



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.