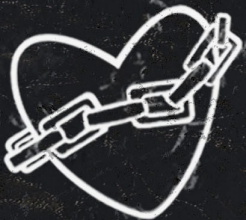


PART 1



The Gospel Life

Mankind's greatest problem



Romans 1-3:20



Fall Life Group Guide 2022

HOW THIS STUDY IS ORGANIZED

Each of the sections in this study is broken down into two parts.

From the Message:

To get the most out of this study, attend the worship services or listen to the message online. While you listen, take notes on the pages provided. Include your thoughts, questions, and insights. Make it a goal, whenever possible, to listen to the message before engaging in discussion with your life group.

Group Discussion:

It's challenging to unpack the full meaning of all the questions in this study without other peoples' perspective and insights. Joining together in a Life Group, with other believers will help you grow and develop your convictions and perspective in following Jesus as your leader.

Group discussions are comprised of three parts:



Share Together: Discussions will begin with a question that everyone can relate to; this time is designed to reiterate the unique relationship we share as believers and the importance of *belonging* in community.



Study Together: The depth of our conversations is found in the study of God's Word; this time reminds us of the sufficiency of Scripture and the importance of *believing* it has authority over all areas of life.



Challenge: This study ends with applying what you have learned; this is a time of reshaping our attitudes and behaviors in *becoming* disciples of Jesus.

IDEAS FOR GROUP TIME

1 be prepared. as students of the Word knowing and understanding the material ahead of time can lead to a vibrant group discussion. Consider underlining passages, making notes and being familiar with the material for when your group meets.

2 listen. we are a church family so be aware of how much you share and leave time for others. Listen closely to others' ideas and remember great conversations include everyone's thoughts and insights.

3 group talk. we are a community of believers and the time we share together should reflect a genuine level of care and concern for one another. Not every question needs to be answered by everyone and it is helpful to avoid getting off topic.

4 prayer. hearing each other's needs and taking them to Jesus is one of the most loving things we can do. Consider writing down prayer requests and following up with one another on how God is working in their life.

THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Share Together



Through studying Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, how are you looking to grow in your relationship with the Lord?

Study Together

1. Jesus had bought Paul with His own blood - he embraced that he was no longer his own, but that he belonged exclusively to Christ. How does the word "bond-servant" which means "slave" suitability describe the Christian's relationship to Christ?
2. How does being "called" by God emphasize the authority Paul received from God? This not simply Paul's word, but God's very word: In what manner would the early church have received this letter? What are the implications for anyone who receives and reads it today?
3. Paul connects being "called" with being "set apart" for the gospel of God. Discuss what it means to be "set apart;" then consider how purposeful Paul was in living for Christ alone. How does his example encourage or challenge you?
4. More frequent than any other New Testament letter, Paul's letter to Rome focuses on God more than any other topic. Why is Paul careful to describe it as the "gospel of God" and how would you describe the gospel of God to an unbelieving friend?



ROMANS 1:1

Notes

¹Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, is the good news from God and about God increasingly good news to you, news that you long to share with others?



TO THE NATIONS

Share Together



How would others describe your life purpose/focus? What would they say you are willing to do or sacrifice to live that out?

Study Together

1. The gospel wasn't Paul's idea, it comes right out of the Old Testament which he refers to as the "holy Scriptures." What do you think of when you hear the Scriptures called "holy"? Why is it important to see that the gospel was promised beforehand in the Scriptures (v. 2)? What difference does this make?
2. The gospel of God centers on the person of God – Jesus! In these verses how is Jesus' deity "declared" or made clear (v.3-4)? Why is the resurrection key to salvation and in sharing the good news?
3. Consider Paul's ministry (v. 5) and what he means by, "to bring about the obedience of faith." What did this look like for the early church and how are these two responses (resurrection and obedience of faith) intricately woven together for the disciple?
4. Paul's concern is for the nations - consider how his ministry reflected this; how does his example encourage or challenge you personally (v. 6)?



ROMANS 1:2-6

Notes

² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, in what circumstances is it easy for you to share Christ with others? In what circumstances is it difficult?



SERVING TOGETHER

Share Together



Who often encourages or challenges you in regard to your faith? Why is it important to get regular time with them so that you can encourage each other in your faith journeys?

Study Together

1. The gospel demands nothing, but gives everything. Paul says that he serves God in his spirit “in the [preaching of the] gospel of His Son” (v. 9). What does it look like to “serve with (our) spirit in the gospel,” to serve wholeheartedly?
2. What does it look like to mutually encourage one another with our faith (v. 12)? In what way can we use our unique talents to utilize a spiritual gift that strengthens others (v. 11)?
3. Paul hoped to join the church in Rome to help aid in their ministry efforts. What does Paul mean in saying, “I may reap some harvest among you” (v. 13)? Compare Luke 10:2 and Galatians 6:9. What do you imagine Paul’s efforts were to help aid them in their gospel influence?
4. As Paul wrote of himself in verse 15, we ought to be “eager to preach the gospel” to others! What are some common barriers disciples struggle with in sharing the gospel?



ROMANS 1:7-15

Notes

7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, how can the concept of being a debtor to lost people help us to share the gospel more often?



GOD IS REVEALED

Share Together



Have you ever had the privilege of relaying unexpected, good news to someone else? How did it make you feel to be able to tell good news?

Study Together

1. Discuss the power of the gospel as a group. Have you experienced the gospel's saving power in your life? How is the gospel a display of God's power (v. 16)?
2. If the gospel is indeed "the power of God," how is that power to be lived out among those who have embraced the gospel message?
3. Since the gospel is such good news, why does Paul address the tension of Christians being ashamed of it (v. 16)? Why are we tempted to be ashamed of the gospel, rather than extoll it and love it?
4. Consider what it means that salvation depends on God's righteousness and not our own righteousness. What do you think it means for God's righteousness to be revealed "from faith to faith"? What does it look like for "the righteous [to] live by faith" (v. 17)?



ROMANS 1:16-17

Notes

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, what fears might prevent you from sharing the gospel with others? How can we overcome these fears?



OUR PROBLEM

Share Together



What responses do you think we would get if we asked a random sample of people in our city, "What is wrong with the world?"

Study Together

1. Consider how the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Exodus 34:6 & Psalm 103:8) and yet how you've seen the wrath of God revealed throughout scripture. Discuss as a group, what is the cause of God's wrath; how "truth" is suppressed; and what precisely is the "truth" (v.18).
2. Paul is referring to God's general revelation in the created universe, not to His special revelation in His written word. What attributes of God does Paul say can be clearly seen from creation (v. 20)? Why is that important?
3. When Paul says, "their foolish heart was darkened," he is referring to their entire inner life, including their intellect, emotions, and will. Discuss how sin has affected our thinking (v. 21). When are we most tempted to trust our own thinking instead of God's revealed truth?
4. Even though God's glory can clearly be perceived in nature, why do people still deny His existence (v. 21-23)? Why are "glorifying God" and "giving thanks" key for a disciple? How can we practice these qualities more faithfully?



ROMANS 1:18-23

Notes

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, who in your life needs to understand the truth - that even in their own righteousness they are subject to God's judgement? How can you find an opportunity to talk to them this week?



THE ROOT CAUSE

Share Together



When was the last time that you got really, really lost. Where were you trying to go; where did you end up instead? How did it happen; what should you have done differently?

Study Together

1. Review verses 22-27. What three exchanges do people who do not honor or thank God make? (23,25,26). What is involved in each of these exchanges and why are they foolish?
2. When people reject God, He gives them over to their sins and consequences. What does it mean that "God gave them up" (v. 24,26,28)? In what sense is this an expression of God's wrath? How is it an expression of His love?
3. The root of sin is to reject the truth of God and to worship the creature rather than the Creator. Discuss how the reality of a Creator influences our discussion of sexuality. Why would someone worship something created, rather than the Creator (v. 25)? How does this help us better understand and respond to hot topics like gender identity, sexual orientation, and homosexuality (v. 26-27)?



ROMANS 1:24-27

Notes

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, how can the power of the gospel affect the depraved condition of those described in Romans 1:18-32? What do these verses reveal about the need for the gospel to spread?



LIFE WITHOUT GOD

Share Together



When you look around, what evidence do you see that we live in a fallen world? On the other hand, what evidence do you see that God is still at work?

Study Together

1. Sin begins when we purposefully shut God out of our lives. Consider what it means that “They did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer...(v. 28).” Why is it crucial to understand that sin begins in the mind (or heart)?

2. Read 1:28-31. What happens to a person or a society which does not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God? What happens to human relations? How does this contribute to our understanding of people and our society?



3. Notice the progression of the destruction of the individual, the family, and the society. Read verse 32. What destroys the moral foundations of society? Why?

4. Discuss: Are Christians giving approval to sin (v. 32) when they enjoy watching crass, lewd, and profane scenes on different media platforms?



ROMANS 1:28-32

Notes

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips,

30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, what hope could you offer one who has spent a lifetime suppressing the knowledge of God and failing to worship Him?



THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS

Share Together



Share why you think we are still prone to use excuses today as adults? What does our propensity to make excuses for ourselves reveal about the way we truly see ourselves?

Study Together

1. Paul is pointing out how prone we all are to condemn others and justify ourselves, even though we're guilty of the same sins that we're condemning in others (v. 1). What do we communicate about ourselves when we judge other people for their sins? What do we communicate about God?
2. Paul continues by saying, if you think that you can get away with sin because God is kind, tolerant, and patient, you're greatly mistaken -that His kindness should lead you to repentance, not to self-righteous complacency (v. 4). What does Paul mean by people can presume on the riches of God?
3. Consider Paul's description of the world and of the human heart up to this point in Romans, and how people misunderstand God's purpose in being kind and patient with the world. What keeps people from acknowledging and repenting of their sins (v. 4-5)? In what way does God's patience and kindness lead to repentance?
4. Discuss the following thought: a disciple regularly judges their own sins based on the standards of God's Word, which includes the sin of self-righteousness that stems from pride, and a true disciple is marked by broken and contrite hearts before God (Ps. 51:17). How has your understanding of sin changed as you've grown as a disciple? What does it look like to have a broken and contrite heart before God?



ROMANS 2:1-5

Notes

¹Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ²We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, what can you do to be more consistently aware of the kindness and patience God has shown you? How might such an awareness change the way you relate to the lost people God has placed in your life?



IMPARTIAL JUDGEMENT

Share Together



Which news stories or specific injustices make you the most upset?
What judgements do you tend to make toward the people involved in those situations?

Study Together

1. The main point is at the beginning and the end of this text; that God will judge each person impartially according to his deeds. What are the standards by which God will judge people?
2. Paul describes eternal life by four words: glory, honor, immortality (2:7), and peace (2:10). Using additional scripture discuss the meaning of each of these descriptions and what the believer has to look forward to.



3. Paul describes eternity for the unbeliever as being bound for wrath and fury along with tribulation and distress (2:8-9). Using scripture discuss the meaning of each of these descriptions and the judgement that awaits those who reject a gospel life.



4. How is God's character trait of impartiality good news to a desperate world? How can you show your gratitude to God and others that He is impartial?

ROMANS 2:6-11

Notes

6 He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality.

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, how has your appreciation of God's grace changed as you grow older? How has our study of Romans equipped you to better share His grace with others?



THE JUST JUDGE

Share Together



Have you ever been wrong about something important? What did it take to convince you that you were incorrect? How did you feel when you realized you were wrong?

Study Together

1. In verses 12-16 Paul is establishing the point of verse 11, "For there is no partiality with God." God will judge everyone with perfect justice. How will those who know God's law be treated compared to those who never heard God's law? (2:12-15)
2. Every culture has standards of right and wrong that often coincide with God's Law; are these verses in Romans saying that there is hope of works-based salvation for the unbeliever?
3. Everyone has a conscience that condemns them when they violate what they know to be right and wrong (v. 15). Why is the conscience not a totally reliable guide? What role does the scripture and the Spirit have on someone's conscience? Should we ever go against our conscience? Why or why not?
4. Why is it important to emphasize that God will judge our secrets (2:16)? What practical implications does this have?



ROMANS 2:12-16

Notes

12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, is the good news from God and about God increasingly good news to you, news that you long to share with others?



MISAPPLIED TRUTH

Share Together



Think back to when you were a child. What's the best or most creative excuse you ever used with someone in authority to avoid taking responsibility for something you had done wrong?

Study Together

1. The Jews were hypocrites just the same as the Gentiles without the Law; they knew and taught the Law, but did not keep it (see Matthew 23:3 & 13-23). In what were the people Paul addressed in these verses trusting?
2. Instead of being a light to the nations, the Jews brought dishonor to the name of God with their evil, prideful, and hypocritical conduct. How does trusting in our own self-righteousness result in the name of God being blasphemed among non-believers (v. 24)?
3. How can trusting in your own acts of righteousness actually dishonor the sacrifice of Jesus?
4. What "absolutely not" questions/statements does Paul make in verses 4,6, & 9? In your own words, how would you describe God from these verses?



ROMANS 2:17-3:9

Notes

1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? 4 By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written,

"That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

5 But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)

6 By no means! For then how could God judge the world? 7 But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? 8 And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

9 What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, **Romans 3:1-9**

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, when you're sharing Christ with a person who is raising objections, how can you know whether they are trying to justify their sin or whether they are sincerely seeking answers? How should you respond in either case?



ALL UNDER SIN

Share Together



What does it mean to “get your hopes up”? Have you ever gotten your hopes up about something that didn't work out? What happened? How did you feel?

Study Together

1. Consider how Paul portrayed humanity in these verses? In your own words, how would you describe the condition of people (vv. 10-20)? Which description of unrighteousness from this passage do you think best fits modern society? Why?
2. How do you reconcile verse 11 with the many Scriptural references to people seeking God? If no one can seek God unless God first seeks him, is it futile to exhort sinners to seek the Lord? Why or why not?
3. When you tell people that they have sinned against the holy God, you will often hear, “God knows that I've done the best that I could.” Is it enough to explain in general terms that we all have sinned? How can we properly use God's Law to show lost people their true guilt before God?
4. These verses seem hopeless for humankind; however, verse 20 offers hope in the midst of the hopeless situation. We cannot be justified by the law. We cannot earn our salvation—how is this a good thing?



ROMANS 3:10-20

Notes

10 as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one;

11 *no one understands;
no one seeks for God.*

12 *All have turned aside; together they
have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one."*

13 *"Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive."
"The venom of asps is under their lips."*

14 *"Their mouth is full of curses
and bitterness."*

15 *"Their feet are swift to shed blood;
16 in their paths are ruin and misery,
17 and the way of peace they have
not known."*

18 *"There is no fear of God before
their eyes."*

19 *Now we know that whatever the law
says it speaks to those who are under the
law, so that every mouth may be stopped,
and the whole world may be held
accountable to God. 20 For by works of
the law no human being will be justified in
his sight, since through the law comes
knowledge of sin.*

Scripture Reference

Challenge

As ambassadors, do you know anyone who is without hope? If so, how can you share the hope of Christ with them this week?





at Snohomish Community Church

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