

Session 1: Gospel.

How can we become confident in our faith?

ROMANS 1.1–17

KEY VERSE:

‘For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes ...’

ROMANS 1.16 (ESV)

Key themes

- The back story of Romans
- The author of Romans
- The recipients of Romans
- The courier of Romans
- Equality, diversity and mission
- The power of the gospel
- Confidence in the gospel

Possible issues

DIVERSITY

Response: In Romans we will see Paul’s inclusive attitude towards male and female, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free.

REFERENCES TO SLAVERY

Response: Romans is set in the context of slavery, but Paul emphasises equality and freedom in Christ.

UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL

Response: Working through *The Romans Course* will help increase understanding.

Wrap up

- In summary: we’ve looked at the back story of Romans, especially the diverse group of people to whom it was written. We’ve highlighted Paul’s confidence in the gospel and been encouraged to believe it is still just as powerful to save people today.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE

- Refreshments:
Greet people warmly as they arrive with a drink and appetising nibbles
- Welcome and introduction
(5 minutes):
Focus on putting everyone at ease so they start to get to know each other. Reassure those who might be a bit apprehensive, that the course will be enjoyable and accessible to everyone. Give an overview of the session structure. Make sure everyone has a copy of the participants’ guide. We will have an opportunity to discuss what we’ve heard and our response to this. This is a safe place where we respect confidentiality. ‘What’s said in the room, stays in the room.’
- Introduce the group to the quiz in the participants’ guide and invite them to work through the questions. Here are the answers to the quiz:
- Who wrote Romans?
- (Answer: technically it was Paul’s secretary, Tertius)
- When was it written (roughly)?:
AD 27, AD 57, AD 87?
- (Answer: AD 57)
- How many chapters does it contain?
- (Answer: 16 chapters)
- In which chapter is the phrase: ‘For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love...?’
- (Answer: chapter 8)

- Reminder about the daily readings in the participants' guide that take less than five minutes to read per day. To get the most out of the course, make the daily readings a priority, as the readings cover some key passages for next session. Does everyone have access to the Bible in a modern translation? Does anyone prefer to use an audio Bible? (Have details ready.) To encourage everyone to do the readings and share what they are learning, would a WhatsApp group be a good idea?
- Next week in Session 2: we will look at the issue of sin and explore questions like, 'What's wrong with the world?' and 'What's wrong with religion?' In this broken world, we will recognise our deep need of God.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE

- Who delivered the letter to the churches in Rome?
- *(Answer: Phoebe)*
- Why was the letter written?
 - to provide a systematic theology
 - to defend Christian belief against Roman critics
 - to unite Jews and Gentiles in a shared mission
- *(Answer: all of the above)*
- In which chapter is the phrase: 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'?
- *(Answer: chapter 3)*
- How long to the nearest hour would it take the average reader to finish Romans?
- *(Answer: about one hour)*
- Fill in the blank from this sentence in Romans: 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the _____ that brings salvation to everyone who believes ...'
- *(Answer: power of God)*
- Name a famous Christian who was transformed through Romans?
- *(Answer: St Augustine, fourth century; Martin Luther, sixteenth century; John Wesley, eighteenth century; and Karl Barth, twentieth century, have all been influenced by the book of Romans.)*
- Video part 1
(15 minutes)
- Discussion time (questions in participants' guide)
(25 minutes)
- Video part 2
(10 minutes)
- Personal prayer/reflection
(10 minutes):
Five minutes to reflect individually on the questions in the participants' guide and five minutes to pray in small groups. You might like to play some worship music in the background during this time.