



Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. The Journey Resources
- IV. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
 - If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.
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LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on April 28, 2024
by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson

WHY I STILL BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL – Romans 1:14-17



I. Introduction

Welcome to the third message in my final sermon series: *Why I Still Believe*. This is one last chance for me to affirm some foundational truths as we look to the future, and to speak into the challenging and deconstructing conversations that are happening in the church today, especially among younger generations. So far I've talked about why I believe as strongly as ever in God and in the Bible. Today I am going to talk about what the gospel is, why I still believe it and how my understanding of it has changed over the years.

Questions: What is the gospel, and why is it such good news?

Bottom line: The gospel is the good news that human beings can be made right with God NOT through good works, or religious rituals, or Bible knowledge, or acts of penance, but simply by saying YES to the love and grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Readings:

Romans 1:14-17

¹⁴ I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵ That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 1:20-25

²⁰ For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Romans 2:1

2 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

Romans 2:17-24

¹⁷ Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; ¹⁸ if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; ¹⁹ if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹ you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

Romans 3:23-25

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice

of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—

Romans 5:12-17

¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

¹³To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Romans 6:1-4

6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Romans 8:20-21

²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

II. Group Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Bryan began the message with the story of the first time accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior when he was 5 years old, and how he would say yes many more times when he understood the gospel more fully.
 - Ask your group if anyone would like to share the first time they said yes to Jesus. OR the first time they received the Gospel message as genuine good news in their lives.
 - Take a moment to read Romans 1:14-17 together as a group.
 - How do you understand Paul's statement, "I am not ashamed of the gospel?" What is Paul saying? Have you experienced or witnessed someone proclaiming such confession?
2. Pastor Bryan points out that Paul spends the first three chapters of Romans explaining that humanity has a big problem, and that problem is called Sin. Pastor Bryan defines sin as "turning away from God's love and life," or breaking relationship with God. He then points out that despite our best efforts, our sinful nature will cause us to ignore God to serve ourselves.

2a. Inductive Bible Study: Feel free to assign different passages to different individuals/pairs and reflect what each passage is teaching about sin.

- a. Romans 1:20
- b. Romans 1:21-25
- c. Romans 2:1
- d. Romans 2:17-24
- e. Romans 3:23

- What word/phrases stand out to you?
- How has your understanding of sin matured over the years?

2b. Paul describes his own struggle with sin in Romans 7:15-20:

¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

- What is Paul saying about sin here? What is he not saying about sin?

- In what ways do you resonate or relate to this battle within Paul is describing?
 - What strategies do you have for surrendering to God's will for your life versus serving your own desires?
3. Why did Christ have to die to accomplish our salvation? Pastor Bryan reviewed the four most common *Theories of Atonement*:
- **Moral Example:** by his beautiful life and sacrificial death, Jesus inspires us to live and love as we were meant to
 - **Ransom/ Redemption:** human beings were slaves to sin and death, and by his death on the cross Jesus paid the price for our redemption – purchased our freedom
 - **Substitution:** as in the Old Testament where animals were sacrificed to atone for sins, Jesus becomes the ultimate sacrifice, absorbing the consequence for all of our sins
 - **Christus Victor:** Jesus entered into the arena with us and confronted the powers that were ruining us – sin and death – and by his sinless life, his sacrificial death, and his triumphant resurrection, he conquered them, once and for all, freeing us from the power of sin and the fear of death
- Which of these theories of atonement have greatly influenced your understanding of Christ's death?
 - How has studying theology edified your spiritual growth and brought clarification/understanding?
4. The Apostle Paul finishes his exposition of the gospel in Romans chapter 8.
- Take a moment to focus on versus 20-21.
 - How can we eagerly live in the waiting and in hope?
 - How can we as children of God live in the freedom and glory God has created us for?

Take Home Message: *Ephesians 2:8-10*

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Let's Pray

III. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

IV. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points:

- Gospel comes from the Old English word for “good news”
- Paul’s letter to the Romans is the most thorough and reasoned explanation of the gospel in the entire Bible
- Salvation through faith in Christ is not something that we can earn or achieve. It is given to us freely by God Himself. All we have to do is believe it, receive it, accept it
- Sin is simply turning away from God’s love and life; choosing to do it our own way
- Sin isn’t really about breaking rules, it’s about breaking relationship with the God who made us.
- The answer to humanity’s problem of sin is the grace of God, made available to us in Jesus Christ.
- Atonement means AT-ONE-MENT. It’s the death of Christ that can restore us to relationship with the God who loves us and made us to enjoy life and love with Him forever.
- Accepting Jesus as your Savior isn’t just about getting to heaven someday, it’s also about this life and this world. It’s about the freedom to become the people we were meant to be in the first place – people who reflect the image of God, and who partner with God to redeem and restore this fallen world
- The most important thing we can do with our lives is to find and follow Jesus, and help others find and follow Him too