



## Lesson 1 ~ paul@slaveofjesus.com

Romans 1:1-17

### Discussion Starter

- If you were writing a letter or email to a "pen pal" who did not know you, how would you introduce yourself? What are some things you would say about yourself in order to make yourself known?

### Introduction

**F**irst impressions are important and making a good "first impression" was on Paul's mind as he opened his letter to the Roman Christians. After all, Paul did not start this church located in the city of Rome, nor had he ever visited it. Yet he had many important things he wanted to say to this group of believers whom he hoped to meet soon – and he wanted to make sure that they would pay close attention to his message. For this reason, he chose each word and phrase of his introduction carefully, in order to

establish his credibility and to win the hearts and "ears" of his audience. First, Paul identifies himself and greets his readers (1:1-7). Then he declares his affection for them and his intention to visit them soon (1:8-15). Finally, he concludes his introductory remarks by stating the **main theme** of the entire letter (1:16-17).

We, too, need to pay close attention to the opening words of this letter so that we can better understand the essence of Paul's message.

### Preparation

1. Before you read **Romans 1: 1-17**, ask God to open your eyes so that you may see wonderful truths in his Word (**Psalm 119:18**). You may want to make the following prayer your own:

**Triune God – Father, Son and Spirit,**

*I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.*

*I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.*

*So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.*

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,  
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

*I ask this in the powerful name of Jesus.*

*Amen*

2. Read **Romans 1:1-17** slowly and thoughtfully. As you read and reread, **underline or highlight** any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a **question mark** beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

**You may also want to read the Scripture in another translation.** The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *New International Version* (NIV) and the *New Living Translation* (NLT). The questions are phrased to be answered from **either** of these versions. Other translations and paraphrases should only be used as supplementary texts to help your understanding.

3. Sum up the Scripture passage for this lesson in a short **sentence, phrase** or **title**.

## Questions

### Read Romans 1:1-7

1. What three phrases does Paul use to identify himself to the Romans (1:1)?

*apostle* (1:1) – a messenger, representative or ambassador, sent out for a purpose, acting with the full authority of the sender. Jesus personally trained and sent out the first apostles (Matthew 10:1-8). The qualifications for an apostle was that the person had been a disciple of Jesus during his earthly ministry and had witnessed his resurrection (Acts 1:15-26). Even though Paul did not meet these original requirements, he claimed *apostolic authority* equal to that of the original Twelve (1 Corinthians 4:9; 9:1-2; Gal. 2) because he, too, had seen the risen Christ (Acts 9:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8) and was also directly commissioned and sent out by Jesus (Acts 26:15-18; Gal. 1:1).

- ♥ From these phrases, how would you describe Paul's view of himself?
- ♥ If you were writing a letter to introduce yourself to a group of Christians, what **words or phrases** would you use to describe your **relationship** to God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit?

Some translations of the Greek word *doulos* in 1:1 read "servant" or "bond-servant," but the most literal translation of this word is *slave*, meaning "to belong completely to a master with no freedom to leave."

- ♥ What do you think of when you hear the word "slave"? Does the word cause a positive or negative reaction in you? Why?
2. Can you think of some reasons why Paul would call himself a "slave" of Christ Jesus (1:1)? (Acts 26:1-5, 9-19; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and Act 20:28 may help you with your answer.)
- ♥ Does Jesus have the same claim on your life as he did on Paul's? Why or why not?
  - ♥ What do you think it would mean for you to actually be a "slave of Christ Jesus"? Would anything in your life change? Why or why not?
3. What are some advantages of being a "slave of Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:16-20; 8:15)?
- ♥ What does the phrase "a slave of Christ Jesus" imply about Jesus' identity? Does this affect your feelings about being a "slave"? Why or why not?
  - ♥ Slaves have masters. Describe "master" Jesus.
4. How do we demonstrate that we are truly "slaves" of Jesus (Romans 6:12-13; 12:1)?

The subject of the *gospel* or *good news* is a predominant theme in Paul's letter. As an apostle, it was Paul's responsibility to proclaim the **gospel** by *teaching, preserving* and *defending* it. Paul wants to make sure the Romans know and believe the **true gospel** and not some counterfeit version.

5. The *gospel* is so important to Paul's message in this letter, that he includes a description of it in his greeting. From **1:1-5**, answer these basic questions about the *good news*.

Who is the origin of the <i>gospel</i> ( <b>1:1</b> or <b>1:2</b> )?	
What helps validate the <i>gospel</i> ( <b>1:2</b> )?	
Who is the "heart" or <i>substance</i> of the <i>gospel</i> <b>1:3,4</b> ?	
Who is the <i>gospel</i> for ( <b>1:5</b> )?	
What is the purpose of the <i>gospel</i> ( <b>1:5</b> )?	

- ♥ What do you see is the importance of the gospel being **promised beforehand** by the Old Testament prophets and Scriptures (**1:2**)?
  - ♥ Why is the identity of Jesus (**1:3-4**) important as it relates to the *gospel* or *good news*?
  - ♥ What connection do you see between **faith** (belief) and **obedience** (**1:5**)? Can you have one without the other? Why or why not?
6. As is customary with letters written in the first century, Paul identifies those he is writing to at the beginning of his letter. Make a note of everything you learn about the recipients of this letter in **1:6-7**.

- ♥ Read **1:6-7** as if it were written to you, substituting the name of your city for **Rome**. What do you learn about yourself?
  - ♥ Where do *grace* and *peace* come from (**1:7**)? Is there something you need to do to experience these qualities? Why or why not? Will you know if you are experiencing them? Why or why not?
7. What do you think it means to be "called by God" (**1:6-7**)? Do you consider yourself "called" by God? Why or why not?

8. What do you learn about "God's call" in the following verses? (In the *New Living Translation*, "called" is sometimes translated "invited.")

**1 Corinthians 1:9** -

**Colossians 3:15** -

**1 Peter 2:20-21** -

**Galatians 5:13** -

**1 Thessalonians 4:7** -

**Romans 11:29** -

- ♥ Did what you learned about "God's call" change your answer to **Question 7**? If so, why?
- ♥ Which one of the above verses is most meaningful to you? Why?

- ♥ How did God call you to belong to himself? How is your life different because of God's call?
- ♥ In what areas of your life are you living up to God's call? In what areas of your life do you need to hear his call again?

**Read Romans 1:8-15**

9. Count the "I" statement in these verses. What are several different ways that Paul shows his great **affection** and **concern** for the Roman Christians?

- ♥ How does remembering someone in prayer (**1:9,10**) help him or her? What friend or family member needs your prayer support right now? How faithful are you in remembering them in your prayers?
- ♥ Who has been a "Paul" to you in your life - praying for you, encouraging you and sharing themselves with you? How can you be a "Paul" to someone else? Ask God to bring someone to mind.
- ♥ In what ways have you **been encouraged** when you took the time to **encourage** someone else?

**Read Romans 1:16-17 in both the NIV and NLT versions.**

**Romans 1:16-17** is considered to be the "thesis statement" of Paul's letter to the Romans. These verses state the reason why Paul wrote this important letter and they sum up the essence of the message that is to come. We will revisit these themes often in this study.

10. In what ways is the gospel **powerful** and how is its **power** released (**1:16-17**)?

- ♥ What are some specific ways the power of the gospel has been displayed in your life?
- ♥ Why might Christ-followers who lived in the Roman Empire, be ashamed of the gospel?
- ♥ For what reasons and in what situations might a Christ-follower today be ashamed of the gospel? What is the solution to this dilemma?

*Response*

**What was Paul's purpose in life?** Read Romans **1:1, 5** and **14** in the NIV and NLT versions of the Bible and try to answer this question by writing a one sentence, general **purpose statement** for Paul's life.

Paul's purpose or mission in life was to . . .

God created you for a reason and a purpose. Your purpose may be nothing like Paul's, but it is just as important! In response to this lesson, **reflect on the following questions:**

Do you know your purpose or calling in life? Could you state it in sentence or two? What is the value of having a purpose statement for your life? Do you sense that God created and called you to do a particular type of thing or be engaged in a particular type of activity? What are some activities of life that give you great pleasure and a sense of purpose or meaning? How do you think Paul came to know his purpose? How might you go about "discovering" what your purpose in life might be?

If you are interested in discovering more about your **God-given purpose**, discuss these questions with someone who knows you well and then commit to pray for each other that God would show you the special reason why he created you! There is great joy in **finding** and **living out** your unique purpose!