



Lesson 3 ~ Double Standard!

Romans 2:1-16

Discussion Starter

- When have you ever been a victim of a *double standard*? How did it make you feel?
- When have you been "caught" applying a *double standard*? How did it make you feel?

Introduction

The *gospel* is for **all people** – and **all people** need the *gospel* is the statement we have used to sum up message of Romans. In his letter to the Romans, Paul begins by "proving" the second half of this statement, showing that, indeed, all people need the good news of Jesus Christ! In Lesson 2 we saw that secular, non-religious people – people who do not know much about God or give him any attention – cannot claim **innocence** before God because of **ignorance** about him. God has placed in every human a knowledge of himself and all creation continually displays evidence of God's existence.

In **Romans 2:1-16**, Paul turns his attention to another group of people – moral people, those who are aware of God's law and know right from wrong – but they use their "expertise" to judge the wrong in others! Paul puts his finger on a curious human habit – our tendency to be critical of everyone except ourselves. We stand aghast at the disgraceful behavior of others while ignoring or downplaying the same sin in our own lives. Paul shows us that God is the only true and fair judge and that even the good, moral person is guilty of sin and therefore deserving of God's judgment.

Preparation

1. Before you read **Romans 2:1-16**, 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 Father, Son and Spirit.

Amen

2. Read **Romans 2:1-16** 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 1:28-32** and **Romans 2:1-4**.

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

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 in **2:1**? _____ What is the significance of the change?
 - ♥ 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?
 - ♥ When considering our own or another's *goodness*, what is the standard or yardstick (**Mark 10:18**)? How do you measure up?
 3. What issue or topic is Paul addressing in **2:1-4**?

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 –

James 4:11-12 –

1 Corinthians 5:9-10 and 12-13 –

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

Galatians 6:1-2 –

1 Corinthians 5:11 –

Hebrews 3:12-13

Matthew 7:15-18 –

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

- ♥ 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?
 - ♥ 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**)? 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**)?

What does this reveal about God's character?

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

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

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

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	
Actions:	Consequences:	Actions:	Consequences:

- ♥ 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**)?

- ♥ 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 expresses itself in good deeds. Is it possible to have good deeds but no faith? Why or why not?
- ♥ When you consider your own judgment before God, does what is revealed about God in **2:11**, comfort or distress you? Why?
- ♥ 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**)?
- ♥ How does making excuses and defending ourselves (our words and actions) prove our guilt?
13. Will those who have never heard God's law be condemned for breaking it (**2:14-16**)? Why or why not?
- ♥ How can a person know right and wrong if they have never read the Bible?
 - ♥ Does anyone live up to the "moral law" common to all people?
 - ♥ 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!