



Full product can be ordered by calling
1-800-333-8300 or by visiting
www.FaithAliveResources.org

show me 

sample

Faith Alive Christian Resources

Property of Faith Alive Christian Resources. All rights reserved.

Discover Your Bible Series

Revised
Edition

Discover
ROMANS
FOR ALL WHO BELIEVE

LEADER GUIDE



Part One of a Two-Part Study

LEADER GUIDE

Discover
ROMANS
FOR ALL WHO BELIEVE




**FAITH
ALIVE.**
Christian Resources

Grand Rapids, Michigan

*The gospel . . . is the power of God that
brings salvation to everyone who believes:
first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.*

Romans 1:16

We thank Neva Evenhouse for writing the original lesson material (1984) on which this revised study of Romans is based. We also thank Edith Bajema for her contributions to an earlier revision (1999). This latest revised edition incorporates updates and suggestions by readers and small group leaders.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations in this publication are from the Holy Bible, Today's New International Version (TNIV), © 2001, 2005 by International Bible Society. All rights reserved worldwide.

Some Scripture quotations are from the Good News Translation (Second Edition), © 1992 by American Bible Society. Used by permission.

Cover photo: iStock

Discover Your Bible series. *Discover Romans: For All Who Believe* (Leader Guide, Part One), © 2010 (revised) by Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560. All rights reserved. With the exception of brief excerpts for review purposes, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the publisher. Printed in the United States of America.

We welcome your comments. Call us at 1-800-333-8300 or e-mail us at editors@faithaliveresources.org.

ISBN 978-1-59255-507-9

5 4 3 2 1

Contents

To the Leader	5
Introduction	7
Glossary of Terms.	9
Lesson 1	
The Power That Brings Salvation.	15
Lesson 2	
God’s Righteous Judgment	25
Lesson 3	
Who Is Right with God?	36
Lesson 4	
Made Right with God.	43
Lesson 5	
Personal Faith, Hope, Peace	51
Lesson 6	
From Death to Life—Through Christ.	59
Lesson 7	
Freed to Live by the Spirit	67
Lesson 8	
Trouble with the Law?	74
Lesson 9	
Led to Be God’s Children.	80
An Invitation and Prayer of Commitment	89
Bibliography	91
Evaluation Questionnaire	

To the Leader

Prepare the Lesson

This leader guide is meant to assist you as a small group leader but not to substitute for your own work. As you prepare to lead each lesson, work first through the questions in the study guide. Then use the leader material to enrich your understanding of the passage. Prepare thoroughly before leading each group session so that you can lead without frequent references to notes. This approach will free you to concentrate on leadership responsibilities, keep eye contact with group members, and listen carefully.

Get Ready to Lead

Learn to think in terms of questions. As you prepare to lead a lesson, ask yourself questions and try to discover the answers yourself. This will prepare you to anticipate group members' questions and thus help others discover truths from God's Word.

Lead with Questions

Use questions to direct the group discussion. Draw out positive contributions by asking questions. Break down difficult or unclear questions into smaller, concise ones. Also use questions to respond to wrong or problematic answers. If you learn to lead others to truth by questions, you will be a good Bible discovery leader. The questions in this study are designed to be used with Today's New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

Help to Apply

Gently help group members discover the meaning of God's message for their own lives. Be careful not to be judgmental of persons who may not yet seem to be applying the truths you encounter together. It's the Spirit's work to apply God's Word to people's hearts. Tactfully let the group know how the Spirit is applying the Word in your own heart and life. Pray faithfully for the Spirit's work in others.

While giving people the time and space to apply biblical truths as the Spirit leads them, simply try to help group members see that there is a relationship between the Bible and life. Questions for reflection at the end of each session invite everyone to take time for personal reflection and optional sharing. Try to offer at least a few minutes for reflection time toward the end of each lesson, and encourage group members to do follow-up reflection at home.

Leadership Training

If more than one group in your setting is using this Bible study, we strongly encourage leaders to meet regularly for discussion of the lessons, for prayer, and for mutual support.

If this study is being used in a Coffee Break Small Groups program, each leader should have a copy of the *Coffee Break Evangelism Manual with Director's Handbook*, a basic "how-to" guide for establishing and leading a Bible discovery group. Reread the book or portions of it periodically and review it at the beginning of each season.

Leaders will also find it helpful to attend a leadership training workshop in connection with small group ministry.

For more information,

- call toll-free 1-888-644-0814, e-mail smallgroups@crcna.org, or visit www.smallgroupministries.org
- call toll-free 1-800-333-8300 or visit www.FaithAliveResources.org (to order materials)

Introduction

What is the book of Romans? It's a letter from the apostle Paul "to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people" (Rom. 1:7).

In this study we'll learn a few things about Paul and the "holy people" to whom he was writing. But mostly we'll learn about God's great salvation for "everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (1:16). We'll discover the good news that in Jesus Christ "the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith" (1:17). In other words, we'll learn firsthand that we can have a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus.

Jesus is the Son of God who became one of us and gave up his own perfect, righteous life for our sake. He died in our place so that we can be free of the curse of sin and death. He also conquered death by rising to life again. And by believing in him, we can have new life—full life with God forever, the way it was intended from the beginning.

Jesus came to show us the full love of God. Jesus came to bring God's salvation to all who believe, trusting that God credits them—us!—with Jesus' righteousness. Romans helps us understand how God accomplished that through Jesus *for us*—and how we can begin living by the power of God each day.

Throughout this letter to Romans we can see that Paul believed what he taught. That's because Paul himself experienced the life-changing power of salvation through Christ. And because of that, Paul was "not ashamed" to share this good news with others (1:16).

Glossary of Terms

Abraham—the father of the Jewish nation, called by God to leave his homeland and follow in faith to the land God would show him (see Gen. 11:26-25:10). Abraham (formerly Abram) believed God’s promises, and the Lord “credited it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). Abraham is also called the father of all believers (Rom. 4:11).

Adam—the first person created by God, Adam is the human father of the human race. Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God plunged all humankind into sin (see Gen. 1:26-5:5; Rom. 5:14).

apostle—“one sent forth”; refers to a messenger sent on a special mission. The New Testament apostles were leaders in the early Christian church; they were specially chosen by Jesus to be his witnesses. In the narrowest sense of the term, an apostle must have actually seen the Lord and been an eyewitness to his resurrection (Mark 3:13-19; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8, 21-25; 9:1-15; Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 9:1-2).

atonement—from the Hebrew word meaning “to cover over,” implying a sacrifice that made amends for wrongdoing. Includes Christ’s payment of the penalty for sin—his life of perfect obedience and his death as a substitute for us. See also **reconciliation**.

baptize—to immerse in or sprinkle with water. This act identifies a person with Christ and is a sign of the washing away of sin through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and of rising to new life through Christ’s resurrection (Rom. 6:3-11). Baptism is commanded by Christ in Matthew 28:19.

blaspheme—to scoff at or misuse the name of God.

circumcision—removal of the male foreskin. God commanded Abraham and his descendants to do this as a sign that they belonged to God and as a symbol of the cutting away of sin from their lives (Gen. 17). In the New Testament circumcision is replaced with baptism in Christ. True circumcision is of the heart, not the flesh (Jer. 4:4; Col. 2:9-12).

covenant—a mutually binding agreement between two parties. God made covenants with his chosen people, Israel (most notably with the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).

crucified (crucifixion)—put to death by nailing or binding to a cross (see Rom. 6:6). The Roman Empire made much use of this brutal form of punishment in public places to intimidate people from engaging in rebellion. Our word *excruciating* (to describe terrible, intense pain) comes from the word *crucify*.

David—son of Jesse, second Old Testament king of Israel, direct ancestor of Jesus Christ. Known for slaying the giant Goliath and for writing

many beautiful psalms. Called “a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14; see 1 Sam. 16-1 Kings 2:12).

eternal life—life that lasts forever with God. It begins when one receives Jesus by faith as Savior (John 6:40), and it reaches fulfillment in the new heaven and earth when the believer’s soul is reunited with his or her resurrected body to live in God’s presence forever (1 Cor. 15:20-54).

faith—defined in Hebrews 11:1 as “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Can be defined in simple terms as “belief and trust.” True saving faith is a gift that consists of knowledge and confidence—a sure knowledge by which a believer accepts as true all that God has revealed in his Word, and confidence that all our sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake.

flesh—refers to our human nature, frequently with reference to our sinful rebellion against God.

Gentiles—all people who are not Jews.

glorification (glorified)—the future aspect of salvation in which the believer is fully conformed to Christ’s image (see Rom. 8:30).

glorify—to exalt or worship (see Rom. 1:21).

glory—splendor, majesty, power, worth, excellence of quality and character. In the Old Testament God’s glory was represented in a cloud (Ex. 33:12-34:7). God’s glory is also revealed in the world around us (Ps. 19:1). Jesus revealed God’s glory through his teaching and miracles and through his death and resurrection (John 2:11; 11:4; 12:23-28). In Christ, we also reflect and share in God’s glory (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 3:18).

gospel—literally means “good news” and refers to the message of God’s salvation from sin and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

grace—God’s undeserved favor and forgiving love. Jesus is the full expression of God’s grace for the salvation and new life of all who believe in him as Lord and Savior (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8-10).

holy people—see **saints**.

Holy Scriptures—(Rom. 1:2) Paul is referring here to the ancient Jewish Scriptures, which today make up the Old Testament part of the Christian Bible. As a whole, these Scriptures are sometimes called “the Law and the Prophets” in the New Testament (Matt. 22:40; Rom. 3:21), and they consist of the Law (*Torah*, Pentateuch, first five books [of Moses]: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) and books known as “the Prophets” (Joshua through Kings; Isaiah through Malachi) as well as “the Writings” (remaining books of history, poetry, songs, and wisdom literature).

Holy Spirit—the third person of the Trinity. The other two persons are God the Father and God the Son (Jesus Christ). They are three persons in one being. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, works true faith in our hearts, and empowers us to live holy lives. The Spirit's presence in our hearts guarantees that we will receive God's promises (John 16:7-15; Rom. 8:11; Eph. 1:13-14).

hope—in combination with faith this means looking ahead in solid trust to the fulfillment of all God's promises (Heb. 7:19; 11:1).

Jesus Christ—the sinless Son of God, who gave his life as an atonement for sin. Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. The name *Jesus* means "savior," and *Christ* means "anointed one."

Jews—the people of Israel, descendants of Abraham; God's special people chosen to be a blessing to all other nations (Gen. 12:2-3).

judgment—God's "righteous judgment" (Rom. 2:5) is God's condemnation of sin and the requirement of death to atone for sin. This term can also refer to the judgment appointed for all humanity at Christ's second coming, when all people will be either justified (through Christ—Rom. 3:24) or condemned on the basis of what they have done (Rom. 2:5-11).

justification (justify, justified)—the procedure of being credited as righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. This is not merely a pardon; the demands of the law have been fully met through the atoning work of Christ.

the law (of God)—generally this term refers to the law that God gave to his people Israel (the Jews), summarized in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:1-21) but also including ceremonies prescribed in Genesis through Deuteronomy.

the Law and the Prophets—the teachings of the Old Testament. See **Holy Scriptures**.

mercy—God's free and undeserved compassion. To be more precise, it refers to showing leniency by holding back punishment even if justice calls for it (see Mic. 7:18-19).

Moses—the leader of the Israelites when God delivered them from slavery in Egypt and as they lived in the wilderness before entering the promised land of Canaan (see Exodus through Deuteronomy). Moses received the law from God and taught it to the Israelites (later known as the Jews).

peace—a result of justification through Christ that yields an assurance of well-being and freedom (guided by the Spirit) to live wholly in relationship with God and others.

- reconciliation (reconcile, reconciled)**—the act by which a person is restored to harmony with God through the atoning death of his Son, Jesus Christ. See also **justification**.
- redemption**—the act of buying something back with a ransom payment; sinners are freed from the consequences of sin by the ransom paid by Christ’s death on the cross (Mark 10:45). In this way Christ bought back all the lives of sinners who believe in him as Savior and Lord.
- repentance**—the word *repent* means “turn around” or “turn back”; repentance for sin involves turning around one’s life to live for God as Lord and Savior (Luke 5:32; 2 Cor. 7:10).
- resurrection**—refers to Christ’s returning to life on the third day after his death for our sake (Matt. 28:1-10). Romans 6:5 teaches that when Christ returns, we will “be united with him in a resurrection like his.” See also **eternal life**.
- righteous (righteousness)**—the condition of being right with God. As God’s people, we are called to be righteous and are credited with Christ’s righteousness: we are made right with God through Christ’s death and given the ability to live in right relationships with others through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 3:21-26). See **sanctified**.
- sacrifice**—an offering given to God to regain right standing with God. In the Old Testament (old covenant), right standing was regained by offering an animal sacrifice for sin. To establish the new covenant, Christ offered himself as the “once for all” perfect sacrifice for the sins of all who believe in him (Heb. 10:10).
- saints**—believers in the Lord; a people belonging to God. People who belong to God are set apart as holy, called to serve a special purpose—to live for God and his kingdom. The Holy Spirit of God fills all believers with new life and begins to work at *sanctifying them*, which means “making them holy.” In other words, they become *saints*. All believers in Christ are saints, being remade to be like the Lord Jesus. (See 2 Cor. 3:17-18; 1 Pet. 2:4-10.)
- salvation**—eternal deliverance from the power and penalty of sin; salvation is possible only through the finished work of Jesus Christ, in whom we believe as Savior and Lord (John 3:16; 14:6).
- sanctified (sanctification)**—made holy. Sanctification is the process of spiritual growth by which the believer learns to live more and more in a way that honors Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). See **saints**.
- Sarah**—wife of Abraham, mother of Isaac (Gen. 11:29-23:19).
- saved**—see **salvation**.
- sin**—disobedience to God; refers to breaking God’s law (1 John 3:4).
- Spirit**—see **Holy Spirit**.

transgression—an act that means, literally, “going beyond a set limit” or “crossing the line”; usually refers to violating a command of God or going beyond the bounds set by God. See also **sin**.

trespass—an act that means, literally, “to pass across”; similar to transgression. Trespassing refers to going where you are not allowed or do not belong. In the Bible it means violating bounds set by God. See also **sin**.

wrath of God—According to the *TNIV Study Bible*, God’s wrath is “not a petulant, irrational burst of anger” such as humans often show; instead it is “a holy, just revulsion against what is contrary to and opposes [God’s] holy nature and will.” Further, “God’s wrath is not limited to the end-time judgment of the wicked” (see 1 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 19:15; 20:11-15); in Romans 1:18, for example, “the wrath of God is his abandonment of the wicked to their sins” (see Rom. 1:24-32).

Lesson 1

Romans 1:1-17

The Power That Brings Salvation

Introductory Notes

Spend a few minutes introducing the book of Romans to your group before you begin studying Romans 1:1-17. You may wish to draw information from a study Bible, a Bible handbook, and some commentaries as well as from the information below. Keep your introduction brief, simple, and objective, remembering that some members of your group may be new to the Bible.

As the first line of Romans tells us, the author of this book (which is actually a letter) is the apostle Paul. Also known as Saul (Acts 13:9), Paul was raised in the Jewish community of faith, became a Pharisee who persecuted Christians, and came to believe in Christ after receiving a vision of Jesus. (See Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-31.) Commissioned in this way by Jesus himself, Paul became a dynamic missionary for Christ (Acts 13-28), completing three long missionary journeys and writing many letters to churches and their leaders. Thirteen of those letters, including Romans, are part of the New Testament in our Bible today. Eventually Paul also made it to Rome, as a prisoner “because of the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20), and he was presumably released after sharing his story with the Roman emperor.

Romans is sometimes called “the gospel according to Paul.” It offers a thorough treatment of the basic teachings of the Christian faith as revealed to Paul. Although this letter is more formal than some of Paul’s letters, it reflects the apostle’s rich personality. He is warm, intense, urgent, concerned, logical, and practical. The letter also has two main parts. The first eleven chapters are largely doctrinal, dealing with how people are made right with God through the finished work of Christ. Then the rest of the letter (Rom. 12-16) offers sound, practical teaching on everyday Christian living.

As you begin your study of Romans together, look for clues that help you form an answer to the question *How can I be put right with God?*

1. Romans 1:1-5

- a. What does Paul say about himself in these verses? Why do you think he emphasizes these things?

It's important to see that Paul was establishing and defining his authority so that his readers could trust him as an apostle, sent by the Lord himself to spread the good news of Jesus and build his church.

- **Whom did Paul serve? From whom was he taking orders? What did he call himself?**

Be sure your group understands that the apostles were the leaders of the early church. Their leadership was not the result of being voted in by the people or even because of their skill or experience. Rather, they were chosen and called by God. On the basis of God's call they were accepted as leaders in the church of Jesus Christ.

- **Who were the original apostles?**

It may help your group to reflect briefly on the apostles and their role. If your group members have studied other gospel books, they may recall that Jesus' original twelve disciples/apostles were a rather unlikely group chosen to be leaders. Some were uneducated fishermen from "way up north" in Galilee; another had been a tax collector for the hated Roman government; another had been a fiery political zealot (see Mark 1:16-20; 2:13-15; 3:13-19). None of them really seemed to be a natural-born leader. None could claim special qualifications. But all were called by God, and that was the qualification they needed. (See also Acts 4:13.)

- **How does Paul place himself in that group? Where did Paul get his apostleship from?**
- **Why might it be important for his readers to know this?**

Remind your group that Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles who followed Jesus in his ministry—but he had the same authority because of his special calling and personal revelation from Jesus Christ (see Acts 26:12-18; Gal. 1:11-24). Some people at that time questioned whether Paul was a true apostle, and Paul probably realized he had to set the record straight (see also 2 Cor. 10-11).

- **What does Paul say his work was? What was he set apart to do?**

As a servant of Christ Jesus, Paul was to proclaim "the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1)—"to call all the Gentiles to faith and obedience" for Jesus' sake (1:5). Explain to your group that the word *gospel* literally means "good news." Also note that "Gentiles" refers to anyone who is not of the Jewish faith or nation. (Mention, as well, that these terms are

explained in the glossary.) Paul’s special calling was to go to the Gentiles with the good news of Jesus Christ.

b. In these verses what does Paul say about Jesus Christ?

Look closely at this question with your group; here is their introduction to the heart of Paul’s letter. Invite everyone to take each of Paul’s statements about Jesus and piece together a picture of the One whom the gospel—the “good news”—is all about. These verses contain a “mini-gospel” that Paul later expands on, so it’s not necessary to go into this at length here. Use everyday language in your discussion, and be careful not to go beyond what your group is ready for at this point. It is important for group members to see that the good news of Jesus is part of God’s plan revealed long ago in the Old Testament.

- **Who is Jesus the Son of, according to Paul? Who promised his coming, and how?**

Jesus is the Son of God. We know this in part because of God’s many promises about Jesus, recorded throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. (If you have time, you may want to read a few Old Testament passages to illustrate: Gen. 3:15; 12:3; 2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 2:4-7; Isa. 7:14; 52:13-53:12.)

- **Along with having God’s own nature, what other nature did Jesus have? Who was his ancestor?**

Point out that Jesus was not only God but also a human being, a descendant of David, one of Israel’s greatest kings (see Matt. 1:1-16). He was human in every way, including the fact that his body was subject to death. If your group seems to find Romans 1:3-4 on the two natures of Christ difficult to grasp, it may help to read these verses in different translations. In the Good News Translation, for example, these verses read as follows:

... as to his humanity, he was born a descendant of David; as to his divine holiness, he was shown with great power to be the Son of God by being raised from death.

- **What proved once and for all that Jesus is the Son of God?**

If some group members do not know the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection, review it briefly. Jesus, God’s Son, became a human being about two thousand years ago by being born among the Jewish people (Israel); he was put to death by people who hated and rejected him;

and he rose to life again—and was seen by hundreds of eyewitnesses afterward (see 1 Cor. 15:3-8; see also Phil. 2:5-11). Paul himself saw a vision of Jesus later on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9).

2. *Romans 1:6-7*

- a. *To whom is Paul writing, and what does he say about them?*
- b. *How does Paul greet his readers?*

As noted in our discussion of Romans 1:1 and 1:5, Paul had a special calling to preach “the gospel of God” to the Gentiles, and Paul tells his readers in Rome that they were “among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ” (1:6). So Paul had a calling, but the people to whom he wrote were also called—“to belong to Jesus.” Note that in verse 7 Paul adds that they were also called to be God’s “holy people.” (Some Bible versions use the word “saints” here.)

- **What do you think Paul meant by this term?**

People who belong to God are set apart as holy, called to serve a special purpose—to live for God and his kingdom. This applies to all believers in Christ. The Holy Spirit of God fills all believers with new life and begins to work at *sanctifying them*, which means “making them holy.” In other words, they become *saints*. All believers in Christ are saints, being remade to be like the Lord Jesus. (See 2 Cor. 3:17-18; 1 Pet. 2:4-10.)

- **What other words describe Paul’s readers?**

Look at the phrases “belong to Jesus Christ” and “loved by God.” These phrases are filled with warmth, with the qualities of trust, security, a close-knit community, a sense of identity, and belonging. People seek these qualities today as much as they did in Paul’s day.

- **What does Paul offer his readers from God?**

The words “grace” and “peace” are rich with meaning. Although your group will discuss these at greater length throughout Paul’s letter, try to gauge people’s understanding of these terms at this point.

- **What do these terms mean? What kinds of things do they bring to mind?**

If group members aren't sure, explain that *grace* is God's love and favor, given even when it is not deserved. And *peace* is harmony with God, others, and self; peace is a result of grace. Invite everyone to look up these words with you in the glossary.

3. *Romans 1:8-12*

- a. Summarize Paul's prayer for the believers in Rome.
- b. What does Paul desire to have happen when he can visit them?

As Paul does in many of his prayers for the people he writes, he begins with thanksgiving (see 1 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:15-16; Phil. 1:3-6; Col. 1:3-4; and other letters). Paul is thankful to have heard so many good reports about the faith of these Roman Christians.

- **What kind of reputation did the Roman believers have?**

For some reason, perhaps because of their outstanding love for each other in Christ—or perhaps because they refused to give up their faith despite persecution—news of the church in Rome had spread all over the empire.

- **How did Paul show his love for these believers, whom he had never met?**

Paul notes that he has spent much time in prayer for the Roman Christians. Use some questions like these to help your group focus on the depth of Paul's commitment to and love for believers he had never met.

- **How can you pray with feeling for someone you've never seen?**
- **How does praying for others help them? What does it say about your relationship to them?**
- **What kind of example does Paul set for us here?**

Talk about the gift of being able to pray for other people's needs and spiritual growth, knowing they are part of the worldwide body of Christ (body of believers).

- **Why does Paul want to visit the Christians in Rome?**

As an apostle and preacher of the good news of Jesus, Paul would have been eager to meet these believers whose faith was known everywhere. Note also that verses 11-12 summarize in a few words what is most beautiful about Christian fellowship: being able to strengthen and encourage each other's faith by means of our spiritual gifts.

Invite group members to think of times when another person encouraged them and helped them to keep going in the midst of difficulty.

- **Why might the Roman Christians have needed encouragement? Why might Paul himself have needed this?**

4. *Romans 1:13-15*

- What more does Paul say about his plans?*

Paul has long wanted to visit Rome. He has tried several times to go there, but each time something prevented him.

- **What does he hope will happen in Rome when he comes?**

Paul plans not only to encourage the Roman Christians but also to preach the gospel throughout the city, "that [he] might have a harvest" among the believers there (1:13).

- **What does this tell us about Paul's dedication to "the gospel of God" (1:1)?**

Look back also to verse 9. Help your group see that Paul was wholly dedicated to his Lord and to the task he had been given: to win converts to Christ from among the Gentiles (see Acts 26:12-18).

Note that Paul sometimes used the term "Greeks" to refer to Gentiles (non-Jews). Although the beginnings of the early church took place in the Roman Empire, the culture was predominantly Greek, from the influence of the earlier Greek Empire (330-63 B.C.). His reference to "non-Greeks" in 1:14, though, was not to Jews but to Gentile peoples of the Roman Empire who were not educated or cultured in the Greek way of life before Rome came to power. (The word for "non-Greeks" in Paul's original text here literally means "barbarians.") Paul's task is to reach out to all classes of all peoples, educated as well as uneducated. And the great city of Rome would offer him much opportunity to carry out that mission.

- b. *What do these verses tell us about Paul's dependence on God's timing? (See also v. 10.)*

Your group should see that Paul waited for God to show him, through prayer and through circumstances, the right time to travel to Rome. If he had been prevented from going in the past, it was through circumstances that God had allowed to happen, and Paul was content with that. But now God seemed to be saying, "Go to Rome." So the way finally seemed clear, and Paul was eager to go (see Acts 19:21).

You might mention, though, that when Paul finally arrived in Rome, he was a prisoner for the sake of the gospel. A short time after writing this letter (probably from Greece—see Acts 20:2-3, 16), Paul traveled to Jerusalem and was soon taken into custody by the Roman guard for his own safety because a group of Jews there plotted to kill him. Then he remained in jail for two years till a Roman official heard his case. Knowing he would not receive justice, Paul, a Roman citizen, appealed to bring his case to Caesar, so he was sent to Rome. (See Acts 21-28.)

- **How have you experienced God's leading in your life? Was it through prayer, unusual circumstances, both? In your experience, has it ever been difficult to wait for God's leading? Explain.**

5. *Romans 1:16-17*

- a. *What does the gospel accomplish through the power of God?*
- b. *Who will be saved?*
- c. *What is revealed in the gospel? Why is that important?*

In these verses we discover Paul's main theme for this letter: salvation by faith, first developed through the Jews so that all peoples (Gentiles) could be reconciled with God. Some terms and phrases in this passage may be unfamiliar to group members, so it'll be important for everyone to understand Paul's teaching here, especially about "righteousness." You may want to share verse 17 from the Good News Translation, which is especially clear:

The gospel reveals how God puts people right with himself: it is through faith from beginning to end. As the scripture says, "The person who is put right with God through faith shall live."

- **Does Paul imply we become right with God by obeying a set of rules like the Ten Commandments? If not, what is required?**

- **Who will receive “the power of God that brings salvation”?**

Lead your group members to conclude that all that is necessary to be put right with God is faith—believing the good news of Jesus Christ. When we believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior (through the power of his Spirit), we are credited with the Lord’s righteousness (see Rom. 4:23-24).

This flies in the face of many people’s belief that because they have lived a good life, they will surely go to heaven when they die. Listen closely to your group members as they discuss these verses.

Remember that you will have the rest of this study to help people understand the truth that salvation is through faith in Jesus alone. Some group members may be encountering this truth for the first time, and the Holy Spirit may be planting seeds here that will sprout and take root later on. Pray for sensitivity and the ability to speak clearly about these spiritual realities.

Note also that Paul uses a verse from the Old Testament (Hab. 2:4) to support his statement about faith. Recall too that in Romans 1:2-3 Paul refers to prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming of Jesus. You may want to look at some of these passages with your group to show that the Bible presents a unified message, pointing always to faith in Jesus Christ. (See again Gen. 3:15; 12:3; 2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 2:4-7; Isa. 7:14; 52:13-53:12.)

d. *What does Paul mean by the phrase “first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16)?*

- **How does this remind us about the whole story of God’s salvation?**
- **Discuss the importance of Jesus’ and Paul’s ethnic identity as Jews. Did either one of them ever stop being Jewish? Explain.**

Paul’s phrase “first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” reminds us that God’s plan of salvation began taking shape long ago with the call of Abraham, when God promised, “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” That’s when God began forming a new nation, Israel (later known as the Jews), from which the Savior of the world would come.

Some group members who have studied the gospel of John may recall that Jesus taught something similar to the woman at the well in Samaria, saying, “Salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:22-23).

The phrase “first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” helps us remember that the entire Old Testament chronicles the development and struggles of that nation as God worked in it and through it, making preparations for the time when its specially chosen Deliverer (Anointed One, Messiah) would come to bring salvation for the Jews and the Gentiles—in other words, for all peoples. It also helps us see that Jesus’ work of reconciliation, bringing us back together with God, paves the way for reconciliation with all other people. This means that no matter what nation or ethnic group we come from, we can all be one new people, one new community, in Christ Jesus.

As Paul teaches in another passage, Ephesians 2:11-22, Jesus broke down “the dividing wall of hostility” between Jews and Gentiles of all nations “to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,” reconciling them to God “through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (2:14-16). As a result, all who believe in Jesus are

fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (2:19-22)

- **What does this show us about reconciling with people of other nations and ethnic groups (including Jews) in the name of Jesus?**

Salvation in Christ transforms our relationship with God—and that transforms our relationships with all people, whom God wants to bring into his kingdom. The process is ongoing, and in Christ we are called to work with God in this process.

- **What examples of this reconciliation do you see in the church today?**
- **In what ways does the church need to keep working at reconciliation efforts? How can you continue this mission of Jesus in your community?**

Questions for Reflection

Looking back over the material of this lesson, how would you describe the good news of Jesus to someone who hasn’t heard it before?

What are you hoping to learn as you go further into this book? What have you learned already about Paul and Jesus and having a right relationship with God?

As group members make comments, listen closely so that you can pray more specifically for each member's spiritual growth and understanding as you continue your journey together into the book of Romans.