

Lesson 1: Get Ready to Live!

ROMANS PROFILE



Genre: Epistle, or letter

Author: Paul

Passage: Romans 1:16-17

Where Is It: New Testament: Gospel of John, Acts, **Romans**, 1 Corinthians

Main Plot: Paul wrote this letter to the followers of Christ in Rome (both Jews and Gentiles) to remind them that God is righteous and faithful, and that by faith, they may truly live.



THE WORD

Romans 1:16-17



ENGAGE THE WORD

Lesson Overview: Relational Dimension

This passage serves as a thesis statement for Paul's entire letter to the Romans. To truly live is to have faith that the gospel of Jesus Christ is real. This kind of faith is not a blind hope that believing in Jesus is a world exit strategy. Instead, it means we have the courage to believe in what popular culture does not understand because we have had an encounter with the living God. To enter into that scary, unpredictable, seemingly impossible world is to believe in something we cannot see but know to be true, in ourselves as well as others. To believe is to truly enter into life rather than death, and into hope rather than fear.

Biblical Commentary

Romans 1:16-17 is essentially the theme of Paul's letter to the Romans.

ROMANS 1:16

For Paul, the good news of Jesus Christ, the gospel, gives him true honor, not shame. It is by the power of God (not by our merit) that salvation is possible. Salvation is received by those who have faith, as a gift from God that we must receive, and as a relationship between the Creator and the created: it is never possessed by one or the other.

To clarify, salvation "first to the Jew, then to the Gentile," is not about status. God does not have favorites. Historically, God has chosen to reveal



Wesleyan Snapshot *Equality in Christ*

Wesley believed that the letter to the Romans was written to show that God does not have favorites and that one does not earn the title "saved." We do, however, believe that God is righteous, and through God's righteousness, through the faithfulness of Jesus, we can truly live.



THE MAIN IDEA

THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, BY FAITH, THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE.

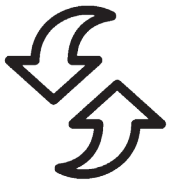
God's self through the Hebrew people (the Jews), but the power of the gospel is made available to all.

ROMANS 1:17

In this verse, Paul begins to address how God is revealing God's self through the act of faith. It is in the power of salvation that God's righteousness is revealed. God has done what humankind could not do for itself—offer salvation from death. God gives us eternal, everlasting life, and through this offering we can see God's justice (rightness or righteousness). So, through faith and by faith, God shows us salvation, righteousness, and good news through the faith of Christ, so we too may have faith. Christ has gone before us—he had faith before us—so we might see and have faith. Faith is action, not just belief. Many believe, but few have faith.

Therefore, salvation is a gift to us so *we may live!* It's easy to get caught up in how things will be better "someday," but the joy of salvation is that today, in the power of God's righteousness, relationships can begin to be made right, right now!

REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:



We are not meant to simply exist, but to live. Living is being steeped in that which makes us passionate and full of life. In order to lead a discussion in living in our faith, what personal experiences can you bring that give you life?

In what ways does our culture highlight shame? In what ways does it highlight honor?

REFLECT ON YOUR STUDENTS:

In what things do your students show honor or pride, and what things seem shameful to them?

WORD STUDY

Righteousness

Righteousness is God's action of "making right." It is justice, not simply morally, socially, and economically, but relationally.



Bible Background


Paul talks about being unashamed of the gospel. In ancient Roman culture, the emperors were regarded as gods and saviors of the people. They valued power over the weak, the educated over slaves and the uneducated, and the Greeks and Romans over everyone else. The way of the gospel of Christ is that the weak will be made strong and the poor will find themselves inheriting the kingdom of God. By Roman standards, believing that Jesus was Lord and Savior was shameful, but for Paul, to represent the Messiah, the true son of the living God, brought honor, not shame.

ADOLESCENT NOTE

Teenagers are desperately seeking identity, the meaning for who they are. Some are given clear direction and favorable circumstances: others are doing it with minimal help or no help at all. This scripture allows them to place themselves in the story to find that God does not show favoritism and that it is by the righteousness of God—not by our own merit—that we experience the power of the gospel.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

**LESSON
OUTLINE**



Main Idea: Through the gospel of Jesus Christ, by faith, the righteous will live.

Resources: A picture or a physical object that represents something that makes you feel alive, whiteboard and marker, copies of handout

Connect to My Experience:
Welcome and Prayer
Explore Constructs of Honor and Shame

Connect to the Word:
Romans 1:16-17
Explore the Open-endedness of Faith

Connect to My Life and the World: Practice Faith

Closing:
Affirmation and Encouragement
Prayer of St. Ignatius



CONNECT TO MY EXPERIENCE

Student Goal: Youth will explore the constructs of how society shows honor and shame.

WELCOME YOUR GROUP AND OPEN WITH THIS SIMPLE PRAYER:

God, give us eyes to see and ears to hear. Amen.

SAY: Today we are going to talk about how our faith can make us come alive, and in the process, we're going to explore some scripture and some social constructs that define our daily lives.

Move into the following icebreaker:

CONVERSATION ABOUT HONOR AND SHAME

On a whiteboard, write down "honor" and "shame" in separate columns. Ask students to name different things that society deems as either honorable or shameful.

LIMITLESS POTENTIAL

"What makes youth youth is its wide-open sense of possibility, the confidence that death is not on the horizon, the exhilarating assumption that the future is wide open and filled with limitless potential."

—Andrew Root and Kenda Creasy Dean, *The Theological Turn in Youth Ministry*



CONNECT TO THE WORD

Student Goal: Youth will be exposed to the unconditional impartiality of God’s love and kindness in the gift of salvation through the faithfulness of Jesus.

READ AND REFLECT ON ROMANS 1:16-17.

ASK: Why might one feel ashamed because of the gospel of Jesus?

Can you think of things that make you feel ashamed?

Can you think of things that others have shamed you for?

SAY: *Gospel* literally means “good news from the battlefield.” The gospel is news that Jesus has defeated death—that what humanity could not do for itself, God did, out of love. Jesus became flesh, not simply to die for us, but to show humanity how to truly live.

ASK: If we believe the gospel, if we really believe that Jesus defeated death so we could truly live, why do you think we live so afraid? What are we afraid of? Death? Messing up? Letting others down? Letting ourselves down?

SAY: To live a life of faith is to live a life of trust—even when we are shaken or unsure—believing and knowing that we belong to Jesus, even if giving everything demands our life. Because of what Jesus has already done, because of his faithfulness, we know that even death does not keep us from true life in God.

ASK: Does hearing this raise any questions for you?

(This is an open-ended question. In exploring faith, there is not always a clear cut answer. Let the students push this question and encourage them to keep searching deeper.)

GOOD NEWS

The gospel is news that Jesus has defeated death, that what humanity could not do for itself, God did, out of love. Jesus became flesh, not simply to die for us, but to show humanity how to truly live.

FAITH

When we have faith in something, we believe and orient our lives to a certain set of principles, ideas, or truths. Having faith in Christ means we believe that Jesus is Lord (over life, death, and everything in between—without compartments) and we live knowing that this is true.

Four Observations

1. Shame makes us feel guilty: it makes us feel small and weak. Having faith in the Creator of life should not leave us feeling guilty, weak, or small. If you have found yourself feeling these emotions because of your belief in Christ, ask yourself why? Sit in the honesty of your own thoughts.
2. Having faith and believing Jesus is Lord over our lives, should make us feel the most alive we could ever feel. Is this your experience? Why or why not?
3. You are not the first or the last to put your faith in Jesus. How does it make you feel that we don't live in our faith alone, that Jesus has already led the way for us by having faith in God the Father and by being obedient, even to death?
4. Maybe you don't believe in God, maybe you half-heartedly believe, or maybe your parents or grandparents want you to believe but you just don't get it. Maybe there have been too many disappointments, too many letdowns, or even too many scandals. Think about this scripture, that by faith in Christ, humanity can truly live. What do you think truly living means?



CONNECT TO MY LIFE AND THE WORLD

Student Goal: Youth will be able to recognize that living in faith is honorable, joyful, and truly life-giving.

SAY: We can define faith as believing and orienting one's life to a certain set of principles, ideas, or truths. Having faith in Christ is believing that Jesus is Lord (over life, death, and everything in between—without compartments) and living our life knowing that this is true.

ASK: In what ways do you practice faith? What makes it faith rather than control?

SAY: We often like to control situations, and if we feel out of control, we leave or give up. Sometimes we want to do this in our decision to follow Christ. But leaning into our doubt means that we care enough to ask the hard questions.

SAY: We don't have faith in isolation. Many before us, many now, and many after us will enter into this relationship with God in faith. Sometimes you might not have the words to articulate what you want to say or how to say it. Here are some examples to use when you need someone who has gone before you to speak:

- "Lord, open my eyes to see you, open my ears to hear you."
- "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!"



CLOSING

Affirmation and Prayer

SAY: Everyone who puts faith in the good news of Jesus can enter into the presence of salvation. It doesn't matter who you are, where you're from, or what you've done. God is always rooting for us, and God's hand is always extended toward us so we can accept God's love!

You received a prayer as a handout this week. Take this handout home and consider adding this prayer to your daily devotions. Now, let's end our time together by praying these words of St. Ignatius of Loyola (adapted) together:

Dear Lord, teach us to be generous;

Teach us to serve you as you deserve;

To give and not count the cost;

To fight and not seek for rest;

To labor and not seek reward;

Save that of knowing that we do your will.

Amen.



PRAYER OF

ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

(ADAPTED)

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Teach us to serve you as you deserve;

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Amen.



MESSAGES TO PARENTS AND STUDENTS

For Teens:

The following are sample text messages, Tweets, or Facebook statuses you can send to teens to promote the meeting and prepare them for it.

- What does a righteous life look like? Over the next few weeks, we'll be talking about how living for God opens us up to living fully.
- Read Romans 1:16-17. Why do you think Paul mentions not being "ashamed of the gospel"?

For Parents:

The following are sample text messages to encourage conversation between parents and teens, along with a follow-up email. The goal is to equip parents to encourage their teens to embrace God's mission in the world.

- Over the next several weeks, we will be talking with your teen about how they can live fully and boldly for Christ. Please pray for these important conversations.
- This week we will be talking about how having faith in God should make us feel alive, not ashamed or weak. Do you need this reminder today as well—that we can live boldly because of the salvation of Christ?

Dear Parents,

This week we looked at how we can truly live if we have faith that the gospel of Jesus Christ is real. This kind of faith is not a blind hope that believing in Jesus is a world exit strategy. Instead, it means we have the courage to believe in what popular culture does not understand because we have had an encounter with the living God.

Use the following points to spark conversation with your teen on this topic:

- How do you think Paul found the courage to live boldly for Christ during a time when he knew he could be put to death for doing so?
- Have you ever felt ashamed of your faith? If so, share an example with your teen and ask them to share with you a time when they have felt ashamed or weak in their faith as well.
- Suggest praying for one another throughout the week, asking God to give you the strength to live fully and boldly, remembering your salvation in Christ.

Let us know if you have any questions as we begin our series. Thank you for allowing us to invest in the life of your teen.