Dear Redeemer Church Family,

We are so glad that you have decided to join us as we study Romans 1-4 together as a church this Spring. We love the book of Romans, and we’ve been hard at work designing a study to help you get as much out of this precious book as you can.

Throughout church history, the Book of Romans has played an outsized role. John Piper called it “the greatest letter ever written,” and Samuel Coleridge, the English poet, said it was “the most profound work in existence.”

Martin Luther himself was converted to Christ while reading Romans 1:16-17, giving birth to the Protestant Reformation. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, was converted reading Martin Luther’s preface to Romans, and the Lord used Romans 13:13 to bring the great Saint Augustine to Himself. Even our own pastor Joel Brooks once said that he taught his daughters to read in the hopes that one day they would be able to read and understand Romans.

It is our earnest prayer that the Lord would use our time together in Romans to leave us awed by the gospel of His glorious grace, as we understand to ever-deepening degrees the gap between what we have deserved from God and what we have received in Christ instead.

The questions provided in the following reading plan are meant to further your own personal study. We encourage you to first spend time prayerfully meditating through a Psalm, and then study the assigned passage on your own before trying to answer any of our questions. If you are new to Bible study or would like to be challenged to go deeper, we’d encourage you to read “How to Approach the Bible” and “Using the HEAR Method” in the Appendix.

We’ve designed this study to provide you with five readings a week, with one day for reflection, as well as an additional day to catch up on any readings you may have missed. Most importantly, we want you to know that this guide has been made for your benefit, so feel free to use it in whatever way would be most beneficial for your walk with the Lord.

Praying that the God of hope would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may abound in hope,

Matt Francisco
Pastor of Discipleship
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WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

“God the Creator taking creation from its original flawless state through its current sin-marred (though still lovely) state to its final glorious state by means of His personal (Father–Son–Holy Spirit) comprehensive (people, places, creatures, and things) redemptive (from sin and decay) work that He shares with His servants, His people.” - Paul House, Beeson Divinity School

1. We were created for relationship with God and to reflect God to the world.
   Colossians 1:16, Isaiah 43:7, Genesis 1:17–28

2. We have been ruined by our rebellion.
   Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23

3. We have been rescued and reconciled through Jesus Christ.
   2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 3:18, Ephesians 2:4–5

4. We now reflect Christ and restore His world together with Him.
   2 Corinthians 5:18–20, Revelation 21:3–4, Philippians 2:9–11

GOD SAVES SINNERS

GOD – the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons working together in sovereign wisdom, power and love to achieve the salvation of a chosen people, the Father electing, the Son fulfilling the Father’s will by redeeming, the Spirit executing the purpose of Father and Son by renewing.

SAVES – does everything, first to last, that is involved in bringing man from death in sin to life in glory: plans, achieves and communicates redemption, calls and keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies.

SINNERS – men as God finds them, guilty, vile, helpless, powerless, unable to lift a finger to do God’s will or better their spiritual lot. God saves sinners... sinners do not save themselves in any sense at all, but that salvation, first and last, whole and entire, past, present and future, is of the Lord, to whom be glory for ever; amen.”

The Book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul around 57 A.D., towards the end of his third missionary journey, while he was stationed in Corinth for a few months before he set sail for Syria (Acts 20:2-3). While he had travelled extensively, Paul had never before visited Rome, and so this letter serves as an introduction of sorts.

While scholars debate who founded the church in Rome, it is clear that Christianity had become a fairly major presence in the city by at least the late 40s A.D. Most of the early converts were likely Jewish (which unsurprising, perhaps, given that there were around 50,000 Jews living in Rome during Paul’s day), but by the time of Paul’s writing, it seems that the church was majority-Gentile (1:5f, 13; 11:13).

These Roman Christians faced persecution alongside their Jewish brethren. The Emperor Claudius banished all Jews from the city in 49 A.D, a decree that remained in effect until Claudius’s death 5 years later- but that persecution was nothing compared to that experienced under the rule of Emperor Nero. By all accounts, Nero was a despicable, violent, and possibly mentally-disturbed man who deeply hated Christians. Towards the end of his rule, Nero famously captured Christians, dipped them in pitch, and used them as torches to light up his gardens at night.

Paul penned his letter to the Roman church during the early days of Nero, when Christian persecution was just beginning to increase.

The Book of Romans gives us the most comprehensive account of Paul’s theology, but like his other letters, it was never intended to be viewed as a complete systematic theology. Given its contents, it seems most likely that Paul wrote this specific letter to address particular issues concerning the Roman church, particularly the apparent growing tensions between the law-observing Jewish Christians and the Gentile believers, who didn’t live by the Mosaic law.

“In his ministry of reconciliation between the Jews and Gentiles, Paul develops two themes and interweaves them beautifully. The first is the justification of guilty sinners by God’s grace alone in Christ, irrespective of status or works. This is the most humbling and equaling of all Christian truths. The second is that the people of God are no longer defined by descent, circumcision or culture, but according to faith in Jesus. So ‘there is no difference now between Jews and Gentiles (Romans 3:22)”– John Stott (1921–2011), Romans: Encountering the Gospel’s Power, p.6
Perhaps more than any other letter, Romans clearly demonstrates how Christianity is different from any other religion. While other religions may give instructions for its followers to obey in order that they may be good enough to saved or to achieve nirvana or some other desirable eternal state, Romans teaches us that our God operates in exactly the opposite way, for “while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6).

Over the course of 16 magnificent chapters (neatly divided into 4 sections), Paul masterfully tells the unfolding story of the glorious gospel of grace. As Bob Johnson has written, “From the greeting (1:1) to the doxology (16:25) the gospel saturates this book. Romans teaches us our need for the gospel (1:18–3:20), the provision of the gospel (3:21–5:21), our growth in the gospel (6–8), the sovereignty of God and the gospel (9–11), and our life together in the gospel (12–16).”

In the first few chapters of Romans, like a world-class lawyer, Paul builds his case. He demonstrates clearly that each of us has exchanged the truth about God for a lie, worshipping and serving the creation rather than the Creator. As a result, Paul can rightly say, “There is no one righteous, no not one.” There is a debt of righteousness that each of us owe to God that we could never repay, and therefore, each of us- the immoral and supposedly moral alike- stands justly condemned before God on the basis of our own merit.

But it is not as though God is somehow overly harsh or vindictive- not at all. Instead, it is His perfect justice that demands that He shows no partiality. Therefore, Paul demonstrates, each of us is judged according to our works- not in comparison to others, but against God’s perfect standard. Therefore, we all- each and every one of us- are left without hope.

But then hope beyond all imagination begins to dawn, and starting in Romans 3:21-29, Paul begins to share the greatest news in the universe. Though we could not be found acceptable in God’s sight, Jesus, God’s own Son took on human flesh and lived a sinless life to fulfill the righteousness requirement of the Law. He willingly substituted Himself for us in death, as a sacrifice to atone the wrath of God, in order that His righteousness could be offered to us as a gift by grace. Anyone anywhere who confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believes in their heart that God raised Him from the dead can be rescued and redeemed, brought into the very family of God.

We are a family of those from every tribe, tongue, language and nation who have been justified by faith- just like Abraham himself. Since our justification is in Jesus Christ and since we are therefore in Jesus Christ, we our hope is firmly secure. We can rest assured that we have access to God, that we have died to our sin, that there is no more condemnation for us, that we will be raised as Jesus Himself was raised, that we are co-inheritors with Jesus, that we are now able to obey God’s Law through God’s
Spirit, and that nothing—neither height nor depth, nor angel nor demon, nor things present or to come—will be able to separate us from God’s love.

This has always been God’s sovereign plan, and it is utterly unstoppable. God will bring to Himself all those whom Jesus purchased with His redeeming blood. Praise the Lord that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, but, Paul asks us, how can they call on him in whom they have not believed or even heard?

It is the task of the church, the new covenant family of Abraham through Jesus’s death and resurrection, to proclaim this good news to the ends of the earth. As we go into the world as heralds, we offer up our gifts to build up the church, and we strive to live as a counter-cultural, supernatural community who fulfills God’s law by loving our neighbors and welcoming one another as Christ has welcomed us, for the glory of God.

We labor until that glorious day when Satan is crushed under our feet, and all the earth sings, “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

**A FEW THINGS TO NOTE**

First, it is helpful to be aware at the outset that the first eleven chapters of Romans are a rather dense theological treatise. For that reason, many of our study questions are intentionally more theological than practical in nature. We want to do all we can to help you grasp the depths of what Paul is saying about God, man, sin, righteousness, justification, and God’s work of salvation—and yet, the Bible cannot merely be read merely intellectually. There is nothing given to us in the Bible simply to be known. His Word has been given to us that we might know Him through it, and, by the power of His Spirit, be changed into His likeness by it.

Our holy, loving God has given us His Word because He wants you to know and love Him— even as He knows and loves you. Therefore, as you open God’s Word, come expecting to meet God, which means you come prayerfully, patiently, and persistently.

Second, as I mentioned earlier, over the first two-and-a-half chapters of Romans, Paul is building his case for what Timothy George, the founding dean of Beeson Divinity School, has called humanity’s radical depravity. This is the theological notion that every aspect of our being and world has been damaged through the Fall, and that we can do nothing to save ourselves. However, humanity is not totally evil, because we all retain the image of God.

It’s helpful to know this at the outset of our study, so that you are not surprised if many of your times studying God’s Word in chapters 1-3 don’t leave you feeling inspired or reassured, like a devotional might. In a very real sense, that’s Paul’s aim— but it’s only the first of his aims. In the words of Tim Keller (b. 1950), “The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”

To put it another way, we only truly begin to recognize how good the gospel is when we first understand how little we deserve it.

Third, we will be taking a break from Romans from the end of May until mid-August. You are welcome to continue your study, but we will not be providing questions until we resume our sermon series. This summer, we will be looking at the 10 Commandments, and we’d encourage you to consider reading Kevin DeYoung’s *The Ten Commandments: What They Mean, Why They Matter, and Why We Should Obey Them* alongside our summer series.
**WEEK ONE**

Day 1: Read Romans 1-3

It should only take you 20-25 minutes, but try to read it all in one sitting with an open journal. Read over the background to Romans and then try to get an overall feel of the letter, jotting down 4 or 5 of the major themes you saw. We encourage you to conclude your time by asking God to bless your study of Romans in the days ahead.

Day 2: Romans 1:1-6 & 16:25-27

1. These two passages serve as the bookends of Romans, which highlight the main topics that Paul is going to discuss in the letter. From these two passages, what do you think the major themes are going to be?

2. In the very first verse, Paul calls himself “a bondservant” (the lowest position) and an “apostle” (a title of great honor). What do you make of Paul’s self-description? How do you typically introduce yourself to people you haven’t met?

3. What do these verses show us about Paul’s passion and ultimate goal in life?

4. What do we learn about the content of the gospel message from these few verses?

5. Why is it so significant that Paul says that he (and, by implication, all of us) “received” grace?

Day 3: Romans 1:1-6 again

1. Read over Psalm 110 and Luke 1:32-33. What is the significance of Jesus being “promised beforehand” and “a descendant of David?”

2. How does the knowledge of God’s plan for salvation, including saving you, change your life and your faith?

3. Verses 3-4. How did Jesus’s resurrection from the dead “declare” that He was the Son of God?

4. What does Paul mean by the “obedience of faith?” Read 1 John 1:5-2:6. How are obedience and faith connected? Is it possible to have faith without obedience?

5. Take this time to pray for obedience. Ask God to reveal to you areas of your disobedience in your life and pray for grace to obey.

“**As he is truly God, so also he is truly man. For he would not be truly man if he were not of flesh and soul. Otherwise he would be incomplete. For although he was the Son of God in eternity, he was not known by the creation until, when God wanted him to be revealed for the salvation of mankind, he made him visible and corporeal, because God wanted him to be known through his power to cleanse humans from their sins by overcoming death in the flesh**”

- Ambrosiaster (written between 366 and 384 AD)
Day 4: Romans 1:5-7
1. Read over Psalm 67. Paul says he has received grace and apostleship “for the sake of his name among all the nations.” What does this teach us about the scope of God’s plan?
2. What role do the nations play in your life or in your prayers? Take some time to pray that your life and our church would be used for God’s glory among all the nations.
3. Verse 6 says that believers are “called to belong to Jesus Christ.” What does it mean to belong to Jesus Christ? How is your life different because you belong to Jesus? What actions, decisions, or priorities is the Holy Spirit prompting you to consider?
4. Pray that the Lord would convince us all of the depth and permanence of His love.

Day 5: Romans 1:7-15
1. Verses 8-12. How would you describe Paul’s love for these Roman Christians? How should Paul’s love for these fellow believers—whom he has never met—challenge us, convict us, and encourage us?
2. Verses 11-12. Do you remember times in your life where you were mutually encouraged by another believer’s faith?
3. Verses 12. The Apostle Paul is humble enough to recognize that he can learn and be encouraged by any other believer. How do these verses give us a hint as to how to get that kind of humility?
4. Verses 14. What does Paul teach us about sharing the gospel? Take some time to prayerfully ask the Spirit to reveal to you who you might be under “obligation” to share the gospel with.

“The Romans were undergoing many tribulations. Paul wanted to see them in order to comfort them and also to be comforted by them… What humility he had! He showed them that he needed them as much as they needed him. By doing this, he put learners in the position of teachers, not claiming any superiority for himself but pointing out that they were full equal to him” - John Chrysostom (347–407)

Day 6 & 7: Reflect, Memorize, and Catch Up
1. What has God taught you this week in His Word?
2. What were you convicted by?
3. What are you praying for?

TAKE NOTES

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Day 1: Romans 1:16-17
1. What does it mean that the gospel is the “power of God?” In what ways is the gospel powerful and how have you seen its power in your life?
2. John Stott has called the gospel “the great leveler,” because it shows us that no one is loved by God because of their own worthiness, but that instead salvation comes “to everyone who believes.” Why is that such precious news? What does that mean for you and how should that news transform your life everyday?
3. James Stewart commented on verses 16-17, saying, “There’s no sense in declaring you’re not ashamed of something unless you’ve been tempted to be ashamed.” Have you ever been tempted to be “ashamed of the gospel” amongst your friends, family members, or co-workers?
4. If you answered yes to the last question, what do you think was behind that shame in those moments? From whom do you desire approval and fear rejection? Whose love and approval do you feel like you need?
5. In what ways can the gospel offend or be despised?

“Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ’s righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that He has becomes ours” - Martin Luther (1483–1546)

Day 2: Romans 1:18-20
1. Try to rewrite these verses in your own words.
2. How would you explain to someone what the “wrath of God” is?

“We tend to be taken aback by the thought that God could be angry. How can a deity who is perfect and loving ever be angry?... We take pride in our tolerance of the excesses of others. So what is God’s problem?... But love detests what destroys the beloved. Real love stands against the deception, the lie, the sin that destroys. Nearly a century ago the theologian E.H. Gifford wrote: ‘Human love here offers a true analogy: the more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him the drunkard, the liar, the traitor.’... Anger isn’t the opposite of love. Hate is, and the final form of hate is indifference... How can a good God forgive bad people without compromising himself? Does he just play fast and loose with the facts? ‘Oh, never mind... boys will be boys.’ Try telling that to a survivor of the Cambodian ‘killing fields’ or to someone who lost an entire family in the Holocaust. No. To be truly good one has to be outraged by evil and implacably hostile to injustice.” – Rebecca Pippert (b. 1949)

3. How do people “suppress the truth” by what they do? How do you think that affects our relationships, the way we think about ourselves, and what we think about God?
4. In what ways have God’s invisible attributes been revealed to the world? What, according to Paul, should everyone everywhere know about God?
5. What does it mean that all human beings are “without excuse” if they don’t seek God? What do you think Paul would say about the “innocent tribesman” who has never heard of the God of the Bible?
Day 3: Job 38–40:5
1. What do these verses teach us about God?
2. How does Creation reveal God’s character, faithfulness, and power?
3. Spend some time praising God for the wonder of His handiwork.

Day 4: Romans 1:21–23
1. In what sense did these people “know” God?
2. What does Paul teach us about the consequences of not honoring God or thanking him?
3. In The Institutes 2.6.1, John Calvin (1509–1564) writes, “It is certain that after the fall of our first parent, no knowledge of God without a Mediator was effectual to salvation. Christ speaks not of his own age merely, but embraces all ages, when he says “This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,” John 17: 3.” How do these verses affirm what Calvin is saying here about our need for God’s Word to truly understand God?

Day 5: Romans 1:24–25
1. What does Paul mean that “God gave them up?” How is the idea of the “wrath of God” connected to God giving people up “in the lusts of their hearts?”

The next few questions are meant to lead you to search your heart for the things that compete with your heart’s affection for the Lord and have been adapted from David Powlison’s Seeing With New Eyes:

2. What do you want, desire, crave, lust, and wish for? What desires do you serve and obey?
3. If you were truly honest with yourself, what do you think would bring you the greatest pleasure, happiness, and delight? What would bring you the greatest pain and misery?
4. What do you tend to think about most often? What preoccupies your mind when you’re “not thinking about anything”?
5. Digging a little deeper, where do you find security or happiness in times of trouble? What do you turn to or remind yourself?

Day 6 & 7: Reflect, Memorize, and Catch Up
1. What has God taught you this week in His Word?
2. What were you convicted by?
3. What are you praying for?

TAKE NOTES
Day 1: Matthew 19:1-6
1. The Pharisees come to Jesus asking about Moses and divorce, but Jesus takes them all the way back to the Garden of Eden. What does Jesus teach us here about God’s creation of men and women?
2. What does Jesus teach us about the nature of marriage?
   Who is marriage for? What is the nature of the promise?
3. Read over Ephesians 5:22-33. What does Paul teach us here about the goals of marriage? What is marriage meant to represent and why does it matter?

Day 2: Romans 1:26-32
1. Before reading verses 26-32, read back over the rest of chapter 1 to see how Paul’s argument has been building to this moment. What has Paul taught us about how God’s wrath works and why it is just?
2. In light of all that has come before, what do verses 26-27 specifically teach? How does Paul connect these sins to his argument in 1:21-25?
3. Three times in this passage Paul says, “God gave them up.” What does this teach us about God and us? What is Paul trying to emphasize?
4. What does Paul mean when he says that “they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die?” What is Paul implying about even those who don’t have God’s Word?
5. Read back over the list of sins in 29-31. Where have you seen these sins rear their heads in your life? Take time to confess and repent before the Lord, and then take time to remember and rejoice in the fact that you are forever “loved by God” (1:7) because of Jesus’s finished work.

“God gave them up because that is what they wanted”
—Oecumenius (d. 990 AD)

Day 3: Romans 2:1-4
1. Verses 1-3: Paul essentially says, “Before you start feeling too good comparing your sins to others, what about you? You who are so hard on others, why are you so easy on yourself? You who tend to play God for others, how do you think God will judge you?” How do these verses show us how religious people can tend to miss the gospel?
2. What do you see in other people that leads you to judge them negatively? In light of God’s Law, where do you tend to be easy on yourself?
3. Francis Schaeffer used to call Romans 2:1-3, “the invisible tape recorder.” Imagine that there was an invisible recorder around your neck that only recorded the things you said or thought about how others should live and behave. Then imagine, on the last day, God takes up the recorder and says, “I am going to be totally fair to you; I will only judge you on the basis of the standards you’ve set for other people.” If that scenario were to come true, how do you think you would measure up to your standard for others?
4. In verse 4, the word “presume” could mean “to despise, care nothing for, look down on, or show contempt.” How does that deepen your understanding of what it means to “presume” on God’s kindness?
5. Paul doesn’t say that it is God’s discipline or justice that leads to His forbearance, but His kindness. Read over Ezekiel 33:11. What do these verses teach us about God’s heart?
6. Think about your life before you came to faith. How can you trace God’s kindness to you over the course of your life?

“What Paul wants to show here is that only God can judge rightly… Given that only God knows the hearts of men and only he can discern the secrets of the mind, only he has the power to judge rightly” – Origen (c. 184 – c. 253)
Day 4: Romans 2:6-11
1. What do you think it means that God “will render to each one according to his works?”
2. How does it sit with you that God will render to you and everyone else each one according to your works? What kind of standard do you think God will use to judge each person?
3. In light of the above, how do you think you will stand on the day that God’s righteous judgment will be revealed?
4. In Mark 10:17–18, we read, “And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.” How does that shed light on Paul’s comment that there will be “glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good?” Who will receive glory and honor and peace for doing good?
5. What does it mean that God “shows no partiality?”

“There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done’” - C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Day 5: Read James 2:14-26 & Ephesians 2:1-10
1. How do these two passages shed light on what we’ve studied in Romans 2 so far?
2. Is Paul contradicting himself in these passages? If not, what else might be going on? What’s the relationship between our works, God’s judgment, and God’s grace?
3. John Stott (1921–2011) has written that justification comes by faith, but judgment comes by works. Take some time to think about the implications for your salvation and praise God for His grace.

Day 6 & 7: Reflect, Memorize, and Catch Up
1. What has God taught you this week in His Word?
2. What were you convicted by?
3. What are you praying for?
Day 1: Romans 2:12-16
1. What do these verses teach us how each of us will be judged by God? What about people who have never heard God’s Word (look back at 1:20-21)?
2. What does Paul mean in verse 15 when he references Jeremiah 31:33, saying “the law is written on their hearts?”
3. Commenting on verse 16, John Stott (1921-2011) wrote that “there will be no possibility of a miscarriage of justice on the last day.” What do verses 6, 11, & 16 teach us about the justice of God?
4. Verse 16. We all have secrets that we try to hide from others and sometimes even ourselves. Why do you think we try to hide? What are some ways you’ve seen hiding be destructive in your life or in others?
5. Read Mark 4:22. How do Jesus’s words amplify what Paul’s saying here?

Day 2: Romans 2:17-24
1. Paul seems to be preemptively responding to an argument he imagines coming from the Jews: “What about the Jews being chosen by God? We received His Word and sign!” How do these verses serve as an answer to that argument from the Jews? What are some other false assumptions that we can make about how we get God’s approval?
2. In verses 19-23, Paul exposes their hypocrisy. He essentially says, “You who teach others; why aren’t you teaching yourself?” Certainly none of us like to be called hypocrites, but where have you seen yourself fail to live up to God’s standards or even your own standards?
3. Verse 24. In many ways, Paul’s accusation could just as easily be leveled against the American church today. How is “the name of God blasphemed” today amongst nonbelievers by the ways we fail to practice what we preach?
4. Take some time to ask God to reveal any ways you are not walking in obedience. Use Psalm 139:5-8 to guide you and ask the Lord to let Romans 12:9 be true of you.

“ If a Jew boasts in God in the manner called for by grace, which is given not according to the merits of works but freely, his praise would be of God and not of men… but they thought that they had fulfilled this law of God by their own righteousness, even though they were transgressors of it” – Augustine (354-430)
1. Why do you think we’re so prone to try to remove the speck from our brother’s eye before looking at the speck in our own eyes?
2. What does it look like to deal with our sin in an honest, God-honoring way?
3. What does Jesus teach us about the nature of our hearts in these verses?
4. What does it look like to build our house on the rock?

Day 4: Genesis 17:1-14
1. Does Abram offer God anything before God makes promises to him? What does that teach us about the nature of God and the nature of our relationship with Him?
2. What does God promise Abram?
3. God institutes circumcision as a sign of the covenant, a physical reminder of God’s promise to care for His people. The physical sign of circumcision doesn’t make God’s promises any more true, because God’s promises can never fail. This covenant sign is for God’s people, as a sign that they believe that God has pledged to remember His promises. Read Colossians 2:11-12, where Paul explicitly ties the Old Testament sign of circumcision to the New Testament sign of baptism. How do those signs relate to one another?

Day 5: Romans 2:25-29
1. Think back on your study yesterday. Paul seems to imply that the Jewish people were wrongly understanding the outward act of circumcision to judge themselves better than other people. What are some of the ways that we as Christians can do similar things? How can we tell if we or others simply know and do the right things, while our hearts are far from God?
2. In verses 26-28, Paul seems to push the point even further, essentially saying, “You thought you would sit in judgment one day against non-Jews, but it is the obedient Gentile who will sit in judgment against you.” Who do we as Christians tend to view as “the other,” like Jews viewed the Gentiles here? Is there any group of people or any particular person who, if you’re honest with yourself, you view as “less deserving” of God’s grace?
3. What does Paul mean by saying that a Jew is “one inwardly” and that “circumcision is a matter of the heart?” (Consider reading Read Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6 & Jeremiah 9:25 for help)
4. What is the Spirit’s role in the “circumcision of the heart” and our ability to receive “praise from God?”

Day 6 & 7: Reflect, Memorize, and Catch Up
1. What has God taught you this week in His Word?
2. What were you convicted by?
3. What are you praying for?

TAKE NOTES
Day 1: Romans 3:1-8
1. Verses 1-2. If, as Paul has argued over the first two chapters, that both Jews and Gentiles have dishonored “God by breaking the law” (2:23), was there ever any benefit to the Jews being God’s chosen people? If so, what were the benefits?
2. Try to put verses 3-4 in your own words.
3. How would you answer Paul’s question in verse 5?
4. If God’s going to be faithful to His people, what’s the big deal about our sin now? Along those lines, can we “sin our way out” of being God’s covenant people (2 Timothy 2:11-13)?

“If one is to be righteous, one must keep the law in every particular, which is... impossible for human nature to achieve. Therefore every one is a liar. For since every man is a liar, it follows that on that day when the Lord comes to judgment with men, only he will be justified in what he says. For his words are true in everything, because they are the words of truth” - Origen (c. 184 – c. 253)

Day 2: Psalm 14
In the next few verses, Paul is about quote Psalm 14, so today we are going to look at Psalm 14 on its own to understand it in its context.

1. James Montgomery Boice, commenting on the first few verses, notes that what the fool actually says is, “No God,” in other words, “No God for me.” So his is a practical as well as theoretical atheism. Not only does he not believe in God, he also acts on his conviction.” How does this deepen your understanding of what a “fool” is?
2. What are some of the ways we ignore or reject God in our lives like the fool?
3. Verses 2-3. What is God’s assessment of mankind? How does this compare to what Paul has said in Romans so far?

“What a picture of our race is this! Save only where grace reigns, there is none that doeth good; humanity, fallen and debased, is a desert without an oasis, a night without a star, a dunghill without a jewel, a hell without a bottom.” - Charles Spurgeon

TAKE NOTES
Day 3: Isaiah 59
In the next few verses, Paul is about quote Isaiah 59:7-8, so today we are going to look at Isaiah 59 on its own to understand it in its context.

1. How would you put verses 1-2 in your own words? What is the end result of our iniquities and sins?
2. How does sin play its way out in a person's life? In a society?
3. Verse 10. In what ways is sin "blinding?"
4. Verses 12-13. How is all sin connected to “denying the Lord?”
5. What is the good news of verses 16-21?

Day 4: Psalm 5
In the next few verses, Paul is about quote Psalm 5:9, so today we are going to look at Psalm 5 on its own to understand it in its context.

1. Verses 1-2. Consider for a moment that the Creator and Ruler of the universe gives attention to your cries and considers your groaning. What are the benefits of prayer? Why should people pray?
2. What do verses 4-6 teach us about God's justice?
3. Verses 7-8. Why does David say he is able to enter the house of the Lord? How does the Lord's love lead His followers?
4. Verses 9-10. How could the fact that this Psalm was a hymn sung in public worship be a sort of mercy to the very evildoers mentioned in these verses?
5. Verses 11-12. Remembering back on what we've read so far in Romans, who are the “righteous” that God blesses? What do verses 7-8 teach us about the origins of righteousness?

Day 5: Romans 3:9-18
1. These short verses are jam-packed with Old Testament references (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Psalm 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 53:1-3; 140:3; Proverbs 1:16; 3:15-17; Isaiah 59:7-8). Why do you think that's significant? What does that teach us about God's unfolding plan of salvation (look back at 1:2)?
2. What does it mean that “none is righteous… no one seeks for God?” How does Paul's assessment of humanity sit with you?
3. What does Paul mean when he says that “no one does good?” What about non-Christians who seem to do good things (see Romans 14:23 & 1 Corinthians 10:31)?
4. What do these verses teach us about the pervasiveness and seriousness of sin? What are some of the effects of sin that we see in these verses?
5. Take some time to pray for those who do not know the Lord and still sit under this description.

The main difference between a real Christian and a religious person is not so much their attitudes toward their sins, but toward their “good” deeds. Both Christians and Pharisees repent of their sins, but only Christians also repent (admit the inadequacy) of their “righteousness!” - Tim Keller (b. 1950)

Day 6 & 7: Reflect, Memorize, and Catch Up
1. What has God taught you this week in His Word?
2. What were you convicted by?
3. What are you praying for?
Day 1: Romans 3:19-20
1. What is the “fear of God” that Paul is talking about here (see Psalm 110:10; 130:3-4)?
2. How is the whole world “held accountable to God,” if much of the world never had God’s Law (Look back at Romans 1:18-23 & 2:1)?
3. How does a right understanding of the Law stop every mouth (take a look at Matthew 5:21-30)?
4. Try to put verse 20 in your own words.

“The way to God is wide open. There is nothing standing between the sinner and his God. He has immediate and unimpeded access to the Savior. There is nothing to hinder. No sin can hold [you] back, because God offers justification to the ungodly. Nothing now stands between the sinner and God but the sinner’s “good works.” Nothing can keep him from Christ but his delusion... that he has good works of his own that can satisfy God... All they need is need. All they need is nothing... But alas, sinners cannot part with their “virtues.” They have none that are not imaginary, but they are real to them. So grace becomes unreal. The real grace of God they spurn in order to hold on to the illusory virtues of their own. Their eyes fixed on a mirage, they will not drink real water. They die of thirst with water all about them” – John Gerstner

God’s righteousness.

“Redemption is the word used for what is given to enemies in order to ransom captives and restore them to their liberty. Therefore human beings were held in captivity by their enemies until the coming of the Son of God, who became for us not only the wisdom of God, and righteousness and sanctification, but also redemption. He gave himself as our redemption, that is, he surrendered himself... and poured out his blood” – Origen (c. 184 – c. 253)

Day 2: Romans 3:21-24
1. Look back at Romans 1:16-17. In what sense has Paul been describing for 2.5 chapters the “first half” of the gospel?
2. Take a moment to deeply consider the importance of specific words and phrases in verses 22-24. Why is it such precious news that:
   • God’s righteousness comes to us “through faith”?
   • God’s righteousness has been manifested “apart from the law”?
   • Redemption is “for all who believe”?

Important note: The word translated “righteousness” in verses 21 & 22 and the word translated “justify” in the rest of the passage are actually the same word — dikaiosune. This means that to be “just” or “justified” is exactly the same as receiving
Day 3: Romans 3:21-24 (continued)
1. Take a moment to deeply consider the importance of specific words and phrases in verses 22-24. Why is it such precious news that:
   • There is “no distinction?”
   • We are justified “by his grace?”
   • This is not something we earn, but “a gift?”
   • Our redemption is not simply “by” or “through” but “in Christ Jesus?”
2. How would you summarize what Paul is saying in Romans 3:21-24 in your own words?
3. In light of all you’ve read up to this point in Romans, how would you explain the gospel to someone?

Day 4: Romans 3:24-26
1. Why couldn’t God simply just forgive us? Why did Jesus have to die in order for us to be reconciled with God?
2. What is God’s “divine forbearance?” What does it mean that God “passed over former sins” (look back at Romans 2:4)?
3. Verse 25. What’s the significance of God the Father voluntarily putting forward His one and only Son so that we could be brought into relationship with Him (See Ephesians 1:3-10)?
4. How can God justify the wicked? Compare these verses to Romans 4:5 & 5:6.
5. How does Jesus’s sacrifice make God both just and the justifier of the one who believes? How can God justifying sinners be an act of His justice as well as His mercy?
6. Has there ever been a time when someone else’s “access” or position “justified” your entrance or inclusion into a group, event, etc.?

“We can put it this way: the man who has faith is the man who is no longer looking at himself, and no longer looking to himself. He no longer looks at anything he once was. He does not look at what he is now. He does not even look at what he hopes to be as the result of his own efforts. He looks entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work, and he rests on that alone. He has ceased to say, ‘Ah yes, I have committed terrible sins but I have done this and that...’ He stops saying that. If he goes on saying that, he has not got faith... Faith speaks in an entirely different manner and makes a man say, ‘Yes, I have sinned grievously, I have lived a life of sin... yet I know that I am a child of God because I am not resting on any righteousness of my own; my righteousness is in Jesus Christ, and God has put that to my account.” – Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981)

Day 5: Romans 3:27-31
1. Why do you think Paul would follow up the last few verses with a question about boasting (Romans 2:23)?
2. What’s the difference between being justified by the Law and being justified by grace?
3. In light of all we’ve read up to this point, how does the gospel render boasting obsolete (read Ephesians 2:9 & Galatians 6:14)?
4. How would this “level the playing field” between Jews and Gentiles, or, to put it another way, how does justification by faith alone humble and unite believers?
5. Why is all boasting then, in some sense, a failure to remember and believe the gospel (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)?
6. How do these verses point us back to the global scope of the gospel that Paul highlighted in 1:5?
7. Verse 31. What’s the significance of the Law now for a believer?

“Paul shows that the Jews, by trying to put the Gentiles in their place, were insulting God’s glory by not allowing him to be the God of all. But if God is God of all, then he takes care of all, and if he takes care of all, then he saves all alike by faith” – John Chrysostom (347–407)

Day 6 & 7: Reflect, Memorize, and Catch Up
1. What has God taught you this week in His Word?
2. What were you convicted by?
3. What are you praying for?

TAKE NOTES
WEEK SEVEN

Day 1: Genesis 11:27-12:9
In order to better understand Paul’s argument in Romans 4 concerning Abraham’s faith and righteousness, we’re going to spend the first few days of this week looking at two important chapters in the Abraham story in Genesis.

1. Is there any indication in the text that Abram had a relationship with God before this or had done anything to deserve God’s special favor on him and his family? What does that teach us about the nature of God’s relationships with His people?
2. Verse 2. Why does God say that He will bless Abraham and make his name great?
3. What does verse 3 teach us about the global ends of God’s blessing?
4. Verses 4-9. How do these verses demonstrate that Abraham believed God? What, then, does this story have to teach us about the connection between faith and obedience?
5. In what ways do we have to similarly answer God’s call?

Day 2: Genesis 15:1-21
1. God had made astonishing promises to Abram, but the crucial element in fulfilling those promises was still lacking: a son. In verses 3-6, how is Abram’s response a mixture of faith and doubt? How does God respond and what should this teach us about how we approach our own doubts and fears or the doubts and fears of others?
2. What does it mean that Abram’s faith was “counted” or “credited” to him as righteousness?
3. Verses 7-21. Why do you think God asks Abram to bring and cut up animals (Read Jeremiah 34:18 for insight)?
4. Why would it be significant that God went through the pieces- and only God went through the pieces?

“Here the covenant is simply a promise. It is one-sided as a commitment on the part of God to Abraham and exacts no comparable allegiance from Abraham to God. It is a commitment of free grace... God’s movement toward Abraham is free and unconditional” – Walter Bruggemann (b. 1933)
Day 3: Romans 4:1-8
1. Underline all the times that “counted” or “credited” is used in chapter 4. What does it mean that “righteousness” was credited to Abraham’s account?
2. How does Paul use Genesis 15:6 to demonstrate the continuity between how God related to His people in the Old Testament or Covenant and how He relates to us now in the New?
3. Verse 4. What is a “wage?” What is a “gift” (see Romans 6:23 for help)? What are the main differences between the two and what are the implications for our relationships with God?
4. Verse 5. In light of what’s come before, what does Paul mean by “the one who does not work?”
5. In verse 5, the word asebas is translated “ungodly,” but it literally means “one who refuses to worship.” How can a holy God justify those who refuse to worship or forgive someone’s lawless deeds (5:7)?
6. Verses 7-8. Look back Psalm 32:1-5. Why is so important that David ultimately did not cover his iniquity? What happened when he did try to hide or deny his sin? What did he experience when he finally confessed? What would this have meant for Paul’s audience and what does it mean for us?

“If we compare other verses in which the same grammatical construction is used as in Gen 15:6 we arrive at the conclusion... that the [crediting] of Abram’s faith as righteousness means ‘to account him a righteousness that does not inherently belong to him’”
– Douglas Moo (b. 1950)

Day 4: Romans 4:9-12
1. Why do you think Paul keeps highlighting the distinctions and commonality between Jews and Gentiles? What is he trying to drive home?
2. Look back at your study on Genesis 12:1-3 and re-read Romans 1:5. What was God’s blessing to Abraham, and was it ever intended to be “only for the circumcised?” How is God’s blessing to Abraham connected to Revelation 7:9-12?
3. Verses 10-12. The gap between the events of Genesis 15 (where God passes between the sacrificed animals) and Genesis 17 (where Abraham receives the sign of circumcision) is at least fourteen years. How does this help Paul’s argument? What does it say about God, His character, and His plans that He declared Abraham righteous long before he was circumcised?
4. If circumcision wasn’t a work that earned God’s favor, what does it mean that circumcision was both a “sign” and a “seal?” In the New Testament, baptism and the Lord’s Supper are meant to function for believers in a similar way. What parallels can you draw between the Old Testament rite of circumcision and the New Testament sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper?

“A sacrament, according to John Calvin (1509-1564) is “an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men.” They are “exercises which make us more certain of the trustworthiness of God’s Word... [they] lead us by the hand as tutors lead children. Augustine calls a sacrament ‘a visible word’ for the reason that it represents God’s promises as a painted in a picture and sets them before our sight.”

Day Five: Galatians 3:1-14
1. Verses 3-5. What can learn from these verses about how these believers are to grow spiritually now that they are in Christ?
2. Paul warns the Galatians that they will constantly be tempted to slide back into works- righteousness. Can you describe the difference between dealing with sin through “believing the gospel” rather than just “human attainment?”
3. Verses 10-12. What are some of the differences between someone who has truly experienced the gospel versus someone who is trying to earn God’s favor?
4. What does verse 10 seem to say? If it’s true, how can God remain just and yet credit us as righteous and not be unjust (see 3:13-14)?
5. What do you think it means that Jesus did not simply take our curse but “became a curse” for us (see Isaiah 53:6)?

Day 6 & 7: Reflect, Memorize, and Catch Up
1. What has God taught you this week in His Word?
2. What were you convicted by?
3. What are you praying for?
Day 1: Romans 4:13-15
1. The Law was handed down to Moses over 400 years after the events of Genesis 12 and God’s promises to Abraham. How does this help prove Paul’s point in verse 13? 
2. Why is it such good news that the promise comes to Abraham and his offspring by virtue of God’s promise and not through the law? 
3. In what sense was Abraham to become “the heir of the world” (Romans 1:6)? 
4. According to v.14-15, can works and faith exist side-by-side? Why does that matter? 
5. What does verse 15 mean (Look back at Romans 2:12 and consider checking out the glossary for the definition of “transgression”)?

“Paul said this because God’s wrath is more severe toward a transgressor who knows sin by the law and still commits it” – Augustine (354-430)

6. Look back at Romans 4 thus far. What are some instances where you are tempted to boast in yourself? When do you feel like you have earned God’s favor?

Day 2: Hebrews 11:1-19
1. Following the first few verses of Hebrews 11, how would you define “faith?” 
2. How do you see Abraham and Sarah (and the other believers in Hebrews 11) demonstrate what it means to walk by faith? Imagine being in their shoes, what would have been the most difficult aspects of trusting God for you? 
3. In what ways has God called you to “walk by faith, not by sight?” Can you think of instances in your life where you’ve especially had to walk by faith? 
4. Verses 13-16. What are the promises of God that you cling the most tightly to?

Day 3: Revelation 21-22
1. In these verses, we begin to glimpse the heavenly city that Abraham longed for. What will it be like? How would you explain the heavenly city to a non-believing neighbor? 
2. What pieces of this description were the most precious to you? Why? 
3. Take some time to let your “holy imagination” run wild. Imagine what it would be like to live in a land where there are no more failures or lies or deceit, no more poverty or miscarriages or miscarriages of justice, no more greed or cancer, no more infertility or racism or sexism, no more envy or lust- and no more funerals, for death itself will be put to death. Dream and praise God for this certain, coming reality. 
4. How do you think it would shape the way you view your time, your money, your hardships, and your relationships if you, like Abraham, often looked “forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God?”
Day 4: Romans 4:16-25
1. How does the fact that the promise rests on grace lead to assurance that is guaranteed?
2. Who does Paul mean by “the one who shares the faith of Abraham?” How do Paul’s words challenge the Jewish notion that Abraham is their father (look back at Galatians 3:7)?
3. Verse 18 tells us that Abraham hoped against hope. What do you think that means? What was Abraham hoping in? Is there anything you’re currently hoping against hope for? Take time to pray for it!

“Abraham believed against the hope of nature but in the hope of the promise of God” — Theodoret of Cyrus (393–458)

4. Verses 19-21. Reading through Genesis, it’s clear that Abraham led a less-than-exemplary life and, at least on occasion, wavered. What encouragement should that give us in our faith?
5. How have you seen God be faithful to His promises in your own life?
6. Verse 25. What does Paul mean when he says that Christ was “delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification?”

“A man will be justified by faith when, excluded from righteousness of works, he lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, and clothed in it appears in the sight of God not as a sinner, but as righteous” — John Calvin (1509–1564)

Day 5: Galatians 2:11-21
1. Verse 14. What does Paul mean when he says that Peter was not “acting in line with the truth of the gospel?”
2. Verses 13-14. In what sense was Peter being a hypocrite in his relationships with the Gentile believers? In what ways can we make similar mistakes?
3. In what sense are nationalism, tribalism, or racism not in line with the gospel?
4. Verses 15-16. How does Paul’s conversation with Peter help us better grasp the meaning of “justification?”
5. Try to put verses 20-21 in your own words, and then spend some time praying for the Lord to align your heart with Paul’s here.

Day 6 & 7: Reflect, Memorize, and Catch Up
1. What has God taught you this week in His Word?
2. What were you convicted by?
3. What are you praying for?

TAKE NOTES

WHAT’S NEXT

We will be taking a break from Romans from the end of May until mid-August. You are welcome to continue your study in this wonderful book, but we will not be providing questions until we resume our sermon series. This summer, we will be looking at the 10 Commandments, and we’d encourage you to spend time prayerfully reading through the Psalms this summer, alongside reading Kevin DeYoung’s The Ten Commandments: What They Mean, Why They Matter, and Why We Should Obey Them.
At Redeemer, we believe that the Holy Scriptures are the unfolding revelation of the greatness and graciousness of the Triune God, they declare the covenant promises of His Kingdom and His people, and they instruct from generation to generation the great deeds of the Lord.

Despite the fact that the Bible was written by 40 authors on 3 continents over thousands of years, it tells one coherent story. From beginning to end, the 66 books of God’s Word tell the story of our all-powerful and loving King and Rescuer. This King made us in His image, but we, desiring to take His place, rebelled and incurred His just and holy wrath—fearful was that being the tragic end to the story, it was merely the title page. For thousands of years, God’s foreordained, perfect plan was coming to fruition. God Himself would come to earth—-to live the life required of us, die the death that we deserved, and reconcile us to Himself by His own blood.

The Scriptures are one of God’s means of grace to us, written under the inspiration of His Spirit so that we might know Him and enjoy Him forever. As J.I. Packer has written, “The word which God addresses directly to us is an instrument not only of government but also of fellowship. He made us with the intention that we might walk together forever in a love relationship. But such a relationship can exist only when the parties know something of each other. God, our Maker, knows all about us before we say anything; but we can know nothing of him unless he tells us. Therefore, God sends his word...to woo us as well as to instruct us.”

This means that the Bible cannot merely be read merely intellectually. There is nothing given to us in the Bible simply to be known. His Word has been given to us that we might know Him through it, and, by the power of His Spirit, be changed into His likeness by it. His Word is a vehicle for your communion with the thrice-holy, living, gracious God, given to you because God wants you to know and love Him, even as He knows and loves you.
1. **READ IT PRAYERFULLY.**

As you prepare to read, slow down your thoughts and prayerfully remember what you are coming to do: meet with the God who loves you. Begin by asking Him to speak to you, acknowledging that, apart from the power of His Holy Spirit, everything you read will be mere words on a page.

One of the best ways to prepare your heart to meet with the Lord is to begin your time by reading and praying through a Psalm, slowly and meditatively using the verses as a launching point for your prayers.

As Eugene Peterson explained in his book, *Answering God*, left to ourselves, we will always fashion a god after our own image. Unless our prayers are grounded in the Scriptures themselves, we will inevitably focus on the facets of God's character that we most appreciate or that we manage to understand, but in order for us to grow in our relationships with God, we must engage with the fullness of who God is and what prayer is for. The Psalms train us in that conversation, so that we come prayerfully before the Lord as we read.

Coming prayerfully also means coming humbly, remembering the gap between who God is and who we are. We are not communing as equals; it should strike us with wonder that the King of the universe has stooped down to spend time with sinners like us.

Coming humbly entails a willingness to submit in faith and obedience to all of the Bible’s declarations— even the ones we don’t like, are confused by or would rather ignore. Since we believe that the Scriptures are trustworthy, complete, and the primary source for equipping the Christian in faith and service to God (2 Timothy 3:16–17), everywhere the Spirit leads a Christian today is in perfect harmony and unity with the Scriptures— even when it could get us into trouble— because the humble obedience to God’s Word is what it looks like to submit ourselves to the Lordship of Christ.

2. **READ IT PATIENTLY.**

Imagine that you went on a date— but it only lasted five minutes, and during that brief time, your would-be date only talked *at* you and never let you respond. Doesn’t sound great, right? What about a date where the other person was constantly on their phone, checking their messages or the latest score? It’s hard to develop a relationship in a context like that!

Far too often, we fail to remember that God is a personal being, and we come to “meet with Him” in a manner that we would find dreadful on a date. Instead, wherever you are in your relationship with God, commit to carving out increments of undistracted time, where you can pour out your heart to Him and where you are quiet long enough to hear from Him, trusting that as you draw near to God, He will draw near to you (James 4:8).

3. **READ IT PERSISTENTLY.**

Just like learning to play the piano, there is no substitute for the regular “work” of meeting with God in His Word and prayer. You may not notice your own spiritual growth in a day or even a month, but like children growing into adults, over the course of time, by regularly meeting with the Lord, a genuine, general pattern of growth will emerge. Take heart and take the long view— you literally have an eternity to grow in intimacy with God.
1. **CONTEXT IS KING**

The most helpful tool you have in interpreting the meaning of a passage is its context. Begin with the question, “How do the surrounding verses give insight into what this passage seems to be saying?” and then, “How does this passage fit into this book as a whole?” Having a good study Bible to read about the author, the audience, and the setting is incredibly useful as well. It is important for us to realize in interpretation that a passage will never mean something for you that it never could have meant for its original hearers.

2. **THINK “READING COMPREHENSION 101.”**

Before you spend time on the pieces that are most interesting or confusing to you, first seek to answer the question “What’s the main point of this passage?” and try to explain it in your own words.

3. **INTERPRET SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE.**

In addition to our other context questions, we can ask, “How does it fit into the Scriptures overall?” If you have a study Bible, the cross references listed will point you to other verses in Scripture that speak to similar themes or use similar words.

4. **COMMUNITY.**

At Redeemer, we often say “theology is best done in community.” Therefore, we encourage you to read and interpret as you study alongside mentors, friends, and believers throughout history.
THE HEAR METHOD

Above anything else, the most important thing you can do in beginning Bible study is simply to come before the Lord prayerfully, patiently, and persistently. However, whether we realize it or not, each of us has a “method” to how we approach God’s Word, and, as you may well imagine, some methods are more helpful than others. The HEAR Method was developed by Robby Gallaty, and we have found it particularly useful, because it’s easy to understand, useful for any passage, and it provides the tools necessary to mine a spiritual gem in 10 minutes or to dig deep into a text for an hour.

Highlight, Explain, Apply, Respond.

**Highlight:**
What is the main point? Is there a verse or phrase that captures it?

**Explain:**
What does this passage mean? Try to write to summarize its meaning in your own words. A proper interpretation of any passage must:
- Be clearly reflected in the text
- Correspond to the teaching of rest of Scripture
- Be timeless (i.e. relevant both to the Biblical audience as well as a contemporary audience)

**A Few Questions to Ask to Uncover the Meaning of a Passage**
- What do the key terms mean?
- How do the verses or phrases relate to each other?
- How does this passage fit into the larger story of the book it is in?
- How does this passage relate to the story of the Bible as a whole?
- What does this passage teach us about God, man, our need, Jesus, our response, etc.?

**Apply**
How should this passage apply to my life today?
- Is there an application already in the text?
- Is there sin to confess, promise to claim, command to obey?
- What would the application of this verse practically look like in my life today?

**Respond**
Is there anything I need to remember, rejoice in, request, or repent of?
- How does this show me something about the character of God for which I can praise him? (What happens in my life when I forget this?)
- How does this show me something wrong with me—some sin of which this convicts me—for which I can repent? (How does my faith and salvation in Christ help me escape this?)
- How does this show me something that I need that I should be petitioning God for? (What do I lack in my life that I should seeking?)
First, a few testimonies: I have it third hand that Dr. Howard Hendricks of Dallas Seminary once made the statement (and I paraphrase) that if it were his decision, every student graduating from Dallas Theological Seminary would be required to learn one thousand verses word perfect before they graduated.

Dallas Willard, professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern California, wrote, “Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth. That's where you need it! How does it get in your mouth? Memorization” (“Spiritual Formation in Christ for the Whole Life and Whole Person” in Vocatio, Vol. 12, no. 2, Spring, 2001, p. 7).

Chuck Swindoll wrote, “I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture... No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified” (Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], p. 61).

One of the reasons Martin Luther came to his great discovery in the Bible of justification by faith alone was that in his early years in the Augustinian monastery he was influenced to love Scripture by Johann Staupitz. Luther devoured the Bible in a day when people earned doctorates in theology without even reading the Bible. Luther said that his fellow professor, Andreas Karlstadt, did not even own a Bible when he earned his doctor of theology degree, nor did he until many years later (Richard Bucher, “Martin Luther’s Love for the Bible”).

Luther knew so much of the Bible from memory that when the Lord opened his eyes to see the truth of justification in Romans 1:17, he said, “Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory,” in order to confirm what he had found.

So here are a few reasons why so many have viewed Scripture memorization as so essential to the Christian life.

1. CONFORMITY TO CHRIST

Paul wrote that “we all, . . . beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18). If we would be changed into Christ likeness we must steadily see him. This happens in the word. “The Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord” (1 Samuel 3:21). Bible memorization has the effect of making our gaze on Jesus steadier and clearer.

2. DAILY TRIUMPH OVER SIN

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. . . . I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:9, 11). Paul said that we must “by the Spirit . . . put to death the [sinful] deeds of the body” (Romans 8:13). The one piece of armor used to kill is the “sword of the Spirit” which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17). As sin lures the body into sinful action, we call to mind a Christ-revealing word of Scripture and slay the temptation with the superior worth and beauty of Christ over what sin offers.

3. DAILY TRIUMPH OVER SATAN

When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness he recited Scripture from memory and put Satan to flight (Matthew 4:1-11).
4. COMFORT AND COUNSEL FOR PEOPLE YOU LOVE

The times when people need you to give them comfort and counsel do not always coincide with the times you have your Bible handy. Not only that, the very word of God spoken spontaneously from your heart has unusual power. Proverbs 25:11 says, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.” That is a beautiful way of saying, When the heart full of God’s love can draw on the mind full of God’s word, timely blessings flow from the mouth.

5. COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL TO UNBELIEVERS

Opportunities to share the gospel come when we do not have the Bible in hand. Actual verses of the Bible have their own penetrating power. And when they come from our heart, as well as from the Book, the witness is given that they are precious enough to learn. We should all be able to sum up the gospel under four main headings (1) God’s holiness/law/glory; 2) man’s sin/rebellion/disobedience; 3) Christ’s death for sinners; 4) the free gift of life by faith. Learn a verse or two relating to each of these, and be ready in season and out of season to share them.

6. COMMUNION WITH GOD IN THE ENJOYMENT OF HIS PERSON AND WAYS

The way we commune with (that is, fellowship with) God is by meditating on his attributes and expressing to him our thanks and admiration and love, and seeking his help to live a life that reflects the value of these attributes. Therefore, storing texts in our minds about God helps us relate to him as he really is. For example, imagine being able to call this to mind through the day:

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103:8-14)

I used the word “enjoyment” intentionally when I said, “communion with God in the enjoyment of his person and ways.” Most of us are emotionally crippled—all of us, really. We do not experience God in the fullness of our emotional potential. How will that change? One way is to memorize the emotional expressions of the Bible and speak them to the Lord and to each other until they become part of who we are. For example, in Psalm 103:1, we say, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!” That is not a natural expression for many people. But if we memorize this and other emotional expressions from the Bible, and say them often, asking the Lord to make the emotion real in our hearts, we can actually grow into that emotion and expression. It will become part of who we are. We will be less emotionally crippled and more able to render proper praise and thanks to God.

There are other reasons for memorizing Scripture. I hope you find them in the actual practice.
First of all, by praying for discipline and setting aside time.

I set aside a block of time in the morning (an hour or so) to be with God alone, reading my Bible, praying for my family, praying for the church, and praying for my soul. And I can generally finish my four chapters or so of Bible reading in about 20 minutes, depending on how long I pause and contemplate. And my prayers may extend for 20 or 30 minutes. So I’ve got 5 or 10 minutes in that hour.

If you decide to memorize Scripture for 5 or 10 minutes a day, you can memorize a lot of Scripture! I mean, it’s incredible! And I put circles around the paragraphs or the verses, and I put a little “M” beside them if I worked on them so I can come back and review.

I got my help here from a little booklet* about how to memorize long passages of Scripture. And basically he says to take your first verse, read it ten times, and then close your eyes or shut your Bible and say it ten times. And that’s the end for that day. (I think if you do that you can memorize almost any verse in the Bible: ten times read, ten times said, and then you’ve got it.) Then you come back the next day. You open your Bible up, and you say that verse again 5 or 10 times. If it’s easy, just 5 times. And then you do the same thing with the next verse. And then you do them both together. And then you shut your Bible and you leave. Then you come back.

So basically, the answer is: repetition and review. Repetition and review.

Here’s one other little tip that I use. If I pick a verse or a couple of verses or a paragraph, I’ll put it on a piece of paper and I’ll carry it here in my shirt pocket. And at little times during the day, I’ll pull it out and read it for my soul. For my soul! I don’t memorize verses that don’t help my soul.

I’m not into mechanical memorizing. I’m into fighting the fight of faith. I want to memorize Scripture so that I can defeat the devil at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, that’s why! It’s so that I can minister to a saint in the hospital at 10 o’clock at night if I’ve forgotten my Bible. This is for our soul. So I carry it around and I review it. Review is so crucial.

So I would just encourage people to set aside 5 or 10 minutes, and then repeat, repeat, repeat. Read the verse 10 times, say it 10 times, close your Bible, and then review it during the day from a piece of paper.

*The booklet that Piper refers to is called "An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture" by Dr. Andrew Davis and is available for free at http://www.fbcdurham.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Scripture-Memory-Booklet-for-Publication-Website-Layout.pdf
Blaspheme/Blasphemy: In the Old Testament, at least five different Hebrew verbs are sometimes translated as “blaspheme,” meaning “revile,” “despise,” or “curse.” Cursing God—which can be done by word or deed—is especially grave. In the New Testament, the word can be used to explain insults aimed at other people, but most often it refers to something that would be “insulting to God,” such as when Jesus declared the paralyzed man’s sins forgiven (Mark 2).

Circumcision: The act of circumcision served as a sign and seal of God’s covenant, a physical reminder for God’s people of God’s promise to care for them. The physical sign of circumcision (like the New Testament sign of baptism) doesn’t earn God’s favor or somehow make God’s promises more sure, because God’s promises can never fail. Instead, these covenant signs are intended to remind God’s people that God has chosen them by grace and given them the promise, “[I will] be God to you and to your descendants after you” (Gen 17:7; cf. Deut 7:7-9).

Condemn/Condemnation: A legal term, which describes the act of judging someone to be worthy of punishment, as in Romans 2. However, in Romans 5:16, 18 and 8:1 the word more explicitly refers to God’s judgment against sin. Its opposite is justification.

Covenant: As O. Palmer Robertson has written, a covenant “is a bond in blood sovereignly administered.” In the Ancient Near East, a conquering king would require his new subjects to enter into a formal oath (a “covenant”) with a regularly expected outline: (1) a declaration of the power of the ruler, (2) a recognition of the benevolence of the ruler, (3) obligations of the subjects, and (4) the consequences for those subjects, should they fail to fulfill their obligations. These covenants were then ratified by the vassal walking through the remains of a “cut” animal (the word “covenant” is connected to the word “cut”), essentially saying to the ruler, “Let the same be done to me if I fail to fulfill this covenant.”

Covenants are the main way the Bible portrays how God relates to His people, but unlike the Suzerain treaties of the Ancient Near East, God shockingly sets no such conditions upon His promises. God creates the covenantal relationship, structures the relationship, and confirms the relationship—all on his own. This means that God’s covenants are not like contracts; they are by His grace alone.

The Bible could be rightly understood as an unfolding series of God’s undeserved covenants with His people—beginning with Adam in the Garden, to Noah in the Flood, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, culminating in the New Covenant in Christ—that reveal God’s plan to carry out His greatest promise, “They will be my people, and I will be their God.”

Forbearance: In other contemporary Greek writing, this word is used to describe a willful self-restraint, a holding back or delaying, but such definitions do not get to the heart of the matter—how is it possible that the infinitely holy God, whose eyes are too pure to look upon evil restrain Himself against immediately and justly punishing sin? Throughout Romans, Paul explains that God, who Himself created time, could look to the certain point in time when Jesus, His Son, would make a full payment for sin by dying on the cross.

Justification: The opposite of condemnation. This too is a legal term, referring to the act of God the judge declaring those who believe in Christ to be free from their guilt and sin and promising to treat them as though they had been perfectly righteous in regards to the Law’s demands. In answer to the question, “Are we saved by the Law or by grace?” the Christian may rightly answer, “Both.” We are saved by Jesus’s fulfillment of the righteousness requirement of the Law, which comes to us by grace through faith. Faith is the instrument by which a believe takes hold of Christ and His righteousness and is, therefore, justified in God’s sight.
In Romans 8, we will see the “chain of salvation,” the sequence of events that always transpires when God saves His people. Those whom God foreknows, He predestines for adoption. Those whom He predestines, He also calls. Those whom He calls, He justifies, and those whom He justifies, He will sanctify, and ultimately, glorify.

**Law:** In Romans, the Law typically refers to the written laws of the Old Testament that were given to the Jewish people, beginning with Moses at Mount Sinai.

**Propitiation:** The word propitiation carries the meaning of “placating anger.” Like the blood from an animal sacrifice poured on the mercy seat in the Old Testament (1 John 4:10), Jesus’s blood propitiated or “placated/satisfied” the very wrath of God, so that His holiness would in no way be compromised by His forgiving sinners. The idea of “satisfaction” is vital here, because Jesus’s willingness to offer Himself up as our substitute not only means that we can be forgiven, but that God’s just anger towards sin can, through Christ, be turned into favor.

**Reconcile/Reconciliation:** According to Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, “Reconciliation comes from the Greek family of words that has its roots in allasso [ai̱llavsw]. The meaning common to this word group is ‘change’ or ‘exchange.’ Reconciliation involves a change in the relationship between God and man or man and man. It assumes there has been a breakdown in the relationship, but now there has been a change from a state of enmity and fragmentation to one of harmony and fellowship. In Romans 5:6-11, Paul says that before reconciliation we were powerless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies; we were under God’s wrath (v. 9). Because of change or reconciliation we become new creatures... it is Christ through the cross who has made reconciliation possible...[and] it is the cross of Christ that reconciles both Jew and Gentile. They are brought near by the blood of Christ. Because of this, Jew and Gentile have access to the Father by one spirit. They are no longer foreigners and aliens but fellow citizens with God and members of the same household (Eph 2:11-22). Gentile and Jewish believers are reconciled to God and the middle wall of partition is broken down; both are brought near by the blood of Christ.”

**Redeem/Redemption:** The word carries the idea of slaves being set free by a purchase (Mark 10:45), and the idea reaches all the way back to the Passover in Exodus 12-15, where the people of God were redeemed by the Lord from slavery under Egypt, spared from the curse of the death of the first born by the blood of a lamb. Ultimately, Jesus sets His people free from the bondage to sin and death by shedding His own blood on the cross (Colossians 1:14).

**Righteousness:** The word “righteousness” can carry several meanings in Scriptures. First, it can refer to God’s perfect character, which is most obviously demonstrated in his infinite holiness and unmatched justice. Second, “righteousness” can be a summary for all the virtues characterized by a godly, moral life lived in conformity with God’s law. Third, and importantly for Romans, God’s righteousness is demonstrated in His perfect work of saving sinners through the death of Jesus—maintaining His perfect character and transferring Jesus’s perfect record of righteousness to the account of sinners so that they might be legally deemed righteous under the Law.

**Sanctification:** According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 35), sanctification is “the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.” In other words, sanctification refers to the process of progressive change worked in us by God, whereby we are gradually but increasingly free from our sinful habits and formed into the image of Christ.

**Transgression:** A specific subcategory of sin that involves a deliberate violation of a revealed command.

**Union with Christ:** Perhaps more than any other theological concept, union with Christ seems to be at the center of Paul’s theology and ministry. Pagans were told they could not have a relationship with the gods because they didn’t have anything in common with them, but Jesus came and had everything in common with us, so that we might have everything in common with Him. To be “in Christ” implies an inseparable relational commonality with Jesus Himself, so that when God looks at us, He looks at us as though we had perfectly obeyed—just like Jesus did—and it also means that every right and privilege that belongs to Jesus now and forevermore also belongs to us.

Union with Christ also means being united not only to Christ Himself but equally inseparably united to all others who are in Him.
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

COMMENTARIES
Romans 1–7: For You by Timothy Keller
Romans 8–16: For You by Timothy Keller
Romans for Everyone by N.T. Wright
The Message of Romans (The Bible Speaks Today) by John Stott

SERMON SERIES
Romans: The Greatest Letter Ever Written by John Piper
https://www.desiringgod.org/series/romans-the-great
est-letter-ever-written/messages