

THE BIBLE RECAP KNOWING GOD SERIES



ROMANS

**DEAD TO SIN
AND ALIVE TO CHRIST**

A 10-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

TARA-LEIGH COBBLE

General Editor, Creator of D-Group International

ROMANS

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**TARA-LEIGH COBBLE,
GENERAL EDITOR**

WRITTEN BY THE D-GROUP THEOLOGY & CURRICULUM TEAM



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INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul's missive to the believers in Rome is the first of twenty-one letters in the New Testament. We call these "epistles"—letters from an apostle. Paul wrote Romans during his third missionary journey in Corinth, around AD 58.

When Paul wrote to Rome, he hadn't visited the city yet, and Scripture doesn't tell us how the message of Christ had found its way there. As the center of the Roman Empire, Rome had a large population of Jews, so it's no surprise that such a large, diverse city included believers in Jesus.

Paul had a deep desire to visit the believers in Rome, but he wrote them this epistle in case he never had the chance to get there. Unlike many of Paul's other letters, his message to the Roman Christians doesn't focus on specific issues unique to their local church. Instead, he uses most of the letter to talk about humanity's pitfalls and God's redemptive plan. Church history tells us Paul eventually did make it to Rome and was martyred there.

The impact of Romans on Christianity cannot be overstated. Many of its passages have far-reaching implications for the everyday lives of believers. For generations, faithful men and women have discussed and debated Paul's theological points and have often come to vastly different conclusions. Despite the varied views people hold in response to Paul's words, it's important to remember that the letter is meant to point Christ-followers toward unity and clarity, not division and confusion.

This study is an opportunity to wrestle with difficult passages, to research what you don't understand, and to ask your questions! It's possible you may wrestle but not reach a full conclusion about a given topic—*and that's okay*. A humble willingness to grow in understanding can be

immeasurably helpful in the process of learning more. Be prepared for the Holy Spirit to introduce different ways of thinking about your faith.

During this study, you will look very closely at the text, but don't forget to zoom out and remember the context of the whole letter. Doing so will help prevent us from building entire doctrines out of single verses.

Romans is full of major themes centered around Paul's systematic reasoning that righteousness comes from God through faith in Christ alone. One recurring theme is the role of the Mosaic law for those who are already saved. Should believers keep the law? Is it the law that provides salvation? Does keeping the law cause God to love us more?

Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation says this about the topic, "First, the Law helps to control violent outbursts of sin and keeps order in the world (a curb). . . . Second, the Law accuses us and shows us our sin (a mirror). . . . Third, the Law teaches us Christians what we should and should not do to live a God-pleasing life (a guide). The power to live according to the Law comes from the Gospel."¹ Pay close attention to what Paul says about the Holy Spirit; He seems to be the key to understanding the role of the law!

Paul also addresses issues that continue to impact the church today. Among these are the importance of unity of the body in the midst of a diverse culture, the doctrines of election and God's sovereignty, obedience to government, spiritual gifts, and the complexities of Christian liberties.

The apostle Peter says this about Paul in 2 Peter 3:16, "There are some things in [Paul's letters] that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures." So as you read, study, and wrestle, be encouraged that even Peter found Paul hard to understand sometimes!

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

While Bible study is vital to the Christian walk, a well-rounded spiritual life comes from engaging with other spiritual disciplines as well. This study is designed not only to equip you with greater knowledge and theological depth, but to help you engage in other formative practices that will create a fuller, more fulfilling relationship with Jesus. We want to see you thrive in every area of your life with God!

Content and Questions

In each of the ten weeks of this study, the teaching and questions are divided into six days, but feel free to do it all at once if that's more manageable for your schedule. If you choose to complete each week's study in one sitting (especially if that time occurs later in the study-week), keep in mind that there are aspects you will want to be mindful of each day: the daily Bible reading, Scripture memorization, and the weekly challenge. Those are best attended to throughout the week.

Daily Bible Reading

The daily Bible reading corresponds to our study. It will take an average of three minutes per day to simply read (not study) the text. If you're an auditory learner, you may prefer to listen to an audio version of these Bible chapters.

Even if you decide to do the week's content and questions in one sitting, we still encourage you to make the daily Bible reading a part of your

regular daily rhythm. Establishing a habit of reading the Word every day will help fortify your faith and create greater connection with God.

If you decide to break the study up into the six allotted days each week, your daily Bible reading will align with your study. Days 1–5 will follow our study of Romans, Day 6 features a psalm that corresponds to our reading, and Day 7 serves as a catch-up day in case you fall behind.

Scripture Memorization

Memorizing Scripture isn't busywork! It's an important part of hiding God's Word in our hearts (Psalm 119:11). Our memorization passage—Romans 8:1–11—focuses on our freedom from sin and death and our new life in Christ, via the presence of His Holy Spirit. We encourage you to practice it cumulatively—that is, *add* to what you're practicing each week instead of *replacing* it. We quote the English Standard Version (and some of our resources are in that translation as well), but feel free to memorize it in whatever translation you prefer. We suggest working on each week's verse(s) throughout the week, not just at the last minute. We've provided some free tools to help you with this, including a weekly verse song: MyDGroup.org/Resources/Romans.

Weekly Challenge

This is our practical response to what we've learned each week. We want to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). You'll find a variety of challenges, and we encourage you to lean into them all—especially the ones you find *most* challenging! This will help strengthen your spiritual muscles and encourage you in your faith. As with the memory verse, you'll want to begin this practice earlier in the week, especially because some weekly challenges include things to do each day of the week (e.g., prayers, journaling, etc.).

Resources

This is a Scripture-heavy study, and you'll find yourself looking up passages often. If you're new to studying Scripture, this will be a great way to dig in and sharpen your skills! You will feel more equipped and less

intimidated as you move through each chapter. Some questions may ask you to refer to a Bible dictionary, commentary, or Greek or Hebrew lexicon, but you don't need to purchase those tools. There are lots of free options available online. We've linked to some of our favorite tools—plus additional resources such as podcasts, articles, and apps—at MyDGroup.org/Resources/Romans.

Groups

Because each week has a lot of questions in the content, we offer the following recommendation for those who plan to discuss the study in a weekly group meeting. As each member is doing their homework, we suggest they mark their favorite items with a star and mark any confusing items with a question mark. This serves as preparation for the group discussion and helps direct the conversation in beneficial ways. Group leaders, please note the starred prompts in each chapter; we've highlighted these for you as topics you may find helpful to prioritize in group discussions.

WEEK 1

Romans 1–2

Scripture to Memorize

There is therefore now no
condemnation for those
who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

Note: If you haven't yet read How to Use This Study on pages 9–11, please do that before continuing. It will provide you with a proper framework and helpful tools.

DAILY BIBLE READING

Day 1: Romans 1:1–7

Day 2: Romans 1:8–17

Day 3: Romans 1:18–32

Day 4: Romans 2:1–11

Day 5: Romans 2:12–29

Day 6: Psalm 106

Day 7: Catch-Up Day

Corresponds to Day 341 of *The Bible Recap*.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

See page 40 for more information.

DAY 1

Romans 1:1–7



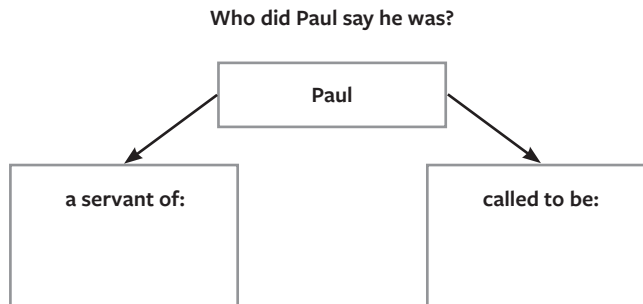
READ ROMANS 1:1–7

In ancient cultures, letter writers began their correspondence with a signature, a recipient, and a short greeting. Typical introductions would've sounded something like this: *Tara-Leigh Cobble. To Bible readers. Hey!* Or in the context of Romans, it might have said: *Paul. To Roman Christians. Hello.*

But here in the longest of his surviving letters, Paul didn't stick to the typical introduction. Instead, in seven verses containing one sentence (depending on what translation you read), Paul began with a multitude of theological truths.

Review 1:1.

1. Complete the chart below. Who did Paul say he was?



Reference—1:1 ESV

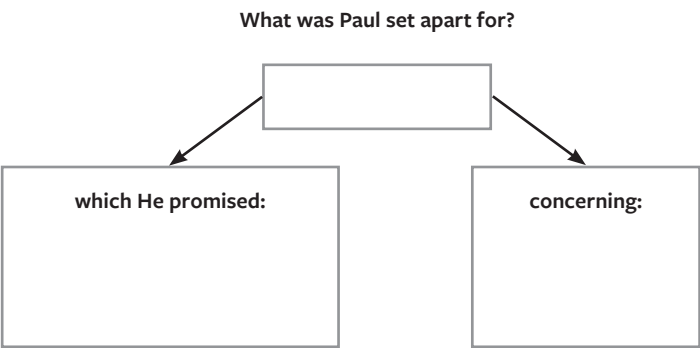
The Greek word used here for “servant,” *doulos*, is closer in meaning to the English word *slave*. Understandably, it’s difficult to grasp Paul’s meaning here, because *slavery* in our context brings to mind depraved systems of enslavement prevalent around the world both now and in the not-too-distant past. But this word in that day’s context didn’t refer to an unwilling or forced obedience. Rather, it meant *complete* obedience.

2. **Use a Greek lexicon to look up the word for “apostle” (1:1).** What is it? What does it mean?

From the first words of his letter, Paul defined himself by Christ. And the rest of Paul’s introduction wasn’t about who he was, but about who Christ was—and *is*.

Review 1:2–3.

3. Complete the chart below. What was Paul set apart for?



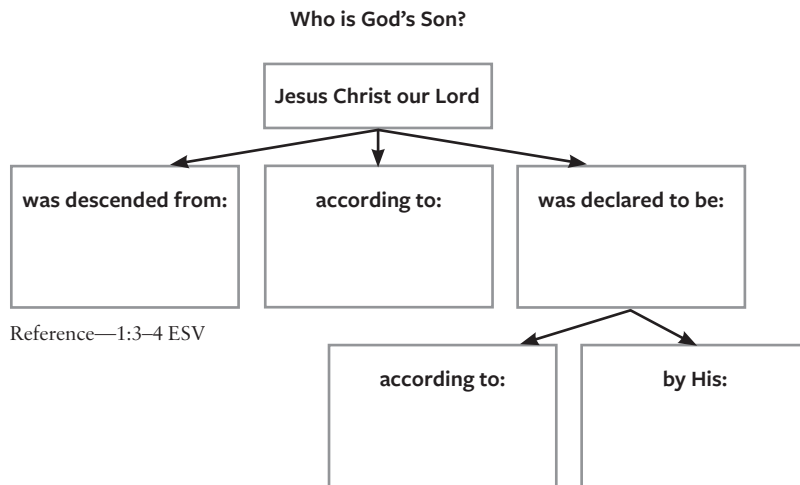
Reference—1:1–3 ESV

The gospel is God’s good news for a broken and dying world, through His Son, Jesus Christ. It was planned from the beginning and promised throughout Scripture (Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 11:1; Zechariah 9:9–11). Every

bit of God’s Word—the Law and the Prophets, the Old Testament and the New—must be understood through the good news of God’s Son.

Review 1:4.

4. Complete the chart below about the identity of God’s Son.



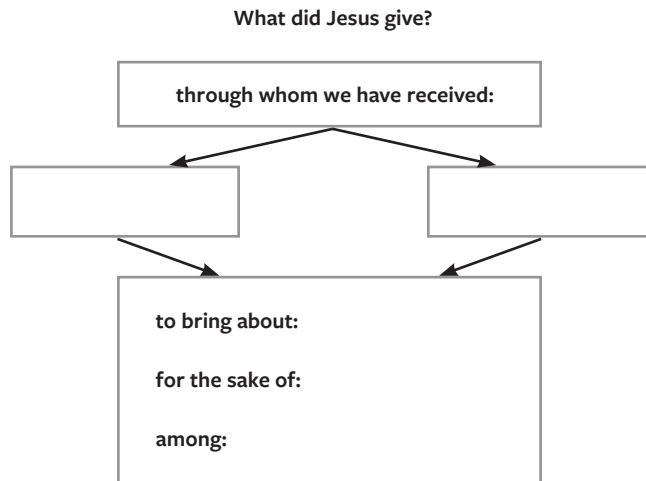
5. Use a Greek lexicon to look up the word for “declared” (1:4).

What is it? What English word came from it? (Hint: What does the Greek word sound like?)

The same God who marked out where the land would stop and determined where the sky would begin also ordained His Son to be both lowly—condescending to our humanity in His life—and mighty—defeating death itself.

Review 1:5.

6. Complete the chart below about the gifts of Jesus.



Reference—1:5 ESV

Theologians differ in their interpretation of the “we” in 1:5. Some think Paul meant only himself. Some think he meant the recipients of his letter, Roman Christians. Some think he meant himself and other early church leaders. And some think he meant all believers, for all time. The interpretation of the word *we* in 1:5 can also impact your understanding of the word *apostleship*. Some theologians say all believers can be called apostles. Some say only a few leaders can be called apostles. And some say only the apostles of the first-century church (the twelve apostles plus Paul) held that title.

As we discussed in the introduction, faithful Christians can search and study God’s Word and seek the Spirit’s guidance and come to different conclusions about many topics. (If you haven’t read the introduction yet, take a few minutes to do that now. As we get further into Romans, you’ll be glad you did.)

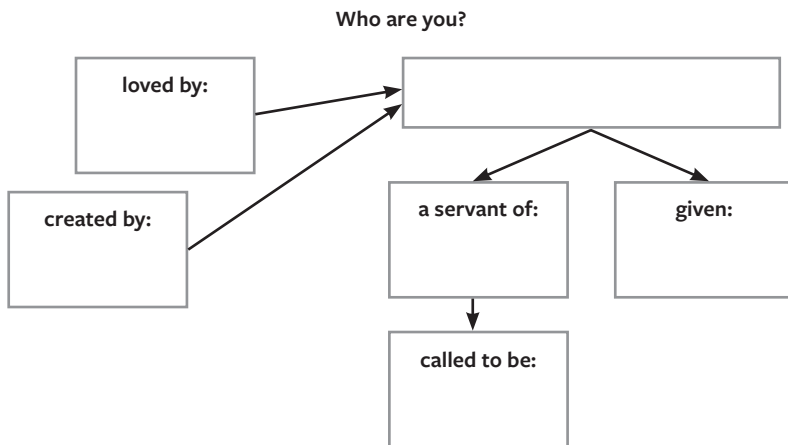
Review 1:6.

- ★ 7. Who is definitely addressed in the “you” here? Who might also be included?*

Paul greeted his letter recipients, who lived in the center of an empire known not only for its military power, but also for its achievements in philosophy, science, literature, and art. Paul didn’t greet them with platitudes about how smart or important they were. Much like how he introduced himself, Paul defined them by Someone other than themselves.

Review 1:7.

8. Complete the chart below about Paul’s letter recipients.



The word *saint* means holy and set apart. Paul didn’t tell the Roman Christians they would be saints when they died; he said they were already saints. And if you’re a follower of Christ today, *you’re a saint too*. You are loved by God, and you’re a recipient of grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

* Starred prompts are specifically designed to be useful for group discussion.

- ★ 9. Review Paul’s introduction and count the number of times he wrote “called,” “set apart,” and “promised beforehand.” What does this tell you about a major theme in Romans?

DAY 2

Romans 1:8–17



READ ROMANS 1:8–17

In four parts, Paul began to wrap up his personal greeting to the Roman Christians, basically telling them: *“I thank God for you. I pray for you. I want to visit you. I’ve tried to visit you.”*

Review 1:8.

1. Fill in the blanks in 1:8 below. Who did Paul thank for the Romans’ faith? Through whom? These details are important—don’t miss them!

I thank _____ through _____ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

Gratitude is a healthy practice, and it can be perspective shifting for anyone. But for the believer, gratitude (to the Father, through the Son) is a vital, heart-shaping practice.

Review 1:9–10.

For the second time in eight verses, Paul shined a spotlight on the gospel. Throughout Romans—and his other letters—Paul kept coming back to God’s good news for a broken and dying world. It seems he felt the profound significance and the incomparable beauty of the gospel to the very core of his being. May God give us that same conviction.

2. According to 1:9–10, what did Paul mention every time he prayed? What was the heart behind his ceaseless prayer?

Review 1:11–12.

As we discussed in the introduction, Paul hadn't yet been to Rome when he wrote to the believers there. But he'd heard about their faithful, growing community, and longed to visit them—not just to encourage them, but to be encouraged by them. As one of the first Christian ministers, Paul understood the importance of mutual upbuilding: Service and encouragement flow both ways. Today, burnout among Christian ministers is all too common, and it might be tied to our failure to recognize ministry as a two-way street.

- ★ 3. If you work in ministry, list some ways you've been ministered to by those you serve. If you don't work in ministry, list some ways you can serve those who minister to you.

Review 1:13–15.

As Paul wrapped up his greeting, he emphasized that his ministry wasn't just to Jews, but to non-Jews (Gentiles) as well. He was appointed to minister to Greeks and to barbarians* (non-Greeks). He told the Romans that—despite his desire—he had so far been unsuccessful in his attempts to get to Rome. We now know Paul did eventually go to Rome, but when he was writing this letter, he wasn't sure he'd make it there. Even though he would arrive in Rome as a prisoner and shipwreck survivor, God answered Paul's prayer with a yes: Paul would preach the gospel in Rome (Acts 28:30–31).

Review 1:16.

For Paul to write that he wasn't ashamed of the gospel was an understatement. This was a man who had been attacked, chased out of town, and stoned for the sake of the gospel. He would soon be arrested, tried, and imprisoned. Eventually, he would be martyred. When Paul's devotion to the gospel was met with opposition, mockery, and even persecution, he didn't waver from the good news. The good news (gospel) doesn't promise salvation from our earthly struggles; it promises an eternal rescue from the penalty of our sins into relationship with God through the finished work of Jesus! And only by God's almighty power—which created the universe and everything in it, which defeated death, and which gives believers His indwelling Spirit—is salvation possible.

4. According to 1:16, who receives salvation? What does that reveal about the heart of God?

Review 1:17.

*When Paul referred to the non-Greeks as "barbarians," he wasn't insulting them. At the time, *barbarian* referred to anyone who didn't speak Greek. It wasn't until later in history that the word came to be used as a derogatory term.

To understand Paul’s meaning in the final verse of today’s section, a quick look at the prepositions is helpful. The English translation “righteousness of God” (1:17) is better understood as “righteousness *from* God.” It’s our right standing before God, given to us by God. He gives us the righteousness of His Son. Righteousness is His requirement, which only He can achieve and impart. *He does the doing*, and we get to enjoy our status because of Him.

And that righteousness is revealed “from faith for [*eis*] faith” (1:17). The preposition *eis* gives us insight into Paul’s meaning, which is close to “from faith, into faith, to faith.”

This idea encapsulates three aspects of how our relationship with Jesus transforms us. Theologians use three terms to help us clarify and understand what God accomplishes on our behalf. Because we’ll see these words and themes throughout Romans, let’s develop a basic understanding of them here.

★ **5. Use a Bible dictionary to fill in the table below.** To complete the last column, make a personal connection to Paul’s explanation of faith.

This ...	Points to ...	Which means ...	And this tells me ...
From faith	Justification		Ex: This one-time moment is just the beginning of our faith
Into faith			
To faith	Glorification		

Through Jesus, we received God’s salvation by faith. We live by faith, guided by the Spirit. And one day, our faith will be made complete and we’ll live with Him in His kingdom forever. Praise God for His gift of faith!

Romans 1:18–32



READ ROMANS 1:18–32

1. Write the definitions of *wrath* given by the sources listed below.

A web search:

A Bible dictionary:

To the world, wrath seems like unrighteous anger, because most of the anger we see in the world is unrighteous. But God’s wrath is always righteous. Before we study today, it’s important to know that because Jesus absorbed all the Father’s wrath for our sins during His death on the cross Christians won’t experience God’s wrath, *so take heart!* It’s also important to remember that because of our sin God’s wrath is what we deserve, *so stay humble.*

Review 1:18.

Until the middle of our next week in this study, we’ll be studying the bad news. If the next few days of reading seem dark, it’s because sin is dark. Sin is deadly serious and leaves us in dire need of a life-saving cure. If we take sin lightly, we’ll take our salvation lightly.

But Paul’s writings on man’s sin and God’s wrath fall between his writings on the cure.

2. Reread 1:17 and preview 3:22 below. Circle the phrases they have in common.

“The righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’” (1:17).

“... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (3:22).

The bad news is sandwiched between the best news: Christians are righteous before God because He made us righteous. So let’s lean into the bad news so we can more fully understand, cling to, and praise God for the good news.

Throughout the next few sections of Scripture (1:18–3:31), Paul addressed four different types of people with unique (but related) problems. You’ll see that he followed a similar pattern in each section, essentially explaining that each group “*knows who God is, but hasn’t responded appropriately to that knowledge, continuing in their sin, and are therefore deserving of God’s wrath.*” All four categories of people—which included both Jews and Gentiles—have sinned, and all are in equal need of salvation.

Paul’s first address was to the Gentiles among them. Theirs was a society marked by immorality and idolatry, but despite their ignorance about God’s law, Paul didn’t excuse their behavior.

Review 1:19–20.

3. Pop quiz: Which group of people did Paul discuss/address first? (Note: We’ll continue to add to this list as we move through these sections, so keep this in mind!)

★ 4. According to 1:20, why are the Gentiles “without excuse”?

In addition to God’s revealing Himself generally through His magnificent creation, He also gave all humans—His image-bearers—an embedded moral code, a conscience. Theologians call this *general revelation*.

Review 1:21–23.

Even though the Gentiles had a general revelation of God, they exchanged the glorious Creator for a fallen and fleeting creation. They preferred the things of the world to the things of God.

5. How does 1:21–23 describe our society today? Give an example.

Review 1:24–28.

At the beginning of the next three paragraphs in this section, Paul used a transition word or phrase. Paul had already told the Roman Christians what the unrepentant Gentiles were guilty of. As he concluded this section, he told them what God did.

★ 6. Complete the table below with Paul’s transition phrases and God’s responses to the unrepentant Gentiles.

Verse	What the Unrepentant Gentiles Did	Transition	What God Did
1:24		Therefore	
1:26	Worshiped and served the creature instead of the Creator		
1:28			

Review 1:29–32.

When God gave the unbelieving Gentiles over to their sin, His wrath was a *passive* wrath, meaning He didn’t give them the gift of repentance, but allowed them to continue in their unnatural ways, working against His holy plan for the world He created. And they got the consequences they deserved.

Because of our God-given consciences, the Ten Commandments are moral laws that make sense. Regardless of their belief or unbelief in Christ, people agree that murder is wrong.

7. Five of the commandments are listed below. Beside each one, write the sins described in 1:24–31 that contradict that commandment.

Honor your father and your mother.	
You shall not commit adultery.	
You shall not steal.	
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.	
You shall not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor’s.	

In case it's tempting to point fingers at the recipients of God's wrath, let's remember that His wrath is what we deserve too.

8. Review the list of the unbelieving Gentiles' sins in 1:29–31. Do you recognize your own sin anywhere in this list?

As we've talked about, all Christians are saints who have already been justified by the righteousness of God through His Son *and* who are being sanctified by the Spirit. But on this side of eternity, we do still sin against God (and more often than we realize). We are saints and we are sinners simultaneously. And as we move forward in our journey of sanctification, we are called to continually confess our sin, agreeing with God that we haven't done as He's instructed us to do.

9. Write a prayer of confession below, agreeing with God about your sin.