



Power of the Gospel

Lesson Overview

Week of July 11

1 Life Need:

Discuss the impact of shame on our lives.

2 Bible Learning:

Study what Paul said about being unashamed in proclaiming the Gospel.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Poster and Reproducible Sheet—The Romans Road to Life

3 Bible Application:

Explore ways to share your faith unashamedly.

Suggested Materials:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Reproducible sheet—It's Not by Night

4 Life Response:

Share your faith in your words and actions.

Church/Home Theme:
We are the Body of Christ.

Lesson Focus:

Shamelessly share your faith in words and actions.

Lesson Scripture:
Romans 1:8-17

An Anticipated Visit—The apostle Paul had always desired to visit the church in Rome to clear up any misconceptions about his teachings and to boldly preach the truth of the Gospel. Usually, the letters Paul wrote encouraged the churches he'd established during his missionary journeys. The church in Rome was likely begun by Jewish converts who happened to be in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. They returned home and created a Christian community. Paul wanted to visit this congregation in the most important city in the Empire.

Paul started his letter by thanking God for the Roman church as he interceded on their behalf. He complimented the congregation for its outstanding reputation; their ministry in Rome pitted them against the idolatry and paganism that consumed Roman culture. Paul was offering himself to the believers and the unbelievers in that region. His visit had been a long time coming, but now it seemed possible. He would stop on his way to another place he wanted to visit: Spain.

Always available as God's instrument, Paul would talk to anyone. His listeners might be hard-headed, resisting the truth, or they might be soft-hearted, ready to hear the truth of the Gospel. Either way, he'd boldly proclaim Jesus' message. The apostle did not hesitate.

When in Rome—The city of Rome is similar to many cities today. Our culture is full of attitudes about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit that are not true, but Christians often find it hard to speak out. Current culture says all religions lead to God or heaven and all truth is relative. People just need to be sincere or committed. Jesus' words are seen as narrow-minded: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus did not leave other options open. Sometimes a believer just wants to be quiet—but Paul spoke out boldly. God desires for His children to share Paul's tenacity and determination.

As Your Students Arrive

Before class, on a whiteboard or piece of newsprint, write the word "Shame" on the left column, then draw a vertical line and write, "Unashamed." What feelings do you associate with shame, and how has it impacted your decisions and behavior? Ask your adults to be discreet in their sharing. Then ask the same questions when we are unashamed. Where shame may cause low self-worth and a poor self-esteem, to be unashamed is to be bold, confident, and unapologetic in the face of opposition.

Link to Last Week

Allow a few students to share about how they thanked God this past week and had an attitude of gratitude.

1 Life Need

Discuss the impact of shame on our lives.

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Power of the Gospel

Hey man, haven't you heard of freedom from religion?" asked the funnel cake vendor.

Jadyn had taken a break to get a snack. He and some friends had a booth at the July 4th weekend outdoor festival and were selling T-shirts and hats that carried the name of their church—DiverseCity. They were also selling Bibles and Christian books and videos.

Jadyn had shared the Gospel with Jewish, Muslim, and other vendors at the fair. At one time he was ashamed to tell anyone about Jesus, but now he shared his faith with anyone. Sales had been slow for their booth, and Jadyn left the table to his fellow church members to mix and mingle on the beautiful day. He could think of no better time to share his good news with whomever would listen.

Jadyn smiled at the funnel cake vendor as he sprinkled the powdered sugar on top of the fried cake. "Christ has given us the freedom to choose Him or not. I wish you would give Christ a try."

"Go on, man," said the funnel cake vendor. "You're holding up my line."

As Jadyn walked away, pulling at the soft doughy bread, he heard a voice call out, "Dude, wait!"

Jadyn turned to see a teenage boy hurrying after him. "Do you have a booth?" he asked. "I like the shirt you're wearing. Can I talk to you?"

"Sure, man," Jadyn said, breaking out in a wider smile. "My booth is just down here."

Read the opening anecdote in the student book, then ask your students to form small groups to discuss their answers to **Questions 1, 2, and 3**.

For Question 1, shame can be good if it deters us from doing something we know the Lord deems sinful. However, shame can hang over us because of our past like a permanent cloud. Our shame can convince us that anything we do is unworthy before the Lord.

However, Question 2 reminds us we are all unworthy and in bondage and condemnation. Sharing our witness before Christ makes us worthy to receive salvation, grace, and forgiveness—without that provision, none of us would be saved or able to share our faith. When we confess Christ as Lord, He takes away our sin and shame, and we become partakers of His righteousness, making us worthy to proclaim His name and lead others to salvation in Jesus' name.

For Question 3, answers will vary, but people may first think of famous evangelists such as Billy Graham. Lead them to think of people they know who are closer to them such as family members or friends.

1. How can shame ruin our lives?

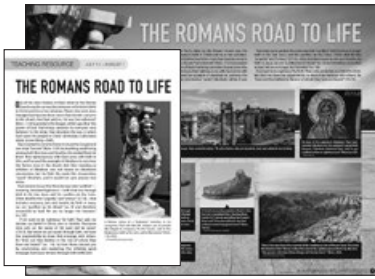
2. How does releasing past shame free us to share our witness?

3. Who has impressed you with his or her unashamed witness?

LESSON FOCUS: Shamelessly share your faith in words and actions.

2 Bible Learning

Study what Paul said about being unashamed in proclaiming the Gospel.



Before teaching this step, put up the poster “The Romans Road to Life” from the Resource Kit and make

copies of the handout that goes with it. On the handout, read the first two paragraphs, and on the poster, note the photo of the ancient Forum in Rome as well as the statue of the kneeling barbarian.

PAUL’S GRATITUDE

Read Romans 1:8-10 and discuss these important points:

- Paul was anxious to visit the Christians in Rome. The Roman Empire was the seat of world power, so whatever happened there impacted the rest of

BIBLE EXTRA

The First Century World

Paul said the faith of the Roman believers was known all over the world. At the time, the world was defined by the Roman Empire (though information about Asia had grown considerably because of the exploits of Alexander the Great). Most of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East were dominated by the Caesars during the time of the New Testament. By the time of Jesus’ birth, the population of the empire is estimated to have been between four and five million people. The Roman trade routes, which had hundreds of tributaries, served as conduits for the Gospel—which accounts, in part, for the rapid expansion of the Church during this time with its message of hope and redemption. The reach and power of the Roman Empire clearly peaked during this time of world history.

the world and this was true of the church in Rome.

- Paul said the zeal of the Roman believers was spoken of throughout the world, and he was grateful and encouraged that they were flourishing.

- Even though he was not in Rome yet, Paul continued to intercede for the believers, since to remain strong in faith requires a life of continual prayer, praise and fellowship with our heavenly Father.

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Paul’s Gratitude

Romans 1:8-10, KJV

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

⁹For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

¹⁰Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

Romans 1:8-10, NIV

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. ⁹God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you ¹⁰in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

Paul began the Book of Romans as he did many of his other letters, with a humble acknowledgment of his appointment by God as an apostle, and a summary of his mission.

Paul’s first thought about these believers was gratitude to God for their responsive faith, especially in the epicenter of one of the world’s most significant superpowers ever. Rome’s domain stretched across Europe, North Africa, and into Asia. God, in His sovereignty, chose this kingdom, at this time in their history, to serve as a conduit for the Gospel. Word of new ideas and stimulating philosophies traveled rapidly along Roman trade routes.

Calling upon God as his witness, Paul testified to the fact that these young believers in Rome were constantly in the center of his prayers—and of course, of his consciousness as he served the church in other parts of the known world. He used words like “constantly” and “at all times” (vss. 9-10) to highlight how much he thought about these people. He wanted them to know that their persistence in the faith did not go unnoticed by him—or, humanly speaking, by the God of the universe to whom he directed his frequent prayers.



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 410-413 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Paul was thankful for the famous faith of the Roman Christians.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

Paul had long wished to travel to Rome to encourage the believers there. He would finally make it there later as a prisoner who had appealed to Caesar.

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The God to whom Paul prayed is the heavenly Father he also served by preaching the gospel of redemption and reconciliation. This was a dangerous task for Paul, whose teachings were seen as a challenge to the power and authority of the Roman Empire. Of course, Paul had no political ambitions whatsoever, so the Caesars' political concerns were unfounded. Paul had been anxious to make it to Rome, but had been thwarted up to that point. It wasn't until Paul appealed to Caesar that the apostle was able to secure free passage to the city to which he longed to visit.

4. Why was Paul grateful for the believers in Rome?
5. What had long been a traveling goal of Paul?

Paul's Longing

Romans 1:11-13, KJV

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

Paul continued in his praise of the Roman believers by pulling the curtain back on his motives. He longed deeply to see these new followers of Christ so that they could benefit from each other's spiritual gifts.

It can easily be argued that the Lord blessed Paul with many spiritual gifts including teaching and encouragement

Romans 1:11-13, NIV

¹¹I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—¹²that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. ¹³I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

PAUL'S LONGING

Read Romans 1:11-13 and note these key ideas:

- Paul also wanted to lay hands upon the believers; he understood the power and Jewish history of bestowing a blessing upon heirs.
- Paul would not only give comfort, but also receive comfort and strength from the believers; there is an added blessing when believers dwell together in unity.
- Paul discredited any false assumptions that he had purposefully not visited the believers in Rome or any assumption that he didn't care about them.
- Although he desired to visit many times before, he explained that the Holy Spirit directed him to preach to the Gentiles and had sent him elsewhere.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

He wanted to build them up, and also to be encouraged by them.

BIBLE EXTRA

Mutual Ministry

Paul couldn't wait to arrive in Rome in order to "exchange" spiritual gifts with the believers there. The spiritual gifts that appear in the New Testament include administration, discernment, exhortation, giving, healing, helps, hospitality, teaching, knowledge, wisdom, mercy, prophecy, speaking in and interpreting tongues (see Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28).

Paul most likely benefited from the gifts of mercy and hospitality. As an itinerant preacher, he was dependent upon the generosity of others in order to give him lodging and perhaps food in the places in which he was ministering (though in some communities such as Corinth, Paul set to work as a tentmaker, providing for his own needs).

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Paul wanted to see a “harvest” of spiritual fruit among these believers—which would have likely included new converts.

NEVER ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

Finally, read Romans 1:14-17 and discuss these ideas in the Scripture passage:

- Paul was called to preach the Gospel not only to the Jews but to the two categories of Gentiles: those who were “Greeks” in language and/or culture and those who were non-Greeks—literally “Barbarians” (vs. 14, KJV).

- The apostle stated that he wanted to reach Rome so he could preach the Gospel there as well, to people that the Good News had not reached.

BIBLE EXTRA

The Gospel

Paul was committed to preaching the Gospel. Simply put, the Gospel is good news for those who realize, and are distressed over, their separation from God caused by their willful disobedience (and all the relational damage caused by their sin). Those who repent and appeal to God’s mercy, through the atoning work of Christ on the cross, experience saving faith. This is at the heart of the Gospel Paul was compelled to tell the world.

BIBLE EXTRA

The Jews First

Since Jews were the heirs of the promises of Abraham and the people from whom the Messiah came, it was appropriate that the Gospel should have been preached first to them and in God’s wisdom, by a man once called “Rabbi.” Paul followed this order on most occasions by first connecting with the local synagogue, but usually the Jews rejected the message of salvation through a crucified Messiah so God turned Paul to the Gentiles.

- Salvation is in the person of Christ, so Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel—he boasted in it.

- Paul proclaimed that the divine “power” of the Gospel “brings salvation to all who believe” (vs. 16). The message that first began with the Jews is now for all who believe, independent of their nationality or ethnicity.

- Paul reiterated that our righteousness isn’t earned; it’s believed and received, and it’s available to whoever calls upon the name of the Lord.

- Salvation is received by faith, and we live the remainder of our days with our faith anchored (steady and secure) in the Lord.

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(Rom. 12:7-8). In his humility, the apostle also acknowledged that he would benefit from the reciprocation of encouragement and faith-building. Along with spiritual gifts, God gives us all (even the apostles!) spiritual gaps that can only be filled by the gifts of other believers. In this way, the Holy Spirit keeps us utterly dependent upon one another for our spiritual health.

Paul assured the Romans that, many times, he intended to come see them but had been thwarted in doing so—perhaps because of crises that needed to be addressed within the church or because of persecution from without. In any case, those obstacles looked as if they were going to be removed, and Paul was ready to make his way to see these eager followers of Jesus. In preparation for this visit, he penned this letter to the Romans in order to give them something to meditate upon before he arrived.

Paul reaffirmed that his mission was to the Gentiles. Paul was hoping to see the same type of spiritual fruit among the non-Jews he had seen throughout his missionary travels.

6. What did Paul hope for in his relationship with the Roman believers, whom he would be meeting for the first time?

7. What was Paul’s motivation to get to Rome?

Never Ashamed of the Gospel

Romans 1:14-17, KJV

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to

Romans 1:14-17, NIV

¹⁴I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.

¹⁵That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

Paul felt compelled to preach the Gospel to the Jews and then every variation of Gentile that existed.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

When we turn in trust and faith to Jesus through the divine power of the Gospel, we receive the gift of righteousness—that is, being in a right relationship with God.

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every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷For 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.”

Paul was driven by a sense of obligation to get the Gospel to the Gentiles. In addition to Greeks and non-Greeks, Paul was ready to preach to the wise and the foolish. He was not addressing intellectual capacity here. Rather, he intended to convey the Good News to people of all walks of life. God does not show favoritism.

Paul’s famous admonition, “I am not ashamed of the gospel,” has inspired countless believers to share the Good News of Jesus in contexts that are hostile to anyone who identifies with Christ. Paul was never embarrassed to convey the hope of the Gospel—even to those who mocked him. The power of the Gospel—namely, the ability to redeem and restore the most reprobate heart—is unmatched by any philosophical system or therapeutic system. Paul reiterated that the Jews had “first dibs” on acknowledging Jesus as their Messiah. Once the good news had been preached to them, however, the Holy Spirit turned Paul’s attention to all the known world.

The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the one who experiences saving faith. In fact, it is only through faith that one can be reconciled with God. It is by this faith that the righteous live and bear fruit for the Kingdom. Any good works are a result of, and evidence of, saving faith—they are not the things that gain us God’s favor. Faith alone is what drives the heart of the follower of Christ.

8. *To whom did Paul feel obligated when it came to preaching the Gospel?*

9. *What is the relationship between righteousness and faith?*

BIBLE EXTRA

Us and Them

The apostle made an interesting distinction between “Greeks and non-Greeks” (vs. 14). Some scholars believe Paul simply meant Jews and Gentiles here. However, as Bible commentator James Burton Coffman says, a dual classification of people was “fashionable in the world of that era. The Hebrews classified all people as Jews and Gentiles; the Romans classified the whole world as Romans and pagans; the Greeks classified everyone as Greeks or Barbarians—a word that the Greeks likely coined as a sarcastic imitation of the speech of non-Greeks. There were other dual classifications such as wise and foolish, male and female, freemen and slaves, etc. Actually in usage, such classifications really mean ‘us and everybody else!’ to all people.” Paul’s evident meaning is simply that he felt obligated to preach the Gospel to all people.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Our Platform

Sometimes we believe that the pastor is the one who needs to proclaim the Gospel while we sit and nod our heads every Sunday. The pulpit is powerful, but in the community and workplace we have a daily platform to live out our faith in wisdom, discretion, faithfulness, integrity, and righteousness. The opportunity to encourage the discouraged or to pray for a co-worker over lunch or to say an uplifting and joyous word can lift a heavy heart and give platform to share God’s plan of salvation. As someone has said, “Joy is the winsome magnet that draws people in because it is the one thing they do not have.”

3 Bible Application

Explore ways to share your faith unashamedly.

Make copies of this page and give instructions to each group. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read “A Living Epistle” in the student book, then answer **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. The heart is where we store our treasures. When the Word of God is written upon the tablets of our heart, then what we speak will edify others; it lifts the heavy heart, it speaks salvation to the lost, and it is filled with a psalm of praise unto our God. It is also a law that commands us not only to obey, but to love, which is the fulfillment of the law; we must first love God with all of our hearts and love our neighbor as we love ourselves. When we have such Good News to share with others, it should also come out of our mouths as well. We should look for opportunities the Spirit provides for verbal sharing.

Quote Discussion

Author Jan Johnson has said, “Many believers are ‘rabbit hole’ Christians. In the morning they pop out of their safe Christian homes, hold their breath at work, scurry home to their families and then off to their Bible studies, and finally end the day praying for the unbelievers they safely avoided all day.” How bold have you been in the past in sharing your faith both in word and deed? How can you improve that witness?



Handout:

‘It’s Not by Might’

Follow the instructions on the handout sheet. Complete the activity on the handout. Share your answers with your group and with the rest of the class as you have time.

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A Living Epistle

We come into visual proximity of countless strangers every single day—people we may never notice but who take notice of us. Within seconds, people subconsciously analyze one another. Many of our assumptions are incorrect; other perceptions are accurate. Without words, we speak.

When we speak words, we reveal our hearts. So what are we saying when we speak—are we being salt to the world around us? Is the light of God’s love on display in the way a lamp illuminates from the table, or is a city on a hill visible from afar? Is our speech tempered and modest, or is it abrasive, crude, or offensive?

We are commanded to be “living epistles,” living letters that are a constant witness and an example of righteousness that is seen and read by anyone. As Paul told the Corinthians, “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone” (2 Cor. 3:2). Our character displays our faith; our words reveal our wisdom and our works display our conviction and integrity. As we walk in unity in the faith and obedience to Christ, people are drawn to Him, and the opportunity to witness is presented.

Prior to his salvation, Paul thought his persecution of Christians was a righteous cause. When the Lord saved him, Paul abandoned everything he used to be in order to embrace who God ordained him to be. “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14).

10. How can we be “living letters” for Christ in our everyday lives?

11. What do you need to leave behind in your life to unashamedly share your faith?

12. Can you be only a “silent witness” for Christ? Explain your answer.

4 Life Response

Share your faith in your words and actions.

This week, be wise (in seeing the appropriate setting) and bold (at the right opportunity) to share your faith. In many instances, that opportunity is incremental and situation specific.

Ask your students to read “I Am Not Ashamed” in the student book and begin praying about sharing this week. Someone may make a statement that prompts them to share how the Lord helped and delivered them. Remind them that the Holy Spirit will give opportunities and guidance on

how to proceed. We also need the energy and guidance of the Spirit each day to be good witnesses. Encourage them to start their day with prayer, praise, and meditation on the Word; they can’t draw from an empty well. When you walk in the Spirit, then the power and capacity is present!

Close the class in prayer, saying something like this: “Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for the power of the Gospel of Christ to redeem us. Thank You for entrusting us and empowering us to proclaim the Gospel to those who are lost. Help us not to be ashamed of the Gospel. Give us boldness to testify of Your grace, mercy, and salvation. In Jesus’ name, amen!”

As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week’s *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn’t be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week’s Lesson

Before you teach next week, read Romans 4:1-12. Ask your students to think about what it means to “stand” for something.

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‘I Am Not Ashamed’

When we decided to follow Christ, a resurrected being recreated after the image of Christ emerged triumphant and is now an ambassador of Christ. We represent Him wherever we go! We must represent Him always with honor, dignity, modesty, holiness, obedience, wisdom, righteousness, and boldness.

► *This week, forget the shame of your past and embrace the position and authority of an heir of God and joint heir with Christ. You may want to write some past “shame” here and cross it out, or write it on a separate sheet of paper and throw it away, symbolizing your new life in Christ. Pray to the Holy Spirit to open opportunities to share the Gospel this week in both word and deed.*

KEY VERSE

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. —Romans 1:16, KJV

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. —Romans 1:16, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of July 12 through July 18

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Genesis 15:1-8—God’s Covenant with Abraham.
- Tues.** Genesis 12:1-9—All World’s Families Blessed through Abraham.
- Wed.** Romans 4:13-15—Promise Realized by Faith Not Law.
- Thurs.** Romans 4:16-18—For All Who Share Abraham’s Faith.
- Fri.** Romans 4:19-21—Abraham Believed Despite Impossible Odds.
- Sat.** Romans 4:22-25—In Christ, Believers Share Abraham’s Faith.
- Sun.** Romans 4:1-12—Abraham, Father of the Faithful.