



## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ROMANS

When Paul authored the book of Romans between 53-58 A.D., he had been a Christian for almost 20 years. Romans is different than most of Paul's other letters because he focuses most of his attention on God's redemptive and transformative work through the cross of Jesus Christ alone as opposed to focusing on specific problems of an individual church, although this too is present at times in the book. Romans is deeply theological with tremendous implications across all times and cultures, specifically that all of humanity is in desperate need of God's saving work and that "all ground is level at the foot of the cross." Some of the themes present in the book of Romans include but are not limited to the following.

- Humanity has this reality in common: We are all sinners in need of the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.
- The Mosaic Law which came from God did its job in pointing out the ugliness and costliness of sin as opposed to the nature of God, but the Mosaic Law could not forgive sins just like a human being's performance can do nothing to forgive their sins.
- The blood of Jesus Christ not only provides forgiveness and salvation, but it and the resurrection of Jesus Christ have destroyed the power of sin and death.
- God's plan of salvation is not about partiality or favoritism. He holds out His invitation to be saved to every single person regardless of how "far" they may seem or actually be from Him.
- The grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ beckon individuals to live lives that are set apart to make much of Him and His kingdom.
- There is much more to come after a physical life has ended regarding hope and glory for those who have surrendered and submitted to Jesus Christ.
- Righteousness from God is given by Him and not obtained by ourselves.

## ROMANS CHAPTER 1 (FACILITATOR)

### **Discussion Starter**

- What is one of your favorite words in the English language?
- What is one of the most important words in the English language and why?
- **Opening Prayer**
  - Ask if someone wants to volunteer before leading the prayer.

### **Tell the Story**

- **PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE ONE PERSON WHO STORIES (SUMMARIZES THE CHAPTER) BEFORE THE GROUP READS THE CHAPTER TOGETHER.**

### **Breaking it Down**

- All questions should be utilized as appropriate based upon group dynamics to facilitate both understanding and discussion. Don't feel tied to the questions and don't feel like you must get through every question. Follow the Spirit's lead! All questions are a matter of perspective in some way BUT there are specific questions that this is truer of, and these questions have been indicated to be perspective/opinion questions.

### **Read the Story (Romans 1:1-32)**

Read out loud as a group, 3-5 verses per person. Let everyone know they can opt out if they would like.

### **Romans 1:1-7**

- Why is the fact that Paul refers to himself as a servant/bondservant/slave in verse one significant?
  - There is a double meaning to the word that Paul uses. First, it has the meaning behind it of Paul being a slave to his Lord, Jesus Christ. Paul views Jesus as having complete and total ownership over him. Second, the word that Paul uses has the meaning behind it of a great privilege and honor. In the Old Testament, the proudest title of prophets was that they were slaves of God, so Paul considers it to be the highest honor to be able to serve God and live for Him.
    - In what ways is it difficult for you to allow God to have total and complete ownership of your life? In what ways do you need to more fully live in gratitude for being able to live for and serve God?

- These are perspective and opinion questions so please listen as the facilitator.

### **Romans 1:8-15**

Why is the language that Paul uses in this section of the text important, especially considering that Paul had never physically visited the church at Rome?

- Paul's heart, love, and passion for the church, his brothers and sisters in Christ are both evident and clear. He is using language that is inspiring the church at Rome to live as God has empowered and enabled them to live.

- In what ways do you need to believe the best about your brothers and sisters in Christ? What is difficult about this for you?

- These are perspective and opinion questions so please listen as the facilitator.

- In what ways do you need to love the church more fully?

- This is a perspective and opinion question so please listen as the facilitator.

Reread verse 14 and Paul's statement that he is obligated to both Jews and Greeks and consider the gift that you have been given in Jesus Christ in answering the following question.

- How do you discriminate against individuals in your mind and actions about whether or not someone is deserving to hear about Jesus Christ? If you don't do this, have you ever been tempted to do this?

- These are perspective and opinion questions so please listen as the facilitator.

### **Romans 1:16-27**

Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-29. In light of this passage, how do you think Paul is able to be in a place where he is not ashamed of the message that has gotten him in so much trouble?

- This is a perspective and opinion question so please listen as the facilitator.

- How can you position yourself to be bolder and more confident in the message that God has given you to speak?

- This is a perspective and opinion question so please listen as the facilitator.

- In verse 17, Paul is pointing to the concept of justification and justification in God's eyes didn't and doesn't have the meaning behind it of God treating us as His enemies because of our sin. It means the following in William Barclay's words.

***“It means that God treats the sinner as if he had not been a sinner at all. Instead of treating him as a criminal to be obliterated, God treats him as a child to be loved. That is what justification means. It means that God reckons us not as his enemies but as his friends, not as bad men deserve, but as good men deserve, not as lawbreakers to be punished, but as men and women to be loved. That is the very essence of the gospel.”***

- What is inspiring and encouraging about William Barclay's quote?

- This is a perspective and opinion question so please listen as the facilitator.

- From verse 18 to the end of chapter one, the reader can see the following principle at work. God gives people over to what they choose to give themselves up to. What does this principle mean and why is this important to understand?

- God has given all of humanity free will and free will comes with daily decisions to make. God does not and will not force Himself on people, but He does allow people to experience the full weight of their decisions whether those decisions are to honor and love Him or whether those decisions are to seek after their own agendas and desires in their lives. This principle is important to understand because God is not some distant God waiting to hammer individuals for their sin. Rather, God is a just and compassionate God desiring individuals to follow His lead and His will.

- In what ways is it difficult for you to give yourself fully over to God?

- This is a perspective and opinion question so please listen as the facilitator.

- Notice in this text that Paul specifically references three exchanges that people on their own agendas make.

- An exchanging of the glory of the immortal God for idols
- An exchanging of the truth of God for a lie
- An exchanging of what's natural for what's unnatural
  - Which one of these hits closest to home when describing things that you're currently tempted by or wrestling with? How can we as disciples of Jesus intentionally avoid making destructive exchanges to more fully accept God's invitation of walking with Him?
    - These are perspective and opinion questions so please listen as the facilitator.

### **Romans 1:28-32**

- Notice that the long list of sins that Paul references includes more “culturally and socially acceptable” sins of envy, gossip, and disobedience to parents right alongside of murder, being a God hater, and malice. Why?
  - Paul desires his audience to understand the following things in light of this list.
    - A person's performance and effort regardless of how good or bad that performance or effort is cannot make them right or justified in the sight of God because every human being is guilty of some type of sin.
    - When you or I make exchanges regardless of how big or small they may seem to us, these exchanges are outside of the will of God and these exchanges have serious and destructive consequences. Sin is a big deal and while God has provided a way for each of us to be forgiven of all of our sins, all sin is to be taken seriously.
    - All ground is level at the foot of the cross. While people may not share the same sin struggles or temptations, every person is in desperate need of Jesus Christ and His salvation and forgiveness.
      - Which one of these do you struggle with the most in terms of living out in your daily life and why?
        - This is a perspective and opinion question so please listen as the facilitator.

### **Final Application**

- What does this passage teach us about God?
- What does this passage teach us about mankind?
- What is a command to obey in this passage?
- What has God revealed in your life that needs changing?
- What truth can be applied to your life about the gospel?

#### **Closing & Prayer Requests**

- Have a designated person to capture and share (as appropriate) within the life group.
- What happens in life group, stays in life group.
- Don't forget get to confirm the next meeting date and time
- Also recruit someone to do the story for the following week (Romans chapter 2)

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## **ROMANS CHAPTER 1 (STUDENT)**

**Romans 1:1-7**

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