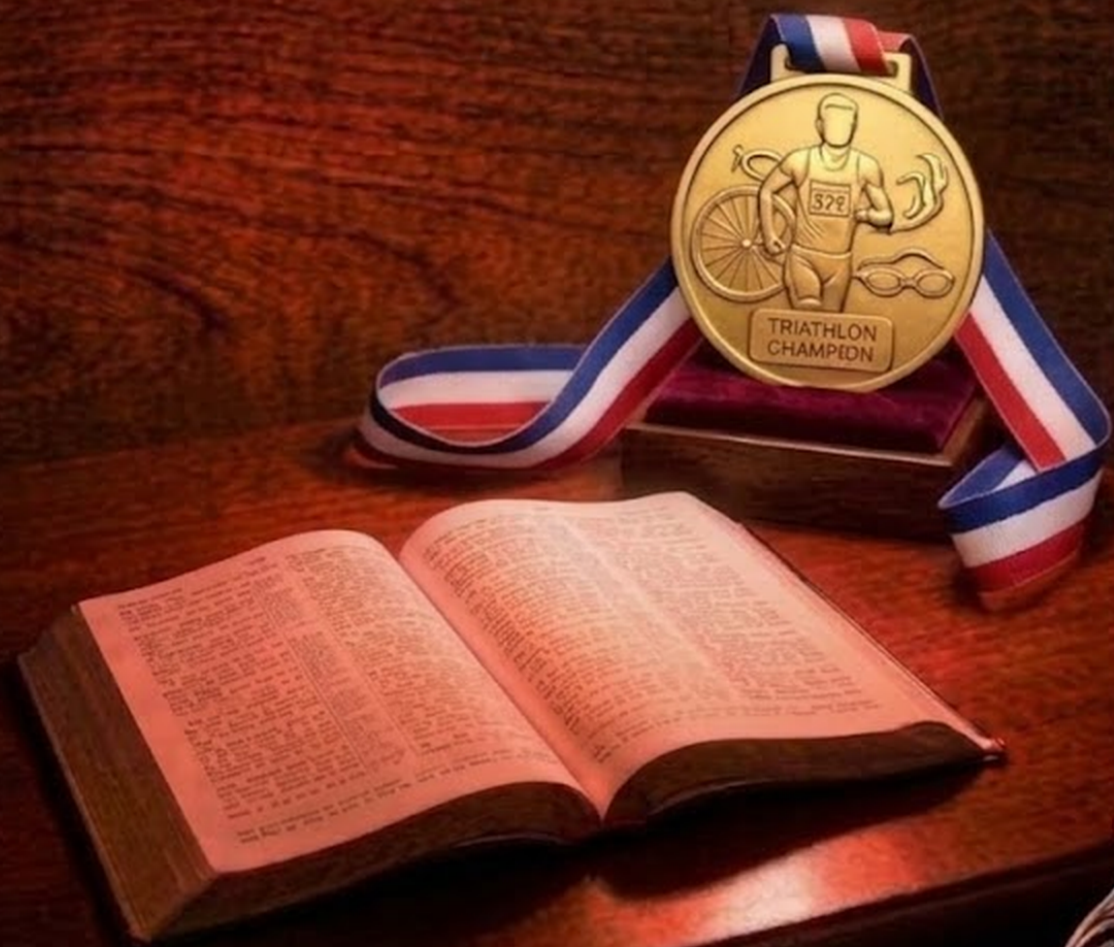


The Letter to the Romans

FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH



THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Jesus Christ, the Victorious Good News of Salvation

A 13-Session Middle School Bible Study

Teacher Guide • Student Handouts • Background Notes

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WELCOME, TEACHER

Thank you for investing in the lives of young people. Romans may look like a grown-up letter, but it holds the clearest explanation of the Good News in all of Scripture. Over thirteen sessions, your students will see that every one of us needs a Savior, that Jesus has paid the full price, that we are made right with God by faith, that the Spirit gives us power to live for Him, and that His love can never be taken away.

Each 45-minute session includes:

- **Teaching** in plain language that sixth- to eighth-graders can follow
- **A hook** to open with and **an activity** to close with
- **Talk About It** questions for small-group discussion
- **Teacher background notes** about the history and culture behind the passage
- **A one-page student handout** with blanks, reflection questions, a memory verse, and a weekly challenge
- **A PowerPoint slide deck** (separate files)
- **A podcast episode** and **companion app** where students can listen, review, and write their own Think, Feel, Do reflection

ROMANS AT A GLANCE

Author	The apostle Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ
Written from	Corinth, around AD 57
Written to	Christians in Rome, both Jewish and non-Jewish believers
Carried by	Phoebe of Cenchrea (Romans 16:1-2)
Theme	The gospel is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes (1:16-17)
Key words	Gospel, faith, grace, righteousness, justified, Spirit, love

THE SHAPE OF THE LETTER

Chapters 1-3	Everyone needs the Good News: all have sinned
Chapters 4-5	Justified by faith: Abraham, peace with God, Adam and Christ
Chapters 6-8	New life in Christ: dead to sin, the struggle, the Spirit, no condemnation
Chapters 9-11	God's faithful plan for Israel and for all nations
Chapters 12-16	Living it out: sacrifice, love, unity, and glory to God

SUPPLIES TO GATHER

Bibles (NKJV if possible), markers and a whiteboard, index cards, pens, sticky notes, and a projector or screen for the slides. Each session's hook and activity lists any special items, and nearly all can be found around the house or church.

THIRTEEN SESSIONS AT A GLANCE

#	Session	Passage	Memory Verse
1	Not Ashamed	Romans 1:1-17	Romans 1:16
2	The Problem Is Bigger Than We Think	Romans 1:18-32	Romans 1:20
3	No One Gets a Pass	Romans 2:1-3:8	Romans 2:4
4	Declared Not Guilty	Romans 3:9-31	Romans 3:23-24
5	Abraham Believed God	Romans 4:1-25	Romans 4:3
6	Peace With God	Romans 5:1-21	Romans 5:8
7	Dead to Sin, Alive to God	Romans 6:1-23	Romans 6:23
8	The Struggle Is Real	Romans 7:1-25	Romans 7:24-25
9	No Condemnation	Romans 8:1-17	Romans 8:1
10	More Than Conquerors	Romans 8:18-39	Romans 8:38-39
11	God's Faithful Plan	Romans 9:1-11:36	Romans 10:9
12	A Living Sacrifice	Romans 12:1-13:14	Romans 12:2
13	Welcome One Another	Romans 14:1-16:27	Romans 15:13

SESSION 1

Not Ashamed

Romans 1:1-17 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: The Good News about Jesus is God's own power to save everyone who believes, so we never need to be ashamed of it.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

— Romans 1:16 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 1:1-17, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Bring a lamp with a bulb in it, but leave it unplugged. Flip the switch. Nothing. Ask: "Is anything wrong with this lamp?" (No. It just has no power.) Plug it in and flip the switch. Say: "Paul says the Good News is like that power. We can have church, rules, and good ideas, but the power to change a life comes only from God."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

A letter to people Paul had never met

Imagine getting a long letter from a famous missionary you have never met. That is how the Christians in Rome felt when Romans arrived. Paul wrote it around AD 57 while staying in the city of Corinth. He introduces himself as “a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God” (1:1). A bondservant is a servant who belongs completely to his master.

Paul had not always felt this way about Jesus. Once he was named Saul, and he hunted down Christians. Then Jesus met him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), and his whole life turned around. Now Paul's greatest joy was to serve the One he used to fight. That is a picture of grace, and Romans is all about grace.

The Good News is about a Person

Notice how Paul describes the gospel. It is “concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (1:3-4). The Good News is not mainly a list of rules. It is news about Jesus: He is the promised King from David’s family, and He proved He is the Son of God by rising from the dead.

Paul also says this was promised long ago in the Holy Scriptures (1:2). The Old Testament pointed to Jesus all along. Then Paul greets the believers in Rome as “beloved of God, called to be saints” and gives them his favorite greeting: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:7). Saints does not mean super-Christians. It means every person who belongs to God.

Paul's heart for people

In verses 8 through 15, we see Paul’s heart. He thanks God for the Roman believers, prays for them every day, and longs to visit them so they can encourage one another. He says he is a debtor, which means he owes everyone the Good News because God gave it to him freely. Paul does not talk about Jesus because he has to. He talks about Jesus because he loves people.

The power and the promise

Then comes the theme of the whole letter. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (1:16). Why would anyone be ashamed? In Paul’s day, the Romans admired strength, and a message about a Savior who died on a cross sounded weak. But Paul knew the truth. The cross was not weakness. It was God’s power at work.

Verse 17 explains how it works: “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” Righteousness means being right with God. We do not earn it by being good enough. God gives it to us when we trust Jesus. That one idea will be explained, tested, and celebrated in the next twelve sessions.

POINTING TO JESUS

Jesus is the center of the very first paragraph. He is the promised Son of David, the Son of God with power, raised from the dead, and the source of grace and peace. Everything in Romans grows out of Him.

TALK ABOUT IT

- Paul calls himself a bondservant of Jesus. What do you think it means to belong completely to Jesus?
- Why might someone feel embarrassed to talk about Jesus at school or with friends? Have you ever felt that way?
- Paul says the gospel is God’s power. What kinds of things can only God’s power fix?
- Verse 16 says it is for “everyone who believes.” Why is that good news for you?

ACTIVITY

Power Plug Challenge: Give each student an index card with the words “Plugged in to ____.” Have them finish the sentence quietly with the name of the One who gives power (Jesus). Then have them write one person they could share the Good News with this week. Close by reading Romans 1:16 aloud together.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

Rome was the capital of the world's greatest empire, with perhaps a million people. The emperor in AD 57 was Nero, who was still early in his reign and not yet the cruel persecutor he later became. Roads from all over the empire led to Rome, so ideas and people from everywhere met there. That made it the perfect place for the Good News to spread.

The church in Rome was a mix of Jewish and non-Jewish (Gentile) believers. Around AD 49 the Emperor Claudius ordered Jews out of Rome, and Aquila and Priscilla were among those who left (Acts 18:2). When Jews returned, the church was shifting, and tension between the two groups is one reason Paul writes so carefully. Christians met in homes, not church buildings.

The word “gospel” (Greek euangelion) was also used when Rome announced a victory or a new emperor. Paul takes a word people used for Caesar and uses it for King Jesus. Paul's letter was probably carried to Rome by a woman named Phoebe from Cenchrea (Romans 16:1). The quote “The just shall live by faith” comes from Habakkuk 2:4.

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. **bondservant** • 2. **Son** • 3. **resurrection** • 4. **power** • 5. **faith**

Memory verse: Romans 1:16

Not Ashamed

Romans 1:1-17

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: The Good News about Jesus is God's own power to save everyone who believes, so we never need to be ashamed of it.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: bondservant • faith • power • resurrection • Son

1. Paul called himself a _____ of Jesus Christ.
2. The Good News is about God's _____, Jesus.
3. Jesus was shown to be God's Son by the _____ from the dead.
4. The gospel is the _____ of God to salvation.
5. "The just shall live by _____."

THINK ABOUT IT

Who is the Good News about, and what do you know about Him?

Is there a time you felt shy about your faith? What helped, or what could help?

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 1:16

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

This week, say a short prayer each morning: "Lord, help me not be ashamed of You today." Then look for one small way to show it.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What does it mean to you that the Good News is God's power to save, not our own good work?

FEEL: How do you feel when you think about telling a friend about Jesus? Excited, nervous, something else?

DO: What is one thing you will do this week to show you are not ashamed of Jesus?

SESSION 2

The Problem Is Bigger Than We Think

Romans 1:18-32 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: God has made Himself known through creation, but people turn away and worship other things, which is why every one of us needs the Good News.

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”

— Romans 1:20 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 1:18-32, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Show a cell phone and ask: "If you found this on a beach, could you guess that someone designed it?" (Of course.) Then hold up a seashell or a leaf and ask the same question. Say: "Paul says creation is like a signature. You do not need a Bible verse to see that Someone made all this."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

A doctor must give the diagnosis first

Imagine going to a doctor with a bad infection. A kind doctor does not say, "You look great!" He says, "Here is what is wrong, and here is the medicine." In the first chapter, Paul gives the good news. In verses 18 through 32 he gives the diagnosis. People do not feel their need for a Savior until they understand the problem.

Paul says "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (1:18). God's wrath is not a bad temper. It is His settled, holy opposition to everything that hurts people and ruins His world.

God has made Himself known

Paul's first point is that no one can say, "Nobody ever told me about God." Look at verse 20: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." The mountains, the stars, a baby's smile, and the way the seasons come around all say, "There is a Creator."

God also placed a conscience in every person, a sense of right and wrong. Creation shows us His power. Conscience shows us His goodness. Together they point toward God, even before anyone opens a Bible.

The great exchange

Here is the sad part. Verse 21 says that "although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened." They stopped giving thanks. They stopped honoring God. And their thinking became empty.

Then comes the exchange. They "exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen" (1:25). That means they took something God made, such as money, fame, pleasure, or even themselves, and put it in the place only God deserves. The Bible calls that idolatry. Today idols are not always statues. They can be a phone, a game, popularity, or being the best.

God gave them up

Three times in this passage, Paul says that "God gave them up" (1:24, 26, 28). That does not mean God stopped caring. It means that when people keep insisting on their own way, God sometimes lets them have it, and they see the painful results. Paul lists some of those results in verses 29 through 31: envy, strife, deceit, gossip, pride, disobeying parents, and having no love or mercy. Teacher note: you do not need to dwell on details here. Keep the focus on what happens when people leave God out.

It is also important to say that Paul is not pointing fingers at "those other people." He is describing all of humanity. By the end of chapter 3, Paul will say that each of us is in the same boat.

POINTING TO JESUS

Paul shows us a world that desperately needs a Rescuer. People swapped the Creator for created things, and none of those could save them. Only Jesus, who is the Creator Himself (John 1:3) and also the Savior, can set things right.

TALK ABOUT IT

- What are some things in creation that make you think, "Someone amazing made this"?
- What does it mean to "exchange the truth of God for the lie"? Can you think of a modern example?
- What are some good things people can turn into idols? How can we tell when that happens?
- Why is it important to understand the problem before we celebrate the solution?

ACTIVITY

Idol Check: Give each student a sticky note. Ask them to write privately one thing they care about a lot (a game, a sport, friends' opinions, grades). Then talk about how every good thing becomes a problem when it takes God's place. Have them fold the note and place it at the foot of a small cross drawn on the board as a

prayer: “Lord, You come first.”

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

Paul's readers lived surrounded by idols. Rome had temples to dozens of gods, and the emperor himself was worshiped as divine. Statues of animals and human figures were everywhere. When Paul talks about worshiping “images made like corruptible man and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” (1:23), his readers could see those very statues from their windows.

Greek and Roman writers of the time also complained about moral decay, so Paul's description would have felt familiar. Jewish readers might feel superior while reading chapter 1, which is exactly what Paul addresses in chapter 2. He is building a careful argument: everyone, Gentile and Jew, needs God's mercy.

Teaching note: Verses 24-27 touch on sexual sin. For middle school, speak in broad and reverent terms, emphasize that every person is made in God's image and loved by Him, and invite students to speak privately with you or their parents about any questions. Verses 29-31 give a list that includes sins every student recognizes, such as gossip, pride, and disobeying parents. Use that list to keep the focus on all of us.

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. **creation** • 2. **excuse** • 3. **lie** • 4. **creature** • 5. **problem**

Memory verse: Romans 1:20

The Problem Is Bigger Than We Think

Romans 1:18-32

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: God has made Himself known through creation, but people turn away and worship other things, which is why every one of us needs the Good News.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: creation • creature • excuse • lie • problem

1. God shows Himself to everyone through _____.
2. People are “without _____” because they can see God's power.
3. They exchanged the truth of God for the _____.
4. They worshiped the _____ instead of the Creator.
5. The Good News matters because everyone has a _____.

THINK ABOUT IT

What is one thing in nature that shows you God is powerful and wise?

Is there something good in your life that could slowly become more important than God? What can you do about it?

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 1:20

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Take a five-minute “creation walk” this week. Look for three things God made and thank Him for each one out loud.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think is the most important thing Romans 1 teaches about God and about people?

FEEL: How do you feel when you notice something in your own life that has been taking God's place?

DO: What is one thing you will do this week to put God first or to thank Him for what He made?

SESSION 3

No One Gets a Pass

Romans 2:1-3:8 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: God judges fairly, with no favorites, and His kindness is meant to lead every one of us to repent.

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

— Romans 2:4 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 2:1-3:8, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Hold up a clear glass of water with a few drops of food coloring hidden at the bottom. Say: "This water looks clean from far away." Walk it close to students. Say: "But up close, we can see what is really there. God sees up close, and He sees the heart."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

Pointing fingers

At the end of chapter 1, it is easy to say, “Wow, those people are really bad.” Paul sees that coming. He begins chapter 2 with, “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things” (2:1). Anyone who is quick to criticize others usually has the same problems.

Think of it like this: a student who points at everyone else's mistakes during a test is probably worried about his own paper. Paul wants us to look at our own hearts first.

God's fair judgment

Paul says God's judgment is “according to truth” (2:2). He sees everything, including motives that no one else can see. And “there is no partiality with God” (2:11). He does not give extra credit for being from a good family, for knowing the Bible, or for being a church kid. Everyone will be judged by the same fair standard.

God's judgment is not the same as human judgment. He knows the whole story, He never makes mistakes, and He never plays favorites. That is a comfort to those who have been treated unfairly. It is also a warning to anyone who thinks he can hide.

The kindness that leads to repentance

Verse 4 is the heart of this section: “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” God has been patient. He has been kind. Why? Not to give us permission to keep doing wrong, but to lead us to repentance, which means turning around and going God's direction.

Picture a parent who waits at the door, light on, not angry but hoping you will come home. That is how God's patience works. Delay in judgment is not weakness. It is mercy.

Knowing the rules is not enough

In verses 17 through 29, Paul speaks to those who were proud that they knew God's law and belonged to God's people. He asks, “You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?” (2:21). Knowing the rules is not the same as keeping them. Even the Jews, who had the Law, Paul says, broke it. Being circumcised on the outside could not change the heart. Real faith is about the inside: “he is a Jew who is one inwardly... circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit” (2:29).

In chapter 3, verses 1 through 8, Paul answers some objections. Did the Jewish people have an advantage? Yes! “Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God” (3:2). God gave them His Word. But their failure does not cancel God's faithfulness. “Let God be true but every man a liar” (3:4). Even when people fail, God stays true to His promises.

POINTING TO JESUS

Everyone has a problem that rules and religion cannot fix. That is why Jesus came. He is the only One who lived a perfectly good life and who can offer us forgiveness. God's kindness to us is seen most clearly in Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT

- Why is it easy to see other people's faults but hard to see our own?
- What does it mean that “there is no partiality with God”? Why is that good news and also challenging?
- How has God shown kindness and patience to you?
- What is the difference between looking good on the outside and having a changed heart?

ACTIVITY

Mirror, Mirror: Pass around a small hand mirror. Each student looks into it quietly and finishes silently, “God sees me and He is ____.” (kind, patient, faithful). Then read Romans 2:4 together and have students share one way God has been patient with them.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

Paul uses a teaching style called the diatribe. He imagines a person speaking back to him and answers each objection. That is why chapters 2 and 3 sound like a conversation. The Roman world loved debate, so his readers would have followed it easily.

Many Jewish people of the time believed that because they were descendants of Abraham and had the Law of Moses, they were safe from judgment. Circumcision was the sign of belonging to God's covenant people, so it was a point of pride. Paul does not say that these gifts were worthless. He says that they were never meant to replace a heart that trusts God. The prophets had already said the same thing (see Deuteronomy 10:16 and Jeremiah 4:4).

In the Roman world, judges often favored the rich and well connected. When Paul says that God shows no partiality, that would have been refreshing and surprising to ordinary people. The word “repentance” literally means a change of mind that leads to a change of direction.

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. things • 2. truth • 3. partiality • 4. repentance • 5. heart

Memory verse: Romans 2:4

No One Gets a Pass

Romans 2:1-3:8

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: God judges fairly, with no favorites, and His kindness is meant to lead every one of us to repent.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: heart • partiality • repentance • things • truth

1. When we judge others, we often do the same _____.
2. God's judgment is according to _____.
3. There is no _____ with God.
4. God's goodness leads us to _____.
5. Real faith is a matter of the _____.

THINK ABOUT IT

Think of a time you judged someone else. What would it look like to show kindness instead?

Why do you think God is patient with people instead of punishing them right away?

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 2:4

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

This week, whenever you catch yourself criticizing someone, stop and pray for that person, then ask God to show you your own heart.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think it means that God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing God sees your heart and still shows patience to you?

DO: What is one thing you will do this week to stop judging someone and show kindness?

SESSION 4

Declared Not Guilty

Romans 3:9-31 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: Everyone has sinned, but God declares us not guilty as a free gift when we trust in what Jesus did on the cross.

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

— Romans 3:23-24 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 3:9-31, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Bring a gavel (or a wooden spoon) and a stack of play money. Pretend to be a judge and say: "The fine for your crime is one million dollars. Can anyone pay it?" Then reveal a signed note: "Paid in full." Say: "That is what Jesus did for us. The debt was real, but it has been paid."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

The verdict: everyone is guilty

Paul has been building a case, like a lawyer, and now he gives the verdict. Quoting several Old Testament passages, he says, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (3:10). Every mouth is silenced and “all the world” is “guilty before God” (3:19). That includes good students, kind people, and church kids. Paul says that “by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (3:20).

The law is like a mirror. It shows us the dirt on our faces, but a mirror cannot wash it off. Trying harder to be good cannot make us right with God. If that were the end of the story, we would be hopeless.

“But now”

Verse 21 begins with two of the happiest words in the Bible: “But now.” Paul says, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.” God has done something we could not do. He gives us a right standing with Him, and the Old Testament already pointed forward to it.

Then Paul says the verse that sums up the whole problem and solution. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3:23-24). Let's look at three big words.

Three big words

Justified means declared right with God, like a judge saying, “Not guilty.” But it is more than not guilty. God treats us as if we had never sinned. A good way to remember is just-as-if-I'd never sinned.

Redemption means buying back. In Paul's day, a slave could be bought and set free by paying a price. Jesus is the price paid to set us free from sin. Grace means a gift we do not deserve. We cannot earn it, so it is “freely” given.

Propitiation: Jesus took our place

Verse 25 says God set forth Jesus “as a propitiation by His blood, through faith.” Propitiation is a big word that means a sacrifice that satisfies God's justice and takes away His anger toward sin. God's justice and love meet at the cross. The punishment we deserved fell on Jesus. That way God can be perfectly just and also the “justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (3:26).

This leaves no room for bragging. “Where is boasting then? It is excluded” (3:27). A person is “justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (3:28). Everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, comes to God the same way: through faith. That levels the playing field, and it makes room for everybody.

POINTING TO JESUS

This passage is the center of the Good News. Jesus is the redemption price, the sacrifice that satisfies God's justice, and the way to be declared right with God. Everything in the Old Testament pointed to Him, and everything in the rest of Romans grows from this truth.

TALK ABOUT IT

- Why can't being a good person make us right with God?
- What does the word “justified” mean? How would you explain it to a younger child?
- Why is it important that salvation is a free gift and not something we earn?
- If Jesus has paid the price, how do you think we should respond?

ACTIVITY

Paid in Full: Give each student an index card. On one side, have them write a sin or struggle they carry (privately). On the other side, write in large letters, “PAID IN FULL by Jesus.” Have them stamp or sign it. Talk about how the debt is canceled. Encourage them to keep the card in their Bible as a reminder.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

Paul chains together several Old Testament quotes from the Psalms and Isaiah in verses 10-18. This was a common Jewish teaching method, sometimes called a “pearl string,” and it showed that his point was not new. Scripture had always said that all people are sinful.

The word redemption would be familiar to people in Roman times. Slaves could be freed if someone paid a ransom price. Scholars also note that the word “propitiation” (Greek hilasterion) is the same word used for the mercy seat, the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, where blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). Paul is telling Jewish readers that Jesus is the true place where sin is covered.

The Jewish-Gentile tension in Rome matters here. Both groups needed to hear that God accepts everyone on the same basis. Paul says there is only one God, so He is God of both Jews and Gentiles (3:29-30). Verse 31 teaches that faith does not wipe out the law; it upholds it, because Jesus fulfilled all of the law's demands for us.

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. righteous • 2. sinned • 3. right • 4. bought • 5. faith

Memory verse: Romans 3:23-24

Declared Not Guilty

Romans 3:9-31

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: Everyone has sinned, but God declares us not guilty as a free gift when we trust in what Jesus did on the cross.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: bought • faith • right • righteous • sinned

1. “There is none _____, no, not one.”
2. “For all have _____ and fall short of the glory of God.”
3. Justified means declared _____ with God.
4. Redemption means being _____ back by a price.
5. We are saved by _____ apart from the deeds of the law.

THINK ABOUT IT

In your own words, what did Jesus do for you on the cross?

What is one thing you tried to do to earn God's approval? How does the free gift of grace change that?

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 3:23-24

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

This week, thank Jesus out loud each night for paying the price for you. Write down one person you can tell about this free gift.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think is the most important thing Paul wants us to understand about being right with God?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that Jesus has paid the full price for your sin?

DO: What will you do this week to show thanks for the free gift of salvation?

SESSION 5

Abraham Believed God

Romans 4:1-25 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: Abraham was made right with God by believing His promise, not by doing good works, and that same faith in Jesus makes us right with God today.

“For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’”

— Romans 4:3 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 4:1-25, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Hold a coin behind your back and tell a student to trust you: "I promise there is a coin in my hand." Ask: "What would it take for you to believe me?" Then bring the conversation to Abraham: "He had only God's promise, and he believed it."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

Back to Abraham

After Paul explains that no one can be saved by good works, a Jewish reader might say, “But what about Abraham?” Abraham was the hero of the Jewish people, the man God called, and the father of their nation. Surely he earned God's favor by being good!

Paul answers with Scripture. “For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’” (4:3). The word accounted is a bookkeeping word. It means credited to his account. Imagine you owe a debt, and someone deposits enough into your account to pay it all. Abraham did not earn righteousness. God credited it to him.

Wages versus a gift

Paul explains the difference with a simple picture. If you work at a job, your paycheck is not a gift. You earned it. “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness” (4:5). Salvation is not a paycheck. It is a gift. That is why Paul says God “justifies the ungodly.” He saves people who know they cannot save themselves.

Paul also quotes King David, who knew what it was like to need forgiveness. David wrote, “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” (4:7). Even a great king needed grace.

Before the rules, before the sign

Here is something surprising. Abraham was counted righteous in Genesis 15. He was not circumcised until Genesis 17, which was about fourteen years later. And the Law of Moses was given hundreds of years after that. So Abraham was made right with God before the sign of circumcision and long before the law. That means Abraham is the father of everyone who believes, whether Jewish or not.

The circumcision was a sign, like a wedding ring. The ring shows a marriage, but it does not make the marriage. Faith came first. The sign came after.

A faith that did not waver

Abraham and Sarah were very old and had no children, yet God promised them a son and a family as many as the stars. Paul says Abraham “did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform” (4:20-21). Abraham was not perfect, but he trusted God to keep His word even when the situation looked impossible.

Real faith is not wishful thinking. It is resting your full weight on what God has said, like sitting in a chair and trusting it will hold you.

Our faith, Jesus' resurrection

Paul ends the chapter by saying the words “it was accounted to him” were written not only for Abraham “but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (4:23-25). Jesus died for our sins, and He rose to prove that the payment was accepted. We are not asked to believe in something vague. We believe in a Person who died and rose again.

POINTING TO JESUS

Abraham looked ahead to the promise God made, and the promised Seed was Jesus (Galatians 3:16). Abraham believed God's promise, and we believe the fulfillment of that promise. Jesus was delivered up for our offenses and raised for our justification. That is the Good News.

TALK ABOUT IT

- What does it mean that righteousness was “accounted” or credited to Abraham?
- Why did Paul point out that Abraham believed before he was circumcised?
- What is the difference between faith and just wishing something is true?
- What promise from God is hardest for you to trust right now?

ACTIVITY

Trust Fall Chairs: Place a sturdy chair in front of the group. Ask a volunteer, “Do you believe this chair will hold you?” Then have the person sit. Say: “Believing about the chair is not enough. You have to rest your weight on it. That is faith.” Then have each student pray silently, resting their weight on Jesus.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

Abraham (originally Abram) lived around 2000 BC and was called by God out of Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 12). In Genesis 15, God took him outside, showed him the stars, and promised that his descendants would be as many. “And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Paul quotes that verse here.

Circumcision was given to Abraham in Genesis 17 as the sign of God's covenant. To many Jewish people in Paul's day, it was the main mark of belonging to God. Some Jewish Christians were urging non-Jewish believers to be circumcised. By showing that Abraham was counted righteous before circumcision, Paul proves that Gentiles do not need to become Jewish to belong to God's family.

The Greek word for “accounted” (*logizomai*) was used in business to mean to calculate or to credit. Paul uses it about ten times in this chapter. David's words come from Psalm 32:1-2. Verse 17 says God “gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.” That describes the power God showed when Abraham and Sarah were old and God gave them Isaac.

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. **accounted** • 2. **wage** • 3. **circumcised** • 4. **able** • 5. **justification**

Memory verse: Romans 4:3

Abraham Believed God

Romans 4:1-25

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: Abraham was made right with God by believing His promise, not by doing good works, and that same faith in Jesus makes us right with God today.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: able • accounted • circumcised • justification • wage

1. “Abraham believed God, and it was _____ to him for righteousness.”
2. Salvation is a gift, not a _____.
3. Abraham was counted righteous before he was _____.
4. Abraham was fully convinced that God was _____ to perform what He promised.
5. Jesus was raised because of our _____.

THINK ABOUT IT

What does Abraham's story teach you about how someone becomes right with God?

Is there a promise of God you want to trust more fully? Write it down.

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 4:3

“For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.””

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Choose one promise from the Bible (for example, Romans 8:28 or Philippians 4:19) and read it every day this week. Ask God to help you be “fully convinced” like Abraham.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think it means to trust God the way Abraham did?

FEEL: How do you feel about God's promises when things look impossible?

DO: What is one promise of God you will choose to trust this week?

SESSION 6

Peace With God

Romans 5:1-21 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: Because Jesus died for us while we were still sinners, we have peace with God, a hope that does not disappoint, and a grace that is bigger than Adam's sin.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

— Romans 5:8 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 5:1-21, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Show two pieces of paper: one crumpled, one smooth. Say: "Everyone is born into Adam's family, and we have all made messes. But there is a second family you can join through Jesus." Smooth out the crumpled paper slightly and explain that Jesus does not just tidy us up; He gives us new life.

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

Peace with God

Romans 5 begins with a big “Therefore.” Whenever you see a “therefore,” ask what it is there for. Paul has just shown that we are justified by faith, so now he says, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1). Before Jesus, our sin put us at odds with God. Now the war is over.

This peace is not just a good feeling. It is a fact. It is like a treaty signed and sealed. Through Jesus, “we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (5:2). We are not on probation. We stand in grace.

Joy in troubles

Paul then says something that sounds strange: “We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (5:3-4). God uses hard times to grow us, just as exercise strengthens muscles. Trouble does not mean God has left. It is a chance to grow.

And hope in Jesus “does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (5:5). Notice that the Holy Spirit is mentioned here. He makes God’s love real inside us.

The proof of God’s love

How do we know God loves us? Paul gives the best proof. “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (5:6). People rarely die for a good person, but Jesus died for those who were far from Him. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (5:8).

Think about that. God did not wait until we cleaned up. He loved us at our worst. And if He did that for us when we were enemies, how much more will He save and keep us now that we are His children (5:9-10)? We “also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (5:11).

Two men, two families

In verses 12 through 21, Paul compares two men. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (5:12). Adam, the first man, disobeyed God, and sin and death spread to everyone. We all inherit that problem.

But there is a second man, Jesus, often called the Last Adam. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (5:19). Adam’s one act brought death. Jesus’ one act of obedience on the cross brings life. Everyone is born in Adam’s family, but anyone can be reborn into Christ’s family through faith.

Paul ends with one of the most hopeful lines in the Bible: “where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (5:20). No matter how big the sin, God’s grace is bigger. “So that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:21).

POINTING TO JESUS

Jesus is the second Adam. By His obedience, even to death on the cross, He undoes what the first Adam did. He is the peace between God and people, the proof of God’s love, and the One in whom grace reigns.

TALK ABOUT IT

- What do you think it means to have “peace with God”? How is that different from just feeling calm?
- Why do you think God allows trouble in our lives? How can hard times help us grow?
- Romans 5:8 says Christ died for us while we were still sinners. How does that change the way you see God’s love?
- What is the difference between being in Adam’s family and being in Christ’s family?

ACTIVITY

Two Families: Draw two columns on a board labeled “In Adam” and “In Christ.” Have students suggest what belongs under each (sin, death, guilt versus grace, life, righteousness). Then read Romans 5:19. Invite students to circle which family they are in, and to talk to you if they are unsure.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

The Roman world knew peace as the “Pax Romana,” a time of peace enforced by the army. Roman rulers claimed to bring peace. Paul says real peace is not brought by the sword but by the cross of Jesus. It is peace with the Creator, not just the absence of war.

Paul uses the Hebrew idea of Adam as a representative, a person who acts on behalf of all. In ancient culture, the head of a household or the king affected everyone under him. Adam's choice affected all humans, and Jesus' obedience benefits all who are in Him. Jewish teachers also spoke about two ways of living, in sin or in righteousness.

Verse 14 calls Adam “a type of Him who was to come,” meaning Adam is a pattern that points to Jesus by contrast. Verse 20 says the law entered “that the offense might abound,” meaning that it made sin visible. Teaching tip: Keep the focus on the good news that grace is greater than sin, not on debates about how sin spreads.

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. **peace** • 2. **perseverance** • 3. **sinner**s • 4. **obedience** • 5. **grace**

Memory verse: Romans 5:8

Peace With God

Romans 5:1-21

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: Because Jesus died for us while we were still sinners, we have peace with God, a hope that does not disappoint, and a grace that is bigger than Adam's sin.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: grace • obedience • peace • perseverance • sinners

1. We have _____ with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Tribulation produces _____.
3. God demonstrated His love while we were still _____.
4. By one Man's _____ many will be made righteous.
5. Where sin abounded, _____ abounded much more.

THINK ABOUT IT

How does it feel to know God loved you even when you were far from Him?

Think of a hard time in your life. What good did God bring out of it, or what might He be teaching you?

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 5:8

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

This week, whenever something stressful happens, say, “Thank You that I have peace with God.” Write down one time you saw God use a hard thing for good.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What does Romans 5:8 tell you about how God sees you?

FEEL: How do you feel when you think about God loving you at your worst?

DO: What will you do this week to thank God for His love or to trust Him during a hard time?

SESSION 7

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

Romans 6:1-23 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: In Jesus we have died to sin's power and been raised to a new life, so we now choose to serve God instead of sin.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

— Romans 6:23 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 6:1-23, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Hold up a pair of handcuffs or a chain (or draw one on the board) and an unlocked key. Say: "Imagine someone has set you free from prison. The door is open. Would you walk back in?" Let students answer. Then say: "That is the question Romans 6 asks."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

A silly question

At the end of chapter 5, Paul said that where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. Someone might think, "Then let's sin more, so there is more grace!" Paul puts that idea down immediately: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (6:1-2).

Think about a person who was rescued from a burning building. Would he run back inside to get rescued again? Of course not. Grace does not give us permission to sin. Grace gives us power to be free from it.

United with Jesus

Paul explains that when we trust in Jesus, we are joined to Him. "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (6:4). Baptism is a picture of this. Going under the water pictures dying and

being buried with Christ. Coming up pictures being raised to new life.

Notice that baptism does not save us. It is a picture of what Jesus has already done. Our old self was crucified with Christ so that “the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (6:6). Death ends a master's rule. Because we died with Jesus, sin has lost its hold.

Count it true

How do we live this out? Paul gives three words. The first is know. “Knowing this” (6:6) means we remind ourselves what Jesus did. The second is reckon: “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:11). Reckon is a bookkeeping word. It means to count it as true. The third is present: “do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead” (6:13).

Your eyes, mouth, hands, and feet are tools. Sin wants to use them for harm. God wants to use them for good. Every day you get to choose who uses your tools.

Two masters

Paul then says that everyone serves some master. “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” (6:16). There is no neutral. We are either serving sin or serving God. But the two masters are very different. Sin pays wages. God gives a gift.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23). Sin pays what it promised, and what it promised leads to death. But God gives life as a gift we do not earn. Paul also promises that “sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (6:14).

POINTING TO JESUS

Jesus is the one we are united with. His death is our death to sin, and His resurrection is our new life. The gift of God is eternal life, and it is found only in Christ Jesus our Lord.

TALK ABOUT IT

- Why is it a bad idea to think, “God will forgive me, so it does not matter if I sin”?
- How is baptism a picture of what Jesus has done for us?
- What does it mean to “reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God”?
- Which of your “tools” (eyes, words, hands, feet) is hardest to give to God?

ACTIVITY

Present Your Tools: Have students trace their hand on a piece of paper. Inside, write three ways they want God to use their hands, words, and feet this week (for example, “encourage a friend”). Have them pray, “Lord, I give You my tools,” and keep the paper in their Bible.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

Baptism in the early church was usually by immersion. Believers went into the water, which would have looked like a burial, and came up again. For many people, especially converts from Judaism or pagan religions, baptism was a public break from their old way of life, and it could cost them family and friends.

Slavery was common in the Roman Empire, and perhaps a third of people in the city of Rome were slaves or former slaves. Paul's readers knew what it meant to belong to a master. He uses that picture to show that everyone is a slave to something, and that Christ's freedom leads to a better service. Paul adds, "I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh" (6:19), meaning he is using a simple illustration.

The word "wages" (Greek *opsonia*) referred to a soldier's pay. Death is what sin earns. The word for "gift" (*charisma*) is related to the word for grace, so it points to something undeserved. In verse 17, Paul says they obeyed "that form of doctrine to which you were delivered," a way of saying the gospel shaped them like a mold.

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. **abound** • 2. **baptism** • 3. **reckon** • 4. **death** • 5. **eternal**

Memory verse: Romans 6:23

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

Romans 6:1-23

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: In Jesus we have died to sin's power and been raised to a new life, so we now choose to serve God instead of sin.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: abound • baptism • death • eternal • reckon

1. “Shall we continue in sin that grace may _____? Certainly not!”
2. We were buried with Jesus through _____.
3. We are to _____ ourselves dead to sin and alive to God.
4. The wages of sin is _____.
5. The gift of God is _____ life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

THINK ABOUT IT

What is one habit or attitude you want God to free you from?

How can you give your eyes, mouth, hands, or feet to God today?

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Each morning this week, say, “I am dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Then offer God one “tool” (your words, your eyes, your hands) for the day.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think it means that sin is no longer your master?

FEEL: How do you feel about the idea of being set free to serve God?

DO: What is one tool (words, hands, eyes, feet) you will give to God this week?

SESSION 8

The Struggle Is Real

Romans 7:1-25 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: Even believers struggle with sin, and the law cannot fix us, but Jesus Christ delivers us.

“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

— Romans 7:24-25 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 7:1-25, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Ask students to try patting their head and rubbing their stomach at the same time. Laugh together about how hard it is. Then say: "Sometimes what we want to do and what we actually do feel like two different directions. Paul knew exactly how that feels."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

A new marriage

Paul begins with a picture from everyday life. A married woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but if he dies, she is free to marry another (7:1-3). Paul's point is that we were “married” to the law, and the law's demands could never be fully met. But when we died with Christ, we were released from that relationship. Now we belong to Jesus, “that we should bear fruit to God” (7:4).

The law is not our enemy. It is good. But trying to earn God's favor by keeping the law is like trying to get a perfect score in a game where the rules keep getting harder.

What the law can and cannot do

Paul asks, “Is the law sin? Certainly not!” (7:7). The law is like a flashlight that shows us dust we could not see before. Paul says, “I would not have known sin except through the law” (7:7). The commandment against coveting made him see that his heart was not clean. The law shows us our need, but it cannot clean us up. “The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (7:12). The problem is not the law. It is us.

The battle inside

In verses 14 through 25 Paul is very honest. “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do” (7:15). Have you ever felt like that? Paul wanted to do right, but sin pulled him another way. He says, “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice” (7:19).

This is not a sign that something is wrong with your faith. It is a sign that you have a new heart that wants to follow God, and an old nature that still pulls the other way. A person who does not care about God does not feel this battle. If you feel the fight, it means God is at work in you.

The shout of victory

Paul does not stay stuck in the struggle. At the end of the chapter he cries out, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (7:24). Notice the word “who,” not “what.” The answer is a Person. “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (7:25).

We cannot beat sin by trying harder. We need a Rescuer. Paul will show in chapter 8 how God's Spirit gives us the power we need. For now, remember: the struggle does not cancel your salvation, and Jesus is the answer to the struggle.

POINTING TO JESUS

The law tells us what to do, but Jesus does what the law could not do. He lived the perfect life we could not live, died to cancel the penalty, and rose to give us new life. When we cry out, “Who will deliver me?” the answer is Jesus Christ our Lord.

TALK ABOUT IT

- Describe a time you wanted to do the right thing but did the opposite. How did you feel?
- If the law is good, why can't it make us right with God?
- Why is it a good sign that Paul felt a struggle against sin?
- What difference does it make to say “Who will deliver me?” instead of “How can I try harder?”

ACTIVITY

The Flashlight: Turn off the lights briefly. Show how a flashlight reveals dust or dirt on a table. Say, “The law is like this flashlight. It shows us the mess but cannot clean it.” Then hold up a cloth or wet wipe and say, “Jesus is the One who cleans.” Wipe the dust away and pray together, thanking Jesus for cleaning our hearts.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

Paul's marriage illustration comes from a legal truth in both Roman and Jewish culture: a marriage ended at death, so the surviving partner was free to remarry. He uses it to show that our relationship to the law ended

when we died with Christ.

Scholars have debated who the “I” in Romans 7:14-25 is. Some think it is Paul before he met Christ. Others see it as Paul describing the ongoing struggle of a believer who tries to live by his own strength. Either way, the key point is that the law cannot produce righteousness, and only Christ delivers. Teaching tip: Present both views gently, but emphasize the good news of verse 25 and chapter 8.

The tenth commandment, “You shall not covet” (Exodus 20:17), is the one Paul mentions in 7:7. It is different from other commandments because it deals with the heart rather than outward actions. It shows that even a person who appears blameless on the outside still struggles inside.

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. good • 2. flashlight • 3. practice • 4. deliver • 5. Lord

Memory verse: Romans 7:24-25

The Struggle Is Real

Romans 7:1-25

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: Even believers struggle with sin, and the law cannot fix us, but Jesus Christ delivers us.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: deliver • flashlight • good • Lord • practice

1. The law is holy and just and _____.
2. The law shows us our sin like a _____.
3. What I will to do, that I do not _____.
4. Paul asked, “Who will _____ me from this body of death?”
5. “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our _____!”

THINK ABOUT IT

What is one area where you often struggle to do what you know is right?

Write a short prayer asking Jesus to help you with that struggle.

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 7:24-25

“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

When you notice the struggle this week, pray, “Jesus, deliver me.” Then tell a trusted friend or leader about it so they can pray with you.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think Paul is teaching about the law and about Jesus in this chapter?

FEEL: How do you feel about the struggle with sin in your own life?

DO: What will you do this week when you feel the struggle? Who could you ask to pray for you?

SESSION 9

No Condemnation

Romans 8:1-17 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: Everyone who belongs to Jesus is free from condemnation, and the Holy Spirit lives in us to give us power, life, and the family name of God's children.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

— Romans 8:1 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 8:1-17, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Bring a mock "guilty" stamp and a mock "pardoned" stamp. Stamp a piece of paper "GUILTY" and say, "This is what our sin deserved." Then stamp over it with "PARDONED" and say, "This is what Jesus did." Ask: "If a judge pardons you, can anyone bring up the charge again?"

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

The best verse after the worst struggle

Chapter 7 ended with the struggle and the shout of thanks to Jesus. Chapter 8 starts with a promise like a sunrise. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (8:1). No condemnation means no guilty verdict. Not “less” condemnation, but none.

Why? Because Jesus took our punishment. Paul explains, “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh” (8:3). The law could point out sin but could not remove it. Jesus did what the law could not.

Two ways to live

Paul describes two kinds of living. One lives by the flesh, meaning our old nature that wants its own way. The other lives by the Spirit. “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (8:6). What we focus on shapes where we go. If we keep feeding our minds with things that do not honor God, we grow weak. If we feed our minds on God’s Word and prayer, we grow strong.

Paul adds an important encouragement: “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” (8:9). If you belong to Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives in you. He is not far away. He is inside you, and the One who raised Christ from the dead “will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (8:11).

Not slaves, but children

Paul says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (8:14). We have not received a spirit of slavery that makes us afraid. Instead, “you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’” (8:15). Abba is the Aramaic word a child used for his father, like “Daddy” or “Papa.” God is not a distant ruler. He is a loving Father who invites us to come close.

And it gets better: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (8:16-17). In Roman culture, an adopted child was a full heir with all the rights of a natural son. Everything that belongs to Jesus is shared with us.

How the Spirit helps us today

The Spirit gives us power to say no to sin. “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (8:13). It is not something we do alone. We cooperate with the Spirit by choosing to listen, pray, read the Word, and obey. When we fail, we do not hide. We run to the Father who has already pardoned us.

POINTING TO JESUS

Jesus is the reason there is no condemnation. He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin, and paid for our guilt. The Spirit who lives in us is the Spirit of Christ (8:9), and the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in every believer.

TALK ABOUT IT

- What does “no condemnation” mean? How is it different from feeling guilty?
- What are some ways we can “feed the Spirit” instead of feeding the flesh?
- Why do you think Paul says the Spirit gives us the word “Abba” for God?
- What is it like to know that you are God’s child and an heir with Christ?

ACTIVITY

Two Plants: Show a healthy plant and a neglected one. Ask: “What is the difference?” (Water, light, care.) Explain that our spiritual lives grow or shrink depending on what we feed. Have students list three ways to “feed” the Spirit (Bible reading, prayer, church) and two things to stop feeding. Close by praying Romans 8:1 together.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

“Condemnation” in Roman courts meant a guilty verdict and a sentence. In Paul's world, once a person was condemned, there was almost no hope. The word “no” in “no condemnation” would have been startling and wonderful. Paul is saying that the judgment has been handled and the sentence has been carried out on Jesus.

The Greek word “sarx” (flesh) in Paul's writing usually means human nature apart from God, not just the physical body. “Pneuma” (Spirit) is the Holy Spirit. Chapter 8 mentions the Spirit about twenty times, more than any other chapter in Romans. In the early church, the Spirit's presence in every believer was a huge change from the Old Testament, where the Spirit came on certain people for certain tasks.

Roman adoption was a legal act in which a person became the full heir of a father's name and property. It was often used to choose successors, as when Julius Caesar adopted Octavian, who became Augustus. Paul's readers would have understood that God's adoption is permanent and carries full legal rights. “Abba” is an Aramaic word, the same one Jesus used in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36).

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. condemnation • 2. peace • 3. Spirit • 4. Abba • 5. heirs

Memory verse: Romans 8:1

No Condemnation

Romans 8:1-17

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: Everyone who belongs to Jesus is free from condemnation, and the Holy Spirit lives in us to give us power, life, and the family name of God's children.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: Abba • condemnation • heirs • peace • Spirit

1. There is now no _____ to those in Christ Jesus.
2. To be spiritually minded is life and _____.
3. The _____ of God lives in every believer.
4. We cry out, “_____, Father.”
5. If we are children, then we are _____ of God.

THINK ABOUT IT

What does it mean to you that God is your “Abba, Father”?

What is one way you will “feed the Spirit” this week?

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 8:1

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Every day this week, start with Romans 8:1. Say it out loud, then thank God that you are not condemned. When you feel guilty, remember the verse and ask God to restore your joy.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think Romans 8:1 means for someone who feels guilty about a past mistake?

FEEL: How do you feel when you hear that you are God's child and that the Holy Spirit lives in you?

DO: What is one way you will “feed the Spirit” this week?

SESSION 10

More Than Conquerors

Romans 8:18-39 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, so we can face suffering with hope.

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

— Romans 8:38-39 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 8:18-39, NKJV). Review last week’s memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Bring a strong rope or chain. Ask a student to try to pull it apart. Say: "Nothing you can do will break this." Then say: "Paul has something stronger than any rope. It is God's love in Christ, and nothing in the universe can separate us from it."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

The best is still coming

Paul does not pretend life is easy. He writes, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (8:18). Paul had been beaten, shipwrecked, and thrown in prison, yet he said the future glory will make all of it look small. Hard things are real, but they are not the end of the story.

The whole creation “groans and labors with birth pangs” (8:22), waiting for Jesus to return and make everything new. Think of a mother in labor: the pain is real, but it leads to the joy of a new baby. In the same way, a broken world groans because new creation is coming.

We hope for what we cannot yet see

“For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope” (8:24). If you can already see it, you do not need to hope for it. Waiting is part of faith. Paul says we wait “with perseverance” (8:25). God asks us to trust Him even when the answer has not come.

And we are not alone while we wait. “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us” (8:26). When you do not have words to pray, the Holy Spirit prays for you, in line with God's will.

All things work together

Verse 28 is one of the best-loved verses in the Bible: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” It does not say all things are good. Some things are painful and wrong. But God can take every piece, even the bad ones, and weave them together for good. Verse 29 tells us what that good is: that we would be “conformed to the image of His Son,” becoming more like Jesus.

Paul then walks through God's golden chain: He foreknew us, called us, justified us, and will glorify us (8:29-30). No link is missing. The same God who began the work will finish it.

If God is for us

Paul asks a series of questions that thrill the heart. “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (8:31). Then: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (8:32). If God gave His most precious gift, Jesus, will He hold back anything else we truly need?

Next: “Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies” (8:33). The Judge has already declared us not guilty. “Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (8:34). The One who died for us is the One who now stands up for us.

More than conquerors

Paul lists terrible things: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword (8:35). Then he says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (8:37). Notice: more than conquerors “through Him.” We win not because we are strong but because we are loved by the One who is.

And the chapter closes with a promise to hold onto: “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:38-39).

POINTING TO JESUS

Jesus died, rose, sits at the right hand of God, and prays for us. He is the One who loved us, the One who gives us victory, and the place where God's love is found. Every promise in this chapter is “in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

TALK ABOUT IT

- Why do you think Paul calls our suffering small compared to the coming glory?

- What does it mean that “all things work together for good”? What does it not mean?
- How does it help to know that the Spirit and Jesus both pray for us?
- Which part of Romans 8:38-39 means the most to you, and why?

ACTIVITY

Unbreakable Chain: Give each student a paper strip. On each strip they write one thing they fear might separate them from God (failure, loneliness, death, mistakes). Link the strips into a chain, then read Romans 8:38-39. Hang the chain where students can see it and talk about how God's love is stronger than any chain.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

When Paul wrote Romans, Christians were beginning to face suffering. Within about ten years, Nero would blame Christians for the great fire of Rome (AD 64) and begin harsh persecution. Paul's words about being “accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (8:36, quoting Psalm 44:22) would soon become real for many readers. These promises were written to comfort people who would need them.

“Conformed to the image of His Son” (8:29) means being made like Jesus. “Foreknew” and “predestined” (8:29-30) are words Christians understand in different ways. A gentle approach for middle school is to emphasize that God is working out a plan for His children, that His love and purpose began before time, and that nobody who trusts Jesus will be lost. Avoid long debates and focus on comfort.

Verse 33's “God's elect” means God's chosen people. The lawyer-style language (“Who shall bring a charge?”) reflects a Roman courtroom. In such a setting, the highest-ranking person speaking on behalf of the accused made a huge difference. Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, is the best advocate possible. The list of dangers in verse 35 matches things Paul himself had suffered (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. **glory** • 2. **Spirit** • 3. **good** • 4. **against** • 5. **conquerors**

Memory verse: Romans 8:38-39

More Than Conquerors

Romans 8:18-39

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, so we can face suffering with hope.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: against • conquerors • glory • good • Spirit

1. The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the _____ to come.
2. The _____ helps us in our weaknesses.
3. All things work together for _____ to those who love God.
4. If God is for us, who can be _____ us?
5. We are more than _____ through Him who loved us.

THINK ABOUT IT

What is something hard you are facing right now? How do these verses encourage you?

Write Romans 8:38-39 in your own words as a promise to yourself.

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 8:38-39

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Memorize Romans 8:38-39 this week, one phrase a day. When you feel afraid or alone, say it out loud, and pray for a friend who is going through something hard.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think is the strongest promise in Romans 8? Why?

FEEL: How do you feel when you face a hard time? How does Romans 8 change that feeling?

DO: Who is someone going through a hard time that you will pray for or encourage this week?

SESSION 11

God's Faithful Plan

Romans 9:1-11:36 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: God is faithful to Israel and to the whole world: salvation is by faith for everyone who calls on Jesus, and God's wisdom and mercy are beyond measure.

“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

— Romans 10:9 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 9:1-11:36, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Hold up a thank-you letter or a family photo and say: "Imagine a family member you love who does not know Jesus. How would you feel?" Let students think quietly. Then say: "That is how Paul felt about his people. Today we see his heart, and we see God's wonderful plan."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

A broken heart

These three chapters begin with a very personal statement. "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying... that I have great sorrow and continuing grief in my heart" (9:1-2). Paul was Jewish, and most of his people had not accepted Jesus as Messiah. He loved them so much that he wished he could trade places with them (9:3). Paul reminds us that sharing the gospel starts with love, not arguments.

He lists their blessings: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law, the worship, the promises, and the fathers, "and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen" (9:4-5). Jesus Himself was a Jewish man, born into this family.

God is sovereign and merciful

Chapter 9 teaches that God is in charge of His plan. God chose Isaac, not Ishmael, and Jacob, not Esau, to show that His promises depend on His mercy, not on human effort. “So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (9:16). God is the potter and we are the clay (9:21), meaning He has every right to carry out His plans as He sees fit.

This is a big, deep topic. You do not have to figure out every question to trust that God is fair, loving, and wise. Verse 25 reminds us that God's mercy reaches people who were not His people and calls them “beloved.” God's heart is wide open.

Believe and call

In chapter 10, Paul explains how people are saved. Israel worked hard to be right with God, but they tried to earn it. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (10:4). That means Jesus is the goal and the completion of the law. We do not need to earn what He already finished.

Then Paul gives the simplest gospel message: “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (10:9-10). And, “For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved’” (10:13). No one is left out. “Whoever” means you.

How will they hear?

Paul asks a chain of questions: “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?” (10:14-15). He quotes Isaiah: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” (10:15). God uses ordinary people to share the news, and that includes you. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (10:17).

God is not finished with Israel

In chapter 11, Paul asks, “Has God cast away His people? Certainly not!” (11:1). God always keeps a remnant, a faithful group, and Paul himself is proof. He pictures an olive tree. Israel is the natural tree. Non-Jewish believers are like wild branches grafted in (11:17-24). Non-Jewish believers should not boast, because they are supported by the root. God is able to graft the natural branches back in too. Paul promises that God's story with Israel is not over.

Paul closes with a song of worship: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” (11:33). And, “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen” (11:36). When we cannot understand everything, we can still praise a God who is wise and good.

POINTING TO JESUS

Jesus came from Israel's family, fulfilled the law, and is the one Savior for Jew and non-Jew alike. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Salvation is as simple as confessing Jesus as Lord and believing that God raised Him from the dead.

TALK ABOUT IT

- How can we show love for people who do not believe in Jesus, instead of just arguing with them?
- What is the difference between trying to earn God's love and receiving it?
- What does Romans 10:9-10 say a person must do to be saved? Is there anyone it excludes?
- How can you be like the “beautiful feet” in Romans 10:15 this week?

ACTIVITY

Olive Tree: Draw a large tree on the board. Label the roots “God's promises,” the natural branches “Israel,” and the grafted branches “those from every nation who believe.” Have students write their names on paper leaves and attach them to the tree. Pray together for people who have not yet heard about Jesus.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

Paul was a Jew, trained under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), so his grief is genuine. In Rome, there was a large Jewish community, and many Gentile believers may have looked down on them. Paul writes in these chapters to prevent pride and to remind the Gentiles that they were grafted into a promise given first to Israel.

Chapters 9-11 are sometimes called Paul's discussion of Israel, and they have many Old Testament quotations. Paul quotes Hosea, Isaiah, Deuteronomy, Joel, and the Psalms. The “potter and clay” picture (9:20-21) comes from Isaiah 29:16 and Jeremiah 18. The olive tree is a Biblical symbol of Israel (Jeremiah 11:16, Hosea 14:6), and grafting wild branches into a cultivated tree was an unusual farming practice, which helps explain why Paul says it is “contrary to nature” (11:24).

Teaching note: Christians understand God's election and human responsibility in different ways. For middle school students, emphasize both truths Paul teaches: God is sovereign and His plan is good, and “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Encourage questions, but do not spend the whole session debating. Remember that confession of Jesus as “Lord” (10:9) was a bold statement in a world where people said “Caesar is lord.”

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. **sorrow** • 2. **end** • 3. **Lord** • 4. **hearing** • 5. **wisdom**

Memory verse: Romans 10:9

God's Faithful Plan

Romans 9:1-11:36

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: God is faithful to Israel and to the whole world: salvation is by faith for everyone who calls on Jesus, and God's wisdom and mercy are beyond measure.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: end • hearing • Lord • sorrow • wisdom

1. Paul had great _____ and grief for his own people.
2. Christ is the _____ of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
3. If you confess Jesus as _____ and believe God raised Him, you will be saved.
4. Faith comes by _____.
5. Oh, the depth of the riches of the _____ and knowledge of God!

THINK ABOUT IT

Who is someone you wish knew Jesus? What is one thing you could do to share His love with them?

What is the simplest way you would explain how to be saved?

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 10:9

“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Write down the names of three people who need Jesus. Pray for them every day this week, and look for one chance to say or do something kind that points them to Him.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think is the main message of Romans 9-11 about God's plan?

FEEL: How do you feel when you think about friends or family who do not know Jesus?

DO: What is one thing you will do this week to pray for or share Jesus with someone?

SESSION 12

A Living Sacrifice

Romans 12:1-13:14 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: Because of God's mercies, we offer our whole lives to Him, let Him renew our minds, and love others in practical ways.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

— Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 12:1-13:14, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Hold up a gift card or a wrapped present. Say: "Someone gave you this. How would you say thank you?" Take answers. Then say: "Paul says the best way to say thank you to God for saving us is to give Him our whole lives. Today we learn what that looks like in everyday life."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

Therefore!

Romans 12 starts with another big “therefore.” Paul has spent eleven chapters explaining God's mercy, and now he tells us what to do about it. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (12:1). Notice that Paul does not say, “Do this so God will love you.” He says, “Because God has already shown you mercy.” Obedience is a thank-you, not a payment.

In the Old Testament, sacrifices were animals that died. Jesus' sacrifice was once for all. Now God asks for a different kind: living sacrifices. We give Him our time, our talents, our eyes, our mouths, and our choices

every day.

A new way of thinking

Paul continues, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (12:2). The world is like a mold that tries to squeeze us into its shape. Instead, God changes us from the inside out. The word “transformed” is the same word used for a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Change begins in the mind, and it grows as we read God’s Word, pray, and spend time with other believers.

Paul adds a warning against pride: “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly” (12:3). Each of us is like a part of a body (12:4-8). We have different gifts, such as teaching, serving, encouraging, giving, and showing mercy, and we need each other. No one is unimportant.

Love in action

Verses 9 through 21 are like a list of what love looks like. “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good” (12:9). “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (12:10). “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (12:15). “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (12:18).

Paul even says to love enemies. “Repay no one evil for evil” (12:17). “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink” (12:20). The chapter closes with a rule to remember: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (12:21). That is exactly what Jesus did. He answered evil with love.

Respecting authority

Chapter 13 begins with how to treat government leaders. “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (13:1). In general, Christians are to respect laws, pay taxes, and honor those in charge. This is not because rulers are always perfect. It is because God is a God of order, and Christians are meant to be good citizens. (When rules clearly demand that we disobey God, we follow God, as the apostles did in Acts 5:29.)

Think about how this applies to your own life: teachers, parents, coaches, and school rules. A student who respects authority shows that he trusts God’s order.

Love fulfills the law, and put on Jesus

Paul sums it up: “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law” (13:8). “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (13:10). Then Paul reminds us that the time is short and Jesus is coming back. “The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (13:12). The chapter ends with a daily challenge: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (13:14). Each morning, we “put on” Jesus like clothing, and we take care not to plan ahead for sin.

POINTING TO JESUS

Jesus is the perfect living sacrifice and the perfect example of love. He gave His life, answered evil with good, and calls us to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” The more we look at Jesus, the more we are transformed into His image.

TALK ABOUT IT

- What do you think it means to present your body as a “living sacrifice”?
- What are some ways the world tries to squeeze you into its mold at school or online?
- Which of Paul's “love in action” commands is easiest for you? Which is hardest?
- Why do you think God wants us to respect authority even when it is hard?

ACTIVITY

Gift Wrap Yourself: Give each student a small gift tag. On one side, have them write something they want to give God (time, talent, attitude, habit). On the other, a person they want to love in a practical way this week. Have them tie the tag to a piece of ribbon and wear it as a bracelet. Pray together, offering these gifts to God.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

Paul's readers were used to animal sacrifices at temples. Pagan temples across Rome offered sacrifices, and Jewish believers knew the Temple system. When Paul says “living sacrifice,” he is saying something new: unlike a dead animal, a living sacrifice has to climb off the altar and keep serving every day. The phrase “reasonable service” can also be translated “spiritual worship.”

The picture of the church as a body (12:4-5) was a common Greek idea for a city or society. Paul uses it for the church, showing that every believer has a role. The gifts listed in 12:6-8 are different from the list in 1 Corinthians 12, which shows that Paul was not giving a complete list but a sample.

Romans 13:1-7 was written when Nero was relatively fair, in the early years of his reign. Later he turned violent. Christians still held to these principles, but they also understood that obedience to God comes first. Taxes in Rome were heavy, and tax collectors were hated. Paul still tells believers to pay what they owe. “Heaping coals of fire” (12:20) is a Hebrew idiom from Proverbs 25:21-22 that points to shaming an enemy by kindness so that he changes his heart, not to revenge.

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. **living** • 2. **transformed** • 3. **good** • 4. **authorities** • 5. **Jesus**

Memory verse: Romans 12:2

A Living Sacrifice

Romans 12:1-13:14

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: Because of God's mercies, we offer our whole lives to Him, let Him renew our minds, and love others in practical ways.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: authorities • good • Jesus • living • transformed

1. Present your bodies a _____ sacrifice.
2. Be _____ by the renewing of your mind.
3. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with _____.
4. Let every soul be subject to the governing _____.
5. Put on the Lord _____ Christ.

THINK ABOUT IT

What is one thing you could give to God as a “living sacrifice” this week?

Who is someone hard to love? What is one kind thing you could do for them?

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 12:2

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Each morning this week, say, “Lord, I give You my day.” Then choose one person to show kindness to, even if it is hard.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: What do you think it means to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind”?

FEEL: How do you feel about loving people who are hard to love?

DO: What is one thing you will give to God, or one act of love you will do, this week?

SESSION 13

Welcome One Another

Romans 14:1-16:27 • 45 minutes

Big Idea: Because Christ welcomed us, we welcome one another with patience and love, and we give all glory to God, who is able to establish us through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

— Romans 15:13 NKJV

SESSION FLOW (45 MINUTES)

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5	Welcome & Hook	Open with the illustration below. Greet students by name.
5–8	Open in Prayer	Pray, then read the passage aloud (Romans 14:1-16:27, NKJV). Review last week's memory verse.
8–25	Teach the Passage	Teach from the teaching sections below, using the slide deck.
25–35	Talk About It	Small groups discuss the four questions. Walk around and listen.
35–42	Activity	Do the hands-on activity below.
42–45	Close	Hand out the sheet, say the memory verse together, and pray. Invite students to use the app.

OPENING HOOK

Set up two chairs. Say: "One student likes pizza with pineapple, and the other thinks that is a crime." Let two volunteers argue playfully for a minute. Then ask: "Is this a big deal?" (No.) Say: "Christians sometimes argue over things that are not the main thing. Paul shows us how to handle that with love."

TEACHING THE PASSAGE

Disagreeing in love

Paul begins, “Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things” (14:1). In Rome, believers disagreed about food and special days. Some felt it was wrong to eat certain foods. Others felt free to eat anything. Some thought one day was more sacred than another. Paul says these are not the main things, and we should not look down on each other.

There are some things the Bible clearly commands, such as loving God, loving others, and trusting Jesus. But on questions the Bible does not settle, we should treat each other with patience. “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (14:10).

We belong to the Lord

Paul gives the reason: “For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's” (14:8). We belong to Jesus, and so do our brothers and sisters. “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God” (14:12). We are not each other's judges.

Paul also says to be careful not to make others stumble. If something we do, though not wrong, would hurt someone's faith, we should be willing to give it up. “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (14:17). And, “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another” (14:19).

Follow Jesus' example

In chapter 15, Paul says, “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (15:1). Jesus did not please Himself. He came to carry our burdens. Paul reminds us that the Old Testament was written to teach us: “that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (15:4).

The big command is, “Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God” (15:7). Think about how Jesus received you. He welcomed you before you were perfect. That is how we are to welcome one another. Paul also shows that the Good News is for all nations, quoting several Old Testament verses that say Gentiles will rejoice with God's people (15:9-12). Then he offers a prayer: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (15:13).

Paul's plans and Paul's friends

In the rest of chapter 15, Paul shares his goals. He wants to preach where Christ has not been named (15:20). He plans to visit Rome on his way to Spain, but first he must carry an offering to poor believers in Jerusalem (15:25-26). He asks the Romans to pray for him (15:30-32). Paul needed prayer too, just like us.

Chapter 16 reads like a list of friends, and it is beautiful. Paul greets more than two dozen people by name, including a woman named Phoebe who delivered the letter, Priscilla and Aquila who risked their lives for him, and many others. Paul shows that the Good News is about real people. The church is a family. He warns about those who cause divisions, and he promises that “the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly” (16:20).

Glory to God

Paul ends with a doxology, a song of praise: “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ... to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen” (16:25, 27). The whole letter has been about one thing: the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the power of God for salvation, the gift of righteousness, the love that cannot be broken, and the hope that fills us with joy.

POINTING TO JESUS

Jesus is our example of welcome, our judge and Lord, and the center of Paul's gospel from first to last. He received us, and now He asks us to receive one another. Romans begins and ends with “the gospel of Christ” and ends by giving glory to God “through Jesus Christ forever.”

TALK ABOUT IT

- What are some “doubtful things” Christians sometimes argue over today?
- Why does Paul say we should not judge our brother or sister in Christ?
- How did Jesus “receive” you? How can you receive others in the same way?
- Which lesson from Romans stands out most to you, and why?

ACTIVITY

Romans Road Review: Give each student a small card with one key verse from the series (1:16, 3:23, 5:8, 6:23, 8:1, 8:38-39, 10:9, 12:1-2, 15:13). Have them stand in a circle and share their verse and one sentence about why it matters. Then pray together, thanking God for the Good News. Hand out a certificate of completion if you wish.

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES

For your preparation. These notes give the history, culture, and setting behind the passage.

Roman Christians came from different backgrounds. Jewish believers often kept food laws and special days. Gentile believers saw no reason to do so. Meat sold in the Roman market was often first offered to idols, which troubled some believers. Paul explains that these are matters of conscience and that love matters more than winning an argument. “Weak” in 14:1 does not mean spiritually inferior. It means having a sensitive conscience.

Paul’s plan to go to Spain (15:24, 28) shows that his missionary heart reached to the farthest western edge of the known world. The offering for the poor in Jerusalem (15:25-27) was a gift collected from Gentile churches to help Jewish believers, a beautiful picture of unity. Paul wrote Romans before this trip and asked for prayer, since he knew it could be dangerous (Acts 20-21).

Romans 16 mentions more than two dozen people by name. It includes many women, such as Phoebe (a deacon or servant of the church at Cenchrea) and Priscilla. It also mentions Tertius, who wrote down the letter for Paul (16:22). The mention of households and house churches (16:5, 10-11, 14-15) shows how the church met. The final doxology (16:25-27) is a fitting end to the letter, repeating the themes of the gospel, the Scriptures, faith, and glory to God.

HANDOUT ANSWER KEY

1. **weak** • 2. **Lord's** • 3. **Christ** • 4. **hope** • 5. **glory**

Memory verse: Romans 15:13

Welcome One Another

Romans 14:1-16:27

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big Idea: Because Christ welcomed us, we welcome one another with patience and love, and we give all glory to God, who is able to establish us through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

WORD BANK: Christ • glory • hope • Lord's • weak

1. Receive one who is _____ in the faith.
2. Whether we live or die, we are the _____.
3. Receive one another, just as _____ also received us.
4. May the God of _____ fill you with all joy and peace.
5. To God, alone wise, be _____ through Jesus Christ forever.

THINK ABOUT IT

What is one person at church or school you need to welcome or stop judging?

Which of the 13 lessons in Romans helped you most? Write one sentence about it.

MEMORY VERSE — Romans 15:13

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

This week, welcome someone new or someone who is often left out. Then read Romans 1:16 and 15:13 together with a friend or family member.

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK: Looking back at all of Romans, what is the most important truth you learned?

FEEL: How do you feel about being part of God's family and welcoming others?

DO: What is one thing you will do after finishing Romans to keep growing in Jesus?

MEMORY VERSES FOR THE SERIES

Romans 1:16 — “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

Romans 1:20 — “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”

Romans 2:4 — “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

Romans 3:23-24 — “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 4:3 — “For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.””

Romans 5:8 — “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 6:23 — “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 7:24-25 — “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Romans 8:1 — “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

Romans 8:38-39 — “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 10:9 — “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Romans 12:2 — “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Romans 15:13 — “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

The Letter to the Romans for Middle School Youth was prepared by Ron Whittam of Quantum Reality Programming LLC. Visit qrprogramming.com or write to

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