

## Facilitator Notes for *Set Free!* – A Study in Romans Lesson 3 – Double Standard! – Romans 2:1-16

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.  
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

### Questions

Read the entire scripture (Rom. 2:1-16) in your small group before you begin discussing questions.

Read **Romans 1:28-32** and **Romans 2:1-4**.

1. What pronoun does Paul use in **1:28-32**? **THEY** Do you think the Roman Christians put themselves in this group? Why or why not?

Probably not, although they may have seen themselves in these words before they came to Christ. Paul uses "they/them" to suggest that he is addressing people other than those who are reading his letter. 1:18-32 are statement about people who reject God and do not include him in their lives.

Do you put *yourself* into this group? Why or why not?

- ♥ What do you think the *Roman Christians* were thinking when Paul described people caught in the downward spiral of sin (**1:28-30**)?
- ♥ What comes to *your* mind when you read when you read **1:28-30**?

2. What pronoun does Paul use is **2:1**? **YOU** What is the significance of the change?

Paul is bringing his argument closer home – that all people fall short of God's standard. He realizes that his readers would probably not see themselves in 1:28-32 because they are Christ-followers, but now he IS addressing those who follow Jesus.

- ♥ What do you think Paul means when he says "you do the same things" (**2:1**)? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Paul's point is that we are all sinners. Just because we commit sins less "intensely" or less frequently than others, doesn't change the basic condition of our heart and we all are in the "same boat." On the human level, some people are more "moral" than others, but that is not the yardstick Paul is using here. When we speak of the condition of the heart, there are only two possible conditions – guilty of sin or innocent of sin. (And besides, given particular, difficult circumstances, how far is any of us away from becoming the person described in 1:28-30?)

- ♥ When considering our own or another's *goodness*, what is the standard or yardstick (**Mark 10:18**)? We often measure ourselves against others to see how well we are doing or how "good" we are. Jesus taught that only God is truly and totally good (there is no evil or darkness in God) and He is the standard for all goodness. On the human level, some people are more moral than others, but when the standard of comparison is God, there is no one who does good, not even one (Ps. 14:3; Rom. 3:12).

(In Mark 10:18, when Jesus said, "Why do you call me good . . .", he was not saying that he, himself was not good. He was challenging the rich young ruler and telling him that you can't call me a "good teacher" unless you acknowledge that I am God. We must either acknowledge Jesus as God or refrain from calling him "good".

How do you measure up?

3. What issue or topic is Paul addressing in **2:1-4**? The moral person (a person aware of what is "right" and "wrong") criticizing and condemning the "sins" in others, especially when they themselves are guilty of the same sins.

From **your own knowledge and experience**, how would you define the word "judge" or explain what it means to "judge another."

**Judge** – In its strictest sense, *to judge* means to *distinguish, discern, determine* and *decide*; to judge in one's own mind as to what is right, proper and expedient (**Hebrews 5:14**). **Judge** can also mean *to decide and separate; to form and express an opinion* as to any person or thing, *usually unfavorable*; to *condemn*; to *separate and put oneself above another* (**Rom. 2:1**).

4. From the following verses, what do you learn about the *wrong* way to judge?

**Matthew 7:1-5** –

Jesus statement – do not judge – is talking about hypocritical judging that tears another down in order to build ourselves up. We are first to examine our own motives and conduct before judging others. Whenever we want to judge another, we first need to look and see if we deserve the same criticism.

**James 4:11-12** –

The wrong way to judge is to criticize and condemn another, without being concerned about helping another become better. Only God can judge motives because he is the only one who knows a person's heart. When we judge another in the wrong way, we are saying we know better than God.

**1 Corinthians 5:9-10 and 12-13** –

It makes a difference whether or not the person we are "judging" is a Christ-follower or not. Our obligation is to fellow believers – others in the body of Christ. We should not gossip or make rash judgments, but on the other hand, we are to judge (discern) and deal with sin that could hurt ourselves and others.

5. From the following verses, what do you learn about the *right* way to judge?

**Galatians 6:1-2** –

The purpose of "judging" is for restoration and it should be done gently. This restoration process is a way of carrying each other's burdens and thus fulfilling the law of love.

**1 Corinthians 5:11** –

Christ-followers are not to associate with someone who says they are a Christ-follower, yet they display unchristlike behavior which is hurtful and harmful to not only themselves, but also others. A person like this can do great damage to the testimony of the church as it presents a distorted picture of Christ to the world. "Not associating" has two purposes. It sends a message of disapproval of the behavior to those who may be watching (as well as protecting those in the body of Christ who may be hurt) and the hope is that "not associating" may hasten the repentance of the one who is overtly sinning.

**Hebrews 3:12-13**

We are to warn and encourage each other so that our hearts don't become deceived by sin and hardened against God.

**Matthew 7:15-18** –

We are to be discerning about each other based on behavior and actions. It is not enough for a teacher (or any Christ-follower) to just say the right things. We must "practice what we preach."

♥ What are some *big differences* that you see between these two ways of judging?

The wrong way to judge, criticizes and condemns; the right way to judge is for the purpose of helping and restoring a person. The wrong way is usually done behind a person's back; the right way if face to face. The wrong way does not acknowledge our own sin; the right way realizes that "but for the grace of God, go I." The wrong way is a self-centered act; the right way is an act of love. The wrong way to judge is negative; the right way is positive. The wrong way tears a person down and in no way helps them to become a better person; the right way confronts a person actions or attitudes with the intent of helping them.

♥ Clearly, it is wrong to judge others in the wrong way. Is it also wrong to not judge others in the right way? Why or why not?

"Do not judge" is not a blanket statement against all critical thinking, but rather, a call to be discerning rather than negative. We are to "bear each other's burdens" and this means we are to confront each other in love and help each other to be more Christ-like. We have an obligation to

each other – as brothers and sisters in Christ – to discipline and correct each other in much the same way that parents have an obligation to correct and discipline their children. To not do so is really a statement of indifference and lack of love. To become involved, gently correct, and then help and encourage each other is the way we show love. We are being disobedient when turn our head the other way and ignore another Christian who is struggling in their attitudes and actions, especially if those actions and attitudes hurt others or malign the name of Christ.

- ♥ When are you most tempted to judge another in the wrong way? What can you do instead?
- ♥ What is the consequence of judging and condemning another, especially when we are guilty of the same behavior (**Romans 2:3; Luke 6:37-38**)?

**God will judge us – using the same measure we use on others.**

When have you ever judged someone else and realized you were guilty of the same offense?

6. Why does God choose to delay his judgment on those who do wrong (**Romans 2:4** and **2 Peter 3:9**)?  
**God is being patient and kind, waiting for us to repent and come back to him**

What does this reveal about God's character?

It demonstrates that God is loving and kind and that he is reluctant to "punish."

**Psalm 103: 8-10, 13-14** says: The LORD is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love. **9** He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. **10** He has not punished us for all our sins, nor does he deal with us as we deserve. **13** The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. **14** For he understands how weak we are; he knows we are only dust.

**God is more interested in being in relationship with us than in punishing us.**

- ♥ When has God's patience, tolerance and kindness brought you to repentance?
- ♥ How does God's patience, tolerance and kindness towards you make you feel? Act?
- ♥ How might God's patience be mistaken for his approval of our actions?

**Because God does not immediately discipline a person, one could take God's delay as God's approval or his indifference towards our behavior.**

- ♥ What are we saying about God and his methods when we continue to judge others?

**Judging others (in the wrong way) shows contempt for God's kindness, tolerance and patience. We are saying that we know better than God in how a situation should be handled.**

7. Why do you think God gives us time to repent and change? What would happen if the "punishment" always quickly followed the "crime"? What does this teach us about judging others?

**God's giving us time to repent and change is motivated by his love for us – and it demonstrates that our repentance and returning to God is much more important than "punishment." If we were immediately disciplined for everything we did wrong – we would never even have the chance to repent or change. We need to be kind, patience and tolerant towards others, giving them time to repent and change. When we forgive another instead of judging them, we are putting them into God's hands to discipline, as we trust God to take care of us.**

Read **Romans 2:5-11**.

8. What are the consequences of a judgmental, unrepentant heart (**2:5**)?

**We store up wrath or punishment against ourselves on the day of judgment.**

*The Final Judgment* – The Bible frequently affirms the fact that there will be a great, final and public judgment of all people, both believers and unbelievers. We will all stand before God and give an account for our deeds (**Rev. 20:11-13; Rom. 2:5-10**). The judgment for unbelievers will include degrees of punishment (**Luke 12:47-48**) and for believers, degrees of reward (**2 Cor. 5:9-10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15**). God's judgment will be entirely just and no one will be able to complain. We can be thankful for this *final judgment* for several reasons: **1)** It will satisfy our inner sense of justice and prove that God is fair and in control and keeps accurate records; **2)** It enables us to forgive others freely because we know God will some day avenge and make things right (**Rom. 12:19**); **3)** It provides a motive for righteous living and an incentive to faithfulness and good works. No one earns forgiveness of sins (Jesus did that), but believers do earn eternal rewards; and **4)** It provides a great motive to share the *gospel* – the *Good News* of Jesus – with all people, especially those we love. Decisions made by people in this life will affect their eternal destiny.

9. God will judge each person *according to what they have done* (2:6). Fill in the chart below by listing in each box the actions and consequences of those who persist in good deeds or evil deeds. (*In the Bible, evil is the opposite of good. Anything that is not good, is evil.*)

Good Deeds – 2: 7, 10		Evil Deeds – 2: 8, 9	
<b>Actions:</b> persist in doing what is good	<b>Consequences:</b> eternal life	<b>Actions:</b> self-seeking (live for themselves) reject truth practice evil deeds	<b>Consequences:</b> there will be wrath and anger
doing good	glory, honor and peace from God	keeps on sinning (does evil)	there will be trouble and distress

♥ What do you see is the motivation or driving force behind the actions of each group in the chart? How does this help you in deciding how to live?

♥ Does the thought of a judgment day make a difference in your life? Why or why not?

10. Besides our *deeds*, what else will God's final judgment reveal (1 Corinthians 4:5; Romans 2:16; Hebrews 4:13)?

**Our deepest secrets and private motives; our secret life; everything will be laid bare.**

♥ If you could choose, would you rather be judged according to your *motives* or your *deeds*? Why?

11. If we are made righteous (right-in-God's-sight) by *faith* (Romans 1:17), why, then, does God judge us according to *what we have done* (James 2:14-17; Galatians 5:6)?

**True faith ALWAYS proves itself in good deeds. "Faith that doesn't show itself by good deeds is no faith at all." True faith always expresses itself in love. Faith is what saves us (Romans 3:20-24, 28; Gal. 2:16; 3:11), and good works is the fruit of true faith.**

**Below is a comment written by Bible scholar John Stott that may help in understanding the difference between being saved by faith and yet still being judged for our works.**

**Judged by our works:** *The whole New Testament teaches this; although we sinners can be 'justified' only by faith in Christ, yet we shall be 'judged' by our works. This is not a contradiction. It is because good works of love are the only available public evidence of our faith. Our faith in Jesus Christ is secret, hidden in our hearts. But if it is genuine, it will manifest itself visibly in good works. As James puts it, 'I will show you my faith by what I do ... faith without deeds is useless' (Jas. 2:18, 20). Since the judgment day will be a public occasion, it will be necessary for public evidence to be produced, namely the outworking of our faith in compassionate action. Jesus himself taught this many times. For example, 'The Son of man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done' (Mt. 16:27). **It is not our salvation, but our judgment, which will be according to our works.***

♥ True faith always expresses itself in good deeds. Is it possible to have good deeds but no faith? Why or why not?

If "good deeds" are evaluated by just their outward appearance, it may seem that a person can have good deeds without faith. However, God evaluates good deeds according to the **motive** behind them (something no human can see) and a good deed is not really a good deed unless it is done to obey and please God. Things that appear to be good deeds are often done for self-serving reasons or alternative motives. Humans look on the outward appearance; but the Lord looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7)

♥ When you consider your own judgment before God, does what is revealed about God in 2:11, comfort or distress you? Why?

**Before God, all humans are equal. No one will receive special treatment due to birth, social status, wealth, skill or achievement. We will instead be judged by whether we possess the righteousness which comes from faith in Jesus, accepting his payment for the penalty of sin.**

♥ Should this characteristic of God in 2:11 affect our treatment of other people? Why or why not?

Read Romans 2:12-16.

*Law* (or *Torah*) – Narrowly defined, the law consists of the first five books of the Old Testament (the five books of Moses or the *Pentateuch*). Law can also refer to all the Old Testament scriptures including the writings of the prophets. The law contains the specific commands from God on how we are to relate to him and how we are to live life. As we will see later in Romans, the law defines right and wrong.

12. How does God ensure that his future judgment of every person who ever lived, based on his or her deeds, is impartial and fair regardless of whether or not that person knew about God's law (2:12)? Those who do not know God's law will be judged on the basis of the knowledge available to them. They won't be condemned for their failure to keep God's law that they knew nothing about, but they will be judged because they did not live up to the good that they did know (Romans 2:14-15). (2:13 – "those who obey the law will be declared righteous" is a hypothetical statement, because no one obeys the law perfectly – James 2:10)

♥ How does making excuses and defending ourselves (our words and actions) prove our guilt? There is never a need to make excuses or defend what we have done if our actions are good. So if we do defend ourselves and makes excuses for what we did, we are proving that we knew our actions were not right.

13. Will those who have never heard God's law be condemned for breaking it (2:14-16)? Why or why not? All people are created in God's image and so have an innate sense of right and wrong. They have a conscience which tells them what the "requirements of the law" are, and this conscience is constantly evaluating their actions, either accusing them or defending them. People may not know that God's law forbids stealing, for example, but they know that stealing is wrong because God's law is written on their hearts. Even their good actions condemn them, because the fact that they do good things shows that they know the difference between good and bad, right and wrong. So, when they do wrong, they have no excuse.

♥ How can a person know right and wrong if they have never read the Bible? Romans 2:14-15

♥ Does anyone live up to the "moral law" common to all people?

Everyone has a sense of right and wrong – and no one is capable of completely living up to what they know is good and right – regardless of whether the "right thing" is based on God's law or not. Even if a person made up their own rules of right and wrong, they would not be able to always do what they considered right – or never do what they considered wrong.

♥ If a friend said to you that they didn't really think there was such a thing as "sin," how could you use what you have learned in Romans so far to respond?

## *Response*

The proper response to God's impending judgment is *always* repentance. God is kind, tolerant and patient as he leads us towards repentance. *Repentance* means "turning" and implies a **change of heart and direction** – turning *away* from sin and *towards* God. Don't mistake God's patience as indifference towards your wrong-doing. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where, in your life, you need to repent (don't depend on your own judgment!) and then *just do it!* Your loving, kind and patient Heavenly Father is waiting!

BELOW IS THE SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURE FOR THIS LESSON THAT CAN BE PRINTED OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME.

**Mark 10:18** “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.

**Matthew 7:1-5** “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. **2** For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. **3** “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? **4** How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? **5** You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

**James 4:11-12** Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. **12** There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

**1Corinthians 5:9-10, 12-13** I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— **10** not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. **12** What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? **13** God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”

**Galatians 6:1-2** Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. **2** Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

**1Corinthians 5:11** But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

**Hebrews 3:12-13** See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

**Matthew 7:15-18** “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. **16** By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17** Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. **18** A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

**Luke 6:37-38** “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. **38** Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

**2Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

**1Corinthians 4:5** Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

**Hebrews 4:13** Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

**James 2:14-17** What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? **15** Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. **16** If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? **17** In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

**Galatians 5:6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

## NLT

**Mark 10:18** “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked. “Only God is truly good.

**Matthew 7:1-5** “Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. 2 For others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged. 3 And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? 4 How can you think of saying, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

**James 4:11-12** Don’t speak evil against each other, my dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize each other and condemn each other, then you are criticizing and condemning God’s law. But you are not a judge who can decide whether the law is right or wrong. Your job is to obey it. 12 God alone, who made the law, can rightly judge among us. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to condemn your neighbor?

**1Corinthians 5:9-10, 12-13** When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. 10 But I wasn’t talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or who are greedy or are swindlers or idol worshipers. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. 12 It isn’t my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your job to judge those inside the church who are sinning in these ways. 13 God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, “You must remove the evil person from among you.”

**Galatians 6:1-2** Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. 2 Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

**1Corinthians 5:11** What I meant was that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a Christian yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Don’t even eat with such people.

**Hebrews 3:12-13** Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. 13 You must warn each other every day, as long as it is called “today,” so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.

**Matthew 7:15-18** “Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep, but are really wolves that will tear you apart. 16 You can detect them by the way they act, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit. You don’t pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles. 17 A healthy tree produces good fruit, and an unhealthy tree produces bad fruit. 18 A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit.

**Luke 6:37-38** “Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. Stop criticizing others, or it will all come back on you. If you forgive others, you will be forgiven. 38 If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving—large or small—it will be used to measure what is given back to you.”

**2Peter 3:9** The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent.

**1Corinthians 4:5** So be careful not to jump to conclusions before the Lord returns as to whether or not someone is faithful. When the Lord comes, he will bring our deepest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. And then God will give to everyone whatever praise is due.

**Hebrews 4:13** Nothing in all creation can hide from him. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes. This is the God to whom we must explain all that we have done.

**James 2:14-17** Dear brothers and sisters, what’s the use of saying you have faith if you don’t prove it by your actions? That kind of faith can’t save anyone. 15 Suppose you see a brother or sister who needs food or clothing, 16 and you say, “Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat well” —but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? 17 So you see, it isn’t enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn’t show itself by good deeds is no faith at all—it is dead and useless.

**Galatians 5:6** For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, it makes no difference to God whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love.