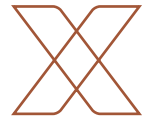


True Power

Session 1 • Romans 1:13-25



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The First-Century Roman Empire*) and **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Romans Time Line*). Bring an envelope to use in the introduction.

ASK: What's a memorable good news moment you've had? How did it affect you? (p. 13)

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud the opening paragraph on page 13. Lead a brief discussion on ways people receive good news.

ILLUSTRATE: Hold up an empty envelope. Allow a few volunteers to share about times they received an envelope containing good news. Explain that the apostle Paul once sent a letter to the Christians in Rome that explained the greatest news imaginable—what we know as the “gospel.”

SHARE: Summarize this content from page 13:

- “Paul introduced himself to the church in Rome by way of the gospel. When anyone used the word ‘gospel’ in those days, they meant that they had good news. For Paul, the gospel meant the good news of

salvation in Jesus Christ. . . . He wanted to encourage believers there, and he also wanted them to partner with him in proclaiming the gospel to others who had not heard it. He testified that telling others the good news of Jesus did not embarrass him. On the contrary, he shared the message with eagerness. He had an obligation to proclaim it everywhere.”

TRANSITION: *In today's study of Romans 1, Paul began building a powerful theological argument for salvation in Christ. And He began by emphasizing the importance of the gospel.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Direct attention to **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The First-Century Roman Empire*) and **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Romans Time Line*) to set the historical context of Rome and Paul's letter to the Romans. Note that Paul wrote this letter toward the end of his third missionary journey.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Romans 1:13-17** as the group listens for why Paul wanted to come to Rome.

EXPLAIN: Point out “Introduction” on **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*). Note that Paul did not plant and had not visited

the church in Rome, so he needed to provide some form of introduction. Share that he used this introduction to launch into a discussion about how every person needs the gospel.

IDENTIFY: Guide the group to work in pairs to examine the verses and make a list of key words or phrases that reveal why Paul wanted to go to Rome. After a few minutes, allow the pairs to share their findings. Highlight the desire for a fruitful ministry.

REVIEW: Encourage volunteers to suggest why “gospel” is such a significant idea in these opening lines of the letter. Share that the good news about Jesus is the power of God that changes lives and brings salvation to everyone who believes.

GUIDE: Direct the group’s attention to Romans 1:16. Encourage the group to memorize this verse, so they can recall it easily when provided an opportunity to share their faith.

ASK: How does remembering that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation” change your confidence in sharing it? (p. 15)

SAY: *Paul had dual desires. On one hand, he wanted everyone to hear the good news of Jesus, the gospel. On the other hand, he wanted believers to grow stronger in Christ. Preaching the gospel could accomplish both.*

WRITE: On a whiteboard write, *No excuses*.

READ: Direct the group to read silently **Romans 1:18-20**, considering how God reveals himself through His creation.

DISCUSS: What does creation teach us about God’s attributes? (p. 15)

GUIDE: Highlight the meaning and purpose of God’s wrath:

- **(1:18)** God’s wrath is not some wild, emotional outburst. Indeed, God’s nature is compassionate, which causes Him to be slow in pouring out His anger (Ex. 34:6). But He does not deal with sin lightly, and His wrath represents a natural response that demonstrates His divine displeasure against sin.

WRITE: Under *No excuses* write the words *General* and *Special*.

EXPLAIN: *Theologians use the words “general revelation” for seeing God through His creation. “Special revelation” comes through Jesus, who we primarily come to know through the Scriptures. Paul emphasized that those who had not received special revelation were still accountable to God because of His general revelation.*

ASK: How are God’s invisible attributes displayed through creation? How should that influence the way we live each day? (p. 15)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 1:21-25** as the group listens for the consequences of rejecting God.

GUIDE: Reflect on the way people deceive themselves when they disconnect from God’s reality:

- The refusal to acknowledge God affects sinners’ minds and hearts. Paul said their

thinking becomes worthless. The word *worthless* also can be rendered as idle, empty, fruitless, useless, powerless, or lacking truth. Their mind chases empty pursuits. Also, their senseless hearts are darkened. Their knowledge of God is clouded with the effects of their evil.

DISCUSS: Group adults into teams of three or four. Direct them to read the passage again and to focus on the “images” people worshiped. Encourage them to discuss why it might be appealing to worship an element of the creation rather than the Creator.

ASK: **How do people exchange truth for lies today—and how might you be tempted to do the same?** (p. 15)

EXPLAIN: *Paul emphasized that people are accountable for their choices. If they reject the Creator, He will let them follow their own passions and suffer the consequences. But Paul also knew the power of the gospel, which is why he was so passionate about shining the light of truth in a dark world.*



Paul's Letters

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

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers seek opportunities to share the gospel's power with those who need it.

- We can point others to God through what he has revealed in His creation.
- Rejecting God ultimately leads to devastating consequences.

HIGHLIGHT: Refer back to *No excuses* on the board. Remind adults that every person can see what God has created and can make a choice to worship Him. Emphasize that there are no excuses for idolatry today, just like in Paul's day.

DISCUSS: Encourage adults to work in their small groups to read and respond to the first **Apply the Text** activity on page 15. Allow a few minutes for discussion and prayer for those who need to hear the gospel and for adults to find opportunities to share that message with those individuals.

PRAY: Call on a pre-enlisted volunteer to close the group time in prayer, asking God to open the door for opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session, sending the group a text or email reminding them to look for opportunities to share the gospel. Encourage them to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions from page 19. Emphasize that they have valid reasons for being confident in the power of the gospel. Assure them that you will continue praying that God will provide opportunities for them to share the gospel with someone who needs it.