

A REAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

7th Grade

Chicago CBF



Developmental Bible Studies for 7th Grade

A Real Christian Life: Developmental Bible Studies for 7th Grade
Chicago Children's Bible Fellowship 2018
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A Note on using these materials

I would personally like to thank you for your decision to guide young children to know Christ. As you look through these materials, you will find a teacher page that breaks down the 3 main points of the lesson. You will also find copies of the lessons which are numbered and include: An Introduction, Questions, and room for the children to write a small reflection on how they put God's word to practice. There are 46 lessons in this book which covers an entire year's worth of Bible study among the Gospels and Epistles. Ultimately, it is to your superb judgment on how the lessons are paced throughout the year. Feel free to make copies or ask questions about the materials that have been prepared for you. And as always, stay blessed, be prayerful, and have fun serving God!

They Will Call Him Immanuel

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, 'God with us.'"

Matthew 1:18-25

Key Verse: 1:23

Have you ever had to **wait** a long time for something you **really wanted**? Did you ever **wait** in a long line to get **something great**? What was the **feeling** when it was **finally time**?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 18. How was Jesus' parents' marriage almost ended? What might Joseph have thought? What did he plan to do and how does it show his character?

Read verse 20. What did the angel tell Joseph to do? Read verses 24-25. How did Joseph respond? Do you think this was easy for him to do? **What does it mean to have faith? How do you think he must have felt knowing who his son would be?**

Read verse 21. Why was Jesus born as a man? **Do you feel that you need to be saved from your sins?**

Read verses 22 and 23. Was Jesus' birth some sudden new idea God had in OAD? (see Isaiah 7:14; 9:6,7) **What does it mean to you that God planned for thousands of years to save us?**

Application: What does the name "Immanuel" mean to you? Do you want Jesus to be with you?

They Will Call Him Immanuel

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, 'God with us.'"

How I Put God's Word into Practice

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

*How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?
What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?
What changes should I personally make in my life?*

PRAYER TOPICS:

Rejoice that Jesus came for You

They Will Call Him Immanuel

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, 'God with us.'"

Teacher's Sheet
Matthew 1:18-25
Key Verse: 1:23

- ❖ As this is the first study of Matthew, keep the focus on Jesus and not on Joseph as some students may not know Jesus. Rather than focusing on his faith, focus on why hearing who Jesus would be melted all his doubts and allowed him to make such a decision of faith.
- ❖ Think about how amazing it would have been for a Jew to hear that the Messiah was finally going to be born, explain the anticipation that and joy Joseph would have felt.
- ❖ In life, we need to live by faith and not by feelings—like Joseph did—but we do this not by sheer willpower but because of the joy that is in our hearts at who Jesus is.

The Magi's Pilgrimage

"...and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.'"

Matthew 2:1-12

Key Verse: 2:2

What gets you really **excited**, what do you **love** to talk about? What do you always find yourself **thinking** about? Or something you collect, books you **love**, games you **can't stop** playing?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 1-2. When and why did the Magi come? What does it mean to worship? (look at Deuteronomy 6:5, John 4:23, 1 Corinthians 10:31) **Why would they come so far to worship a baby?**

Read verses 3-4. What effect did their questions have on King Herod and the people of Jerusalem? Read verses 7-8. How did Herod try to use the Magi and why?

Read verses 5-6. How is Jesus a different kind of king from Herod? **How does it make you feel to know that our King Jesus shepherds us rather than ruling over us?**

Read verses 9-10. Why were the Magi so joyful to see the star and find Jesus? Why did they lay down their greatest treasures at Jesus' feet?

Application: What would you lay down at the feet of king Jesus? Do you want to worship King Jesus?

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THE MAGI'S PILGRIMAGE

"...and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.'"

Teacher Sheet
Matthew 2:1-12
Key Verse: 2:2

- ❖ Worship is intense love for something. When God is the object of our worship we express it not only in singing, but in acts of service, obedience, prayer, reading his word, love for Bible study and desire to become like him—in other words it is all our life, everything we do. The object of our love, consumes all our thought world and therefore actions.
- ❖ When something else is the object of our worship, naturally, it will pull us away from God and make our heart sick and ultimately leave us feeling unsatisfied.
- ❖ There is nothing and no one else in this world that is worthy of our worship than Jesus our true King. We happily and willingly lay down our treasures and our life at his feet because we love our gentle shepherd king.

Salt of the Earth; Light of the World

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.”

Matthew 5:1-16
Key Verse: 5:13-14

What is your **influence**? Are people around you **influenced** by you? Some way you **talk**, what you **talk** about, what you **like**, what/who you don't **like**, the way you **dress** or what you're **good** at?

Discussion Questions

What does it mean to be “blessed”? What is the best blessing? (Gen 15:1) Read verse 3. How does a person become ‘poor in spirit’? What is Jesus’ promise to them? Read verse 4. When do people usually mourn? What blessing is given to them?

Read verse 5. Can you think of examples of people who were/are meek? What blessing is given to them? Read verse 6. What does it mean to “hunger and thirst for righteousness”? What blessing is given them?

Read verse 7. What is mercy? How does a person become merciful? What blessing is given to them? Read verse 8. What does “pure in heart” mean? How can we be pure in heart? What blessing is given to them?

Read verse 9. How can we be peacemakers? What blessing is given to them? Try to imagine all the qualities of verses 1-9 in one person, what would they be like? Read verses 10-12. What does “persecuted” mean? How does God reward those persecuted for his name?

Read verses 13-16. **What effect do salt and light have on everything around them?**

Application: According to the Beatitudes, how can we be salty salt and the light of the world?

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Teacher Sheet
Matthew 5:1-16
Key Verse: 5:13-14

- ❖ A person who follows all the beatitudes may seem like a wimp to the kids (though they may not admit it). So, emphasize that this is the way people in heaven act and since we are from the earth people here live by a different and incorrect set of rules.
- ❖ Kids like rewards, and it is an emphasis of this passage—in fact they are the greatest rewards a Christian could hope for. Emphasize the fact that God loves such people and showers them with blessings.
- ❖ The main point is influence. Discuss how often though we are Christians, no one can tell by our actions. Though we say we want to spread Christ, our actions are just like everyone else and we instead spread worldly bad habits just like everyone else. Think about what the world would be like if everyone acted like these beatitudes—it would be heaven!

Be Perfect by God's Grace

"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Matthew 5:17-48

Key Verse: 5:48

Have you ever been **pressured** into doing something? Did you ever experience **peer pressure** to do something like **everyone else** when actually it's not you? What is the number one **peer pressure** for kids?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 21 and 22. Why is anger like breaking the 6th commandment? Read verses 23 and 24. **How can we be peacemakers at home and school?** (see 5:9)

Read verses 27 and 28. Why do we (both boys and girls) need to control our eyes? Read verses 29 and 30. **How does Jesus say we need to deal with the sin of looking at each other the wrong way or looking at bad things on the internet to be free?**

Read verses 38. How do we usually treat those who hurt us, steal from us, or make fun of us? Read verses 39-44. How does Jesus say we should treat them and even more treat our enemies? Read verse 45. **How can we show ourselves to be children of God as we do this?**

Read verse 48. **Why did God set the standard so high? How does Jesus cover our sins and perfect us?**

Application: Have you tried to reach God's standard or settled for being "good enough" "like everyone else"?

Be Perfect as God is Perfect

"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

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“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Teacher Sheet
Matthew 5:17-48
Key Verse: 5:48

- ❖ This lesson can easily just become a lesson in morality, which is not Christianity. The point of the lesson is not to act like a good Christian, but our sincere desire to become more like Jesus. The concept of being sanctified (made more like Jesus) is not new but was the spirit of the Law as expressed in Leviticus as well: “be holy as I am holy.” In both cases it is our love for God that makes us want to be like him, it is about relationship not morality—which is why the Jews never were able to keep the law, but Christians with a new heart can to some extent.
- ❖ However, again this is not the point of the passage: try to be perfect like Jesus. Rather, Jesus is taking the high standard and making it even higher and even adding loving your enemies and doing good to those who harm us makes us realize that this is totally beyond our human ability. Our kids cannot try to be perfect—but many do stress themselves out to no end trying because they’re taught based on rules and not grace. This standard makes us realize our great need for Jesus’ blood.
- ❖ When we are covered by the blood of Jesus we will begin to become like this. It is strange to the world but this is the way people act in heaven. Eventually, we will all be glorified and made perfect like Jesus but only in heaven.

Live Before Your Father God

"Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:1-8;16-18

Key Verse: 6:4b

Have you ever **secretly** done something good? Did anyone ever **find out**? How did it feel to keep it a **secret**? Was it different than the times you were **noticed** for what you did?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 2a,5a,16a. What is the meaning of "righteousness"? What 3 "acts of righteousness" are mentioned here? Read verse 1. **Why should acts of righteousness be done secretly?**

Look at verses 1,2,4,5,6,16,18. How many times is "reward" mentioned? Look again at verses 2 versus 4, 5 versus 6, 16 versus 18. What two kinds of rewards do you find? What are the rewards God gives?

Read verses 2-4. Why must we give to the needy (see also 2Cor 9:7; Ac 20:35b)? **How should we give and how should we not give?**

Read verse 5-6 and 16-18. What are prayer and fasting? What are "hypocrites" and "pagans"? How do they pray and fast? How should we pray and fast? **What do we learn about showing off in this lesson?**

Application: How can you live as a real Christian in your private time?

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"Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

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"Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Teacher Sheet
Matthew 6:1-8;16-18
Key Verse: 6:4b

- ❖ Kids are always looking for attention. If they don't get it from the good things they do, then they start acting out to get negative attention because they desperately need love. So, when they do good things it is primarily to get our praise. It is therefore hard to teach them to do things in secret because there is no instant gratification. So, the most important thing in teaching this lesson is that they have a personal relationship with God, to the point that he is so real to them that they can physically, emotionally and spiritually feel his pleasure at the good they do. Aside from this, this is yet another teaching in morality.
- ❖ Ultimately, it is the type of person that we are in secret that should define us. What we do in public is like the facade of a building, what we do in private really defines who we are on the inside and the type of man or woman our kids will grow into. Hypocrisy is the one thing that really makes Jesus angry. Help them to understand that special pride we can take in knowing we are living the right way before God with no acting and no matter what anyone else thinks.
- ❖ Make the emphasis of this passage be about reward. Human praise is a shallow earthly reward that doesn't last and it robs us of our heavenly reward. But if we do our good deeds in secret for God he will give us a greater reward than we could possibly imagine, no good deed will be left unrewarded.

Seek First His Kingdom

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Matthew 6:19-34

Key Verse: 6:33

What is your **prized possession** or at least your most **expensive**? How much **time** do you spend with this thing? What would you do if it **burned** or **broke** today?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 25. **Why do people worry all the time and why shouldn't they worry?**

Why shouldn't we worry about wearing Abercrombie, Hollister, Aeropostale or whatever is considered "cool"? (26-27) **Why shouldn't we worry about having enough money to eat McDonald's or buy Slurpees everyday?** (28-31)

What spiritual problem is at the root of worry? (30b-32) **How should Christians be different than Pagans (unbelievers)?**

Read verse 33. How can we seek God and his kingdom first? **How is this verse the point of the whole lesson?** What is God's promise to those who do this?

Application: How can we overcome all sorts of materialism and love of the world that pulls us away from God and seek him first?

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PRAYER TOPICS:

Stuff won't make you happy and it can't save you, only God

Seek First His Kingdom

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Teacher Sheet
Matthew 6:19-34
Key Verse: 6:33

- ❖ We live in a society that encourages and thrives on materialism. We need to discuss with our kids the commercials and magazine ads and so many ways the world tries to get us to live for stuff, entertainment and pleasures and how these things pull us farther and farther from God.
- ❖ Materialism is fueled by greed and covetousness—the 10th commandment. It is a basic dissatisfaction with what God has decided we need and we want more and more with no end. This wanting to be my own god makes us also worry all the time because we don’t believe God can or will provide for my needs. Ultimately, verse 24 wraps it all up, we will serve one god or another, either self and sinful desires God doesn’t want us to have or God.
- ❖ Seeking first God and his kingdom is not the magic recipe to get what we want. Rather, when he is the first and only thing we seek, we will learn to be content with what we have. Being content frees us from greed and all sorts of idolatry. What God wants for me, he will provide out of his love and it will be exactly what is best for me.

The Wise and Foolish Builder

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

Matthew 7:13-29

Key Verse: 7:24

Do you have more **friends** or **acquaintances**? How do you differentiate between the two? What do you **expect** from a **friend**? How do you **treat** your **friends**?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 13-14. **How can we live for Jesus if the whole world is going the wrong way?**

Read verse 15-20. How can we recognize fake Christians? Read verse 22. Look at the amazing things that false disciples can do. Do they look like good Christians? Read verse 23. What is their inner problem revealed by Jesus? **How can we have a real relationship with Jesus?**

Read verses 24. How can we wisely build our house on the rock? Read verse 25. What is the result? **What storms have and are going to come against your house?**

Read verse 26. How does the foolish builder live? Read verses 27, 23, 19, 13. What happens to those who build foolishly?

Application: How are you building your life what are you building on and how can you build better? Are you going to be able to stand the storm of final judgment?

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Matthew 7:13-29
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- ❖ While there are four very separate and important lessons to be learned here, don't go into the details of each but focus on the main point of building our life upon a relationship with Jesus. Narrow Gate=don't follow the world building easy houses on sand; False prophets=learn to recognize fake Christians by the fruit of their life; False disciples=Even those who do incredible things and look like amazing Christians are foolish builders if they have no relationship with Jesus. Works are not the rock only Jesus himself can be the foundation of our life. Jesus said in John that the way to love him is to obey his commands. Here also Jesus says that the wise builder is the one who puts his words into practice. So, through deep Bible study kids can come to know Jesus personally and build a firm foundation.
- ❖ Bible study should not focus on learning facts but on putting the word into practice. Every week kids write testimonies where they say they repent of x,y,z but then it comes up again next week, and the next week, and the rest of the year. This is not putting it into practice. A person who isn't smart but puts one thing into practice is better than a genius who knows everything but does none of it. In fact, the Jewish understanding of “to know” is that we do it.
- ❖ Our kids need a firm foundation because we live in a world determined to knock their house down. They will be constantly challenged and they need a strong foundation. In this generation they must build well through really studying the Bible to know the truth and put it in their heart or they will not be able to stand.

The Centurion's Faith

"Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."

Matthew 8:5-13
Key Verse: 8:10b

Have you ever baked a cake? Do you like baking? What happens, when you **follow the recipe** versus not **following the recipe**?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 5 and 6. Who came to Jesus and what did he ask for? What is a centurion? What was unusual about this centurion?

Read verses 7-9. What did Jesus offer to do? What did the centurion ask for instead and why? What did he believe about Jesus' word? **Why did he believe this?**

Read verses 10-13. How did Jesus praise the centurion's faith? How did he challenge his own people the Jews? What did Jesus do for the centurion?

How strong is your faith in the Word of God? Do you believe that prayer can heal others? Do you have faith that one word from God can do anything?

Application: Do you ever pray for others with faith that it will help them? Who can you pray for?

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Teacher's Sheet
Matthew 8:5-13
Key Verse: 8:10b

- ❖ A centurion is a commander of a unit of Roman soldiers—at least 100, but could be 200 to 1000 soldiers. Centurions were generally calloused since they saw death on a daily basis, compassion was not one of their strong suits. Our kids also live in a calloused environment where compassion is only shown to people they value like family and friends. But this centurion showed compassion to a seemingly useless member of society. Encourage compassion in your kids leading by example.
- ❖ The centurion had no sense of entitlement like so many today. He humbly submitted to Jewish custom that did not allow for a Jew to enter a Gentile's house. As a centurion he was used to absolute obedience. In the army, if soldiers start questioning the commands given to them, very soon there will be disaster. He believed that Jesus was commander of the heavenly forces and as such his word had absolute weight. His faith was that Jesus is Lord of all, which is what the Bible says.
- ❖ Jesus expects this kind of faith from his people=absolute faith in his word, faith that He is Lord of all and his word has life-giving power.

Sending the Twelve

“Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: ‘the kingdom of heaven has come near.’”

Matthew 10:1-15

Key Verses: 6,7

When was the last road trip you took? Where did you go? How long did you travel? How did it feel to leave your familiar surroundings and go someplace new?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 1-4. Who are the twelve disciples? What do you know about them? What kind of authority did Jesus give them? **Would you like to have this kind of authority?**

Read verses 5-6. To whom did Jesus send the disciples on their first mission trip? Why? Read verse 7. What message should they proclaim? What does this mean? Read verse 8. What actions would support their message?

Read verses 9-10. Did they take any luggage? What did they take? How could they support themselves (look at 10b-11)? **What could they learn through this experience?**

Read verses 11-15. Whom should they seek out in each town or village? What makes a person “worthy” or “unworthy”? How would a worthy person be blessed? If the disciples were rejected, what should they do? **What happens to people, who reject the gospel?**

Application: Are there “worthy” people in your class or on your sports team or in your neighborhood? How can they be blessed?

Jesus is sending YOU to the lost people around you

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Teachers Sheet
Matthew 10:1-15
Key Verses: 6,7

- ❖ The disciples were ordinary people from all walks of life. They neither had seminary degrees nor fancy pedigrees. But they had received authority from Jesus to share the message of the kingdom and to heal, even raise the dead. The kingdom of heaven had come near because Jesus was near. Wherever Jesus is there is the kingdom. Our kids are still young, but if they believe in Jesus, they are authorized to share the gospel.
- ❖ Sometimes we think that in order to carry out God's mission we have to travel to another country, but Jesus sent the disciples to the lost sheep of Israel first. We can start right here at home.
- ❖ We have to learn to depend on God rather than depend on money or material. This way we can experience God's power.
- ❖ A "worthy" person is someone, who values the gospel message and is willing to accept it. We don't have to feel bad when we are rejected, rather we should feel bad for the ones who reject Jesus, for they will face judgment without a defender.

“Come to Me”

“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:1-30
Key Verse 11:28

Do you ever feel weary=tired, worn out, exhausted? What makes you feel burdened?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 16-19. What was the response of their contemporaries to Jesus and John? Why might people have responded in this way? **Do you feel indifferent to the gospel message sometimes?**

Read verses 20-24. Why did Jesus pronounce woes over the towns where most of his miracles had been performed? **What should be our response when we witness great work of God?**

Read verses 25-27. What did Jesus praise God for? **Who can know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven?**

Read verses 28-30. What was Jesus’ invitation? What is a yoke? How does a yoke make the burden lighter? Look at Isaiah 40:28-29. How does the Messiah help us? What does verse 29 reveal about Jesus’ nature? What does Jesus promise?

Application: What burden do you need to bring to Jesus this week? How can you take his yoke upon you and learn from him?

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Teachers Sheet
Matthew 11:1-30
Key Verse 11:28

- ❖ John’s disciples might have expected Jesus to break him out of prison and make a political statement. But Jesus just kept teaching the gospel. Could that really be the Messiah? Their expectations were not based on the Word of God, but on their own desires and political ambitions. Jesus taught them about John and about his own work from the Bible. We can expect Jesus and God’s servants to fulfill the Word of God. False expectations will leave us sorely disappointed.
- ❖ The response of Jesus’ contemporaries was indifference and ridicule. The enemy tells us that it is ok to make fun of gospel workers and that their message is boring. But those who choose to ignore Jesus have no recourse when it comes time to be weighed on the goodness scale as we saw in the video last Saturday.
- ❖ Jesus praised God for revealing the secrets of the kingdom of heaven to little children. God loves the weak and vulnerable, he loves little children. What a privilege to serve in CBF!
- ❖ We may think that children are full of energy and never grow tired. Whoever thinks that has never tried to get a teenager out of bed in the morning. Isaiah 40:28-29 teaches us that even youth grow weary and tired. Excessive homework, burdensome testing, parents’ expectations can make our kids weary and tired—aside from their own sin problems. But Jesus can help us, he promises to give us rest. A yoke ties an old experienced ox to a younger one, so they can work together—their strength will be pooled and the younger one can learn from the older one. When we are yoked to Jesus, we can experience this ourselves.

Why We Must Be Thankful

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

What is the biggest thing you ever did to say thanks to someone? Why were you so thankful? What was their response? How did it make you feel?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 16. How can we always be “joyful?” **What kinds of joy are there in the world? What kind of joy was Paul talking about here?**

Read verse 17. What does it mean to “pray continually?” What kind of prayer is this? **What happens when we do so?**

Read verse 18. Why should we give thanks in ALL circumstances (All the time no matter what)? **What happens when we do not thank God?**

What if something bad happens to us, can we be thankful? How were the first Pilgrims in America thankful? What were they thankful for?

Why is it important to thank God? What are you thankful for this thanksgiving?

Application: List your thanksgiving topics as many as you can think of. Especially find as many complaining topics as you can and find a way to give thanks for them from God’s perspective by faith.

Why We Must Be Thankful

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

How I Put God’s Word into Practice

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?

What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?

What changes should I personally make in my life?

PRAYER TOPICS:

Giving thanks is the secret to real happiness and joy

Why We Must Be Thankful

*“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

Teachers Sheet
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

- ❖ Why should we be “joyful” always? (What is Joy [as opposed to happy feelings] and what do we always have to be Joyful about?)
- ❖ Why should we always “pray?” (Pray for what? And why non-stop?)
- ❖ How can we “give thanks” always? (Good times and Bad regardless of our circumstances)

The Greatest Treasure is Jesus

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”

Matthew 13:24-52

Key Verse: 13:44

Have you ever gone on a treasure/scavenger hunt? How did you do it?
What was the treasure?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 24-29 (see also verses 37-43). In the parable of the weeds, who is the sower? What is the field? The good seed? The weeds? The enemy? Why couldn't they just pull out the weeds?

What does this teach about the kingdom of God?

Read verses 31-32. How is the kingdom of heaven like a mustard seed? Read verse 33. How is the kingdom of heaven like yeast? **How are these two parables similar; how are they different?**

Read verses 44-46. **How do the parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl show the supreme value of the kingdom of God?** What does “sell everything” mean? **What is the greatest treasure** (Phil 3:8-9)? **Ask yourself: “Is Jesus #1 in my heart or #10 or #252?” if he were #252, would you feel comfortable when comes that you are going to heaven?**

Read verses 47-50. What does the parable of the net teach about the kingdom of heaven? What makes us good or bad fish?

Application: How can you spread the kingdom, grow it, treasure it and spread the net wide?

If the kingdom is our treasure share it

The Greatest Treasure is Jesus

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”

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Teachers Sheet
Mt 13:24-52
Key Verse: 13:44

- ❖ Wheat and weeds grow together. At harvest time they will be separated. In this world Christian kids grow together with non-Christian kids. We may be concerned about the bad influence of the "weeds", but God is patient and reserves judgment for himself and for judgment day. We should be careful not to judge others, thinking as his servants we should be pulling the weeds out.
- ❖ The kingdom of heaven is always growing like a mustard seed from seemingly insignificant to huge. Its influence is like yeast that is tiny, but once activated will expand the dough.
- ❖ The treasure and the pearl both hold extreme value. The treasure is hidden, so we must seek it out and it does not come with instant gratification. To "sell everything" may mean to repent of worldly attachments. Jesus is the greatest treasure for He holds the key to the kingdom of heaven. Only through him are we deemed "good enough".
- ❖ Good fish are fulfilling their purpose. People are both good and bad. It depends on whether or not we know Jesus to be chosen as "good fish"

“Great Faith”

“Then Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, you have great faith.’”

Matthew 15:1-28

Key Verse: 28a

Have you ever met kids who feel entitled to everything who always make demands and think they deserve everything without working for it? What do you think about them? Why are they like that?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 21-24. Where is the region of Tyre and Sidon? What kind of people lived there? What problem did a Canaanite woman bring to Jesus? What did she believe about him?

Why didn't Jesus answer her? Is he a racist? What was his main Messianic mission? **When God does not answer your prayer right away, do you give up?**

Read verses 25-28. Look at the woman's response. **Was she angry because her Canaanite pride was hurt? What does verse 25 reveal about her?**

What did Jesus mean when he said, “it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.”? How did the woman reply? **What was her attitude before Jesus? What was her faith?**

What was Jesus' response? Why is her faith “great”? **Do you have such a humble attitude before God or do you make demands? How are we all like dogs? Do you believe that Jesus is more powerful than the devil, that even one crumb from Jesus' hand can defeat the enemy?**

Application: How can you humble yourself before God this week? Are there areas where you've been making demands of God and can you accept crumbs instead?

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“Great Faith”

“Then Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, you have great faith.’”

Teachers Sheet
Matthew 15:1-28
Key Verse: 28a

- ❖ Tyre and Sidon is Gentile territory. After being attacked by the Pharisees Jesus withdrew to Gentile territory, where he seems to be much more welcomed than among his own people. After this he immediately goes back to the Sea of Galilee, so it is possible that he only came here for the sake of this woman or rejected by the Jews to show his disciples the faith of the Gentiles in comparison. It really reveals the way in which Jesus’ ministry had spread, that even in the Gentile region the people knew about him and had faith in him.
- ❖ Jesus was sent to the children of Israel, not to unbelieving idol worshippers. Jesus is not a racist, who discriminates against people because of their nationality (see the Samaritan woman or the Gerasene demoniac). Maybe Jesus wanted to take the opportunity to show his disciples the contrast between the pride of the Pharisees and the humility of the Canaanite woman. Gentiles were considered unclean, but her faith made this woman clean.
- ❖ We can learn persistent humble prayer from this woman—lose our sense of entitlement and acknowledge that we do not deserve anything, it is only by God’s mercy we are saved. In the cross Jesus has already given each of us everything we need and far more than we could ever deserve whatever crumbs he gives to us unworthy dogs is more than we deserve—this should be our attitude, then we are glad for anything and everything God gives us.
- ❖ The woman could have said, “I will never share my testimony again, if I am only shamed and put down in front of others.” But she did not care. She was already on the ground, broken because of her daughter’s demon-possession. She was ready to do whatever it took to save her child. She believed that Jesus had the power to do so. She recognized him as Lord. Just one crumb from Jesus’ hand would be enough to defeat the devil and free her child.

“Who Do You Say I Am?”

“Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.””

Matthew 16:1-20

Key Verse: 16:16

Have you ever seen a celebrity’s Instagram or twitter account? Do you think this is a good way to find out who they really are? What is the best way to get to know a person?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 1-4. How did the Pharisees and Sadducees try to test and discredit Jesus? What did Jesus say about sign seeking? What is the sign of Jonah?

Read verses 5-12. What did Jesus warn the disciples about? What did the disciples think he meant? What did Jesus really mean?

Read verses 13-18. What question did Jesus ask the disciples? What was the popular opinion? What second question did Jesus ask? **Why is this an important question for you and me as well?** What was Simon Peter’s answer? How could Peter make such a confession about Jesus? **Who do you say Jesus is? Why?**

Read verses 19-20. How did Jesus promise Peter? What is the rock on which Jesus will build his church? How will this church be victorious? What are the keys to the kingdom? **Do we have access to these keys?**

Application: How can you make such a confession about Jesus? What is your confession and how are you living it out?

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PRAYER TOPICS:

“Who Do You Say I Am?”

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Teachers Sheet
Matthew 16:1-20
Key Verse: 16:16

- ❖ The Pharisees and Sadducees did not come with pure motive. The Bible says, they came “to test” Jesus. He should give another sign to prove that he is the Messiah. This is an attitude of unbelief and with the motivation to discredit Jesus if he cannot produce the sign they demand on the spot. Jesus had already given so many signs: healing, driving out demons, feeding the 5000 and then the 4000--how many signs are necessary for us to put our faith in Him? The sign of Jonah (death and resurrection) was the only sign they would get.
- ❖ The yeast of the Pharisees is their bad influence of unbelief.
- ❖ The popular opinion was that Jesus was John the Baptist (Herod thought that), Elijah (a man of God with a powerful spirit), Jeremiah (a prophet). Everybody thought that Jesus was a good man, a good teacher, a man of God, but none recognized him for who he really was. Peter knew Jesus intimately, he had seen him walk on water, and he had heard his teaching publicly and privately. He had a hunch that Jesus was more than a man; he was the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus says that this was revealed to him by God. It was the work of the Holy Spirit in Peter. Likewise, when the Holy Spirit works in us, we can make a confession of Christ as well. The church is the gathering of those who confess Jesus as their Savior and worship him as God. Anyone who confesses Christ can join. Pray that your children may have such a confession.
- ❖ Jesus would build his church on Peter’s confession of Christ. “Peter” literally means “rock”. Peter was the first to enter Jesus’ church through his confession of faith. He laid a foundation that others could follow. Jesus would give him the keys to the kingdom, not just one key for Peter to enter, but multiple keys. These keys have been given to the church. When we share the gospel and the Holy Spirit works, the doors of the kingdom open and people can enter God’s presence through Christ’s forgiveness and cleansing.

God's Best Gift to Us

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

What is the best Christmas gift you ever got? How long had you wanted it? How long did the excitement last after getting it? Do you still have it? Use it?

Discussion Questions

What does it mean that Jesus was "born" or "given" to us? How was Jesus born? **How does Jesus' birth show God's love for all people? How does Jesus' birth show God's love for YOU?**

What is a "government?" What does it mean that the government will be on his shoulders? (Mt 2:2) **What does this show about Jesus?**

What does the word "counselor" mean? (Jn 4) Why is Jesus the wonderful counselor? **Why do people need a counselor? Do you?**

What does "Mighty God" mean? (Jn 1:1-3) Everlasting Father? (Heb 13:8) Why is Jesus both? **How important is this to you?**

Why is Jesus called "Prince of peace?" Why do people need peace (most of all) in their lives? **How do people not have peace? Do you have peace?**

Application: Consider which of these names of Jesus speaks most to you and consider how you can praise God for that this Christmas?

He gave us his son

God's Best Gift to Us

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PRAYER TOPICS:

He gave us his son

God's Best Gift to Us

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Teachers Sheet

Isaiah 9:6

- ❖ Why God sent Jesus to us
- ❖ Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace
- ❖ Why is Jesus the best gift to us?

He gave us his son

A Decision that Pleases God

"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

Daniel 1:8

What are some New Year's resolutions that you failed at? How long did it take? Are there any you kept? Do you like making resolutions?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 1-2. Why do you think God allowed King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to take over God's people Israel? (Deuteronomy 6:5, 10-12) **Why is it important to be faithful to God in our lives?**

Read verses 3-5. How did King Nebuchadnezzar use some of Jerusalem's young men? How were they qualified to be part of his kingdom? What were they trained for? What kinds of good things (benefits) did they receive?

Read verses 6-8. Who were the young men chosen from Judah? Why did the king change their names? What did Daniel decide to do? **Why would it be hard for Daniel to keep this decision?**

Read verses 9-16. What is a decision? **Why did Daniel's decision please God? Why is it important to make decisions that please God in our lives? Did you make good decisions this year, or bad ones? What are the best decisions we can make?**

Read Verses 17-21. How did God help these four men? **What will happen when we decide to please God with our lives? How can you start small and make small decisions to please God this New Year?**

Application: Choose one key verse as your prayer to make a decision before God and live for him?

his decision to please God with his life

A Decision that Pleases God

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his decision to please God with his life

A Decision that Pleases God

"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

Daniel 1:8

- ❖ What does being faithful mean?
- ❖ What does it mean to make a decision?
- ❖ Why did Daniel's decision please God? What is your decision to God this year?

his decision to please God with his life

Forgive Your Brother from Your Heart

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Matthew 18:21-35

Key Verse: 18:35

When you were younger, did your mother or father prompt you to say sorry when you did something wrong? When you apologized, did they say "I forgive you" or "it's ok"-maybe followed by a hug? Did they ask you to do the same when you were wronged by your siblings? Was it always easy to forgive?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 21-22. Why did Peter ask this question? What did Jesus teach about forgiveness?

Do we literally have to count out 77 times or what does he mean?

Read verses 23-27. In the parable, who does the king represent? How much did the servant owe? Would it be possible to pay this back? What did the king order? When the servant pleaded for mercy, what did the king do? **Has God shown such grace to you?**

Read verses 28-35. When the servant, who had been forgiven his debt, was owed a small debt by a fellow servant, what did he do? Why do you think, he did this? What did the king do when he heard about this? **Why was he so angry?**

Read verse 35. **Why is extending grace to other absolutely essential for Christians? How can we show grace to others, even if they have hurt us badly? What about justice? What is the purpose of forgiveness?**

Show mercy as you've been shown mercy

Forgive your brother from your Heart

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

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Teachers Sheet
Matthew 18:21-35
Key Verse: 18:35

- ❖ Peter poses the question, "How many times shall I forgive my brother?" given the fact that James and John tried to usurp leadership going behind his back even using their mother to get in Jesus' good graces, must have irked him. Maybe John Mark was annoying him with his cowardice. Maybe John was calling himself the most loved one too many times. Maybe Matthew was too much of a Levi-tax collector etc. Forgiving others is not easy. We think 7 times is enough already. But Jesus urges us to forgive 77 times, meaning endlessly (7 is the perfect number, 77 is the perfect number multiplied=double perfect)
- ❖ The king in the parable represents God, whom we all owe enormous debt because of our sins. Jesus forgave our sins on the cross, it cost him great pain to do so. But by His grace, we are saved.
- ❖ Like the servant, we also hold on to our grudges and refuse to forgive others claiming justice must be served. God is angry when we do this because it negates his grace. As Jesus' followers we should imitate him in all things especially in his grace.
- ❖ Forgiveness is absolutely necessary for our spiritual health. A Christian who hold on to grudges, is not exercising grace. Many books have been written about this issue—most recently Bishop Tutu wrote a book about forgiveness citing many examples from his experience in South Africa. Even worldly psychologists say that forgiveness is necessary for a person's health. We may hurt because of the wrong someone did to us, but we will hurt even more, if we hold on to the deadly poison of bitterness. Forgiving someone does not mean we say that he/she was right in what they did, but it means that we will not hold on to a grudge or gripe. We will make room for God's justice. God is a righteous judge, while our judgment is often clouded. When we look at Jesus on the cross, who prayed for all of us, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing", we can imitate this prayer, for others, just like us, don't know what they are doing half of the time.

Show mercy as you've been shown mercy

Be Rich in God

“Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’”

Matthew 19:16-30

Key Verse: 19:21

Who is the richest man/woman you know or know about? Would it be fun to be as rich as they are? What would you do if you struck it rich?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 16-20. What did the man who came to Jesus want? How did he think he could get it? How did Jesus answer? What did the man think about himself? **Do you think he was correct?**

Read verses 21-22. What was Jesus’ invitation to the man? Why was the man sad? **Why didn’t his riches make him free and happy?**

Read verses 23-26. What did Jesus teach about the rich and the kingdom of heaven? Why were the disciples astonished? **How can we be saved and be truly rich?**

Read verses 27-30. What does Peter’s question reveal about him? **What did Jesus promise him and us? What does this mean to you?**

Application: Make Jesus your treasure by cutting off the thing you have been giving most of your time to, like your phone, game, movies, etc. and give that time to God to read and pray instead.

Be Rich in God

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Teachers Sheet
Matthew 19:16-30
Key Verse: 19:21

- ❖ This rich man felt he did not have eternal life. What are all the riches in this world worth, if we have to leave them behind once we die? The richest man in the world maybe the one who does not need anything—this man needed something (as we all do). The man thought he had kept the commandments, but had he really? Can anyone keep the law perfectly?
- ❖ The rich man was very poor, spiritually speaking. His riches could not give him happiness. His wealth did not enable him to give generously and bless others, but instead he worried about losing it and was not free to accept Jesus’ invitation to follow Him.
- ❖ It is impossible for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle? So it seems impossible for the rich to be saved—or is it? Nothing is impossible with God! The disciples had bought into the Jewish world view that riches are God’s blessing and maybe hoped for a little windfall their way. But what we really need is treasure in heaven. Assurance of salvation is worth more than all the world has to offer.
- ❖ Sometimes we have a sense of loss, especially when we compare ourselves to our worldly contemporaries. But Jesus promises that we will not lack anything, if we put our trust in him.

The Parable of the Two Sons

"I will not," he answered, but later he changed his mind and went."

Matthew 21:28-32

Key Verse: 28:29

Do you have chores at home? What are they? Do you always do them right away? Might there be a long-term benefit in doing chores?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 28-29. What did the father ask his first son to do? Why might he have asked this? What did the son say and do? What kind of son acts this way?

Read verse 30. How did the second son respond? Fill in the blanks—what might have happened between his military cadet answer and the subsequent disobedience?

Read verses 31-32. According to these verses, who does the first son represent? Whom does the second son represent? (see verse 23) Who is the father? What would the ideal son have said and done? Is there such a son?

Which of the sons can you identify with? What does the father want from you and me and from every child of God on the planet? Why does he want this?

Application: *What things have you told God you would do but did not, how can you do what you said this week?*

The Parable of the two Sons

"I will not," he answered, but later he changed his mind and went."

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PRAYER TOPICS:

The Parable of the Two Sons

"I will not," he answered, but later he changed his mind and went."

Matthew 21:28-32

Key Verse: 28:29

- ❖ One son said no but later changed his mind and went, he represents the tax collectors and sinners who first seemed to reject God to sin but now were coming and doing what God wanted. This son represents those who are rebellious toward God outwardly. Those who are outwardly rebellious are easy to see because they tell you plainly where they stand. As a result they are the one who looks wicked in others eyes. However, in a way they are people of truth who disregard propriety and give an honest answer. Not surprisingly, those who look most rebellious outwardly are often those most open to Bible study. But as people of truth they eventually repent and recognize very easily that they were wrong and make the right choice to go and work. The second son is much more difficult, he represents the Pharisees and teachers of the Law who say yes to God but they weren't actually doing the work God wanted. He says what is expected of him just because it is right and he has good manners, good intentions or feels obligated or duty bound. Yet, he never goes and works. He looks much better and gets lots of praise but he is not a man of truth. Whereas the outwardly rebellious are easy to understand, for the inwardly rebellious there is a multitude of reasons he may not follow through. However, Jesus does not concern this parable with the reasons only the outcome. It was not their aural responses but their practical ones that defined them in Jesus' eyes. In-other-words what we say is almost meaningless compared to what we do.
- ❖ Some people believe that by one thing they say, like a confession at baptism or a prayer of faith they said one time, that they are saved but Jesus continually tells us that it isn't what we say but what we do that counts—"by their fruit you will know them" (Mt 7:16). Helping kids to make a confession of faith is very important and significant to their life but it does not guarantee salvation. Real salvation is accompanied by action, by a lifestyle of seeking God, especially by obedience. In this way we should really examine our hearts, "these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Mt 15:8), to see if our actions agree with what we say. Are we Christians in word only or in action? If someone looked at our life would they be able to clearly tell we are a believer? Jesus clearly says that it's not what you believe but what you do.
- ❖ What God wants is obedience as the true evidence that we love him (Jn 14:15,21). The book of 1 John really deals with this, that without evidence of love, if we have an ongoing pattern of sin, if we leave the church, if we do not obey God, we are not real believers. This is not to make people doubt being saved but for them to have a moment of self-realization. The Pharisees thought they were saved but they were actually very far from God and were destined for hell. Jesus' rebuke was his love for them to put them on the right path to being saved. Our kids also need to have a moment of self-realization so that they are not deceived about where they stand. A confession is not necessarily salvation, but if they are obeying God daily. If they have a life pattern of doing what God wants. If they have a pattern of doing what they want and just saying the right thing they should examine their hearts. Jesus' goal every time he rebuked the Pharisees was to help them repent and come into a proper faith so they could be saved, and it is his hope for us as well.

Practice What You Preach

*“For those who exalt themselves will be humbled,
and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

Matthew 23:1-39

Key Verse: 23:12

Did you ever enjoy wearing a mask to disguise yourself or meet a friend and not recognize them because of a mask? What did it feel like to be hidden or look like someone else? Why do people like to wear masks?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 1-4. Why should the disciples listen to the Pharisees? Why should they not imitate them? Read verses 5-12. What are “phylacteries”? What does it mean to make them wide? What does it mean to make the tassels long? How should the disciples be different from the Pharisees?

Read verses 13-22. What shuts the door to the kingdom of heaven? What opens it? How were the Pharisees blind? Can one be a Christian and still be spiritually blind?

Read verses 23-28. What is hypocrisy? How can we clean the inside of the cup and dish? Read verses 29-36. What is the purpose of the prophets? Instead of decorating their tombs, what should the Pharisees do? What should we do?

Read verses 37-39. Why is Jesus lamenting over Jerusalem? What is his heart’s desire? When we reject Jesus’ love, what happens? How can we please God?

Application: *In what ways have you been pretending to be good but actually are very dirty on the inside? Can you confess to others honestly this week and become right with God and man?*

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Teachers Sheet
Matthew 23:1-39
Key Verse: 23:12

- ❖ The Pharisees sat in Moses’ seat where the law was taught. Jesus wants people to obey the Word of God, even when teachers are not so good. The Pharisees’ practice did not match their teaching; they were not shepherds for their people, but burdensome taskmasters. Phylacteries were small cube-shaped cases made of leather containing Scripture passages written on parchment (Dt 6:8, 11:18, Ex13:9) These were worn on their heads and arms to keep the word of God in their hearts and minds. Tassels with blue cord were attached to the four corners of their garments reminding them of God’s commandments. Making them wide and long means they wanted to appear more pious. Disciples should not seek recognition or self-glory, but humbly serve others in order to exalt God.
- ❖ Legalism shuts the door, burdening people with many rules. Jesus’ grace opens the door—through repentance and faith anyone can enter. Being born into a Christian family does not mean we have automatic spiritual insight. One can go to CBF, HBF, Bible club, and SWS and still be totally blind, spiritually speaking. Help our children to see the spiritual world! Help them to see God, not rules and regulations.
- ❖ Instead of trying to look shiny outside, we must allow Jesus’ blood to purify the inside. The Pharisees looked holy outside, but were filled with greed and self-indulgence. The prophets gave the message of repentance. The Pharisees needed to repent and so do we (even cute little CBF kids are not immune to the corruption of the world)
- ❖ Jerusalem was supposed to be a city on the hill, from which God’s blessing would flow. But over time she lost her sense of mission and her people just lived for their own pleasure. When God sent his son, they rejected him, thus shutting the door to the kingdom of heaven on themselves and bringing destruction on their city (70 AD Titus destroyed Jerusalem) Help our kids to understand Jesus’ heart, who laments over those who reject the love of God. When we reject Jesus, he leaves. Then our house becomes desolate. So many teenagers have desolate houses. No Cymbalta, Paxil, Zoloft or Prozac can fix that. May our CBF kids have the heart of Jesus to reach out to their classmates and friends so they may be saved.

The Faithful and Wise Servant

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.”

Matthew 24:36-51
Key Verse: 24:45-46

Do you know what to do in case of a fire or a tornado? Do you have emergency rations stored somewhere? How do you prepare?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 36-41. Why didn't Jesus just tell us, "I will come back at such and such date."? Does anybody know when Jesus will come again? What will most people be doing at that time? Who will be taken and who will be left behind?

Read verses 42-44. What does it mean to keep watch? Are you waiting for his return and trying to be ready? Do you think you would be ready (saved) if he suddenly came in the middle of this Bible study?

Read verses 45-47. What does it mean to be faithful? What does it mean to be wise (compared to being smart)? What does a faithful and wise servant do while waiting for Jesus? When is the proper time for food?

Read verses 48-51. What does the wicked servant do? Why? What are the consequences for each one's actions? How can we be faithful and wise servants? Can you?

Application: Try to imagine this week Jesus suddenly coming, what immediately comes to mind that you need to do to be ready what is the work God wants you to be doing?

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How I Put God's Word into Practice

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

*How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?
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PRAYER TOPICS:

The Faithful and Wise Servant

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.”

Teacher Sheet
Matthew 24:36-51
Key Verse: 24:45-46

- ❖ To keep watch means to be ready. When the teacher says, “next week we will be having a quiz”, we all have time to prepare, and even crammers can succeed. But when the teacher says, “POP QUIZ!” only those who are prepared will pass.
- ❖ God is absolutely faithful=He keeps his promises, no matter what. So we also should be faithful. Wise: The Bible says, “the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom”
The faithful and wise servant gives food at the proper time. We all need physical food on a regular basis. We eat at least 3 meals a day to nourish our body. In the same way, we need spiritual food on a regular basis. If we don’t feed our spirit regularly, we are spiritual anorexics.
- ❖ Jesus call the servant who does not mind the needs of others “wicked”. He is possibly beating the other servants because they are witnesses of his wickedness. Our children are often afraid to share the gospel. Encourage them to consider the spiritual welfare of others, to be faithful and wise servants.

How to Use God-Given Talent

“The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master’s happiness!’”

Mt 25: 14-30
Key Verse 25:20-21

Talent shows on TV are very popular. Why do you think this is? Does your school have a talent show? If so, did you ever participate? What did you do?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 14-18. In this parable, who is the master, who are the servants? What did the master entrust to his servants? Why were they different amounts? What did the servants do with their bags of gold (Old NIV calls them Talents)? How can we put “the money to work”?

Read verses 19-23. When the master returned, what did the first two servants say? What was the master’s response? What was their reward?

Read verses 24-30. What did the third servant say? Why did he bury his talent? What was the master’s response? Why was he so severe with the man?

What can we learn from this parable? What are your God-given talents? How can you use them?

Application: Write down each of your talents and next to each write how you have been putting it to work for God, also how you have been developing it and making it grow so it will be more useful. How can you put what God has given you to work better?

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PRAYER TOPICS:

Put your talent to work

How to Use God-Given Talent

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Teachers Sheet

Mt 25: 14-30

Key Verse 25:20-21

- ❖ If Jesus is the master and we are his servants, then what is the property he has entrusted to us? We may have different gifts or talents, we may have different opportunities in life, advantages and disadvantages, but all of us have one most precious gift from God=our soul.
- ❖ The first two servants in the parable doubled their talents. God wants us to win other souls to populate the kingdom of heaven. The parable uses a picture from the financial world, doubling the money involves risk. If I invest in the stock market, I could lose my money overnight. But the first two servants did not mind the risk. Maybe at first they made mistakes, but in the long run they yielded a huge profit.
- ❖ The third servant, however, did not work with his money. He buried it, seemingly because he was afraid of any risks. But from the master’s response we can see that this was just an excuse, for he could have put the money into a savings account, which would have given him interest. His problem was not fear, but that he just didn’t care.
- ❖ Our children struggle with peer pressure. Some are afraid to use their talents because others might attack them or make fun of them. Some are afraid to make mistakes. Encourage them “to put the money to work”. Emphasize the reward, which is to share in the master’s happiness!

The Sheep and the Goats

“The king will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

Matthew 25:31-46

Key Verse:25:40

Have you ever been to a petting zoo with sheep and goats? What do you remember about these animals?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 31-33. How will Jesus come again and what will he do? What two kinds of people will be there? What are the characteristics of sheep and goats? Read verses 34-36. What does the king say to the sheep on his right? Why are they blessed?

Read verses 37-40. What is the question of the sheep? What does the king reply? Does this mean we are saved by our works? What is the sheep’s motive for service? How can we have such a motive? How can we serve others without taking credit for it?

Read verses 41-46. What does the king say to the goats on his left? Why were they cursed? Why didn’t they even know what they had failed to do?

Who are “the least of these”? How can we be sheep rather than goats? If we find ourselves to be goats, is there any way to change into sheep? Who can change us?

Application: *What work is God calling you to do? Do you have a humble attitude to live for God or a stubborn goat attitude to live your own way, can you change your attitude?*

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PRAYER TOPICS:

The Sheep and the Goats

"The king will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

Teacher Sheet
Matthew 25:31-46
Key Verse:25:40

- ❖ Sheep don't see so well, they are kind of slow and well mannered. Goats, on the other hand, are clever, aggressive, and move in quick, horns first. There is only one area, where sheep might be smarter than goats: goats will eat almost anything indiscriminately: beer cans, newspapers, old shoes, while sheep will stick to the green stuff. Goats will do what they have determined to do while sheep will follow their shepherd.
- ❖ In the spiritual world, sheep are those who submit to God and follow their good shepherd Jesus, while goats are those who do what they want, hoping that God will jump on the bandwagon. Goats will explore all kinds of spiritual sources indiscriminately while sheep will stick to the wholesome food of the Word of God.
- ❖ Sometimes our teenagers may look like goats only wanting to do their will and nothing but. It might look like the terrible twos all over again, only more argumentative. Let's help them to stick to the wholesome food of the word of God and yield their will to the will of God so they may be blessed and inherit the kingdom of God.
- ❖ Serving others will not get us into heaven, but motive counts. To those who love Jesus, serving others comes naturally; they don't even have to think about it.

Jesus' Gethsemane Prayer

"Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.'"

Matthew 26:31-75

Key Verse 26:39

Have you ever seen kids in their "Terrible Twos"? What is their favorite word and why do you think this is?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 31-35. What did Jesus' predict? How should the disciples have responded? Read verses 36-46. How did Jesus feel? What did he do about it? What was his prayer topic? What did Peter, James and John do while Jesus prayed? What should they have done? How did Jesus feel after prayer?

Read verses 47-56. Who came to arrest Jesus? What did one of Jesus' companions do? What did Jesus say to him? According to verses 53, who is in control here? What did the disciples do at the time of trial?

Read verses 57-75. During the trial, what questions did Jesus answer and what questions did he not answer? Why? What was the result? Why did Peter deny Jesus three times? What made him repent?

What can we learn in this lesson about the power of prayer? What is the #1 thing we should do in a crisis? What are the four things we should not do in a crisis?

Application: *What problem have you been struggling with, can you spend a night of struggling prayer this week, until you have victory?*

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Teachers Sheet
Matthew 26:31-75
Key Verse 26:39

- ❖ In his prayer Jesus struggles to submit his own will (to live and skip the cross) to the will of God (to die on the cross for the sin of the world). He is very honest in his prayer, but ultimately God's will becomes his own.
- ❖ Jesus could have easily defeated the mob with a legion of angels, but he chose not to in order to fulfill Scripture and to save us.
- ❖ Jesus was very clear when it came to his identity. Adolescents struggle to develop their own identity, which they want to be different from their parents. Often wills clash. But being a Christian means to submit to the will of God. We can only do so when we trust in God's love. Jesus did exactly that trusting in God's "good, pleasing and perfect will" (Ro 12:2) We may not always be able to understand God's will, but we can trust that it is best for us and everyone around us. After prayer Jesus was strengthened and could face his enemies without fear. The disciples on the other hand were nothing but fear, because they had missed the opportunity to pray. Encourage our children to pray about everything honestly and sincerely, not superficially. Help them to struggle to submit to the will of God.
- ❖ The #1 thing we should do in a crisis is PRAY
- ❖ 4 things we should not do are: brag, sleep, fight humanly, run away

Jesus Died For Our Sins

*“About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice. ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachtani?’
(which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’)”*

Matthew 27:32-61

Key Verse: 27:46

Did you ever get lost? Maybe when you were younger, you wandered off in the mall or some other public place? When you realized that your parents were nowhere to be seen, what did it feel like?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 32-38. How did Simon of Cyrene get involved? How do you think he might have felt at the time? How did this event influence his life? (Ac 13:1, Mk 15:21) Why did Jesus refuse the painkilling drugs before the crucifixion? What did the soldiers do and why does Matthew even mention this?

Read verses 39-49. How did the people taunt Jesus? Why did he not come down from the cross and save himself? What does it mean that the world became dark? What did Jesus cry out? Where did he take these words from?(look at Ps 22—how does the Psalm begin, how does it end?) in his greatest agony what was at the core of Jesus’ heart and thought?

Read verses 50-61. What happened at the moment of Jesus’ death and what does this mean? What was the testimony of the centurion? What is the meaning of Jesus’ death? (Heb 9:12-14, 22b, 25-26; 1Ti 2:5)

Read verses 55-61. Who were the witnesses? Why weren’t the disciples there? How did God use Joseph of Arimathea?

Application: Does the death of Jesus for you move you to have a closer relationship with God?

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"About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice. 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachtani?' (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?')"

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PRAYER TOPICS:

Jesus Died For Our Sins

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(which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’)”*

Teachers Sheet
Matthew 27:32-61
Key Verse: 27:46

- ❖ Simon did not volunteer to carry the cross. He might have complained, “Why me? I am a free man, how dare they treat me like a slave?” (Since he was from Cyrene, which is in Africa, he might have been black and complained about racial discrimination) However, when he carried the cross, he got to be close to Jesus and his life was changed. Later we learn about his sons Rufus and Alexander, who were known to the Christian community, meaning, they were men of faith. When we carry our cross as parents, our children may do the same.
- ❖ Painkilling drugs have mind numbing side effects. Jesus did not want to lose his mental faculties.
- ❖ Jesus could have easily come down from the cross, but he chose not to, so we would be saved from God’s wrath over our sins.
- ❖ Jesus is the Light of the world, so it is fitting for the world to be dark at his death.
- ❖ Psalm 22 is a prayer of King David. It begins with him feeling forsaken, but ends in victory. Jesus was very familiar with this Psalm and maybe quoted it intentionally. In his greatest agony, the Word of God was at the center of his thought and heart. In a crisis, we must hold on to the word of God.
- ❖ The curtain of the temple separates the holy place from the most holy place, where God’s presence dwells. No sinner can come into God’s holy presence. But when Jesus died, he opened the way to God for us.
- ❖ Heb 9:14 says that the blood of Christ cleanses our consciences. According to Heb 22b, his blood was shed for our sins. Jesus’ death solves our sin problem. When we accept Jesus’ sacrifice, God forgives our sins.
- ❖ Notice that the witnesses are women. In Jewish culture they were not important, but Matthew mentions them because they were faithful to the end, while the disciples fled in fear.

He Has Risen

"He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay."

Matthew 28:1-20

Key verse: 28:6

Do your parents have expectations of you? How do you feel about that?
What are your expectations of yourself and your life?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 1-4. What happened at the tomb? Compare the women to the guards. What do you think, why did the women not faint? Read verses 5-7. What good news did the angel tell the women? What job did he give these first resurrection witnesses? Can we be resurrection witnesses as well?

Read verses 8-10. How did the women feel and what did they do? Whom did they meet on the way? How did they react to him and what does this mean? What mission and promise did he give them? Read verses 11-15. How did the religious leaders try to hinder the good news from getting out? How does their cover-up add proof to the resurrection?

Read verses 16-20. Where did the eleven go and why? How did they respond to the risen Christ? What kind of authority does Jesus have? What was the mission Jesus gave the eleven? What does it mean to make disciples? Why is baptism important? What promise did Jesus give?

Verses 18-20 are also called the World Mission Command? Was this command only given to the eleven or also to us? (Ro 10:14-15) How can you share the good news with others?

Application: Can you begin to "go" to your school mission field this week depending on God's provision and his being with you?

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PRAYER TOPICS:

Jesus overcame death

He Has Risen

“He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.”

Teachers Sheet
Matthew 28:1-20
Key verse: 28:6

Everybody has expectations: parents expect their kids to do well in school and/or to excel in sports or music etc. Children expect to be loved and supported by their families and have expectations for their future (they say “I want to become a fireman or an astronaut”, “I want to become a singer/ballerina/president”—later they want to get into a good high school/college and later even find a good husband/wife). When the women came to the tomb, they expected to find dead Jesus and consequently were sad/depressed. Expectations have influence. If we set the bar too high, we might be disappointed. If we set the bar too low, we may become mediocre.

- ❖ The fierce looking guards went into a coma, while the women remained conscious. This shows their courage. The women were thinking about Jesus and this gave them strength. Like them we can also be resurrection witnesses, if we believe the good news and take courage.
- ❖ The women had mixed emotions: joy and fear. When they met Jesus, they did not want to let him go. They worshipped him. Jesus repeated the mission the angel had given them. It is very important that we share the good news. Jesus could have gone to the eleven himself, but he wanted to use the women as resurrection witnesses as he wants to use you and me. The cover-up of the religious leaders was ridiculous. If the Roman soldiers had really fallen asleep on the job, they would have been severely punished, possibly killed. Securing the tomb and following cover-up adds proof to the resurrection.
- ❖ Jesus commissions the disciples(and us) to share the good news with others. Baptism is a public declaration of faith. It is good to make this declaration early on for as George Barna says, “Whatever a child believes by age 13, is in most cases what he/she will die believing.”

Intro to the Book of Romans

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 1:1-17

Key Verses 1:16-17; 2:6-7; 3:23-24; 4:7-8;
5:6,8; 6:23; 8:1; 8:38-39; 10:9; 11:5-6

Introduction

More than any other individual, Paul was responsible for the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. He made 3 missionary journeys through much of the Mediterranean world, preaching the gospel that he had once sought to destroy. However, he was falsely accused by the Jews, arrested and eventually brought to Rome. Though he was released for a brief period of ministry, he was arrested again and was martyred (killed for his faith) at Rome in AD 65-67.

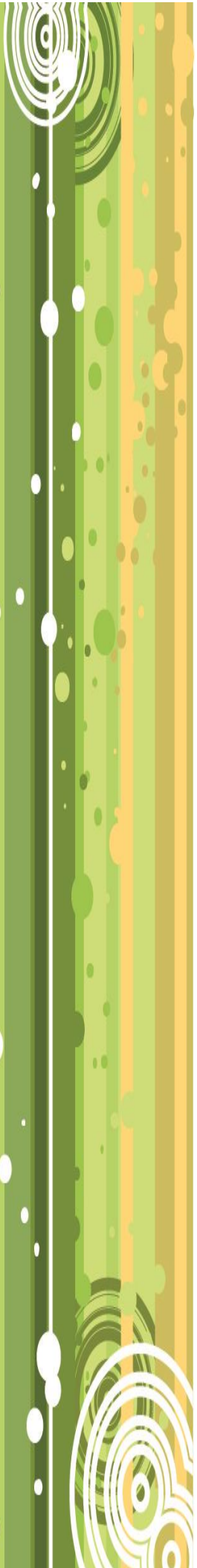
Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, as the references to Phoebe, Gaius, and Erastus—all of whom were associated with Corinth—indicate. The apostle wrote the letter toward the close of his third missionary journey (most likely in A.D. 56), as he prepared to leave for Israel with an offering for the poor believers in the Jerusalem church. Phoebe was given the great responsibility of delivering this letter to the Roman believers.

Rome was the capital and most important city of the Roman Empire. Rome is located along the banks of the Tiber River, about 15 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. In Paul’s day, the city had a population of over one million people, many of whom were slaves. Rome boasted magnificent buildings, such as the Emperor’s palace, the Circus Maximus, and the Forum, but its beauty was marred by the slums in which so many lived. According to tradition, Paul was martyred outside Rome on the Ostian Way during Nero’s reign (A.D. 54–68).

Some of those converted on the Day of Pentecost probably founded the church at Rome (cf. Acts 2:10). Paul had long sought to visit the Roman church, but had been prevented from doing so (1:13). But because of this Paul wrote this letter. It is his most important letter and one of, if not the most important books in the whole Bible.

Paul’s primary purpose in writing Romans was to teach the great truths of the gospel to believers who he could never visit or preach to. His point is that righteousness (being right with God) comes from God alone not something we did and is only by faith through Christ alone. This book helps us to understand why we believe in Christ, how we are saved and how we should live as Christians. This book helps us to truly understand what it means to be a Christian.

At the same time it is one of the most challenging books in the Bible, so get ready for some good discussion and make sure to ask lots of questions!



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5:6,8; 6:23; 8:1; 8:38-39; 10:9; 11:5-6

Discussion Questions

Read verse 1. Who is the author of Romans? What do you know about him? Read verses 5-6, 13b, 8. Who is the letter to the Romans mainly addressed to? Read verse 15. What was Paul’s burning desire for the Romans?

Read verse 16. What is “the gospel”? Why does Jesus’ crucifixion and death have the power to save? Why does his resurrection have the power to save? How can we be saved? If God has made such a simple and beautiful way for us to be saved, why are so many Christians “ashamed of the gospel” (see also 1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-24)? What are some practical things we can do to not be ashamed?

As we review all the key verses, especially 1:17, how can we sinful people become righteous (right with God)? What are the other ways that people try to make themselves righteous? Why is faith in Jesus the only way?

Application: *Can you tell several classmates about your faith this week? Can you pray for them to accept the gospel believing it is the power of God to save everyone?*

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Romans 1:1-17

Key Verses 1:16-17; 2:6-7; 3:23-24; 4:7-8; 5:6,8; 6:23; 8:1; 8:38-39; 10:9; 11:5-6

NOTE: Though there are many key verses to the book of Romans, the reading only focuses on those verses that pertain to the theme: we are saved by grace alone, by faith in Jesus Christ alone. From chapter 12 the book turns to practical application, so these key verses cover the first 11 chapters. Probably the best way to start this lesson would be to read the intro, then read the verses and then go through the questions only reading the verses that are asked, rather than reading all of chapter 1, as well as referring to what they learned in the introduction.

- ❖ Paul is clearly the author of the letter. There has been some debate over the years but all such debate has now been silenced as the evidence for Paul as the author is just too overwhelmingly clear. It is similar to many other books written by Paul and covers a lot of the same themes. Therefore, understanding Romans, deeply, helps us to understand all the New Testament epistles. The Romans were not really a church, or he would have addressed them as such—as he did in other letters—but a group of believers but who were full of amazing faith being reported all over the world. There were clearly Jews based on the content of the letter but yet the intended recipients were Gentiles as indicated by Paul, so they were a group of believers who had migrated to Rome and were bringing Gentiles to faith. Paul never had the chance to visit them personally, they were not one of his churches or people he had converted or preached to and so his burning desire was to preach the gospel to them, which he does by way of deeply unfolding the gospel to them in Romans. Paul explained in the book of Galatians 1:11-20 that he had been given the gospel as a special revelation by Christ. Therefore, we can trust the deep interpretation of the meaning and application of the gospel aimed mainly at helping Gentiles to come to faith, in accordance with Paul’s mission.
- ❖ “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died, according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures.” (1 Co 15:3-4) This is the gospel. Jesus’ death has power: 1) It pays our burden of sin as Jesus fulfills God’s righteous requirement (1 Pe 2:24, Ro 3:23-24) 2) It makes us pure, cleansing us from sin, not just paying for it in the sense that it is something outside of ourselves, but washing us so we are made a clean person, (1 Jn 1:7,9; Heb 9:14) 3) It makes us a new person, we are made holy, we are redeemed to live a new life (1 Pe 1:18, Ro 6:4), 4) It puts to death our old sinful self, in other words, I can overcome my sin and temptation and find victory, as we are buried with him through baptism and rise with him through his resurrection to live a new life, (Ro 6:4; 1 Co 15:56-57, Ro 8:2) 5) It defeats the power of the devil by destroying the power of sin. For these reasons and many more we are completely set free, our sin is finished and we can live a new life.
- ❖ Jesus’ resurrection has power: 1) Christ overcame death, so that we do not need to fear death anymore (Heb 2:14) 2) As Christ rose, we will rise again (1 Co 15:20) 3) By

defeating death, Jesus destroyed the power of Satan (Heb 2:14-15) 4) Not only do we have eternal life in heaven but we have it now (Jn 4:14, Jn 10:10) 5) Resurrection proves that Jesus is God and can fulfill every promise he made (Rom 1:4), For these and many more reasons, the resurrection is the power of God, through it he defeated every enemy and gives us access to the power to live a new life, leading to eternal life.

- ❖ Then if God has made such a beautiful and simple way to be saved, why are so many ashamed of the gospel. In Paul's time Jews were ashamed of it because it was too simple. Paul said that those of the circumcision group infiltrated the believers to see the freedom they had in Christ. They thought it was a joke to be so easily saved. To Greeks who want to sit around talking about high ideas, the very simple gospel, that doesn't require self discovery and years of philosophizing was too simplistic. But in our day, the reason for being ashamed of the gospel is different. It is because it will bring persecution, whether real or imagined, in the form of being excluded or viewed as strange. Because of this our kids are afraid to reveal their faith. But this is largely imagined, a lie of Satan. In fact, kids who are really clear and confident are respected by their peers. Muslims walking around their school in the full headdress with their faith on display are not viewed as weird, but shown respect. One very practical way to help our kids to overcome this fear of shame, is like Paul to help them see the power of the gospel to save. Reading testimonies from "Voice of the Martyrs", of people whose lives have been changed in countries where it could mean death to confess Christ and who do it anyway; or watching a movie of a person whose life was powerfully changed by the gospel (ie "Gifted Hands"). The message then is not "you should not be ashamed", but "look at how awesome Jesus is" until they may be proud of Jesus and ashamed to deny him.
- ❖ The theme of Romans is that we are saved by grace alone and not by anything we have done, because nothing we do can ever be good enough to make us right with God. And this salvation is offered to us by faith alone and not earned by anything that we can do to earn it. This is transformational and foundational to our Christian life. There is something deep in our soul that makes us want to earn our salvation and pay for our own sins, because we are made in God's image, we want to be holy and please our Father. But no matter how much we torture ourselves or do good works we can never earn it because everything we do is tainted with sin and the scale will always be tipped against us. What is more our good works cannot pay for sin only blood, and our blood is insufficient to pay the huge debt we owe. Therefore, knowing that it is only by grace and only by faith frees us from the rat race, running and striving to be forgiven—we are already forgiven! It is shocking and unimaginable and when we finally get a grasp on that, we begin to understand the depth to which God loves us and are in fact motivated to work a hundred times harder for the right reason: to love God. Understanding the theme of Romans frees us and helps us to rest in his salvation and yet not abuse it or be lazy.
- ❖ *As a parallel to this it could be very edifying to watch the life of Martin Luther. He was tormented all his life by understanding that God was so holy and he was so righteous and he lived an ascetic life trying to subjugate his sinful nature to no avail. Finally, through the study of Romans he discovered what no one of his time had grasped and which the church did not teach: that we are saved only by what Jesus has done, given to us freely by grace. As a result his life was completely changed and the church freed.*

Why is the World So Messed Up?

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”

Romans 1:18-32

Key Verse: 18

What are some things you’ve seen or experienced that you think are not the way they are supposed to be? How does it make you feel? How would you change these things? Do you think change is possible?

Connection to last week: Why do we need to preach the gospel in our world today?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 18. Many people blame God for the world being messed up, but what is the real reason that Paul tells us here? Why is God angry with sin?

Read verses 18b -20. Are people who haven’t heard the Bible responsible for their sin? Why then do people “suppress the truth [about God]” (see also John 3:19, and think about all the evil things listed in the rest of this chapter)?

Read verse 21. What is the evidence, in societies all over the world, that everyone knows God? Read 21b-22. What are some of the foolish ways people try to explain away God?

Read verse 23. What does “worship” mean? We are all created to worship. When we don’t worship God, what kinds of things do people worship?

Read verse 28-32. What happens to people and the world when they reject God? Read verses 24, 26 and 27. How are we seeing this happening today? Read verses 25 and 32. Why is this life a lie and what will be the consequence?

Application: What are the worldly media that dishonors or is against God that you need to reject? Or friends or ways of thinking that you need to separate from?

People invent lies about God so they can sin freely

Why is the World So Messed Up?

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”

How I Put God's Word into Practice

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?

What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?

What changes should I personally make in my life?

PRAYER TOPICS:

People invent lies about God so they can sin freely

Why is the World So Messed Up?

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”

Teachers Sheet
Romans 1:18-32
Key Verse: 18

- ❖ To put this passage in perspective we must see that Paul is talking first about the Gentile world. He will later get into the issue of Jews who sin but chapters 1 and 2 are making the point that even though Gentiles didn't hear the law, they are still accountable for their actions which fill the world with all kinds of sin
- ❖ Many people use the excuse that if God were real then the world wouldn't be in the state it is in today, if they were God they would do things differently and the world would be perfect. The problem in this thinking, is that they imagine with the right parameters we could make a perfect world. The problem is sin. Sin always causes everything to become messed up even in the best situation (Eden).
- ❖ God's response is wrath. Many reject the idea of a wrathful God but anger and hatred is the only proper response to the sick and twisted things that sinful man do. When we see the horrible things that people do to others, we become angry and rightly so. People reject this natural feeling because they don't want to imagine that God is angry with their sin, but a perfect, holy God can only have one response to sin and that is hatred (Ps 45:7, Heb 1:9). However, this does not mean that God hates sinners, quite the opposite!
- ❖ This wrath shouldn't be confused with human anger or wrath, which is emotional in nature and uncontrolled. The word here “Or-gay” is a settled, determined indignation, not the momentary, emotional, often uncontrolled anger “thu-mos” to which humans are prone. This wrath is revealed by God sometimes through the natural consequences of our sin and sometimes through God's personal intervention. The rise of depression, meaninglessness, drug addiction, suicide are the natural consequences of a sinful society and always end up destroying societies that indulge in sin without restraint. God's direct intervention can be seen through Noah's time, in the Tower of Babel incident, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of Pharaoh and his armies, the destruction of all the wicked peoples of Canaan, even in the New Testament, we see it most clearly through God judging sin in his one and only Son (John 3:16), the judging of Annanias and Saphira (Acts 5). Later in Romans 9:22, Paul will discuss how though God reveals his wrath, he patiently endures vessels prepared for destruction. Which is why sometimes his wrath is not immediately evident because he takes no pleasure in destroying the wicked but desires all to come to repentance (Ez 18:23). So, we ask why doesn't God destroy this wicked people? One of two answers can be given, that God is storing up his full wrath against that person for the day of judgment (Rom 2:5) or that he is patiently waiting for them to repent.
- ❖ The question arises: “How can God hold all people responsible for their moral and spiritual failure, and be so angry when some people have had so much less opportunity than others for hearing the gospel and knowing God?” All people know that God exists. This can be seen in themselves (KJV and ASV translate “made it plain to them” as made it “manifest” in them or revealed it “within” themselves. So, we see the evidence of God within and in the natural world. Each of us has a not just 5 senses but a “sixth sense” of

People invent lies about God so they can sin freely

the spiritual world and we ALL innately know that it exists. When Anne Sullivan finally succeeded in helping Helen Keller to speak and write, she tried to explain God to her, to which Helen replied that she already knew God but just didn't know what to call him. God has revealed himself in all of creation, such that anyone who examines creation closely, scientists (or even Solomon in Ecclesiastes) concludes that the natural world could not be created by accident. The creation is so amazing, that some primitive societies worshipped objects of creation like the sun and moon because they reveal the infinite power of God. Regardless of what anyone lies, everyone knows God exists and longs for him. What is more the Bible says, that anyone who sincerely seeks God with all their heart will find him (Jer 29:13, Dt 4:29). Whatever is the revelation of God that people feel anywhere in the world, when they are true to that revelation, God will find a way to reveal the gospel to them and we are seeing incredible and increasing evidence of this in the world.

- ❖ There is evidence all around that man knows God exists. No matter where we go in the world to the most remote jungle or sophisticated society, we find a history of worshipping God. No one told them how to do it, but they found in themselves a need to worship. The moral order that every society has and the establishing of law, shows that we know God's laws and agree with his sense of justice and hatred for what is evil. Even those who reject God turn to astrology, horoscopes and fortune tellers, all people innately know that there is an order to the universe and something beyond themselves and they long for it.
- ❖ The head of the department of evangelism for a major denomination in America said, "We don't need to evangelize the people of the world who have never heard the message of salvation. We only need to announce to them that they're already saved." This rising tide of universalism, says that God is too loving and gracious to send anyone to Hell. If that is true then there is no place for judgement and no need to proclaim the gospel. But rather 2 Cor 5:12 says that it is because of "the fear of the Lord [that] we persuade men". In other words, because of God's terrifying judgement on the unbelieving world we should be motivated to witness to how they may escape through Jesus. But when we remove the fear of judgment there is very little urgent motivation to witness. So many men and women have given their lives to save the lost, like John Knox, Hedson Taylor, Hentry Martyn, Adoniram Judson, James Chalmers, Robert Arthington gave \$500,000 to the work of foreign missions by living frugally, saying, "Gladly would I make the floor my bed, a box my chair, and another box my table, rather than that men should perish for want of the knowledge of Christ."
- ❖ Then when people do not admit there is God it is because they are suppressing that truth. Men are not naturally inclined to seek God. This was proved by the earthly ministry of Christ, face-to-face with the Creator, they rejected the light because their deeds were evil (John 3:19-20). Therefore, all men have enough evidence but do not respond to it because they love their sin and do not want to admit there is a God because they know that then they would be held accountable to him. So, spiritual darkness and moral perversity are inseparable. Sin is always the reason why men reject the truth and rejecting the truth always leads to sin.
- ❖ The Westminster Shorter Catechism states that "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." When man fails to give glory to God, it is the ultimate affront to their Creator. From the time of Adam and Eve, when they sinned they hid from God and ever since that time, sinful man has sought to hide from God, even to the point of denying his existence. One evolutionist said, "I refuse to believe in God, so what other

alternative do I have but evolution?" In verse 21 "their thinking became futile" could be translated "they became futile in their speculations". That is, that man's "wisdom" about the created world when they deny God is nothing more than collective ignorance. Robert Jastrow, an astrophysicist and director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, said that for a scientist who has lived his life by faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream, he has scaled the mountain of ignorance and at the final peak, he finds a group of theologians who have been there for centuries. The sum of all human religion, philosophy, occult practices and the like, not to mention evolutionary science are but man desperately trying to make a lie into the truth to suppress the truth of God allowing them to sin freely. The church therefore has to watch out because we are being infected by this thinking. Rather than trusting to the revelation of God, because of the overwhelming pressure of modernism, the church has tried to blend the foolish speculations of evolution or big bang theory which have no factual basis into our theology, changing our message to accommodate the world's lie.

- ❖ We are all created to worship God and so when we remove God, we inevitably worship some created thing. Anyone who thinks that idol worship and bowing down to statues is only something of the Bible, need only watch people with their iPhones. If your class doesn't think they are idol worshippers, have them simply take a survey first rating how much time they spend with the following: 1. Their phone 2. The computer 3. Games 4. TV 5. Internet 6. Music 7. Leisure activities/sports/hobbies 8. Bible // Then how excited they are about the same list from 1-5. Worshipping created things is a lie and the worshippers know it is a lie but they prefer it to the truth. As Isaiah said, with part of a piece of wood they heat their food and with part they make coals to keep warm and with part they make a god and worship it (Isa 44).
- ❖ Man first makes these idols in the form of man, that is he worships himself and then moves on to ridiculous things like birds, animals and reptiles.
- ❖ Therefore God gives them over. God endures man's rebellion holding back his full wrath but he will not be mocked, people reap what they sow. When God abandons men to their own devices, His divine protection is partially withdrawn. When that occurs, men not only become more vulnerable to the destructive wiles of Satan but also suffer the destruction that their own sin works in and through them.
- ❖ We see the proof that it is not God that makes the world evil but man in how man destroys the world when he is left to his own devices. He degrades into increasing evil and wickedness as seen in verses 28-32, and turns the world into hell.
- ❖ What is more God gave them over to shameful lusts. Lust and only lust is the basis for homosexual relationships. It is not uncommon in America for a homosexual males to have over 300 partners a year. This often leads to brutal murders in the gay community from jealous partners. Investigators conclusion is that such a lust fueled lifestyle boils over into the most powerful jealous reactions. Those who choose to be a homosexual, just like being a murderer, thief, adulterer, do so by choice, not nature and they receive the due penalty in their flesh. The increase of AIDS is frightening evidence of this.
- ❖ Apart from God man cannot but become an animal destined for destruction. What greater motivation do we need to preach the gospel in this world. Not only will everyone be held accountable but the world will only become increasingly evil without God.

God's Judgment is Right

"To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger."

Romans 2:1-16

Key Verses: 7-8

What is the biggest punishment you ever got at home or school? What effect did that have on you the next time you were going to do it? Do you think punishment is good or bad?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 1. Why do people like to judge others? What don't they realize about themselves (see also Matthew 7:1-5)? Read verse 2-3. Can we escape judgment just by being a little better than others?

Read verse 4. How do people often take advantage of God's kindness? Why doesn't God just judge all the wicked people of the world immediately? Read verse 5. What is the warning about taking God's kindness for granted?

Read verses 6-8. What is God's standard for judging all people? Why is this the only fair judgment? How does our lifestyle reveal who we really are? Read verses 9-10. How will God reward those who seek good and those who seek evil?

Read verses 12-13. How can God judge those who had no chance to hear God's law or his gospel? Read verses 14-15. What is his basis for judging them? Why is it so important to realize that all people will be universally judged?

Application: *How does realizing God's standard change your view of yourself and motivate you?*

God's Judgment is Right

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Teachers Sheet

Romans 2:1-16

Key Verses: 7-8

- ❖ People judge others to somehow justify themselves. Children do this all the time, diverting attention away from what they did by bring up what another kid or a sibling did, arguing the merit of a punishment by bring up how so and so was punished. Yet, God's judgment is not based on meeting the status quo morally but on his perfect righteousness. What judgmental people don't realize is that they are the same sinners. They minimize their own sin while maximizing others sins. In this way they minimize how great their sin is and they also minimize God's standard. Hypocrites imagine that since their being morally good on the outside impresses others, that God will judge them by a similar standard. But God's standard is so incredibly high that everyone must realize they are a sinner who cannot escape judgment—everyone will be judged no matter how good or bad we are.
- ❖ However, God's desire is not to judge people but that all people would repent and be saved. Eze 18:23, "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?" Mt. 9:13, Mt 12:7 "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent." Rom 9:15-17, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy..." Micah 7:18 "You...delight to show mercy." Therefore, God bears with great patience the stubborn unrepentance of mankind who all—believer or unbeliever—know God as we established in the previous passage. Yet, in Israel's history we see that God's grace was taken advantage of. People may think that the OT is full of judgment but not when you compare it to His original standard: all who sin should die. Then you realize that God very rarely gave the people what they actually deserve. But stubborn Israel took this to mean that God is permissive and did as they pleased. God bore with stubborn Israel for 800 years before sending them into captivity and then only for 70 years—what patience! Some even go so far as to believe that God is so loving that he will just forgive everyone in the end. But this is our sinful nature trying to justify ourself on the basis of our very low standard. The reality is that though God is patient now, those who refuse to repent are storing up wrath for the day of wrath. This word (orgay) is the strongest type of anger that will finally burst forth after being pent up for so long—it will be a truly terrifying thing to be a hypocrite on that day who knew everything and stubbornly chose not to do it, thinking it would be ok.
- ❖ God's impartial standard of judgment is our deeds or lifestyle. Let's be clear right off the bat that this is NOT the standard of salvation but judgment. Salvation is not discussed until chapter 3, it is the sole work of God, through Christ, by grace alone and completely apart from works. No one by his works can save himself. Yet, as Jesus said, "by their fruit you will recognize them" (Mt 7:16). So as James 1:22-25 and 2:14-26 (esp17) and 1 Co 3:10-15 tell us, our deeds are the evidence of being saved. Where God's spirit is dwelling, there must be evidence of a changed life, it is impossible to have God's spirit in us and not be changed. Yet, salvation is not the topic of chapter 2 but judgment. His

goal to show that there is a universal judgment from which no one will be exempt. Even believers will be judged on the basis of what they did. Many Christians like to teach that there will be varying rewards in heaven but not that we will all be judged based on what we did with our salvation. Therefore, one who claims to believe and is still living a worldly lifestyle running after the pleasures of sin and longing for all the things of the world, seeking only themselves and their own glory will find they will receive punishment in accordance with what they did or better yet failed to do. While those who lived for God's glory, doing good and seeking eternal life, they will receive all they sought. This judgment is first for the Jew and then for the Gentile. Meaning that everyone will be judged based on what they did. But for those who know more and had more opportunity to be saved, they will be judged more severely. Therefore, the Jews (and us!) are not more secure or privileged, we who know much more will be expected to have put what we know into practice (James 3:1). Students understand this concept. They cannot just listen to what is taught passively, they will be held accountable and put to the test based on how well they practiced what they heard and it is pass or fail. We cannot imagine that we can passively listen to the word and not do it and be ok. Gal 6:7-8, "7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

- ❖ A common question kids bring up is how can God judge all the other people and religions who never heard the Bible or the gospel? Well as we learned in the previous passage all people know God through his general revelation in nature and through the personal revelation within them that longs to worship God. Based on how they respond to that revelation God will judge them. But even more so, their conscience will condemn them because when they keep God's law based on their conscience, they prove that the Law of God is written on their heart and are then held accountable to it. Did they do what their conscience told them to do? Since they know instinctively what is right and wrong did they do right or ignore their heart and do what is wrong. Because God has revealed himself in the very nature of man, no one is without excuse. Yes, those who have the Bible have a great advantage but it is only the doers of the word and not the hearers who are declared righteous (13). So the Bible is a double edged sword (Heb 4:12) bringing greater revelation and opportunity but also a higher standard of judgment.
- ❖ This should lead us all to realize that we must repent before our holy God. The sinful world tries to say that God has no right to judge, that he is cruel and unfair. But when we look at the Bible, and look at his standard and how many times he actually gave people or nations what they deserve, we find that overwhelmingly he gave sinners, Gentiles and self-righteous hypocrites overwhelming mercy and patience bearing with them in the hopes they may repent. Therefore, God's high standard should humble us and never make us think we are better than someone else. We all should examine our hearts before God's righteous judgment.

A Christian Must Be a Christian on the Inside

“No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.”

Romans 2:17-29

Key Verse: 29

Who are some good fakes you know about? People who pretend to be smart or pretend to act or sing? What do you think about people who are famous for nothing? Who are all image and hype?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 17. If we replace the word “Jew” with the word “Christian” what can we learn about trusting in rules as a standard of being right with God? Read 18-20. How does growing in Bible knowledge sometimes puff us up and make us think we are better than others?

Read verses 21-23. When we want to criticize others verbally or in our hearts, what should we remember about ourselves? Read verse 24. Why were people making fun of God because of the Jews? What happens when we claim to be Christian but don’t act like it?

Ultimately, why can’t knowing the Bible be enough to meet God’s standard and be saved? Why isn’t it enough if I’m born in a Christian family? Or go to church? Why isn’t a ceremony like baptism enough?

Read verse 28-29. Circumcision was a process of cutting away a piece of skin in order to symbolize cutting away sin which is passed down generation to generation, this mark set Jews apart as God’s people. Yet, even though we do outward things that seem good, is it enough to become God’s people? What must be truly cut away? Who does it? And what is the reward?

Application: *Have you had an honest practice of repenting each time you study the Bible or have you been trusting in Bible knowledge and outward performance?*

A Christian Must be a Christian on the Inside

“No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.”

Romans 2:17-29

Key Verse: 29

- ❖ Paul began in chapter one to tell us that no one in the world has any excuse for not believing in God because of his general revelation of himself through nature and in our hearts that long to worship him. He then moved on to the Gentiles, saying that their keeping of the law without having read the Bible clearly shows that the law is written on their heart and so based on the way they reacted or didn’t react to that revelation of God they would be judged. Finally, in this passage he moves on to religious sinners or moral sinners who thought they could stand on their morality but were doing all the same things. Finally, he comes to the Jews who flat out believed that Abraham would be standing at the gates of hell not letting even the worst Jew enter there. Simply because they were the “chosen people” they thought they were exempt from judgment. This is a false confidence.
- ❖ The first false confidence is depending on your heritage. Jesus said that out of the stones God could raise children of Abraham. There was no favoritism in judgment because of heritage. If we replace “Jew” with “Christian” in 17 then it is equally true that a one born in a Christian family is no better off than one born in a pagan one. Second Generation Christians are not saved by their Parent’s faith. Some Christian leaders like Luther tried to teach that children were saved by their parent’s faith but the Bible is clear that each one must stand before the judgement seat of Christ—it is an individual matter.
- ❖ The second false confidence is knowledge in verse 18. That just knowing about a thing is enough to be saved. In Jewish thinking, what you know is what you learn and then put into practice, which differs quite a bit from Greek thought which is just the accumulation of knowledge. However, the Jews moved toward a Greek kind of thinking: since they couldn’t keep the law (or didn’t want to try) they reasoned that just knowing the law in their heads would save them, some didn’t even want to put forth this effort and reasoned that just possessing a scroll of the law was enough. Jewish men’s “instruction in the law” was about memorizing large passages of the Old Testament and then reciting them in public to show off their piety and they really thought that by this they would be saved. American Christianity is also very concerned with the accumulation of knowledge and weak on actually doing it. Hebrews 5 tells us that many Christians had enough knowledge to have become teachers by now but were practically baby-Christians. And Paul has already established that we will be judged by the content of what we DID in our life not by what we KNOW. Our kids must take caution, they can learn hundreds or thousands of verses and facts and have a wall full of trophies and they may all be thrown down into hell—trophies cannot give us confidence in salvation.
- ❖ They were confident that because of their head-knowledge of the Law, they were a “guide for the blind” (19) but Jesus called them “blind guides” (Mt 23:24-28). It was always God’s intention that they should be teachers for the whole world (Isa 42:6; Gen 12:3) but not through teaching hypocrisy. Jesus said that they would go over land and sea to win one convert, and would make them twice a son of hell as they were

(Mt23:15). In fact, the Jews were well known through the Gentile world for teaching one thing and doing another. The third area of false security was what they did with the law. They thought that it was enough to teach knowledge and not obedience but it is the doers of the law who are righteous not the knowers (2:13). A believer therefore should not be recognized by his words but by his actions.

- ❖ The worst part was that to Gentiles it was obvious that they were fakes. Teachers like Seneca had shown them how to live a morally upright life and they had great respect for the one who could live well and they made jokes about the Jews who just talked and didn't do any of it, thinking they were better than everyone. Paul points out three areas where he knew from being a Pharisee how they had twisted the law to steal by devouring widow's houses and such, commit adultery by twisting God's view of divorce, and rob temples by raiding pagan temples and keeping the gold rather than burning everything as God commanded.
- ❖ In the same way, it would often be better if many nominal Christians did not profess to be Christians—because they are not. As a result the name of Christ is ridiculed and people think that all Christians are that way. We should be more concerned for the glory of Christ's name when we look at our behavior. Is our attitude bringing shame to his name or glory. The mark of a true Christian is a desire to bring glory to Christ through everything we do in our life.
- ❖ Lastly, is the false security of ceremony. The Jews prided themselves in circumcision. However, Abraham was justified before circumcision by faith in God. It is faith that made him righteous. Circumcision was a sign of that justification but not the justification itself. Therefore if a Gentile has faith God will consider them as circumcised and them in their disobedience as uncircumcised and the Gentile rightly judge them. In the same way our kids can't put confidence in baptism, whether baby baptism or otherwise, confirmation, dedication or any kind of Christian ceremony. These things are of value as a symbol and strong reminder—certainly circumcision was a strong reminder—but are not what saves. Surely, in circumcising that which was involved in procreation, God was symbolizing the cutting away of sin that is passed down from generation to generation. He wants us to also cut away sin rather than trying to find the shortcut or false confidence.
- ❖ Therefore the true Jew is the one who is one inwardly. The true Christian is not the one who does righteous actions on the outside—though these are necessary as a symbol of faith—but one who is a Christian from their heart by faith. Such a person will be praised by God above the one who is morally perfect or has a theology degree or a wall of trophies. In fact, the problem is that the more we know, the more we are judged. Greater knowledge of the word leads to a greater expectation of obedience. Therefore, it is Christians who will have the greatest standard of judgment because we were given the greatest revelation and chance to be saved.
- ❖ Ultimately, this passage completes Paul's indictment about anyone who thinks they will not be judged. His point which he will conclude in Chapter 3 is that no one is righteous and no one can meet God's standard, regardless of how much they know or do. Then, it is only God's gift of salvation that can save. However, before we can share salvation we must convince people that they need to be saved. In the case of the Jews or moral Christians or unregenerate professing Christians, this is not easy to do. Once he clearly indicts the world about their sin, then it sets us up to honestly cry out to God for salvation which he graciously provided in Christ.

The Gift of Grace from God

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

Romans 3:21-25

Key Verse: 23-24

What is the best gift you ever received? Why was it so meaningful to you? How do you feel when you receive gifts? How do you feel towards the person who gives a really good gift?

Discussion Questions

From chapter 1:18 to 3:8 Paul has made it clear that no can claim they haven't sinned or that they are good enough. Read 10b. What is Paul's conclusion about all people: unbelievers, good people, moral people, religious people, Jews and all human beings? Read verse 20. Reviewing what we learned last week, why can't following rules make us good enough? Then what was the purpose of "the law" (the rules)?

Read verses 21-22. Then if following rules doesn't make us right with God (righteous) what is the new way that God has made? What does it mean to believe by faith in Jesus Christ?

Read verse 23. Why do all people need Jesus? Read verse 24. After making it perfectly clear that no one can ever be right with God on their own, what did God give us as a free gift? Why did God do this (look at Romans 5:8; John 3:16)?

Read verse 25. How did Christ make is possible for us to be forgiven? When we think of all that God has done for us by his one-sided grace how does it change our relationship to him? How does it change the way we live? The way we love? The way we attend church?

Application: *How can you show grace to someone this week? Why must you?*

The Gift of Grace from God

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

Teachers Sheet
Romans 3:21-25
Key Verse: 23-24

- ❖ **Verses 10b&20.** We can compare a person trying to reach God’s standard to people on the beach in Hawaii having a contest to jump from that island to the mainland in California which is 2,300 miles. Some would make very feeble jumps like the pagans and some might make very significant leaps because they are well trained like religious people. Some may even use a trampoline or pole or even a cannon to go 100 feet, like the Jews or even legalistic Christians. Yet, if viewed from far off in light of the distance they need to go, their feeble attempts would look like they had barely even moved. This is the condition of all people. Nothing we do moves us any closer to God’s standard. Rather all people have in them the seeds of all the evil listed in verses 11-18.
- ❖ No flesh can ever be justified in his sight through works of the law, precludes any argument that someone could live a perfect life and therefore receive life and justification through keeping the laws. The law never had as it’s purpose to justify. It was only meant to reveal our sinfulness by revealing how perfectly holy God is in comparison. Genesis 3:15 bears witness to this. God’s plan to save mankind was from the beginning of time to send Jesus to die. That was always the plan. The law was a guardian for a time to stem the spread of rampant sin and help us to see our sinfulness and God’s holiness, but it was never the end, the plan was always Jesus. Therefore, as we view the law we must put grace by faith as bookends on either end of it: it came before and was completed after.
- ❖ So, there is nothing we can say in our defense, then is the conclusion of the matter from 1:18-3:8. The defense must rest and be silent for there is nothing that we can say to defend ourselves before God on the day of judgment. We cannot say we didn’t know—it is in our heart—and we cannot say we had the law—we didn’t keep it—we can’t claim we were good people—compared to God’s standard we didn’t even come close. When God opens the book of our life, there will be nothing we can say, all will be laid bare and in the presence of such holy perfection we cannot utter a single word in our defense.
- ❖ **Verse 21-22.** In Job 9:2-20, Job cannot fathom how anyone could possibly come into the presence of God who is too perfect and holy and there is no way he could ever be right before God. So all want to know “what can I **DO** to be saved?” In fact this is the question of all religion in the world. God up to this point can look very scary and demanding. In Pilgrim’s Progress the law and morality was like a terrible thundering mountain with boulders crashing down ready to kill any who dare climb it. We may want to shrink back from such a God, but here he removes his frightening armor so that we can see his smiling face. He always knew we could not reach his standard and so he made a way for us to be righteous totally apart from the law. The word “But” at the beginning of 21 is an adversative, indicating a contrast between man’s total depravity and the way God has made to come to him. It is a significant turning point in the book. Actually, nowhere in the Old Testament does it say that we can find salvation by keeping the law but many in Jesus’ and Paul’s day placed their trust in man-made traditions. So he makes it clear that this righteousness is “apart from the law” to also refute Jewish legalists (judiazers) who tried to bring the law into Christianity. God holds up his standard so

that he may demonstrate the impossibility of keeping it so that we may turn to him in faith. “The righteous shall live by faith” (Gal 3:10-11) “It is by faith you have been saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works” (Eph 2:8-9).

- ❖ Saving “faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” is not a verbal declaration, or dogmatically following prescribed church doctrines. When Martin Luther set forth his theology of Salvation only by Grace it was a revolutionizing thing. It upset the believers whole life, it took hold of him and turned him upside down and brought him into obedience to Christ (AW Tozer “The Root of the Righteous”). Saving faith is an exercise of the will, it is turning from sin and following Christ. It is a total surrender of our life. It is also an exercise of the emotions (from the heart) and the intellect because we must understand what we are committing to. Someone who gives their whole life to Christ wholeheartedly will be saved and considered righteous before God.
- ❖ **Verses 23-24.** The words, “There is no distinction” are very significant here. No matter what kind of person we were before coming to Christ, even murder or terrorist we are all the same because we have all fallen short of the standard. Each is equally justified regardless of the past life. Jesus said, “The one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37). No one is too evil to be saved, regardless of what we have done, God accepts all without any distinction.
- ❖ In the same way, no one is ahead of anyone else for salvation. A gift by definition is something given freely not because of anything we have done, it is unearned and unmerited or else it would be a reward or a payment. The law reveals God’s righteousness and man’s unrighteousness. Grace on the other hand not only reveals God’s righteousness but actually gives that righteousness to those who believe in Jesus by faith. That gift, though free to us cost God the suffering and death of His own Son on the cross, so that for the believer there is nothing left to pay. The word redemption in the Greek carries the idea of delivering, especially by means of paying a price (paying the price to free a prisoner or a slave). Because of our utter sinfulness only Christ could pay this price.
- ❖ **Verse 25.** The cross is the meeting place of God’s perfect justice and love. As we’ve been talking about up till now, God cannot just sweep sin under the rug because it would call his righteousness into question, he must punish sin to be just. Actually, as stated in 1:18 God is full of wrath because of the willful rebellion of mankind, so much so, that he once wiped out the entire population of earth by flood. That wrath cannot just disappear it must be carried out. All the sin of man from the beginning was not ignored by God or tolerated, but he was looking ahead to the cross. On the cross God unleashed all his wrath upon Jesus and what a terrible burden it was. Jesus bore the full weight of the condemnation for sin and cried out in agony. But everything was paid. Therefore, God is not angry with us, we are not under wrath but under grace.
- ❖ Many view God as an angry God with a gavel in his hand ready to condemn everyone. But when man only destroyed his world and filled it with darkness, God in turn provided the way to be saved. When man could never reach his standard, God provided the way for us to be absolutely perfect. Everything is one-sided, we did nothing to contribute to our own salvation, we cannot even claim we believed because the Bible teaches that Christ is knocking at our heart, God is moving in us who believe and he chose us, to believe is really only to surrender. Then we must not see God in terms of rules and punishment but as love and grace. Then Grace and Love must characterize the way we treat others, the way we treat ourself, and our reaction to our own failures and shortcomings. It means that church is not about rules but about a relationship with God who loves us more than we can possibly imagine and he always has even at our worst.

It's All About Faith

*"being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.
This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Romans 4:13-25

Key Verse: 21-22

Is there anything you used to think was impossible but you later discovered is not? Or did you think something was impossible and now it's become possible in modern times? Was it hard to believe it?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 13. What is the promise given to Abraham (look at Genesis 22:17-18)? Read Genesis 15:6. Historically what came first, the law or Abraham being justified by faith?

Read verse 16. Why is it important to know that we are saved only by God's grace, through faith alone-and that nothing else is necessary? Read 16b and 17. Are these promises only for the Jews, what is required?

Read verses 18-19. How did Abraham show his faith? Why was it literally impossible for him to believe God's promise? Read verses 20-21. Does faith depend on us and what we can do? What "impossible" things are you trying to believe?

Read verses 20-21 again. How does faith glorify God? Read verse 22. Why was Abraham credited as being righteous even though he didn't DO anything? Read verses 23-25. What is the impossible thing that Christians believe by faith? Do you believe?

Application: How can you express your faith in God's promises this week?

It's All About Faith

*"being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.
This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."*

How I Put God's Word into Practice

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

*How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?
What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?
What changes should I personally make in my life?*

PRAYER TOPICS:

It's All About Faith

*"being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.
This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness.""*

Teachers Sheet
Romans 4:13-25
Key Verse: 21-22

- ❖ At the shrine of Guadalupe in Mexico believers will crawl on their hands and knees for a quarter of a mile, to a place where supposedly the virgin Mary appeared one time, to pray for their loved ones who died. In India every 12 years they have a huge religious festival called Maha Kumbh Mela. Millions come for the promise of salvation. It is a common sight to see people with long knives piercing their tongues, sentencing themselves to eternal silence. Some look at the sun until they are blinded, others cause their limbs to atrophy holding gestures of worship—one man who had held up his hands for eight years, had fingernails that extended 2 feet past his hands. People are willing to go to great extremes to do something to appease the “gods” and somehow win salvation by their works. This passage destroys all such confidences.
- ❖ At the center of works based salvation is us and our self-centered works that we do not because we love and glorify God but because we want to save ourselves. When saving oneself is the goal of our faith, then what we do is all about us and has, actually, very little to do with God. This was Paul’s point at the end of chapter 3:27-31 that we cannot boast because salvation is only given to us as a gift by God. This places the emphasis of our life and worship clearly where it belongs on God and what God alone has done.
- ❖ **Verses 13-15.** Paul develops this in two points of how Abraham wasn’t justified by circumcision (4:1-12) which means he wasn’t even Jewish yet in some sense, he wasn’t justified by the law (13-15) it wasn’t written yet, but he was justified by grace through faith. Abraham is the crux of Paul’s argument that we are justified by faith because he was declared righteous before circumcision which the Jews actually believe made them saved regardless of what they do, and before the law which means it’s possible to be righteous without either. Faith also is not something that we can then “work” at and then boast about, it also is a gift of God (Eph 2:8-10a). If we have done nothing to deserve salvation and it is credited to us based on faith, then that is only because God in his grace grants it to us, he doesn’t HAVE to give it to us just because we believe but he gives it as a gift out of his grace, because we have done nothing to earn it. Again he emphasizes that to put confidence in the law is foolish because we all transgress it and only bring God’s judgment.
- ❖ **Verse 16-17.** Therefore, the only way of salvation is by faith, not by outward ceremony or keeping rules. Some kids really feel that Christianity is not attractive because they have to keep many rules they say. If they are being taught that Christianity is rules, they are learning Judaism not Christianity. There are other kids who have some accomplishments and who are told they are better than others and become spiritually snobbish believing that their behavior which is a little better than others will save them. But at the core of Christianity is that I am a hopeless sinner, who can never measure up to God’s impossible standard, which is like having a contest to see who can jump to the moon; therefore, I am saved only by grace when I believe in Jesus. It is a gift freely given. Because it doesn’t require any special ceremony or having a set of special rules, then anyone anywhere can believe and be saved. Strictly speaking, before God’s covenant with Abraham there were no Jews or Gentiles. Abraham’s faith is a universal faith that can be embraced by all mankind who believe in Jesus Christ. In

fact, thousands if not millions were saved before the Bible was put together—hearing the gospel and believing was all that was necessary. Learning to live out the Christian life is a matter of ongoing sanctification and being made in the image of Christ and is in fact about relationship with God but salvation is a matter of grace alone by faith alone. Then we don't need to worry about burdening possible believers with many rules and requirements, we simply need to introduce them to the grace and love of Jesus (though many times we must make them understand first that they are sinners in need of grace), then trust that God will do his own work in their heart to change them.

- ❖ **Verses 18-19.** Abraham's faith is exemplified in his willingness to go to a land he had never seen, believing in a promise that could not possibly be fulfilled, by a God he had never met. We don't know how God convinced Abraham, a pagan, that he was the one true God, or how he persuaded Abraham to place his trust in him, but we know that the same God who made the call gave him the faith to trust in him.
- ❖ The promise that Abraham believed was literally impossible. He and his wife were way beyond the age of bearing children. The older you get the risk of complication in pregnancy, the rate of down syndrome, defects and the like go way up. Not only Sarah, but Abraham also was as good as dead, men also lose the physical ability to bear children beyond a certain age. Not to mention that in all of history Abraham is probably the only one who ever did anything like this. Not only did he believe but as time went on he grew stronger in faith, believing in a thing that just literally defied everything we know—such faith would be ridiculous to us in our modern society and many Christians would even think it impossible.
- ❖ **Verses 20-21.** Abraham's faith was not in himself but in God. Thus his faith glorified God increasingly as his life went on, because it was fully centered in God and not in himself. Ultimately, this is why faith alone can make us right with God because it glorifies him and causes us to come out of our naturally selfish inclination. God created us to glorify him. When through the law we see how utterly sinful we are then, we come to God fully and give him glory as God placing all our hope and trust in him. In that way we are restored to the perfect relationship we had with him in the garden as children who utterly and completely trust and love their Father. This is how kids can challenge the impossible also, don't look at the problem but look at God who is bigger. Then we see that in fact problems are not problems, problems are opportunities to learn faith and that brings salvation. Thus problems are God's great blessing upon each of their lives.
- ❖ **Verses 24-25.** We as Christians also believe an impossible truth. That if I simply believe in a God I have never met who by faith we believe died for us, then my mountain of sins will just disappear and I'll be more perfectly right with God than if I kept a huge pile of rules, or did some amazing act to earn it. People always want to turn to works so that they can give themselves assurance and so they can boast. But faith in Christ strips all that away. It is not at all about us but entirely about him. And that is the hallmark of the rest of our life, it is not about me it is all about him.

In Jesus Our Hope is Certain

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”

Romans 5:1-8

Key Verse: 1

What kind of hope do you have? Do you hope for your future career, school you’ll go to, car you’ll drive, house you’ll live in, person you’ll be? What difference would it make if you could see into your future that you will get all those things in 20 years?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 1. What does it mean that we have been justified? What does it mean that we have peace with God? How does this give us great hope?

Can we by any sin or mistake lose our salvation? Read verses 6-8. What was our condition before we knew God? How did God show us his amazing love while we were his enemies?

If God loved us this much when we were his enemies how much more do you think he loves us when we become his children through faith in Jesus? Then do you think that he will start holding our sins against us and not forgive us after becoming a Christian? What about if we become really caught in a serious addiction to sin and live wildly(10)?

Read verses 3-5. How does this sure hope that we are saved no matter what affect the way we live?

Application: Consider what are your practical hopes for you life academically, future job, etc and consider how each of these can serve your greater hope in heaven as your #1 hope.

In Jesus Our Hope is Certain

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”

Teachers Sheet

Romans 5:1-8

Key Verse: 1

- ❖ One of Satan’s primary tactics against believers is that of making them doubt that salvation is secure forever or that it is real in their personal case. Some maintain that a person is saved by faith in Jesus Christ but can lose it by sinning; then, the believer lives in continual uncertainty, doubt and fear. If salvation was by faith, then it must be faith from first to last. If it was not by works then how can it be lost by works. They say that salvation is won by faith but maintained by works. That is we are saved by God’s power but are maintained by our power—it is just another kind of works-based salvation like Judaism. One day when a person is good they can have assurance and the next when they are bad their salvation is forfeited. As he had been in Chapters 3-4, he is again speaking to Jews. He had heard many of their arguments and some of these he brought up in Chapter 3 “is God’s grace a license to sin freely?” Now he brings up another important question, “if we are saved apart from our good works, then how is salvation maintained? Is it by our good works?” If salvation depended on what the believers do or do not do, then their salvation would only be as sure as their faithfulness—which is no hope at all. In developing his argument in the book of Romans against the destructive notion that believers must live in uncertainty about the completion of their salvation Paul presents six “links” in the chain that eternally binds a believer to the Savior: The Believer’s Peace with God (1), The Believer’s Standing in Grace (2a), The Believer’s Hope of Glory (2b-5a), The Believer’s Possession of Divine Love (5b-8), The Believer’s Certainty of Deliverance (9-10), The Believer’s Joy in God (11).
- ❖ Paul first tells us that we have peace with God in the present tense, not as a future hope. This means that in the past we were God’s enemies. As a result, we must be punished for our sin because in willful rebellion we did what is wrong in his sight and went against him who made us. However, Jesus took upon himself all of the wrath of God against sinful mankind who made themselves his enemies. Thus, the position of a believer has changed from enemy to at peace because Christ has justly paid all of the punishment necessary for sin to the full degree (justification). Thus we are reconciled to God. This assurance is rooted in Christ and not in ourself, so it is sure. When we truly understand this it makes us immeasurably grateful and we serve God with an entirely new spirit and we stand secure, ready to do anything he asks.
- ❖ Verses 5 and 8 tell us that God not only justifies us giving us peace with God, but he also pours out his love. He doesn’t give it in small drops but pours it out, which refers to the lavish outpouring to the point of overflowing. If we think that we need to maintain our salvation by living the right way, we need only think back to when we were saved: we were powerless (“helpless” ASV) (v6). We could do nothing for ourselves to make God want to save us. Rather, while we were still his enemies he died for us to save us. As verse 7 points out, this goes way beyond human love and sacrifice, because he did it while we were his enemies, which puts it in the realm of the one-sided agape love of God. He did this not just because it seemed right on principle but because he loves us. If he loves us that much when we were his enemies, then how much more will he love us when we are his children.

- ❖ Verses 9-10 demonstrate that if Christ saved us when we were his enemies then how much more will we continue to be reconciled to God even if we continue to sin and fail. If he forgave all sin when we were sinners, then that did not stop when we become believers: before our sins were forgiven and now they are counted against us—how ridiculous. It is very common for a true believer to fall into sin and seem to wander. At that time they do not lose their salvation, the good work Christ began in them by taking away their sin cannot be canceled by their sinning. Rather, they grieve the Holy Spirit and lose fellowship with God. They don't feel love for God or feel God's love but they are not lost, they just need to be brought back into fellowship. However, those who renounce Christ either by persistent ungodly living or by rejecting him through their words and actions, don't lose their salvation, but as 1 John points out they never had it to begin with. One who has honestly experienced the grace of justification and the powerful transformation of the new birth and the immeasurable love of God cannot ever imagine doing these things—they are not perfect, but they are maintained in their faith by God's grace from beginning to end. So, a person who walks away from the faith? Maybe they are true and will come back or maybe they were false from the start. Either way, the response is the same, we must love them and bring them to repentance the same as we would any sinner that they may once again come into the fellowship of believers.
- ❖ Then this assurance produces in us a hope in which we boast. Because of this hope, Scripture is clear, that we will absolutely endure persecution (2 Ti 3:12). The word "suffering" is not the normal human suffering but the (Thlipsis) tribulations that Christians will suffer on behalf of our Lord. Thlipsis carries the meaning of being under pressure like olives in an olive press. Christians will endure immense pressure from Satan and the worldly system, to conform and deny their faith but all the tribulations that are brought against them only make them hope all the more in heaven, which makes their hope more sure, which brings heavier tribulations, which makes them yearn for heaven with greater intensity. Therefore, suffering for Christ, suffering for being Christian, produces a godly character in us that we could never have any other way and a hope that is as solid as the Cornerstone on which it is founded. Of that hope we can be sure (v5) because God has poured his love into hearts along with his Holy Spirit. So we live confidently, hopefully, working hard with joy in our hearts and eyes fixed upward toward heaven.

Dead Though Adam Life Through Christ

“Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.”

Romans 5:12,18-21

Key Verse: 18

Did it ever happen to you that because of the actions of one sibling or one classmate your whole family or whole class had to suffer or be punished? How did you feel about it?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 12. What did the “one man” do that caused sin to enter the world (see Genesis 3 esp. 1,6)? Why did sin bring death (see Genesis 2:16-17,3:4)? Why was death also passed on to all people? So many people ask, “Why does God allow death?” what is the clear answer? Was death part of God’s original plan, was man originally made to die?

Read verse 18. In the same way that Adam’s sin brought death to everyone, what does Christ’s death do for all who believe? Read verse 19. How did Adam’s sin forever change the nature of all people? How did Christ’s obedience change the nature of those who believe?

Read verses 15b, 20 and 21. Even though everyone received death through what Adam did, how do we receive justification and righteousness? Why is it so important that it is by grace? How does it make you feel to know that Christ has forever, completely changed you by his grace?

Application: *Would you say that you are living as Adam or Christ? How can you experience the life that Christ wants to give instead of dead life of sin?*

Dead in Sin Alive in Christ

"Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people."

How I Put Gods Word into Practice

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?

What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?

What changes should I personally make in my life?

PRAYER TOPICS:

Dead in Sin Alive in Christ

“Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.”

Teachers Sheet
Romans 5:12,18-21
Key Verse: 18

- ❖ While Paul brings up the issue of death in this passage, it is really for the means of making his point that justification and righteousness can be imputed to all people through the act of righteousness of one man. Someone may wonder how the death of one man Christ can make me righteous or why God would count what he did and make it count for me. To make the argument, Paul gives the example of how Adam’s sin caused all humanity to become sinful. There is something about this that we cannot possibly hope to understand and must simply accept by faith. Did all of Adam’s DNA change when he sinned? Is there a sinful nature gene? The sinful nature is part of our flesh, not part of our spirit, so did Adam’s body undergo some transformation? Was it just some part of the brain that was unlocked or rewired? Some have even said that this is why God gave the covenant of circumcision to symbolize the cutting away of the organ for procreation to symbolize the cutting away of the sin we pass on. But we cannot know the answers to these questions until we go to heaven, we must simply accept it by faith. But the proof of it can be seen in that all people die and all people sin, therefore we can be sure that all people have inherited a sinful nature and therefore die. Even babies can die, though they clearly have not sinned, they have a sinful nature.
- ❖ While it was Eve who first sinned. Verse 12 accounts the blame to Adam because he was the one who was given the command directly and was therefore more responsible for obeying it. As the one who received the command he should have refused the fruit even when Eve disobeyed—some have even said that Adam was there watching and did not intervene out of curiosity. Secondly he was the spiritual leader of their family and should have taught Eve the importance of obedience.
- ❖ A smart person will say of course, “That’s not fair! I didn’t ask to be born, nor did anyone. How can God hold my sin nature against me?” Of course the same could be said for Christ: it wasn’t fair that he had to die to take away our sin. If God were only fair, then he would have destroyed Adam and Eve the moment they sinned and been done with it. But in his grace he gave us the gift of life and a way to be made perfect.
- ❖ Many more ask “how could a loving God let so many people die, especially good people, babies and the innocent?” Of course no one is innocent and everyone deserves death and worse, the same people who bring up these arguments don’t want to acknowledge that. The simple answer is that death was not part of God’s original plan. God did not create man to be mortal. Death is not something that God created that was good as was all his creation. Death is the consequence of man’s sin. It is our fault that there is death, just like it is our fault there is poverty and hunger and all the problems of the world that we like to blame God for. God made man to rule over all aspects of his creation with just one rule. It was one rule but it came with a steep penalty: sure death. The serpent tried to get Eve to believe that death was not certain as a result of sin and Adam after seeing that his wife did not die, believed that sin would not cause death but that was the sure penalty. In fact, death was and is in some ways also a mercy: a release from the pain and tribulations of this world.

- ❖ This death comes in 3 forms. The first immediate consequence of sin was spiritual death, that is separation from God. The immediate consequences of sin were shame (they sewed fig leaves), fear and guilt (they hid from God, also a kind of separation), broken relationship with God and with others (blaming God, blaming his wife), finally total physical separation (they were banished from the garden and could never see God face to face again). Eph 2:1-2 say that the Ephesians were dead in their sins in which they used to walk when ruled by Satan. Eph 4:18 says that the unbelieving are darkened and separated from the life of God. The second consequence of sin was physical death, that didn't come immediately—in fact in his great mercy he delayed it extraordinarily long (yet as sin increased so death came on quicker...). Physical death also makes it impossible to be saved if we have not repented in life. The third type of death is eternal death or the “second death” Rev 21:8. This death is not only eternal, complete separation from God but also eternal torment. All of these kinds of death are the consequence of sin and will be the punishment of all unbelievers. However, believers should not fear any kind of death Heb 2:14-15.
- ❖ The second half of the passage is about contrasting the gift of God and the trespass of Adam. When Adam ate of the fruit, rather than becoming more like God like Satan promised, he became more unlike God and was separated from him. From that time on his nature was fundamentally changed to be sinful. He was delivered from the province of God to the province of Satan. However, Christ's one act has immeasurably more impact than Adam's one act of damnation. Verse 15 says much more did grace overflow to many. Calvin wrote that Christ is more powerful to save than Adam was to destroy. That is that Christ's sacrifice was greater in its **effectiveness**.
- ❖ “Many” in verse 15 and “all” in verse 18 and “many” again in 19 does not mean that all people are justified and made righteous. In other words this is not universalism. Paul made the clear point at the beginning of Chapter 5 just before this that, we are justified by faith in Christ. So many and all are those who believe by faith. But in order to simplify and clarify his argument he uses parallel statements. Always we must be careful to not take a verse or passage out of the flow of what the book and all of scripture clearly teaches.
- ❖ Verse 16 points out that one sin equaled death but the free gift followed many transgressions. That is it was greater in **extent**.
- ❖ Verse 17 points out that death was the result of sin. However death was certainly not the desired result of sin. Adam and Eve wanted to be more like God but instead received the opposite and death. But the result of Christ's sacrifice is exactly what he desired. Whereas the result of sin is one dimensional: sin; the result of Christ's sacrifice is multidimensional: salvation, life, righteousness. That is it is greater in its **efficacy**.
- ❖ Verses 18-19 summarize the analogy of Adam and Jesus and show the difference in their **essence**. The essence of Adam's one transgression was disobedience but the essence of Christ's one act of righteousness was obedience. When God sent Jesus to die for the sins of the world he obeyed. He led a perfectly sinless life in every way. Even when he was 12 he had to be about his Father's business. Because of Adam's one sin he passed on the guilt of what he had done and so we all bear the guilt, we are guilty and deserving condemnation (18). So also, because of Christ's one act of obedience he passes on righteousness to all who believe. Those who sin are fundamentally changed in their nature to be sinful but in Christ we can be fundamentally changed to be righteous. Just as the result of Adam's sin fundamentally changed us forever, so Christ's more effective act of righteousness fundamentally changes us forever to be righteous. However, this can only be passed on from Christ to each person and not from parent to child like the sinful nature.

- ❖ This imparted righteousness and justification is called in this passage “the gift” to emphasize that the grace given to us is not as a result of what we did like Adam sinning and ruining all people but rather it is given to us because of what Christ did regardless of what we have done. This gift is not like the trespass, it is more effective, has a greater extent, more efficacy, a greater essence and more energy to save (20-21). The more that sin increases the more that grace increases. Though the law made transgression increase greatly, grace increased more. By his one-sided grace God has made it possible for all people to be redeemed from the sinful nature that we inherited from Adam and be born into a regenerative nature where we become less like Adam and more and more like Christ, finally shedding the sinful nature and the mortal body and receiving the gift of eternal life, perfect righteousness and unbroken fellowship with God once again.

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”

Romans 6:1-14

Key Verse: 6

Have you ever been addicted to something? –something you couldn’t stop doing or saying or reading or watching or eating. What finally set you free? How did it feel?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 1. How did some people make fun of God’s grace? Why? Read verse 2. What is the answer? Read verses 2 and 11. What does it mean to be dead to sin?

Read verses 3-4. What is the meaning of baptism for a Christian? Read verse 6. What is the effect of accepting Jesus’ crucifixion? Read verses, 5 and 8. If we are united with Christ in his crucifixion and death, what amazing transformation will take place now and be completed in heaven?

Read verse 7. What does it mean to be set free from sin? Read verse 12. Does our battle with sin end when we believe? How does our attitude toward sin change?

Read verse 13. What are some examples of offering the parts of your body to sin? Once we are set free from sin, how can we positively offer the parts of our body to do good?

Application: *What sins do you need to put to death this week? How can you stop offering the parts of your body to sin?*

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin"

How I Put Gods Word into Practice

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?

What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?

What changes should I personally make in my life?

PRAYER TOPICS:

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”

Teachers Sheet

Romans 6:1-14

Key Verse: 6

- ❖ The question at the beginning of the passage comes from Paul’s Jewish opponents. At this point of his writing, he has been doing ministry for years and first primarily to the Jews scattered around the Roman world, until he decides to exclusively go to the Gentiles. In all that time of Jewish ministry he experienced many such questions and this was presumably one of the most common. Those who lived under fear of judgement believed that if you removed the consequences people would sin freely. It is because in their mind they really wanted to sin and only fear of punishment was holding them back. But for a Christian it is quite different. We are set free from sin. We died to it and our old self is dead and gone. We actually begin to hate what God hates and love what God loves. This transformation is what sets Christianity totally apart from Judaism and laws and legalism. Legalist hate grace, because they don’t think it works. They think that we need rules to control people or they will do everything wrong. But rules only produce outward change. But grace produces inward transformation and rebirth. Rules produce defiance but grace produces love and greater obedience.
- ❖ Therefore, baptism which symbolizes repentance must be complete death to all our old sinful habits and attitudes. Repentance means to completely turn away from our sin and never return to it. It doesn’t mean we won’t fail and slip back but it is an attitude that I’m now forever turned away from my sin and I’m walking toward God. A person therefore who continues to walk toward sin, living in a sinful lifestyle, has clearly never repented and experienced the transforming power of new birth (see 1 John 3). What is more through the cross also our old self is crucified. Christ died, so that sin may die and when we believe our old sinful self is destroyed. It means that believing in Christ is not just a matter of theology or religious activities, it is life transformation, there must be a change. It is not immediate but there must be a continual growth to be more like Christ. Therefore, just as we die and are crucified with him, there is also a resurrection, we are resurrected as a new person. We are not Bob or Sally anymore but New Bob and New Sally. We look like ourselves but we are no longer ourself. (After conversion, St. Augustine was confronted by an old girlfriend who said “Augustine, it is I, it is I!” But Augustine running in the other direction away from temptation said, “Yes, but it is not I!”)
- ❖ When we believe we are set free from sin. It means that it has no power over us. Christians have the power to break addictions and overcome the devil, we are not slaves anymore, controlled by the things of the world. However, many Christians go around acting defeated and believing they have no power. It is because their direction is toward sin and toward themselves. A Christian must be going toward God and away from sin. We will still struggle and still have failures, but we will not be mastered by sin. Therefore, a Christian should put away those things that lead them toward temptation. It may mean that one Christian needs to put away the computer and another may need to put away his game console, one may need to put away her internet use and another may need to put away her phone. We have the power to overcome through Christ but we must change our attitude.

- ❖ We offer parts of our body to sin often, even after we offered our heart to Christ. Then even though we are set free children of God, we experience becoming slaves again. However, we are bound by chains that we possess the key to—we could free ourselves at any time. Girls offer the parts of their body to sin often by the way they dress. They think it is just fashion but they cause boys to sin. Some girls realize the effect they have and pursue that attention. Boys offer their hands to sin through playing inappropriate games or playing them in excess to the point they become an idol. Everyone often offers their mouths to sin by not controlling their talking—there are certain things that Christians just can't talk about anymore, or ways of talking that are no longer appropriate for a Christian (negativity, gossip, complaining, etc.) and they must be crucified. We offer our eyes to bad movies that a Christian should know to avoid but we say it's just a little bad language, just a little killing, just a little adult themes, just a little... and anyway its all fake... but in our mind it becomes very real and those fantasies of love, revenge, and flashy modern culture shape our thought world. There are many more worse examples but the point is that if we have been purchased by the blood of Christ then we should no longer be offering parts of ourselves to the devil for his purpose. We become like the Israelites who after being set free from harsh slavery—in which they were mercilessly beat and killed, had their babies slaughtered before their eyes and were used like animals—actually thought fondly of their slavery and wanted to return. How RIDICULOUS! We were freed from Satan who treated us mercilessly, desiring our destruction. We cannot return to a sinful lifestyle after we've been freed from slavery.
- ❖ Rather, a believer must devote themselves to what is good. The first most important thing is reading the Bible and prayer. As a sinner we filled ourselves to the brim with sinful knowledge. We were experts in how to sin so now we must fill up on God knowledge and push out all the bad. We need to renew our mind (Rom 12:2). Daily Bible reading and daily prayer should be the first goal of every Christian to establish. Then, we must ask what is the good I can do. The best way to overcome a sinful life is to start positively DOING something for God, otherwise there is a vacuum that will definitely be filled by sin, just because it is our default. If a Christian doesn't fill their life with mission and good works, he will ALWAYS default to sin because it is his habit and nature.

Slaves to God

“But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.”

Romans 6:15-23

Key Verse: 17

Did you ever feel you were a slave having to obey everything told to you?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 15. What is in the mind of the person who asks the question in verse 15? Read verse 16. What reveals a person’s real master (also 19)? What happens to us when we obey sin? What are some examples of this you have seen or experienced?

Read verse 17. What is the “pattern of teaching” that we have come to obey? How does this set us free from being slaves to sin (See also John 8:31-32)? How can we have a heart change toward God’s word?

Read verse 18. What does it mean to be a slave to sin? a slave to righteousness? Read verses 19-23. What is the outcome of being a slave to sin? of being a slave to righteousness?

How can we stop ourselves from being controlled by sin and instead be free to follow God?

Application: *In what ways can you commit to do what God wants this week serving him as of first priority?*

Slaves to God

"But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance."

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SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

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How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?

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PRAYER TOPICS:

Slaves to God

"But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance."

Teachers Sheet
Romans 6:15-23
Key Verse: 17

- ❖ The person who says they love and obey God but thinks that they should sin freely if we don't fear punishment, clearly doesn't love and obey God from their heart. In their heart is not a constant desire to love God but to sin. A person who loves God has in his heart always to please God. People think grace doesn't work because people will abuse it but only if they are still of the world. No amount of laws can produce the heart change that is done by the Spirit. It produces in us a desire to do what God wants from the heart. As a result we don't need to be under the law any more because we willingly want to obey God.
- ❖ People who are slaves to sin and people who are slaves to righteousness have the same beginning point: they chose to obey one or the other. We are slaves to sin because we chose to be slaves to sin. When we follow our flesh, the result can only be that we will become slaves to sin. But interestingly, when we offer ourselves as slaves to God willingly choosing to obey anything that God commands without question or fail like a happy slave, we find we are compelled to do good, bear fruit, love and grow. So, the beginning point is what we choose to obey, will become our master and thus we will be recognized by what we are obeying. We cannot obey 2 masters, as we considered last week.
- ❖ There are too many examples in our society. When we play video games, we can't stop playing video games. When we lie, we can't stop lying. When we swear, we can't stop swearing. When we want attention from the opposite gender, we can't stop seeking that attention. And there are many more. Sin is always addictive and progressive. When we do it once we can't stop and the sin get's worse and worse over time.
- ❖ The way that we can dedicate ourselves to God and grow in him, is by filling our hearts with the Bible. The more we study it and decide to follow it, the more we grow to love God and desire to follow him. We make ourselves willing slaves. Slave has a very negative connotation in our society, but in these times, people could have a very good job by giving themselves as slaves to a good master. They would have food and lodging and a steady future and if there master is good their life is very enjoyable. In a sense employees willingly make themselves the slaves of their employer, or students should become slaves to their teachers if they want to learn well, that is more the sense here. We choose to obey the person and then we can have the benefits. But if we don't actually obey we are not actually connected to them. We as Christians must willingly decide to do whatever the Bible says no matter what as if we don't have a choice. When we become slaves of God and obeying anything he says in the Bible, we will grow in a right relationship with him, grow in our right actions and grow to become like Jesus. Jesus says, that whoever hears his words and puts them in their heart will be set free.
- ❖ The result of giving yourself to ever-increasing wickedness, we become unable to ever stop sinning, this itself is death but it also leads to the second death which is hell. But as a result of Christ we were set free. We are so happy about this, that we willingly give ourselves to obey God, and we grow in righteousness and this is true life and it leads to eternal life.
- ❖ Then the crux is to choose well what we will obey. We cannot obey sin and have life. But if we obey God willingly we will be set free from sin.

Struggling Against Sin

*“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?
Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

Romans 7:14-25

Key Verse: 24-25

What is the hardest thing you ever did? Why did you do it? Why didn't you just give up? How did it feel after you went through it?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 14-15. What was Paul's struggle? Read 15b again. What proves that Paul is a true believer even though he continues to sin? How does a Christian's attitude toward sin differ from an unbeliever? Have you experienced such a change?

Read verses 20-23. What two natures are always at war within the heart of a believer? What does a Christian really want to do? What is a believers' delight? Should we be discouraged as Christians when we still find ourselves battling with sin?

Read verse 24. How do you feel to hear such a mature believer like Paul share so honestly about his struggle? Can you relate to him? Read verse 25. What is the only way to win this struggle? When will we finally be free from sin?

Application: *What sins are you still struggling with? Can you change your attitude toward it and finally be free of it?*

Struggling Against Sin

*“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?
Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

Teachers Sheet
Romans 7:14-25
Key Verse: 24-25

- ❖ The points Paul makes are always progressive one truth building upon the next to make his argument clear. The point he makes from chapter 6-7 on the surface seems very simple but when we dig deeper is very complicated. His point in chapter 6 is that once we were all slaves to sin. It was our master and we had no choice but to obey it, but in our slave mentality we saw no problem with this condition and knew nothing else just as many choose to remain slaves over seeking freedom because it is all they know. However, when Christ freed us the reality is that sin has no more mastery over us, we are completely free. We died and therefore the old self controlled by sin is dead and Satan can never have the same power over us he once had. While we cannot attain sinless perfection, yet our relationship to sin is fundamentally changed it can no longer master and control us. Therefore a person whose life is characterized by living for sin and loves sin most should question whether he really accepted Christ—in believing we changed masters. In Chapter 7a we find we have also been set free from the law, in the same way that a married person is only under the law of marriage until death, so our death means that we are free from the law as well. We may think in 7b then that the law was a bad thing then. It is not, it is the perfect representation of God’s holiness and it is a perfect standard for how we should live. The law never promised salvation. Salvation has always been the free imparted gift of God apart from any law, look at king David. The law’s purpose was to point out our sinfulness and our need for the salvation which can only be given by God alone. Which brings us to the last point of chapter 7. Yes, we are free from sin and it is no longer our master and we are no longer its slave and we are free from the law, that is the reality, that is the truth because the Bible says so. But the painful reality that every Christian struggles with is that after believing in Jesus, our struggle with sin seems to have not changed one bit. In fact, before we just sinned and it was no problem but now we have an intense struggle all the time. We expect that when we believe we should stop sinning, but the reality is that the sinful nature is still very much alive in us. Many have tried to pretend that after accepting Christ they can attain sinless perfection but the Bible itself says that anyone who doesn’t sin is a liar and calls God a liar. No, the reality is that when we become a Christian, we now must struggle for the rest of our life. The reality is that in our soul we are free and we are slaves to God, this we must believe by faith regardless of how much we are failing in life. However, in our flesh the sinful nature will continue to live and deceive us. The moment we are set free Satan tries to convince us that we are not through the deception of sin. Because of their ongoing battle with sin, their many times falling back into their old life and struggle with the same bad habits, many Christians doubt their salvation believing that after becoming a Christian this should not still be happening. However, the fact that we see a problem with what we are doing and very much want to change, is the proof of our salvation. As slaves to sin, we see no problem with our sin and want to keep on going in it. But now a Christian cannot feel comfortable anymore sinning, that struggle and problem is the sign of a true Christian. In fact the more mature we become the more we clearly see God, the more we

realize his holiness and the more we see our sinfulness, the more struggle we have and the more we feel about ourself that there is nothing good in us.

- ❖ Many have over the years tried to suppose that the person portrayed in these verses is not a believer since he still has such a struggle with sin. These Christian legalists try to imagine that the goal of the Christian life is to become perfect. However, they clearly do not really understand God's standard. As God made very clear in Leviticus, obeying the law is trying to be holy as God is holy and there is no way we become like God in this life totally. If we have a very low view of the law and God we may think we can attain perfection, but when we really see how amazingly perfect God is we really want to be like him, but we painfully realize how short of his standard we fall. The level of struggle of the person in this passage is in fact that of a very mature believer who really wants to do good and delights in God's law—signs of his maturity, a young believer doesn't have such a desire—but he is honest that he knows he cannot perfectly. Thus he struggles against sin to the point that he hates this life and hates his sin desiring to be set free from the body and be perfect—this is a very mature desire and deep in the hearts of Christian legalists, I have to believe they know they are just the same.
- ❖ Then we must realize that the great desire and aspiration of a Christian is to be like Christ, to lose this life and gain a glorified body free from sin and not to try to reach legalistic perfection through rules like we did under the law. The mark of a true Christian is a hatred of sin, desire to do good, delight in God's law and a constant sense of struggle to grow, this struggle is not cause for doubt but wonderful proof of our regenerate life. So, Christians should not pretend to be perfect or teach young Christians to be perfect, it is all an illusion. The fact is that we never stop struggling, because we never stop trying to be more and more like Christ. We must teach that we are all sinners who live only by grace and we must continually come to the cross to receive mercy and continue to persevere to the end.
- ❖ Therefore, because the law shows us our sin and helps us be more like God, God's law is very good, we should not try to throw it off as many do in our modern society but embrace it as the way to know God deeper and grow to be like him, something that we can only achieve now that we are in Christ by the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ What is so moving in this passage is that Paul is so vulnerable and honest about his sin—very few leaders show this kind of vulnerability, to many being this honest with their young students is unthinkable! But the reality is that we know the Bible is true because it doesn't try to cover up what we all know to be very true. Paul's struggle is our struggle, he is just the same as we are and it endears us to him and makes us realize that we can be just like him, he is not a superman but a sinner struggling and living by faith just as we are.
- ❖ The only hope any of us have is that we will be delivered through Christ Jesus our Lord. In this life we will never overcome sin. But when Jesus delivers us from this body of death then we will finally be free as our souls desire to be. Then since in our spirit we are free and in our flesh we are slaves, then it is up to us to exercise our will. Sin is no longer our master but often we purposely choose to let it control us, like putting on play handcuffs, we pretend we are slaves but in fact have the power to free ourselves at any time. Many people don't want the consequences of their sin but still don't want to give up their beloved sins. The attitude of a real Christian is that we will begin to more and more hate what is sinful and desire to be set free. Thus, what Jesus said is true, that unless we hate our life we will not experience true life. This is why the rich have such a hard time to accept the kingdom, we cannot be perfectly happy with this life, and then unfortunately one day we must die and go to heaven. We must hate this life and the flesh controlled by sin and the more we see God and grow like him the more we long for heaven and the release from the flesh.

No Condemnation

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:1-12

Key Verse: 1

Did you ever feel judged and condemned by others? How did it affect you? What did you do? How did you overcome your feeling?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 1. What is condemnation? Why do we deserve to be condemned? Read 7:24-25a, 8:3-4. How is it that we are freed from condemnation? Is this something that we can do on our own? Then, is it possible for us ever to fall back into condemnation because of our sins? Then should we condemn ourselves when we sin? What should we do instead?

Then, if we are freed from condemnation does that mean we can do whatever we want without any consequences? Read verse 5. What does it mean to live according to the flesh? Read verse 6. What is the outcome of such a life? Read verse 7. What is the attitude of those in the flesh toward God? Read verse 8. How does God feel about them?

Read verse 9. How does the mind governed by the Spirit differ (also review 5-8)? Read verses 10-11. What is the outcome of such a life? Can a real believer just sin freely because they are no longer condemned?

Application: *Would you say that your mind is controlled by your flesh or by the Spirit? Do you find rebellion in your heart or willingness toward God? How can you submit yourself to God?*

No Condemnation

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

How I Put God's Word into Practice

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No Condemnation

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Teachers Sheet

Romans 8:1-12

Key Verse: 1

- ❖ Chapter 7 paints such a complete picture of the total depravity of people, that even after we accept Christ we can never escape our old nature and old habits. It is therefore very easy to believe that if we sin we will be condemned, because we feel in our hearts that we deserve to be condemned. In fact, the grace of Jesus makes us feel more condemned because we know that we deserve punishment even more in light of God’s grace. But as Paul already established in 7:24-25, though in our flesh we continue to sin, God has set us free through Christ. THEREFORE, we must believe by faith, regardless of how we feel or any human logic or lie of the accuser (Satan), that the trial is over and Christ has paid the full price and I can never be put in double jeopardy and tried again for the sin that Jesus was already tried and condemned for. We will never be condemned in any way for the sin we committed or any of the sin we will commit in the future. To deny this is to say that the blood of Jesus was not powerful enough and somehow I can sin my way out of grace, that somehow Jesus’ blood was enough to pay for all the sin of all the people of all time, but my sin is somehow too much. Our forgiveness has nothing to do with us and everything to do with Jesus. What he did is enough and therefore when we believe nothing we do can remove that, because it did not come from us in the first place.
- ❖ However, the problem arises: “if there are no longer consequences to what I do, then I can do whatever I want and get away with it!” For one, the eternal consequences are removed but the natural consequences are not. If you break the law and shoot someone, I will go to jail whether I’m a Christian or not “God will not be mocked a man reaps what he sows.” What is more, Paul develops the point of the mind controlled by the flesh vs the Spirit. For a person controlled by the Spirit, it would be impossible to ever think like that, because the Spirit would never prompt such a response, such a person is in the flesh and desires all the time to please that nature. A person in the Spirit cannot continue to live in such a way, though we are completely free to do so—that is how complete and shocking the covenant of grace is and why so many have denied it or tried to put stipulations on it. But the reality is that God has forgiven us in a crazy unimaginable way and no human actions can add to it. What is more, it is not enough to be simply positionally holy without seeking true holiness. When we were forgiven, the trial is over and we are forever free but then God asks us to begin to live in a new way and gives us His Spirit so that it is actually possible to do what we could never do before. We would not want our spouse in marriage to be only positionally committed to us, to only marry us and after that to have nothing practically to do with us. Of course God wants us to be positionally holy but after that to seek true holiness, to be molded into his image. We have to imagine it, one day we will be perfected and live with him in perfect holiness forever, will we until then live as we please and then against our will be forced to give all that up in heaven?
- ❖ The whole world is in the flesh and cannot help but continue sinning. *“To set the mind on the flesh means to think continually about and constantly desire the things characteristic of fallen, sinful human nature, that is, to think just the way the unbelieving world thinks, emphasizing what it thinks important, pursuing what it pursues, in disregard of God’s will.”* (ESV Study Bible) Those who do not have the Spirit can only therefore live by the flesh, there is no middle

ground: you are in the Spirit or you are in the flesh, period. Therefore, those who have not accepted Jesus may be able to overcome themselves to some degree but they can never be free from the desires of their flesh. If they overcome games, they watch too many movies, if they stop that, they turn to materialism, if they stop that they obsessed with relationships, there is no freedom in the flesh, the flesh is death. Therefore, the default position of all people toward God is rebellion, they bristle at the word and hate it, especially they hate that it reveals their sin and condemns them and they reject it and God. Unless the Spirit works in a person, they cannot come to God and they cannot find salvation in Christ—which is why he said that no one can come to me unless God has enabled them. People living worldly lives concerned with worldly things are not in the Spirit and therefore cannot please God.

- ❖ In contrast we are not in the flesh when we believe, but we are in the Spirit. This means that we obey the Spirit's leading. Little by little God renews our mind so that we want what the Spirit wants and do what the Spirit wills. When it says that we are in Christ, it is a profound mystery. The language literally means that we are an appendage of his body. We are totally in him and he in us. He wills us to move and we do as he feeds us our life and sustains us. Everything we do is because he is willing it and we move according to his command. In babies these connections are weak and so the mind wills the hand to move and it may never or move in a way totally unexpected—but at least it moved. It is because the connection is weak, the muscles have no memory of the action, and largely the impulses of the brain are misunderstood by the parts of the body resulting in much frustration. As we mature, what the mind wills the hand understands how to do with greater and greater efficiency and it is possible to stop there. However, excellent people train themselves to grow in efficiency in one way they use their body and through much training their hand can move with lightning speed, the time between brain thinking and hand moving is instantaneous. Fighters, artists, musicians, athletes train themselves with so much repetition that the body can do what it is trained to do before the brain even tells it, moving with exquisite precision faster than the mind can conceive. In fact, a musician can often watch their hand moving, making music as if it were being played by someone outside of themselves, moving in its own mysterious way faster and more beautifully than the mind could conceive of how to make it do so. And so those trained develop incredible reflexes so that the body moves before it is told and anticipates what will be commanded of it moving in a way that amazes and pleases the mind and fills both the hand and the mind with joy and pride. It is but a weak human comparison but it is the way that we mature in God to move and respond until we are in a perfect unison with him moving as he would and both he and we derive great meaning and pleasure. Therefore, the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace and leads to righteousness and to the glorious resurrection, where we will have bodies are no longer flesh but Spirit.

God Adopted Us as His Children

"The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"

Romans 8:13-17a

Key Verse: 15

Did you ever experience a change of status, like becoming a member of something or being student of the month or given special recognition or privileges? How did it feel? How did it change the way you live?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 12-13. What does Paul say is our obligation as believers? Why are we obligated? How can we practically put sin in our body to death by the power of the Spirit?

Read verse 14. What can we be absolutely sure of if we feel led by the Spirit? Read verse 15. What does it mean that we are "adopted to sonship"? What does it say about our relation with God that he would adopt us? What is the significance of being adopted by him?

Read verse 16. How can we be certain of this? Read verse 17. What is the great benefit of being God's children? How does this hope help us to let go of this world and its desires? How then do we live as God's children?

Application: *What does it mean to you that you are God's son or daughter? How can you live more like his child this week?*

God Adopted Us as His Children

“The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’”

Teachers Sheet
Romans 8:13-17a
Key Verse: 15

- ❖ By the word “Therefore” Paul begins an exhortation based on the beautiful promise we have as believers: There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We have victory over the flesh and instead are controlled by the Spirit. “Therefore” we must do our part to put sin in us to death by the Spirit’s power in response to all that Christ has done for us. He calls it an obligation that we have to Spirit. It is natural for a young immature believer to still live in the flesh but he has the power to slowly and sometimes with frustration put it to death but he will feel compelled continually by the Spirit to do so. On the other hand one who claims to be a Christian but only keeps it on the outside to appear good before others and who is still living only thinking about the flesh and its desires deserves to die. This passage should not make a believer doubt that if he doesn’t put sin to death he will go to hell. It is not possible in this life to put all sin to death, even with the Spirit’s help, so then what would be the measure of how much sin put to death is enough to get into heaven? The point is what is the motivation of our life: are we continually trying to put sin to death or living in sin comfortably looking like the rest of the world? As believers we must remember that as God has given us to the power to be sanctified through the Spirit we must do so.
- ❖ Scripture offers us many helps to avoid and destroy sin in our lives. First, we must recognize the presence of sin in our flesh. We must admit like Paul that “there is nothing good in me, that is in my flesh.” So we should pray with David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart...”(Ps 139:23-24) Second, have a heart fixed on God. When our time and thinking is focused on God’s word and his work and praising the living God, we are building up our offenses and defenses. Third, believers should meditate on God’s word. Meditate doesn’t mean read, many of the great truths of scripture can only be revealed to us through deep concentrated time of study giving the Lord plenty of time to speak to us. Memorization then is a very good way to do this (Ps 119:11). Fourth, is to commune regularly with the Lord in prayer. Peter tells us to be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer (1 Pe 4:7). True prayer will always have an element of confession. Through prayer the Spirit will reveal to us even sin that had gone unnoticed. Fifth, is to practice obedience to God. When we constantly practice obedience to him then we will have a good habit to help us in the severe testing of temptation. As Paul made clear in chapter 7, overcoming sin is a slow and frustrating process. Paul after being an apostle for many years confessed, “Not that I have already obtained it or am already perfected. But I press on that I may lay hold of it.” (Php 3:12-14). Then the great danger for a Christian is to believe they are ok and stop trying to overcome sin as the Spirit desires, it is then that Satan will get a good foothold in a mature believer’s life. The Puritan John Owen warned that sin is never less quiet than when it seems to be most quiet and its waters are for the most part deep when they are still. Being controlled by the Spirit comes from being obedient to his word. The Spirit-filled life doesn’t come from an ecstatic experience but from studying and submitting ones self to Scripture.
- ❖ So, if we are let by the Spirit, we can be certain that we are real believers and as such we are God’s children whom he adopted into his family—and God would never destroy his own

children, that would be detestable. If we have believed from our heart and confessed with our mouth that Jesus is our Lord, and even once have felt the Spirit leading us to stop doing something, to start doing something, to make a decision, to go a certain way, then we can know we are his children. This is not an uninterrupted leading of course because of the interference of the flesh but it gives us assurance.

- ❖ We cannot really understand in our finite human minds, how the Spirit leads us but we do know that he doesn't force his children, he wants their willing obedience, which cannot be coerced. He leads not forces. Isa assures us that if we seek God's will the Spirit is right behind us saying "This is the way, walk in it" (Isa 30:21). The first way the Spirit leads us is to illuminate scripture. Jesus promised that the Helper would come and teach the disciples all things and help them remember all that Jesus had said (John 14:25-26). The second way the Spirit leads is to sanctify believers. Not only are our minds illuminated to scripture but we are helped to obey it. We often feel this power at work when we overcome things that we didn't feel we worked at or we realize in retrospect that the Spirit has changed us in some way without our immediately realizing it.
- ❖ So we no longer have a spirit of slavery which leads to fear but a spirit of sonship. That is the Spirit confirms in our spirit that we are God's children. It isn't just a transaction but God wants us to feel it in our spirit (16) that we are His and cry "Abba, Father!" Knowing we are adopted is the second great assurance we have in addition to being led by the Spirit. The act of adoption is filled with the ideas of love, grace, compassion and intimate relationship. The first instance of adoption recorded in the Old Testament was Moses who went from being a doomed child born into slavery to die to being Pharaoh's son who could inherit the riches of Egypt. Though the most touching instance of adoption is that of David and Mephibosheth. When David learned of the crippled only remaining son of Jonathan, he sought him out and brought him to dine at his own table and gave him all the previous lands of Saul as an inheritance, though he was no longer legally entitled to them. That is the image of our Father God who loving seeks out unworthy people to be his children solely on the basis of their trust in his Son. As children, they share in the full inheritance of the Son. Adoption carries the idea of a second-class member of the family for us but in the Roman mind, an adopted son was often more favored. If their natural children did not exhibit the qualities a father was looking for, he would seek out a worthy boy to become his son. This adopted son would often be the one to inherit everything from the father upon his death. Because of its obvious significance, the process involved several very carefully observed legal procedures. The first absolutely severed the boy from his natural family and the second step placed him permanently into his new family. In addition all his previous debts and obligations were eradicated as if the previous person never existed. It therefore required the witness of seven reputable witnesses who could testify against any challenges upon the father's death. Paul may have had this process in mind when he wrote this, as believers our status is completely changed as if the old person no longer exists and we belong completely to God. It is a great honor and privilege. Those who are saved have no greater title than "Adopted Child of God."
- ❖ This relationship draws us near to God such that we can call him Abba which would be like Daddy in English, not the formal father but the intimate term of endearment. We have a relationship to him more close than our most intimate earthly relationship. Believers know that they can come straight to God as children without fear or hesitation. We know in our spirit that nothing separates us from him and that he loves us infinitely. The idea that we could have such a relationship with someone so infinitely important and powerful, or that he wants such a relationship with us and sought us out to have it is beyond our comprehension.

- ❖ And if we are children, then we are heirs with Christ. In Jewish law the oldest son received a double portion of the inheritance but in Roman law all children receive an equal share and good received by inheritance were under greater legal protection than those earned through their work. This is the sense here, all believers receive an equal inheritance. And it is protected, nothing between Justification to Glorification can remove our inheritance. As children we are guaranteed it. As Paul elaborates in the end of chapter 8 nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. In the Roman equation, the inheritance would be divided up equally among all the children and each would get some fraction, but in the heavenly equation, all believers receive the full inheritance that is promised to the Son by right and to us by grace. Therefore, the believer should have no greater hope than to receive that inheritance. Those who have no hope in heaven are too closely tied to this world. Those whose hope is in heaven are most useful to God on earth. But those whose hope is here are too blinded by this earth to see God and his purposes. The hope of the inheritance in heaven helps us to let go of the things of this world in order that we may fully gain what is waiting for us in heaven, even if it means suffering with Christ as we will look at next time.

The Whole World is Groaning Because of Sin

“For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed... Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.”

Romans 8:17b-25
Key Verses: 19,23

Have you ever been frustrated—you should have gotten a good grade, overcome, won, did well at something but something blocked you? How did it feel? What did you do as a result?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 17-18. What are some of the horrible ways in which Christians have suffered with Christ? How can Paul say that it is not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed? What is the “glory that will be revealed in us”?

Read verse 19. What is all creation waiting for? Read verse 20-23. How was everything in the world ruined by sin? Whose fault was this? How will the world change when sin is destroyed? How does this explain a lot of the seeming problems with our world—hunger, violence, natural disasters—is this the way the world was made to be?

Read verse 23. For what do we hope? Why do we need our bodies to be redeemed (See 7:21-24)? Read verses 24-25. Where does the frustration of creation and the fallen state of our bodies make us put our hope? Then, if our hope is in this world and we are very comfortable and happy here, what is the big problem?

Application: *Would you say you are waiting in expectation and groaning to be with God leaving this world?*

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How I Put God's Word into Practice

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

*How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?
What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?
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PRAYER TOPICS:

The Whole World is Groaning Because of Sin

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Teachers Sheet
Romans 8:17b-25
Key Verse: 19,23

- ❖ Verse 17b gives us a clue, that if we are not sharing in his sufferings, there is something wrong with our faith, because true faith in Christ will always include suffering with Christ. Many Christians have suffered greatly for their faith: Stephen was stoned to death, James was beheaded by Herod—amazingly tradition says that his unnamed accuser was so moved by his courage that he converted on the spot and was beheaded also. Then from tradition supposedly Peter was crucified upside down, Andrew was tortured to death and then tied to a cross, Bartholomew was skinned alive and beheaded, Philip was scourged and crucified, Thomas was run through with a spear, Matthew was stabbed in the back, James son of Alpheus was stoned, Thaddeus (Jude) was crucified, Simon the zealot was crucified, James the brother of John was thrown from the highest point of the temple, survived and was then beaten with clubs. Polycarp was burned at the stake and countless Christians fed to lions under the reign of Nero. In addition many Christians have suffered the death of loved ones and family, simply as a result of the chaos of this fallen world. When we consider “these present sufferings” it seems they would overshadow any reward given, but this all the more shows us how great will be the glory revealed in us, because the reward will be so great that we will no longer care about how we suffered or try to compare it with the glory that will be revealed, we will not need God to explain to us why we suffered or why the world was like this or that because we will be so happy we will not need any explanation.
- ❖ All of creation was frustrated as a result of sin. That is it was blocked from the original intention and glory it should have achieved and instead subjected to decay. In the garden of Eden were four headwaters going to all the earth that should have spread paradise over the whole world. Instead, the world was filled with thorns and thistles and the ground was cursed so that it became very hard to bear fruit—the original world was supposed to be very easy, work a joy and food very abundant and healthy. Childbirth became very difficult. Ecclesiastes says that everything in the fallen world is “meaningless, meaningless, meaningless...” Animals began to kill each other, filling the world with violence and nature became suddenly dangerous, where before Adam could name the animals without fear.
- ❖ When sin is removed, the whole world will become an easy place to live, life will become enjoyable and all the natural world will get along with us—it is beyond imagination. The fallen nature of the world explains many arguments against God from unbelievers who complain that an all-powerful God would not allow hunger, natural disasters, violence and the like. However, when we look around at the world and feel that it is not the way it is supposed to be, and feel angry about how messed up everything is, we should not direct our anger toward God—like Adam did—but instead toward our sin that caused the world to fall. The answer to all these questions is “yes the world is not how it was designed to be, it is the way we made it because of sin.”
- ❖ What is more we will be changed when we are glorified. As Paul expressed in chapter 7, we cannot do the good we want because our sinful flesh continues to get in the way. Then one

who is really struggling against sin and trying hard to live the way God wants will feel that to be released from this body of death and be glorified is the greatest reward.

- ❖ However if a person is very comfortable in this life, like the rich men whom Jesus pronounced woes upon (Luke 6:24-26), then they clearly are not struggling against the world, but have instead made very good friends with it. Where our hope lies shows where our treasure is and what we really love. Troubles of this life therefore are a great help to us in putting our hope in the right place.

God Works Out All Things to Good

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Romans 8:26-30

Key Verses: 28

Did you ever experience that something really bad happened that at the time was really painful but later turned out really good? Did it make you more optimistic the next time something bad happened?

Discussion Questions

Read verses 26-27. Even though we believe, what are we still too weak to do? How ought we to pray? How does the Spirit help us? Why does the Spirit help us?

Read verse 28. How is God working in the lives of believers? What things are included in “all things” that God is using for good? When it says that God is working all things for good, what does “good” mean? What kind of “good” do we usually want? What is the only thing that is “good”?

How is God working for our personal good as well? Read verses 29-30. What things in your life both good and bad have led you to this point of knowing God and growing in him? What is your response to God’s leading in your life (consider 28b)?

Application: Spend some time thinking about your life up to this point are there things that you complained about that now you realize helped you or shaped you or led you to be the person you are or to do the work God planned? How can you thank God this week?

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How I Put God's Word into Practice

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE ABOUT?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT GOD THROUGH THIS PASSAGE?

APPLICATION:

How does the meaning of this passage apply to my life?

What truths should I believe and keep in my heart?

What changes should I personally make in my life?

PRAYER TOPICS:

God Works Out All Things to Good

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Teachers Sheet
Romans 8:26-30
Key Verse: 28

- ❖ “In the same way” means in the same way that our spirit inside us groans for the freedom from our cursed nature, so the Holy Spirit also groans in communication with God on our behalf. We are not aware of the way our spirit groans, neither are we aware of how the Holy Spirit groans in communication with God but we feel both. It means that even our prayer does not depend on us, but God even helps us in prayer and it is because of God’s faithfulness that we have all that we need. In prayer, we do not know what we ought to pray, meaning what is in accordance with God’s will. It does not mean that we can only pray for holy things and not personal matters. When Paul had some severe physical problem, “a thorn in my flesh”, he prayed but his prayer was not in accordance with God’s will. So, as he prayed the Spirit communicated with God and he felt the answer given to him by the Spirit in his heart, “The grace I’ve given you is enough.” He understood from the Holy Spirit’s communion with God the Father, that this malady was given to him to keep him from becoming proud as a result of his superior revelation of the gospel and even being caught up into heaven on one occasion. In this way, it was not God who changed in prayer but Paul was changed in prayer because the Spirit helped him to understand God’s will as he prayed. Often we don’t know what we should pray for and are awakened in the night and prompted by the Spirit how we should pray. When praying for someone, we find clarity on how we should pray for them, and we find we have been praying for them wrongly—our wrong prayer topic will never be answered positively but rather through constant prayer, the Spirit helps us to understand God’s perfect will. One day we will perfectly know God just as we are perfectly known, but in our “weakness” that is our flesh we cannot perceive God’s will perfectly, thus we **need** the intervention of the Spirit to pray as we ought and we grow through prayer to understand God and his will better. In prayer, God already knows what we need before we ask for it (Mt 6:8) and what we will say before we say it (Ps 139:4), so prayer is not about changing God’s mind but in fact about us being changed through prayer. Most of the time we do not even know what we need for ourselves, but God has a perfect plan. When we pray for popularity, God does not give it, but instead gives us one good friend, which is not what we asked for but what we really wanted and needed when we asked to be popular. All this is to emphasize his point, that our eternal security is sure, even in prayer God helps us in our weakness. In all things God is working out his good will in and through us and in no place do we need to fear, because God will help us in our weakness.
- ❖ Verse 28 is one of the most comforting and all encompassing statements of God’s grace in the Bible. The proper translation would be God causes all things to **work together** for good. Work together, comes from the word Sunergeo from which is derived the English word Synergism, the working together of various elements to produce an effect greater than and often different from the sum of the individual parts. It means that God uses all things good or bad that by themselves may seem meaningless or even evil to produce an effect far greater through the total of them working together. God uses many things for our good, He shares His wisdom with us for our good, His faithfulness works for our good, His Word is for our good, His

angels work for our good, His children are ministers of His good to each other. Though it seems contradictory, God uses evil also for our good—in fact this is the meaning more readily referred to by this verse. God uses the suffering of His people for good, like slavery in Egypt or the unjust suffering of Joseph or Daniel for his good purpose and also often to bring about rescue for his people—but the abundance of martyrs through history clearly shows that God does not always work things out for our personal good, but always for His good. God also uses temptation for the good of His people. This is not to say that temptation is from God or that temptation is good but in his sovereignty God uses it for good—temptation helps his children to recognize sin as evil and run to God when tempted, temptation ultimately draws a true believer closer to God because we see our great need of his power to overcome. God also uses sin for the good of his people. Sin is the antithesis of God and what is good and yet because He is sovereign, he can use even that for his good purpose—as Paul already shared, it was the sin of covetousness in him, that made him realize how much he could never be free of sin in his flesh and how much he needed Christ and his continual saving grace to stand; how easy it would have been for Paul as a former Pharisee to become proud and legalistic, trading Jewish legalism for Christian legalism, but Christ made him hyper-aware of his sin which made him humble and dependent on God’s grace instead, Thank God! Suffering can teach us to hate sin, to avoid becoming proud because our sin is the same as the sin of others, it keeps us running to God. Often times the suffering can come from God as a divine chastisement. While God makes the payment for our sins, ensuring our eternal security, the consequences of our sin are the natural effect of them. God killed several believers in the Corinthian church so that they would not poison the rest of the believers with their continual, unrepentant sin, and perhaps to save them from falling into worse sin and harming themselves—it is even possible that Ananias and Saphira were real believers, yet God used their punishment for his good purpose of driving fear into the whole church. God used the punishment of Manaseh in the Old Testament to bring about his repentance and return to God through he was one of the most wicked kings in the history of Judah. When Satan asked for permission to test Job, God allowed it and yet Job was unwavering in his faith in God’s goodness; yet, the constant suffering made him begin to question God’s methods, in the end after God’s rebuke Job said, “I had only heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I will be silent and retract and will repent in sackcloth and ashes.” (Job 42:5-6)

- ❖ Good does not refer to our personal good but to the good purpose of God’s perfect will. Ultimately, no one or nothing is good but God alone. Good therefore refers to only God. We often have our own idea about what is good for us but it is diametrically opposed to God’s good purpose for our lives. Only God alone knows what is good—that which will bring about our salvation, sanctification, growth and his ultimate purpose to save the whole world. If our temporary pain will bring about that greater purpose then God will use even our death or pain for that purpose. But he doesn’t do this like moving pawns on a chessboard, he cares for each one of us and gives us assurance of this as well as caring for and providing for our needs continually. Jesus struggled with this in the garden of Gethsemane. His pain was the ultimate pain and yet he conceded that God’s will was perfect and allowed God to take his life for the sake of his far greater plan. Therefore, “for the good of those who love him” does not equate to for our happiness. Rather, we can take great comfort in knowing that God works every seemingly random and horrible event in the life of a believer to bring about His great purpose of saving the whole world and that is a great comfort indeed to know that our suffering is not in vain or random but is serving a greater purpose.
- ❖ Those who really know God will respond with love—“those who love God...”. Just as those who are not saved will always respond with hatred to God, those who are true believers will

feel genuine love for God. They also realize that they are called for His purpose and therefore accept everything he is doing in their lives as working toward his purpose, and submit their purpose to God. A true believer submits his will and to the will of God, his life direction to God's control and thus lives his life for God's purpose and not his own.

- ❖ This assurance is only for believers. God often uses unbelievers for his purpose (Ahab, Manaseh, Pharaoh, the Philistines, and many others) and does amazing good in the lives of undeserving sinners. But the assurance that God is working out all things to good, which means immediately for their salvation and transformation to His image and more broadly for his world salvation purpose is only a security for believers. Often, God did things in the lives of wicked people to ensure their destruction. In fact, the lack of judgment in the lives of the wicked even David recognized was God preparing them for destruction. Even modern sociologists are discovering that children left to their own devices by their parents with no boundaries perceive even if not consciously that their parents don't love them. Unbelievers have no security, but are subject to the chaos of this sinful world and sometimes to the direct judgment of God not meant to bring them to good but destruction.
- ❖ God **always**, works **all** things for the good of those who love him. There is no room in here for exceptions or conditions, this is an absolute certainty that everything happening in the life of a believer is used by God for his purpose, this is our comfort. It is also our security, because if we are his, nothing can work to remove our salvation, but rather everything is working for good that is here narrowly, according to verse 29, our personal salvation and conformity to the image of Christ. So verse 28 is in line with his point of this chapter, to assure believers of their salvation which he develops from verse 1 to a beautiful conclusion in 39. When we consider verse 29-30, this even works in retrospect. We can say that everything that happened in our life was working out our final good to be saved and live for God's purpose, because God knew who are his from the time he made us. So, literally everything in our entire life was working for our good and every believer realizes that God was calling them and bringing them to Him from the very beginning of their life. And therefore, as he will develop in the rest of the chapter, there is literally nothing that can separate us from God's love, because we didn't become his children but we were created his children and at one point called and then justified and even Paul puts glorified in the past tense, to say that while it has not yet happened, it is inevitable for all those who believe, there is nothing in all creation that can stop a believer from being completely saved and transformed into God's glorious image and for that we can only love and glorify God with all our being for all our life.

Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:31-39

Key Verses: 38-39

Why don't we ever have to wonder if our parents love us? Did you ever do something so bad that you thought they would stop loving you? Why do people wonder if God loves them?

Discussion Questions

Read verse 31. What can we be confident of as Christians? Is there anything that can rob us of our salvation? Read verse 32. Can we sin so greatly that we undo our salvation or will God take it back? How can we be sure of this?

Read verse 33. How does Satan challenge our salvation? Can he through his mischief remove our salvation? Read verse 34. How does Jesus protect us? Read verses 35-36. Can life ever get so tough that we will leave or lose our salvation?

Read verse 37. What is Paul's conclusion about all the things that try to destroy our confidence in salvation?

Read verses 38-39. Can anything in this world, any spiritual power or authority, anything happening to you now or anything that will happen to you in the future, make God stop loving one of his children that believes in him? How does being absolutely sure of God's love make us victors in the spiritual battle? How does this change your life and faith knowing this?

Application: *Has anything ever made you feel separated from God's love? Can knowing that God loves you enable you to remove that thing and overcome?*

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PRAYER TOPICS:

Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Teachers Sheet
Romans 8:31-39
Key Verse: 38-39

- *Intro discussion: There's a small possibility that someone may be going through something that may make them feel that their parents don't love them, reassure them of their parents love and perhaps take time to talk to their parents. Generally, emphasize how if sinful parents love us no matter what we do, then how much more God who is love will love us perfectly and eternally when we believe him.*
- ❖ ***From the get go, we have to be clear that this passage refers solely to believers. Yes, God loves all people and gave his Son for them. But here the love of God is referring specifically to salvation and the promises, confidence and overwhelming conquering, and inseparable love refer to those who are his children by faith in Christ. Then we cannot universally apply this passage to every kid in our class but only to those who are believers. Then we need to be careful about our language to give hope and incentive to those who haven't made a decision, while be clear about the confidence those who have made a decision should have, regardless of how they may feel or what they worry can take away their salvation. Then the teaching has to have a double sided application in this difficult context.***
- ❖ What then shall we say in response to the overwhelming evidence that our salvation is absolutely secure. v31b "If God is for us..." the word "if" is not the mere possibility but the Greek conditional particle *ei* meaning "Because God is for us..." not "if it is true that God is for us, then..." Rather, because God is for us then who could possibly take away our salvation? First, this proposes the question that someone or something can take away our salvation and makes a believer live in insecurity and fear. God who says in 8:1 that we will not be condemned is greater than any power in this universe, if He is for us then nothing can subvert his will in this matter. Satan has his mischief but no one can snatch us from Jesus' hand (John 10:13). This was in direct opposition to the work of Judiazers who tried to claim that no person could be saved unless they kept the whole law of Moses (even though the Mosaic Law never promised salvation by keeping it). The Roman Catholic church teaches that salvation can be lost by committing so-called "mortal sins", they also teach that they have the power to both grant and revoke God's grace, but these have no Scriptural basis. No person has the power to revoke what God gave us.
- ❖ Second, a Christian may think that they can put themselves out of God's grace by committing some unusually heinous sin. Tragically, some evangelical churches teach that loss of salvation is possible but if we were not able to save ourselves by our own power, what makes us think we can nullify it by our own power.
- ❖ Third, we may think that God could revoke our salvation. Theoretically, God who gave salvation could revoke it but it flies in the face of all we know about God and his purpose in salvation. Would he treat his children worse than his enemies? Would he treat us harsher after believing than before? In answer to such a suggestion Paul says, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is not only the foundation of our salvation but our

security. God so loved the world that was under condemnation, his enemies, that he gave his one and only Son to save us. Christ so loved us that he laid down his life for us while we were still lost and against him. Will he now reject us after believing, when he died to win us to himself in the first place? Jesus promised his disciples, that he was going to prepare a place for them. Nowhere in that promise does it promise this conditionally. They still had a long life ahead of them in which they would make many mistakes—Peter even made a huge grievous error after God had clearly shown him his direction to accept Gentiles and Paul had to rebuke him publically—yet, Jesus was preparing a place for them from the moment of his death on the cross nothing they did could remove it. The word “graciously give” is the Greek *charizomai* which means to bestow graciously or out of grace. In some of Paul’s other letters the word carries the meaning of forgiveness (2 Cor 2:7,10; 12:13; Col 2:13; 3:13). So it could also be understood as “forgive us all things”.

- ❖ Fourth, we may think that Satan as our most powerful enemy can take away our salvation. He is called the accuser and he constantly is challenging God about the salvation of believers, the most notable: Peter (Luke 22:31-32), Joshua (Zech 3:1-2), Job (Job 1:8-11). But throughout the entire encounter with Job from the beginning to the end when Job questioned God’s wisdom, still God lovingly referred to Job as “my servant” (1:8, 42:7-8). The world and Satan are constantly trying to condemn God’s elect, but those accusations amount to nothing because God is the one who justifies and who decides who is righteous, he is the only one who can condemn (8:1). He is the one who made the law and through the sacrifice of his Son all the righteous demands of the law have been met and we are no longer under condemnation. That is the absolute truth from God and no one can challenge it.
- ❖ Fifth, we may wonder if Christ himself may take back his salvation. Paul declares that Christ is he who died and was raised and is at the right hand of God, interceding for us. Because of that constant intercession on our behalf, we will never perish or be taken out of his hand. For Christ to take away our salvation would be for him to work against his own promise. He could not grant eternal life and then take it away because that would mean that the life was not eternal in the first place. But those who believe are given the **gift of eternal** life which means that it can never end or be taken.
- ❖ Then if it is not possible for people or ourself to take away our salvation, is it possible for circumstances to rob the believer of salvation? Verses 35-37 deal with this issue. Certainly, terrible circumstances can test the faith and endurance of a believer to the breaking point. But this is the same question as the one above if a believer can dislodge himself from God’s grace. When it says the love of Christ, this refers to his love for us and not our love for him. Those who believe are loved by Christ with an everlasting love that never stops pursuing us. We may very well face harsh ever increasing persecution for our faith (35b). As Paul quotes from the Septuagint (the Greek OT) Psalm 44:22, “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” Before Christianity, God’s people had suffered horrible persecution that only intensified for those who believed in Christ. Jesus clearly told us that anyone who loved father, mother, son or daughter is not worthy of him and whoever does not take up their cross and follow is not worthy, then whoever wants to save their life must lose it (Mt 10:37-39). Then if a professing Christian turns his back on the things of God or lives persistently in sin, he proves that he did not lose his salvation, but he never had it. As John says, “They went out from us but they were never really from us (1 John 2:19).
- ❖ Those who are true believers overcome all these, not because they are so strong but because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Therefore, “we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Or “We overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us.” Overwhelmingly conquer is from the Greek *hupernikao* a compound verb that literally means

to hyper-conquer, to over-conquer, to conquer as it were, with success to spare. We overwhelmingly conquer everything and everyone who tries to separate us from salvation and the love of God. Why? Because "If God is for us, who can be against us?" What is more we overwhelmingly overcome, because our reward will far surpass whatever temporal pain we may experience in the world. Christians look like the biggest fools in the world, because they are continually persecuted, hated by society, marginalized and rejected but in God's great scheme of things, the conquered in the world are the conquerors eternally and the worldly conquerors will be vanquished eternally.

- ❖ Paul concludes with a beautiful summary of all he has been saying in the first 8 chapters. He was not teaching them anything about which he was not fully convinced. He says it in this way so as to express that it agrees with the revelation which Christ gave him of the gospel and also his personal experience in over many years of serving God: that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. It was this same truth that Paul wrote to Timothy many years later, "That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day."
- ❖ Paul begins with the last enemy, death, first which no longer holds any power over a believer. Life, is where all the dangers we've been talking about lie, but these we've shown cannot separate a real believer. Angels, is purely hypothetical, but even Paul said that if anyone preaches a separate gospel even "an angel from heaven" (Gal 1:8) do not believe it. Demons are maybe the chief worry for a believer, but as we've already illustrated they have no power over a believer. Present or future means that nothing happening now or that will happen in our future can ever separate us, which is pretty conclusive. Powers refers to persons in authority or supernatural powers. Height or depth refers to the belief in that time that the heavens were high above and above them was heaven and in the depths were Hades and Hell. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.
- ❖ Paul earlier stated that there is no one righteous, not even one, (3:10-12) so that no one could make an exception for themselves. Now in the same way he concludes that Christ's salvation is just as all encompassing. As strongly and thoroughly as Paul spend the first 5 chapters of his letter convincing us that everyone is a sinner deserving absolute judgement, now he absolutely sums up in chapter 8, the complete and total assurance of our salvation in Christ. He leaves no ambiguity or room to put conditions, or exceptions, NOTHING, ANYWHERE, ANYTIME, in ALL OF CREATION can EVER separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. If we truly call him Lord and he is in fact the Lord of our heart, then we need never fear no matter what the enemy says against us.

