial gift collected by Gentile believers for needy believers in Judea.
- Prayer is a great way to connect believers to the ministries of those sharing the gospel around the world. Sensing danger in Jerusalem, Paul urged the Roman Christians to "strive" with him in prayer. He asked that they pray for his "rescue" from opponents who would try to silence him and that the financial gift would be welcomed.
- Finally, he asked them to pray that he finally would be able to visit Rome. He wanted to enjoy fellowship with believers in the city. As it turned out, the opposition Paul expected is also what eventually brought him to Rome.

What do believers stand to gain when they unite in prayer for the sharing of the gospel? (PSG, p. 125)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss why believers should work together in sharing the gospel with those who have not heard.

Consider ways your group or church can be involved in doing this. (PSG, p. 126)

Identify individuals who are supporting your ministry for the kingdom, as well as others you could enlist.

How much will you trust the power of God's Spirit as you talk with others about Jesus? (PSG, p. 126)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 125)

Create a chart to better understand a Bible passage.

Read the following verses and determine how prayer influences sharing one's faith: Matthew 9:37-38; Acts 4:29-31; Romans 10:1; Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1.

How would you summarize the role of prayer in evangelism? In what ways do these verses motivate you to pray for your sharing of the gospel and those who are taking the gospel to the unreached?

As a group, complete the Bible Skill activity on page 125 of the PSG. Enlist volunteers to read the passages listed and lead a brief discussion about how each one connects prayer and evangelism. Review the questions in the activity. Direct adults to gather in groups of two or three and to spend time praying for ministers and missionaries who are sharing the gospel. Challenge adults to continue praying for these individuals during the week.

OBJECT LESSON: BATTERY

Display a battery. Encourage adults to list different kinds batteries. Record their responses on the board. (*Examples: Car batteries, watch batteries, computer batteries, phone batteries*) Note that we probably use many batteries without even thinking about it.

Remind the group that a battery must be charged by some kind of power source for it to be useful. Say: *If it's not charged, the battery is dead and can't do its job. In the same way, a believer's connection to Jesus Christ offers access to the Holy Spirit's "charge."* Note that believers who rely on the Holy Spirit are strengthened and empowered to share the gospel. Affirm that one way to maintain that connection is through prayer.

Challenge adults to consider their own connection to the Spirit and what hinders them from sharing the gospel. As time allows, spend time in prayer, asking God to give each person boldness to tell others about Jesus.

EVANGELISM

In Romans 15:14-21, Paul laid bare his passion for evangelism, describing himself as a "minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles" (v. 16). The apostle saw his calling as a priestly duty, proclaiming the gospel so Gentiles might become "an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (v. 16). For Paul, evangelism was not simply persuading people to make a decision. It involved presenting new communities of believers to God as holy, Spirit-shaped testimonies to His grace.

Paul's evangelism was Christ-centered (v. 18). He refused to measure his ministry in personal terms. Instead, he gave credit to Jesus working through him, by the power of the Spirit. The fruit of evangelism is never the product of human effort. It reflects the out-working of divine power.

Equally important was Paul's pioneer vision. He declared a desire to go "where Christ has not been named" (v. 20). His driving ambition was to reach the unreached, to shine the light of Jesus in places untouched by the gospel. Paul's mission was guided

by Isaiah's prophecy: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand" (v. 21). Paul longed to see that prophecy fulfilled, at least in part, through his ministry.

The closing verses of chapter 15 remind readers that evangelism is not a lone task. Paul urged the Roman believers to "strive together with me in prayers to God on my behalf" (v. 30). Evangelism demands not only preachers, but also partners in prayer. Gospel work advances through both proclamation and intercession. Those who send, support, and pray are as much a part of evangelism as those who go to the field.

Paul's words highlight the truth that evangelism is both the privilege and responsibility of the church. It is Spirit-empowered, Christ-focused, rooted in love, and sustained through prayerful (as well as financial) partnership. At its heart, evangelism is not about building our own legacy. Rather, it's about making Christ known among the people who need to know Him.



These items are available in the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack* (print and digital).

Visit [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.explorethebible.com) to purchase the pack.

Pack Item 1: Map: The First-Century Roman Empire (Sessions 1-13)

- Locate a map that highlights the key regions and cities that defined the Roman Empire during the time of Paul.

Pack Item 2: Poster: Outline of Romans (Sessions 1-13)

- Refer to page 9 of the PSG to create a poster that outlines the book of Romans.

Pack Item 3: Poster: The Doctrine of Man (Sessions 2, 8)

- Create a poster with a quote from Article III on “Man” in the *Baptist Faith and Message (2000)*.

Pack Item 4: Poster: Key Words in Romans (Sessions 2, 3, 5, 7, 13)

- Create a poster that defines key terms from the book of Romans, such as *atonement, faith, grace, gospel, justification, law, righteousness, sanctification, sin, and works*.

Pack Item 5: Poster: Key Verse: Romans 5:19 (Session 4)

- Create a poster with the text of Romans 5:19.

Pack Item 6: Poster: Key Verse: Romans 12:1 (Session 10)

- Create a poster with the text of Romans 12:1.

Pack Item 7: Poster: Showing Honor (Session 11)

- Create an application poster with three columns: *Authorities, Others, and Christ*. Leave room for responses under each column so adults can suggest ways to show honor to each group over the course of the session.

Pack Item 8: Handout: Romans Time Line (Sessions 1-13)

- Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events related to the book of Romans. Include both biblical and non-biblical historical references for context.

Pack Item 9: Handout: Praying Scripture in Romans (Sessions 1-13)

- Create a handout to help adults pray through key Scriptures in the book of Romans. Focus on these questions: *What does this passage teach you about God and His character? How is God leading you to respond to what He is showing you about Himself?*

Pack Item 10: Handout: Justification by Faith (Sessions 3, 8)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create an article that describes the biblical teaching of justification by faith, both theologically and practically, especially as it applies to Romans.

Pack Item 11: Handout: A New Way of Life (Sessions 4-7)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create an article that describes how Paul used baptism as a symbol of a believer’s new life in Christ and why it is significant in Christianity.

Pack Item 12: Handout: To Do or Not To Do (Session 6)

- Create a handout that allows adults to identify things they do that they should not and things they want to do but don’t (Rom. 7:14-23). Provide additional space for adults to list practical steps for aligning their lives with God’s plan.

Pack Item 13: Handout: Adoption in the First Century (Session 7)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create an article that describes adoption in the first century and how Paul used it as an illustration of a believer’s relationship with God.

Pack Item 14: Handout: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Rome (Sessions 9, 12)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a handout with three columns: *Jewish Believers in Rome, Gentile Believers in Rome, and Key Principles from Romans*. Under the first two columns, list distinctives of each group. In the third column, highlight key principles for their unity from the book of Romans.

COMING **NEXT QUARTER**



1 SAMUEL

Session 1: **Prayer** (1 Samuel 1:9-18,24-28)

Session 2: **Calling** (1 Samuel 3:1-14)

Session 3: **Savior** (Luke 2:8-20)

Session 4: **Supremacy** (1 Samuel 5:1-10; 6:13-15,19-20)

Session 5: **King Demanded** (1 Samuel 8:1-9,19-22)

Session 6: **Obedience** (1 Samuel 15:7-23)

Session 7: **Valued** (Psalm 139:1-10,13-16,23-24)

Session 8: **Anointed** (1 Samuel 16:1-13)

Session 9: **Victory** (1 Samuel 17:32-47)

Session 10: **Friendship** (1 Samuel 18:1-9; 20:35-42)

Session 11: **Respect** (1 Samuel 24:1-11,16-20)

Session 12: **Discernment** (1 Samuel 25:14-19,29-35)

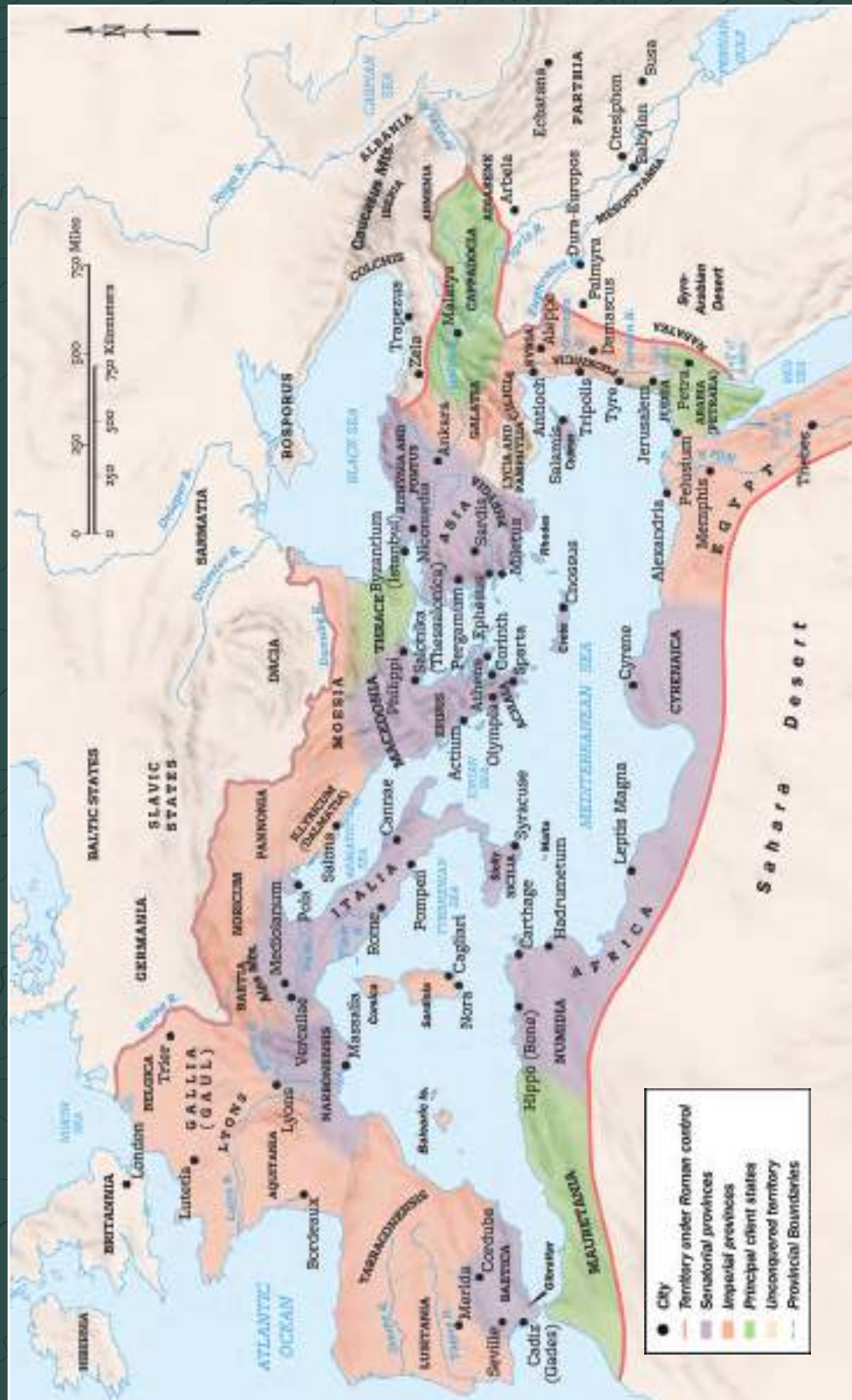
Session 13: **Guidance** (1 Samuel 30:1-8,21-25)

Explore

“You will seek me and find me when you search for me
with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

The First-Century Roman Empire

"The First-Century Roman Empire" is adapted from "The Roman Empire in the Age of Augustus" in the Holman Bible Atlas (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), p. 196. Used with permission.



ROMANS

In some ways, we live in a world defined by sound bites and social media posts. We condense key events of our days down to 280 characters or to quick videos that are here today and gone tomorrow. While brevity can be a good thing, our obsession with what's temporary also runs the risk of trading genuine substance for empty cliches. In his letter to the Christians at Rome, Paul rejected flimsy theology. His systematic and logical explanation of the gospel left no doubt about the world's need for a Savior and our responsibility as Christ followers. By studying his words to the Romans, we can gain a better understanding of who God is, what God does, and the impact it should have on our lives each day.

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