

# ROMANS

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## Introduction: Romans

In the book of Romans Paul provides a systematic theology for the church that will guide them in their efforts to honor God and proclaim his love the world. John Stott refers to the book of Romans as a “Christian manifesto” of freedom and grace. It is the “fullest, plainest, and grandest statement of the gospel in the New Testament.”<sup>1</sup> To be sure, Romans is important, but important does not necessarily mean easy. Even Peter reminded his readers in 2 Peter 3:16 that Paul is sometimes hard to understand. In his first sermon on the book of Romans, one pastor commented, “I have considered [preaching Romans] again and again, and backed off from the task—like a mountain climber gazing up into the clouds around the peak of Mount Everest and then turning to lower heights. It has felt very daunting.”<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, the epistle to the Romans will require effort to grapple with some of its more intense themes, but the effort is worthwhile because the reward is eternal. Martin Luther called Romans, “Really, the chief part of the New Testament” and urged that Christians should know every word of it by heart.<sup>3</sup> Saint Augustine of Hippo was led to Christ after reading Paul’s words from Romans 13:13-24.<sup>4</sup> John Wesley was delivered from a belief in works righteousness to salvation by grace by hearing Luther’s explanation of the gospel as presented in Romans.<sup>5</sup> Martin Lloyd-Jones went so far as to say that the epistle to the Romans was first among the epistles in the New Testament be-

cause, “The church was given the wisdom by the Holy Ghost to realize that it is first in importance....It has been recognized as the Epistle in which we are face to face with all the foundation truths of the Scripture.”<sup>6</sup> With these commendations from history, we undertake a great study of Paul’s greatest letter, for God’s glory and our good.

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## Romans: Authorship and Background

When we study books of the Bible, it is important to understand some basic background about the book. Many of these pieces of information like who wrote it, when was it written, to whom was it written and why was it written (i.e. – the “Explore” section of our Bible study map) can help us to better comprehend God’s truth. Here is some background information for the book of Romans:

### Author

Romans 1:1 clearly identifies the author of Romans as the Apostle Paul. It is also worth noting that like several of Paul’s letters, he used an amanuensis or scribe to write Romans (Rom 16:22). Some speculate that Paul had an eyesight problem that caused him to rely on a scribe to write down his dictations (see Gal 6:11).

### Date

Unlike some of the letters in the New Testament, most scholars agree on the date of Romans. From the book of Romans, we know that Paul was headed to Jerusalem to bring an offering for poor (Rom 15:25-26). He was hoping that this offering would help the relationship between the Jewish and Gentile Christians (Rom 15:27). Paul then intended to go from Jerusalem to Rome and then from Rome to Spain.

The context clues that we see in Romans would indicate that Paul wrote this letter towards the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 18:22-21:17). Some of the people mentioned in Romans 16 would lead us to believe that Paul letter from Corinth which would date it around A.D. 57 during his time in Greece (Acts 20:2-3).

### Destination

Paul identifies the recipients of this letter in as “those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints” (1:7). We do not know much about how the church at Rome was started. Some traditions indicated Peter and/or Paul as having started the

church at Rome, but biblical and historical evidence discredits this theory. However, using statements by the Roman historian Suetonius, we believe that there were Christians in Rome by AD. 49.

The Roman church was comprised of both Jewish and Gentile Christians and there was apparently some disunity and struggles between the two groups. In A.D. 49, Emperor Claudius’s expelled all Jews (including Jewish Christians) from Rome. Later, when the edict was lifted and Jews were allowed back, there were some understandable conflicts as the Jewish believers returned to a now-Gentile church. These conflicts appear to be part of the background behind Paul’s reasons for writing this letter.

### Purpose

Paul identifies the recipients of this letter as “those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints” so he was writing to the church at Rome (1:7). From his letter, we know that Paul had several reasons as to why he wrote to them. First, he desired for there to be no tensions between the Jews and Gentiles. This is why Paul spends significant portions of Romans discussing the issue of the Old Testament law and its relation to sin, salvation, and the gospel.

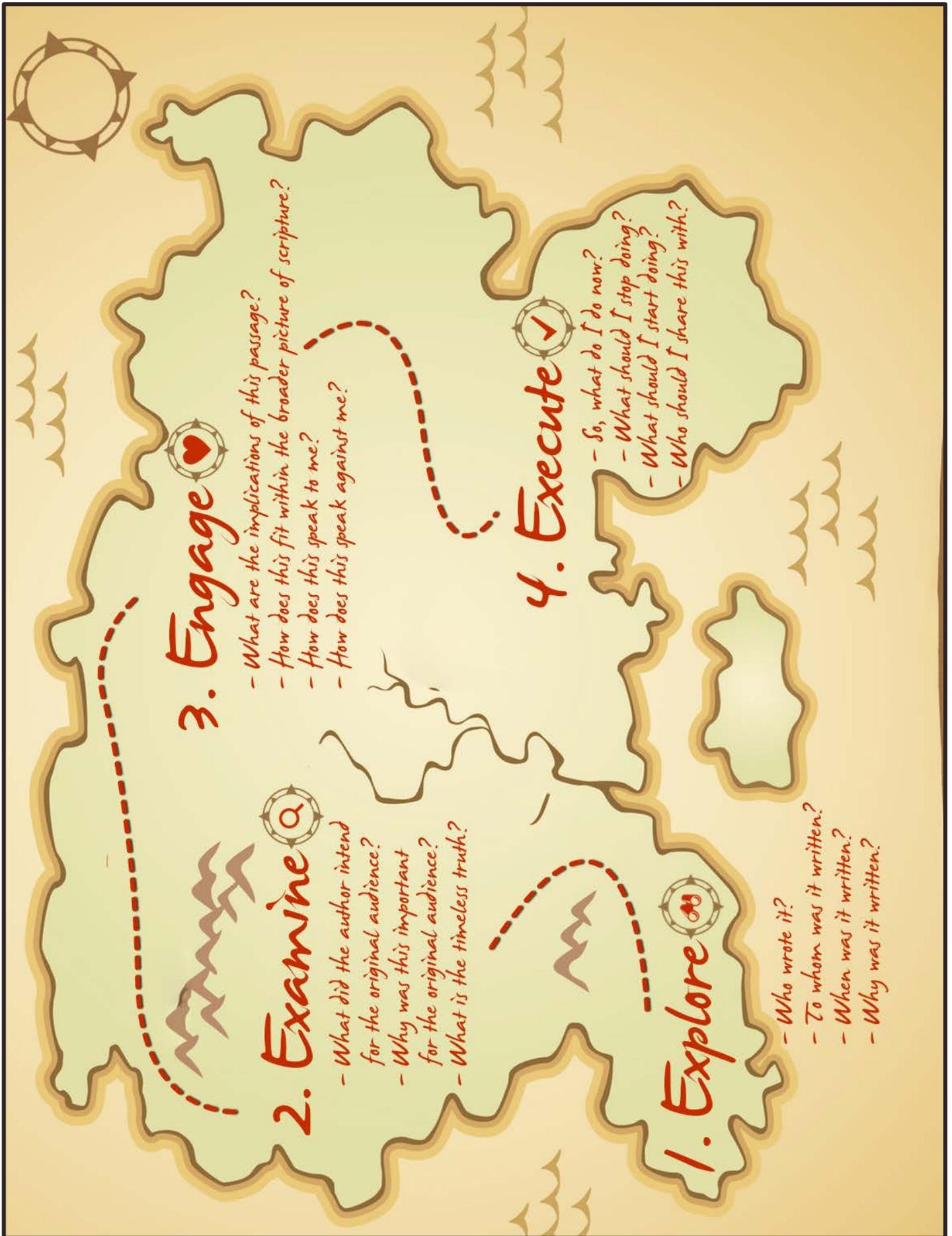
A second reason for Paul writing Romans was to unpack how theology drives actions. Paul spends the first 11 chapters of Romans unpacking the good news of the gospel. Then in Romans 12:1, Paul writes, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” Our beliefs influence our actions. Lastly, Paul wrote to the Romans with the future hope that he would be able to come visit them so that they could provide spiritual and material resources that would help him take the gospel to Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28).

## Sermon Calendar

<u>Study Date</u>	<u>Sermon Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Big Question and Synopsis</u>
Jan-4	Dec-28	Bought, Called, and Set Apart	Romans 1:1	Paul, the author of Romans is a bond servant, called as an apostle, and set apart from his birth for the ministry of the gospel of God. <b>Big Question:</b> To whom do you belong?
Jan-11	Jan-4	God's Gospel	Romans 1:1-4	The gospel of God was God's intention from all time, the result of prophecy, in the line of David, and was made manifest in Jesus. <b>Big Question:</b> What is the purpose of the gospel?
Jan-18	Jan-11	The Result of the Gospel	Romans 1:1-7	The gospel gives grace, calls us into service, and compels us toward missions for the glory of God. Romans is a book of theology. Theology is not opposed to evangelism, a robust theology leads to healthy evangelism. <b>Big Question:</b> What does the gospel do to us?
Jan-25	Jan-18	The Mutual Blessing of the Gospel	Romans 1:8-15	Paul longs to go to Rome to bless the Romans and to receive a blessing. Part of the gospel's beauty is its ability to bring together people of all maturity levels to bless one another. <b>Big Question:</b> How does the gospel bless the preacher and the hearer?
Feb-1	Jan-25	No Shame	Romans 1:16-17	We should not be ashamed of the gospel because it is powerful. We can avoid shame before God, not because of our righteousness, but because God's righteousness has been imparted to us in Christ. <b>Big Question:</b> How does the gospel remove our shame?
Feb-8	Feb-1	The Wrath of God	Romans 1:18	God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness, who are the ungodly? All have sinned and fall short of God's glory. All men stand under the wrath of God. <b>Big Question:</b> Who stands under God's wrath?
Feb-15	Feb-8	Reasons for God's Wrath	Romans 1:18-23	Ultimately, God's wrath is revealed against men for their idolatry, they refuse to give God the honor he deserves. <b>Big Question:</b> Why is God's wrath justified?

## Sermon Calendar

<u>Study Date</u>	<u>Sermon Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Big Question and Synopsis</u>
Feb-22	Feb-15	The Reality of God's Wrath	Romans 1:24-32	<p>God's wrath is also shown also in his rejection and disregard. God's wrath is shown as his hand of mercy and grace is removed and men and women are left to dig their own graves.</p> <p><b>Big Question:</b> In what ways is God's wrath realized?</p>
Mar-1	Feb-22	Judgment of the Hypocrite	Romans 2:1-5	<p>We must not presume that because of our heritage or social position that we will avoid God's judgment. Be careful that you do not judge others without first judging yourself.</p> <p><b>Big Question:</b> Do you practice what you preach?</p>
Mar-8	Mar-1	The Works of Salvation	Romans 2:6-11	<p>Romans is very clear that salvation is given by God's grace, not earned by human efforts. However, while the good works of man do not save him, they are evidence of the good work that God has done in a man's heart. God shows no partiality.</p> <p><b>Big Question:</b> Is God's work evident in your life?</p>
Mar-15	Mar-8	The Righteous Judge	Romans 2:12-16	<p>Our works will condemn us apart from Christ because the scale by which people will be judged is Jesus Christ.</p> <p><b>Big Question:</b> What about those who have never heard?</p>
Mar-22	Mar-15	Blind Guides	Romans 2:17-24	<p>Do you call yourself a follower of Christ and live like hell? Instead of promoting God's kingdom, you are actually a stumbling block, "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."</p> <p><b>Big Question:</b> Are you bringing others closer to Christ?</p>
Mar-29	Mar-22	The Value of a Godly Heritage	Romans 2:25-29	<p>Though your faith will not save your children, there is great value in granting a godly heritage.</p> <p><b>Big Question:</b> How are you passing down your faith?</p>



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## Bought, Called, and Set Apart (Romans 1:1)

Discussion Guide Week 1 – January 4<sup>th</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**Christians have been bought with a price and set apart for God's service.**

### INTRODUCTION

Paul begins his letter to the Roman believers by talking about how he had been set apart for a specific act of service to God. Knowing your calling can help you to stand firm in the midst of difficulties:

*"Having lived in South America as missionaries, my family and I realized that moving to another jungle location meant a lot of work. We knew the discomforts of such things as snakes and bugs.*

*One morning, a few days after beginning to clean our temporary home, the family and I were taking a short break. While we were drinking tea, a large black beetle suddenly flew through the room with a loud buzzing noise. As it darted between us, my wife let out a startled scream.*

*Astonished more by her scream than the beetle, my youngest daughter cried out, "For heaven's sake, Mom!"*

*My wife resolutely replied, "That's the only reason I'm here."*

(Patrick Jenkins, *Leadership Journal & Christian Reader*, 75)

Because of her calling, this missionary was willing to put up with the discomforts, differences, and literal bugs of a different culture. Do you know the calling that God has in your life?

### EXAMINE

- 1. Read Galatians 1:15-17. In light of that passage, what do you think Paul meant when he said he had been set apart?**
- 2. Paul writes about how God was at work in his life before he was saved. Why would this have been important to the original audience?**

# **Bought, Called, and Set Apart (Romans 1:1)**

**Discussion Guide Week 1 – January 4<sup>th</sup>**

## **ENGAGE**

- 1. How does your lifestyle show others that you are not your own, but that you have been “bought with a price?” How does the metaphor of a bondservant fit with other metaphors that the Bible uses for Christians (for example, “ambassador” in 2 Cor. 5:20)?**
- 2. Paul was called into particular service as an apostle. How have all Christians been called into service? How do your spiritual gifts equip you for particular kinds of service?**
- 3. What are some ways that God worked through the circumstances of your life so that you could know him?**

## **EXECUTE**

- 1. Why should we share the Bible's teaching about Christ's followers as "bondservants" or "slaves?" With whom can you share this teaching?**
- 2. God has given every believer spiritual gifts to build up his church (Eph 4:12). How are you making use of the gifts God has given you? What are some gifts that you are not using but that you would like to use within our church family?**
- 3. How do you see God putting you into particular situations now to minister to other people? How is he using you to bring others closer to him? How are you actively sharing Christ with the people he brings to you?**

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## God's Gospel (Romans 1:1-4)

Discussion Guide Week 2 – January 11<sup>th</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**God's glory is the ultimate purpose of God's gospel.**

### INTRODUCTION

In his book, *God is the Gospel*, John Piper writes:

*"The ultimate good of the gospel is seeing and savoring the beauty and value of God. God's wrath and our sin obstruct that vision and that pleasure. You can't see and savor God as supremely satisfying while you are full of rebellion against Him and He is full of wrath against you. The removal of this wrath and this rebellion is what the gospel is for. The ultimate aim of the gospel is the display of God's glory and the removal of every obstacle to our seeing it and savoring it as our highest treasure. 'Behold Your God!' is the most gracious command and the best gift of the gospel. If we do not see Him and savor Him as our greatest fortune, we have not obeyed or believed the gospel."*

(John Piper, *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself*)

We cannot separate God's glory from our salvation. To believe and trust in Jesus is to "see Him and savor Him as our greatest fortune." Do you seek to glorify God in your own life?

### EXAMINE

1. Why did Paul feel that it was important to emphasize that the gospel had been promised beforehand?
2. In what two ways does Paul trace the lineage of Christ? What does Paul show by tracing the lineage of Christ in these ways?

# **God's Gospel (Romans 1:1-4)**

**Discussion Guide Week 2 – January 11<sup>th</sup>**

## **ENGAGE**

- 1. How is God justified in making his glory his primary goal?**
- 2. How can the goal of the gospel be both the glory of God and the salvation of sinners?**
- 3. Why do you think people tend to shrink away from giving God glory (hint: read Romans 1:23)?**

## **EXECUTE**

- 1. Do you tend to talk with others about your experiences of God or about the person of God? Why? Why should we focus on God's character and actions more than our experiences?**
- 2. How can you encourage non-Christians to trust Christ as a result of his work of redemption on the cross?**
- 3. Based on Romans 1:1-4 what are some reasons you could share to show others the truth of the biblical account of the gospel?**

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## The Result of the Gospel (Romans 1:1-7)

Discussion Guide Week 3 – January 18<sup>th</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**The gospel drives us into relationship with Christ.**

### INTRODUCTION

In his book, *The Gospel Driven Life*, Michael Horton points out that the 24-hour news cycle of America has changed the way that news is reported. In the past, news outlets were required to edit and select what was most important to be reported upon. In the current cultural context of 24/7 news channels and internet news, the reporting industry no longer has to focus on what it deems important. Instead, it is able to throw nearly every tidbit of news at the general population. Today, people are given all the news they can use and are allowed to discriminate based on what they feel is important for their life today. This is especially true on websites that are organized around “what’s trending” or “what’s popular” instead of what is important.

Unfortunately, the news industry has become more entertainment than news. But in the ancient world, news mattered. It was a big deal. That is why the message that Jesus came to give and that the apostles delivered was called news—good news to be precise. In the ancient world the gospel (*euangelion*) was usually good news delivered from the front lines of a victory in battle. The biblical writers chose the word “gospel” because what they had received and began to share about Jesus is just that, good news. It is not merely advice or ideas; the heart of Christianity is Good News. Horton goes on to write, “The Good News concerning Jesus Christ saves us from sin’s guilt and tyranny over our lives and the fear of death. It’s Good News because it does not depend on us. It is about God and his faithfulness to his own purposes and promises.” The gospel of Jesus frees us from our sin and drives us forward to honor Christ with our lives.

### EXAMINE

1. Paul had never visited the Christians in Rome. What encouragement might they have found by his words in verses 5-7?

# The Result of the Gospel (Romans 1:1-7)

Discussion Guide Week 3 – January 18<sup>th</sup>

## ENGAGE

1. Paul wrote that grace had been received to “bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name...” (Rom. 1:5). What relationship exists between justification (getting saved) and sanctification (growing in Christ)?
2. Many equate salvation only with conversion—the moment a person is saved. How does Paul suggest that salvation is much larger than a single event? How can you show this idea through your life?
3. Christianity has often been referred to as a “relationship” instead of a “religion.” If you are in a “relationship” with Christ, how should your life look? How is this different than a “religion?”

## EXECUTE

1. The gospel says you are not good enough but that Christ is the goodness we lack. The gospel provides grace and mercy. How does truth make you want to live for Christ?
2. How does the work of the gospel in your own life drive you toward missions?
3. How strange would it be for us to be saved by God and then desire to distance ourselves from God rather than giving him all of the glory? In what ways can you give more glory to God for your salvation and in your everyday life?

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## The Mutual Blessing of the Gospel (Romans 1:8-15)

Discussion Guide Week 4 – January 25<sup>th</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**The gospel blesses both the preacher and the hearer.**

### INTRODUCTION

In his book *Radical*, David Platt shares the story of Ed and Patty:

*“Now in their early seventies, they were presented with a plethora of options for what to do together in their retirement. In response, they chose an uncommon path. This year, between July and October, Ed and Patty were home a total of only eleven days. They weren’t home, because they were doing disaster relief in cities and towns that had experienced flooding in the United States. They both went to Nigeria, and Ed went to Sri Lanka, where he cooked meals for the hungry in the middle of rebel fighting. Ed told me that Patty usually travels with him, but she doesn’t like sleeping under trucks in the middle of rebel fighting, so she didn’t go to Sri Lanka with him! Ed said to me one time, ‘What else am I going to do with my retirement? I just want to tell as many people about the gospel as I can.’”*

Many of us have experienced times where we sought to do God’s work and ended up receiving a blessing by being obedient to His calling. Do we have the passion of Ed and Patty to be a blessing to others through the declaration of this gospel and to be blessed by God and those to whom we minister?

### EXAMINE

- 1. How do you think that Paul could have received a blessing from the Romans even as he was blessing them?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. How would the Roman believers have been encouraged to know that Paul had been praying for them?**

# **The Mutual Blessing of the Gospel (Romans 1:8-15)**

**Discussion Guide Week 4 – January 25<sup>th</sup>**

## **ENGAGE**

- 1. Paul was writing to the church, those who had already been converted. How would the gospel have been beneficial to those who already belonged to Christ? How is it beneficial for Christians today?**
- 2. Read Romans 15:20-21, what are some reasons that Paul had been hindered from coming to Rome? Might God sometimes hinder us from doing good things to help us focus on more important things?**
- 3. What are some things in your life that God wants you to demote to a place of less importance so that you can better focus on things that matter more?**

## **EXECUTE**

- 1. To whom should you go now with the good news of Jesus?**
- 2. How can you receive a blessing as you minister with our church family? Are you comfortable having someone minister to you? How might you pray for God to change you so that you can be more comfortable (or humble) in receiving blessing from others?**
- 3. How can you pray regularly and specifically for other brothers and sisters as Paul did? How might you be blessed through these prayers for others?**

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## No Shame (Romans 1:16-17)

Discussion Guide Week 5 – February 1<sup>st</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**The gospel removes our shame.**

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had the desire to change your life in a radical way?

*“In 1867, Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel awoke one morning to read his own obituary in the local paper: ‘Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, who died yesterday, devised a way for more people to be killed in a war than ever before. He died a very rich man.’*

*Actually, it was Alfred’s older brother who had died. A newspaper reporter had made a mistake. But the account had a profound effect on Alfred. He decided he wanted to be known for something other than developing a means to kill people efficiently and amassing a fortune in the process.*

*So Nobel initiated the Nobel Prize – an award for scientists and writers who foster peace. ‘Every man ought to have the chance to correct his epitaph in midstream and write a new one,’ Nobel said.”*

*(From Doug Murren and Barb Shurin, *Is it Real When it Doesn’t Work?*)*

Nobel had a desire that most people have at some point in their life – to make a new life for themselves. The problem for Nobel is that he, like most people, believe that we have the means to change our lives under our own power. Instead, it is God who redeems through the power of the gospel and gives salvation to “everyone who believes.” (Rom. 1:16)

### EXAMINE

- 1. How would Paul’s proclamation in Romans 1:16 help a small, young sect of believers in Rome boldly live out their faith?**
- 2. Why would the Roman believers in particular have been reassured to know that the gospel was for Jews and Greeks?**

# No Shame (Romans 1:16-17)

Discussion Guide Week 5 – February 1<sup>st</sup>

## ENGAGE

1. What are the implications of Paul's words, "in [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith" (Rom. 1:17)?
2. According to Romans 1:16 and Romans 8:1, what are two ways that Christians should avoid shame as a result of the gospel? Why might it be easy to be ashamed to share that the God you worship died?
3. According to 1:17 and Romans 4, what role does faith play in righteousness? What is the relationship between faith and belief?

## EXECUTE

1. How has Christ removed your shame? How does Jesus' work affect the way that you view yourself?
2. Who do you know who needs to know that Jesus died to take away their sin AND their shame? How freeing is it to know that Jesus's death on the cross even frees us from the sins of others?
3. If the righteous live by faith, how can you give encouragement and hope to believers who are struggling? How might you help them to increase their faith (Mark 9:24, Luke 17:5)?

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## The Wrath of God (Romans 1:18)

Discussion Guide Week 6 – February 8<sup>th</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**All who have sinned stand under God's wrath.**

### INTRODUCTION

In 492 BC, the great Persian Empire invaded Greece to punish the city-states of Athens and Eretria for their role in a previous revolt. After burning the city of Eretria and enslaving all the surviving people, the Persians turned their eyes towards Athens to finish their campaign of revenge. The Persian fleet landed at a place called Marathon where their army then began the 25-mile march toward Athens.

The Athenian army, numbering only around 11,000 against the 25,000-50,000 Persians, marched toward the enemy in a risky maneuver since it left their city undefended. A defeat of their army would spell doom for the city. However, the result of their battle was a decisive victory for the Athenians as the Persians fled to their ships leaving thousands of casualties behind.

This battle is probably better known for a legend about the aftermath of the battle. According to this myth, a runner was sent back to Athens following the great victory at Marathon. This runner, exhausted from battle, ran the 25 miles back to Athens, yelled out "We are victorious!" and then died from utter exhaustion. It is from this legend that we get the modern running marathon.

The victory at Marathon was good news for the people of Athens who waited in fear over their fate. The wrath that was coming had now been extinguished and they were free from what awaited them! Many people today seek to downplay God's righteousness, holiness, and wrath because they believe it keeps people away from God. Unfortunately, the result of their efforts is a watering down of the gospel to where it is no longer "good news." Apart from an understanding of our sin and God's rightful judgment and wrath against us, we cannot truly understand the great thing that God has done for us on our behalf. The good news of the gospel is that we have sinned and stand under God's wrath but there is a victory that has delivered us from what we rightly deserve. God's wrath doesn't diminish the gospel, but rather makes it all the more glorious.

# The Wrath of God (Romans 1:18)

Discussion Guide Week 6 – February 8<sup>th</sup>

## EXAMINE

1. Why did Paul feel it was important to share such bad news with the Roman believers?
2. In the Romans 1:13-17, Paul talks about his eagerness to preach the gospel. Why did Paul include this verse on God's wrath after talking about the gospel?
3. What would the Roman Christians have understood from this verse?
4. What is the timeless truth of Romans 1:18?

## ENGAGE

1. In what ways might someone suppress the truth of God? Do you ever suppress God's truth in your own life?
2. What are some other scriptures that describe or display God's wrath?

# **The Wrath of God (Romans 1:18)**

**Discussion Guide Week 6 – February 8<sup>th</sup>**

3. Are there times when you have suppressed the truth of God in your own life?

## **EXECUTE**

1. How can you avoid suppressing the truth of God in your own life? Do you have someone in your life that holds you accountable for correctly handling the truths of God's word?
2. How do you reconcile Romans 1:18 with 1 John 4:8?
3. Since all people have sinned and fall short of God's glory, all people stand under the judgment of God until Christ saves them. How does this truth give you a greater incentive toward evangelism?

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## Reasons for God's Wrath (Romans 1:18-23)

Discussion Guide Week 7 – February 15<sup>th</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**God's wrath is justified because of the sin of humanity.**

### INTRODUCTION

Sometimes we think of God's wrath as an angry outburst when his patience finally wears out much like a parent who is tired of dealing with unruly children. However, this idea about God is not a biblical understanding of his wrath:

*"The Bible defines God's wrath as His settled opposition to sin. That means His wrath is not something that simply welled up within Him after He observed human sin. It is rather a consistent manifestation of His holy character, a settled determination that He must and will punish sin."*

(R. Albert Mohler, Jr, *He is Not Silent*, p. 135)

God's wrath comes from his love for all that is right and good. Do you believe that God's wrath is justified towards the sin in your own life?

### EXAMINE

- 1. How did people in the first century have known certain things about God from the creation around them and yet worship created things rather than the creator?**
- 2. Why was this passage especially important for a people who had been saved out of a pagan, idol worshipping culture?**
- 3. What is the timeless truth in Romans 1:18-23?**

# Reasons for God's Wrath (Romans 1:18-23)

Discussion Guide Week 7 – February 15<sup>th</sup>

## ENGAGE

1. Some have argued that idolatry is the overarching sin of the Bible. What punishment did God send on the Israelites during Isaiah's time because of their idolatry (Isaiah 6:8-10)? How did God give them what they wanted and make them like what they worshiped?
2. In what ways does our society resemble the idolatrous tendencies of the first century? What are the primary idols that you see in our world today?
3. How do you see our modern culture "claiming to be wise" and becoming fools by exchanging the glory of God for other things?

## EXECUTE

1. How have you exchanged God's glory for worship of other things? What are the idols in your own life that tempt you most?
2. How can you look to created things and worship God accordingly? How can/does creation drive you to worship God more regularly?
3. How can you use Paul's words about idolatry to share the gospel with someone this week?

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## The Reality of God's Wrath (Romans 1:24-32)

Discussion Guide Week 8 – February 22<sup>nd</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**God's wrath is displayed in a variety of ways.**

### INTRODUCTION

Much of what the Bible calls sin has been redefined in our culture as “natural,” but calling something natural does not necessarily mean that it is within God's standards or expectations. In his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, M. Scott Peck writes:

*“Many people justify a variety of behaviors by calling them ‘natural.’ Calling it natural does not mean it is essential or beneficial or unchangeable behavior. It is also natural to defecate in our pants and never brush our teeth. Yet we teach ourselves to do the unnatural until the unnatural itself becomes second nature. Indeed, all self-discipline might be defined as teaching ourselves to do the unnatural.”*

In Romans 2:24-32, Paul does not argue that sinful behaviors are always unnatural. Sin is wrong because God says it is wrong, it is outside of God's standards. Simply calling an action natural says nothing about its moral qualities. The standard for judging sin is God's law, not natural inclinations.

### EXAMINE

1. How would an adulterous Roman have understood Romans 1:24-32?
2. Why was it important for Paul to show the Roman Christians that God's lack of involvement in the sinful affairs of men did not constitute his approval or ignorance? How does this passage say that God was judging people for their sins?

# The Reality of God's Wrath (Romans 1:24-32)

Discussion Guide Week 8 – February 22<sup>nd</sup>

3. What is the central truth of Romans 1:24-32?

## ENGAGE

1. What does this passage teach us about people who are caught up in sinful lifestyles? If a person does not feel judged by God, does this mean that God approves of their lifestyle?
2. What can we use as the measuring stick to determine what is right and what is sinful? Who gets to decide what is OK and what is sin?
3. What causes God to let someone have the lusts of their hearts? God judgment may be to give someone up to the lust of their heart, what does this say about the common encouragement that people should “follow their heart?”

## EXECUTE

1. How might it be spiritually dangerous to follow your heart (Compare Jeremiah 17:9)? In what areas of your life are you tempted to follow your heart rather than God?



# ROMANS

UNASHAMED • UNDESERVING • UNSTOPPABLE

## Judgment of the Hypocrite (Romans 2:1-5)

Discussion Guide Week 9 – March 1<sup>st</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**Practice what you preach.**

### INTRODUCTION

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote of a certain man, "The longer he talked of his honor, the faster we counted our spoons." You've probably had a similar experience in your life when a person's talk did not match their lifestyle. In fact, you may have had situations where a person seemed to talk so much of their righteousness that you began to suspect if they could be as good as he or she claimed to be.

Concerning the things of God, people must be certain that they do not espouse an "honor" that they do not have. Speaking of your great relationship with Christ and your privileged seat at his table is of little consequence if you do not actually know the savior. Before you begin to talk to others the about the life they should live, look first to yourself.

### EXAMINE

1. How would the Roman Christians have understood Paul's words concerning God's forbearance and patience in Romans 2:3?
2. What is the timeless truth of Romans 2:1-5?

### ENGAGE

1. Why are those who judge without excuse?

# Judgment of the Hypocrite (Romans 2:1-5)

Discussion Guide Week 9 – March 1<sup>st</sup>

2. According to Romans 2:4, what is the purpose of God's patience? Compare this verse with 2 Peter 3:9. How is God's grace shown in his patience?
3. Does this passage of scripture say that Christians should not judge others? Read Matthew 7:1-5. What does Jesus want people to understand about judging others?
4. Read Romans 2:3. Have you ever been guilty of judging others for doing the same things that you do?

## EXECUTE

1. If God is patient with sinners, how should we behave toward those who do not know God and do not live according to God's Word?
2. Do you ever learn something from God's word but don't apply that knowledge in your own life? How can you avoid hypocrisy by applying what you know of God's word?
3. Is it possible for a person to believe that he or she is a Christian when they have not ever been saved? How might you share Romans 2:1-5 with someone who claims to be a Christian but does not live a lifestyle that reflects a relationship with Christ?

# ROMANS

UNASHAMED • UNDESERVING • UNSTOPPABLE

## The Works of Salvation (Romans 2:6-11)

Discussion Guide Week 10 – March 8<sup>th</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

God's work should be evident in the lifestyle of Christ's followers.

### INTRODUCTION

*"No one can become a Christian unless he understands what Christianity is saying. Many pastors, missionaries and Christian teachers seem to be helpless as they try to speak to the educated people and the mass of people about them. They do not seem to face the fact that it is our task to speak to **our** generation; the past has gone, the future is not yet here. **So the positive side of apologetics is the communication of the gospel to the present generation in terms that they can understand.**" [emphasis in the original]*

(Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who is There*, 173)

In our increasingly post-Christian culture, it is important that we live out the truths of the gospel before our non-believing friends, neighbors and co-workers. One of the ways that we communicate the gospel to our culture "in terms that they can understand" is through our actions. While words are necessary to clearly communicate the gospel, our actions can plant the seeds and show what the fruit of the gospel looks like in our lives (Rom. 10:17, Gal. 5:22-23).

### EXAMINE

1. What encouragement would the Roman Christians have received from Paul's words in Romans 2:9-10?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Antinomianism is the belief that after a person is saved, they are free from the law and can live any way they want to live. Does Paul espouse that belief system in this passage of Scripture?

# The Works of Salvation (Romans 2:6-11)

Discussion Guide Week 10 – March 8<sup>th</sup>

3. What is the timeless truth of Romans 2:6-11?

## ENGAGE

1. Read Luke 8:4-15. What does this passage teach about those who are converted? How does Luke's teaching help you to better understand Paul's teaching?
2. Is Paul advocating for a works-based salvation? Why or why not?
3. How does this passage speak to or against the way that you are living your life today?
4. Romans 10:4 says that Christ is the end of the law and that he is the righteousness for all who believe. That means that in Christ, the law is completed. He has now become the righteousness that sinners needed. Upon whose work is salvation dependent? Why is it important that we understand this truth?

## EXECUTE

1. How can you bring your life more fully under the control of God's grace?



# ROMANS

UNASHAMED • UNDESERVING • UNSTOPPABLE

## The Righteous Judge (Romans 2:12-16)

Discussion Guide Week 11 – March 15<sup>th</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**Jesus is the only way to salvation.**

### INTRODUCTION

In December 1998, NASA launched the Mars Climate Orbiter to study the atmosphere and climate of Mars. The cost for the orbiter was \$327 million dollars including the costs for development, launching, and operating the spacecraft. Unfortunately, after nine months traveling towards Mars, the orbiter broke apart as it was descending through Mars' atmosphere. Several hundred million dollars worth of work burned up in the atmosphere or fell in pieces to the surface of Mars.

An investigation later discovered that the failure of the mission resulted from using two different standards of measurements. Lockheed Martin, which helped design the orbiter, designed a software program that used American units of measurements. However, NASA predominately used the metric system. The result was that the software allowed the orbiter to descend into the atmosphere in a way that would destroy it.

When we use the wrong standards, things go terribly wrong. Many people today believe that there are multiple ways to God and that there are many paths to heaven. However, God's Word doesn't allow us the luxury of making our own standard of measurement. We may devise a new measurement (good works, avoiding "bad" things, loving others, etc.), but it still doesn't change God's measurement.

### EXAMINE

1. What are the reasons Paul gives in this passage for why people are without excuse for living sinful lifestyles?

# The Righteous Judge (Romans 2:12-16)

Discussion Guide Week 11 – March 15<sup>th</sup>

2. How will the Gentiles, who did not have the law, be judged differently than the Jews who had the Old Testament? Look back to Romans 1:18-22 for help in answering this question.

3. What is the timeless truth of this passage?

## ENGAGE

1. How can the works of those who have never heard the gospel of Jesus condemn them?

2. According to Romans 2:12-16, what is the standard by which all people will be judged?

## EXECUTE

1. Compare Paul's words in Romans 2:12-16 with his words in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. What methods should be used to share the gospel?

2. How can the church be "all things to all people?"



# ROMANS

UNASHAMED • UNDESERVING • UNSTOPPABLE

## Blind Guides (Romans 2:17-24)

Discussion Guide Week 12 – March 22<sup>nd</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**The lifestyle of a Christian should draw others closer to Christ.**

### INTRODUCTION

In his book, *The Unbelievable Gospel*, Jonathan Dodson talks about the importance of relational evangelism. While other methods of evangelism are not wrong, the changing culture in America means we must build relationships with unbelievers. For example, Dodson points out that modern Americans now days have less biblical knowledge and shared beliefs. Even more so, he states that for many non-believers the gospel is simply news and not *good* news in their lives:

*We need to ask "How is the gospel good news to those we evangelize?" Evangelicals are proficient at rehearsing the information of the gospel but we often lack the ability to situate the gospel in the lives of others. We need to get into their skin, to understand how the gospel could transform the self-righteous do-gooder, the skeptical urbanite, the abused mother, the successful professional, and the strung-out addict. It is true that, in the end, the Holy Spirit has the final say in convincing others that the gospel is good news. But it is also true that the Holy Spirit chooses to use what we say along the way....People need to know what the gospel is but also what it does.*

*For instance, we know the gospel is good because it frees us from being a slave to others' opinions, when through faith in Christ, we have obtained the opinion that matters most: God the Father saying, "This is my son. I am pleased with you!" This deep, undying love and approval of God the Father frees us from people-pleasing, over-working, spouse-impressing, self-adoring living. The gospel sets us free! The trouble, of course, is that there are so many people who don't know the power of the gospel like you and me. They don't know how the gospel is good news for them.*

(Jonathan Dodson, "Going Back to Believable Evangelism", [theresurgence.com](http://theresurgence.com))

Our evangelism must be more than reciting phrases and memorized catchphrases. For us to evangelize in our 21<sup>st</sup> century world, we must be willing to live our lives among those who need to know eternal life. We must do more than share facts about Jesus, we must show others that He is to be treasured above all.

# **Blind Guides (Romans 2:17-24)**

**Discussion Guide Week 12 – March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

## **EXAMINE**

- 1. Earlier in Romans, Paul writes against the Gentiles and how they are without excuse before God. In this passage, Paul turns his attention to the Jews. How does Paul reveal the hypocrisy in the lives of some of the Jewish believers?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. What is blasphemy? What could the Jews have done to cause the name of God to be blasphemed among the gentiles because of them?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. What is the timeless truth of Romans 2:17-24?**

## **ENGAGE**

- 1. How might a person who claims to be a Christ follower be a stumbling block to those far from Christ?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. What danger exists for teachers and preachers who do not do what they encourage others to do?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. It appears that some in Paul's day were boasting in the fact that they had been given the law. According to Galatians 6:14, in what does Paul boast?**



# ROMANS

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## The Value of a Godly Heritage (Romans 2:25-29)

Discussion Guide Week 13 – March 29<sup>th</sup>

### BIG THOUGHT

**Pass down your faith**

### INTRODUCTION

Augustine of Hippo was a great Father of the church who lived during the fourth century. He is considered to be one of the church's greatest theologians and philosophers. He was a pastor, a civic leader, an apologist, as well as a philosopher and theologian. He was raised by a pagan father and a Christian mother, Monica, who longed for her son to know Christ.

From his youth Augustine showed promise as a leader and scholar but was also rebellious against the things of God. He dabbled in Manichaeism, Platonism, and Paganism before he was converted through his reading of the book of Romans. It was his mother, Monica, who first introduced him to Christianity and through her witness, his eyes were eventually opened. Though she lived many years with a rebellious son and a pagan husband, Augustine writes in his *Confessions* that before her death she not only saw her son come to Christ, she also led her husband and her mother-in-law from their pagan worship to the worship of the one true God. She passed down her faith and, though she did not see results immediately, God was faithful to save her family members through her witness.

### EXAMINE

1. What warning does Paul give to those who are Jews by birth?

# **The Value of a Godly Heritage (Romans 2:25-29)**

**Discussion Guide Week 13 – March 29<sup>th</sup>**

2. What encouragement would these verses have been for gentile believers during Paul's lifetime?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What is the timeless truth of Romans 2:25-29?

## **ENGAGE**

1. According to Romans 2:29, what kind of change is necessary for someone to become a child of God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How might the inward change in a person's life be reflected outwardly?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Though a person cannot be saved by the faith of their parents or grandparents, what benefit is received by being raised in a godly family?

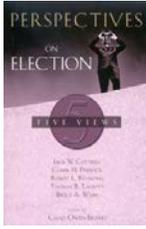
## **EXECUTE**

1. Have you owned your faith personally or are you attempting to live off of the faith of others?



# Recommended Resources

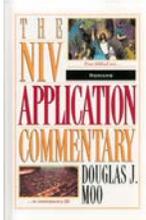
## Book Resources



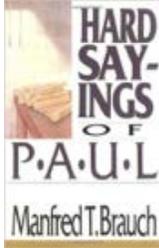
**Five Perspectives on Election** – One of the major themes in the book of Romans is God’s work of election. This book gives a great overview of five different views on election through a debate between five different theologians.



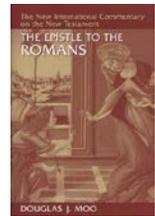
**Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary** – Witherington focuses on the background of the readers to whom the book of Romans was originally written.



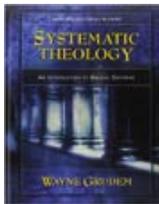
**Romans: NIV Application Commentary** – The NIV Application Commentary series is a great resource for understanding the Bible. It offers commentary on the text while also providing insights for the application of biblical truth.



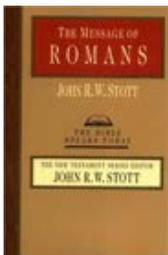
**Hard Sayings of Paul** – Drawing on years of pastoral experience and study, Manfred Brauch takes on forty-eight of Paul’s hardest sayings. Brauch helps believers to understand and apply these difficult passages to their Christian life.



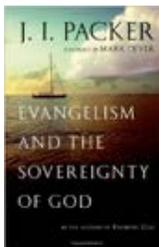
**The Epistle to the Romans: NICNT Commentary** – This is the expanded commentary by Dr. Douglas J. Moo who also wrote the NIV Application Commentary. This commentary delves deeper into the exegesis of the text.



**Systematic Theology** – Wayne Grudem’s textbook is among the most used by evangelicals today. Grudem clearly and systematically lays out the theological themes introduced by Paul.



**The Message of Romans** – John Stott has written what many consider to be the best popular-level commentary on the book of Romans. His approach is both pastoral and devotional and offers deep insights from a balanced perspective.



**Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God** – Two of the overarching themes of Romans are God’s sovereignty and evangelism. J.I. Packer explores how the two concepts work together through God’s church. This is a classic work on evangelism.

## Online Resources

**Don Sunshine Ministries** – Don Sunshine is going to lead our Evangelism Conference on January 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. You can find out more about his ministry as well as evangelism resources at <http://www.donsunshine.org>.

**Blue Letter Bible** – The Blue Letter Bible is an online resource that offers multiple translations of the Bible, translations, definitions from the original languages, and some commentaries. In addition to the website, there is an app you can download to your tablet or smartphone. <http://www.blueletterbible.org>.

**John Piper’s Sermons on Romans** – Dr. John Piper’s sermons on the book of Romans can be found at his ministry’s website, <http://www.desiringgod.org>. Dr. Piper is an example of a godly and patient pastor who spent many years working through the book of Romans. His sermons on this book serve as a model for many.

**Paige Patterson’s Lectures on Romans** – Southwestern Theological Seminary has made a series of lectures of Dr. Paige Patterson on Romans available on YouTube. Dr. Patterson was one of the leaders in the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention and continues to be one of the convention’s leading voices. You can view the first lecture at <http://youtu.be/0Jqd7C1wu0s> or by going to YouTube and searching for “Focused Study in Romans.”