

TO KNOW
HIM MORE:
SEEKING GOD
THROUGH THE
LETTER TO THE
ROMANS

Kimberly Kirk

ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

PURPOSE

The purpose of this workbook is to draw us closer to our Lord. As we dig deeply into God's Word, our desire should be **to know Him more** not just know more about Him. Bible study is not about collecting facts and learning principles but rather drawing ever nearer to our Heavenly Father. God told Moses that no one can see His face and live (Ex. 33:20), and yet Jesus Christ is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being (Heb. 1:3). He is the Word made flesh (Jn. 1:14)! The Father's goal for each of us is to be transformed into the likeness of His Son (II Cor. 3:18), and He calls us to be imitators of Him (Eph. 5:1). But how can we do either if we do not know Him? I hope you are excited because the Almighty wants to lower the veil and reveal more of Himself to us through His Word! May we seek to know Him more as we study His letter to the church in Rome.

PRAYERS ABOUND

Do you ever pray God's Word back to Him? It is a wonderful, powerful way of interacting with the Lord. John tells us that if we ask anything according to God's will, we have it (I Jn. 5:14-15), so when we pray His promises, we will receive them! Dear One, I have been praying God's Word over you (and myself) as I have sat and studied through Romans, and I already feel like the Lord has connected our hearts! I encourage you to pray the verse for each week as you work through the lessons. Be ready for the Lord to bless! The theme verse for this workbook is James 4:8a: *Come near to God and he will come near to you.* May we draw ever closer to our Lord as we study this portion of His Word.

READY - SET - GO!

READY: I hope you're excited about working through this study, but there is something we must do to get ready for the journey. **Before you begin, I would ask you to read through the entire book of Romans.** It's so important to read a book of the Bible in its entirety before digging for the deeper truths. It gives us an overview of the path we will tread and sets a framework into which we can place all the treasures we discover along the way. It will also get us excited about all that God is going to show us through this powerful portion of His Word!

SET: Now that you have read through Romans, you're ready to dive into the Scriptures! As we approach each passage, we need to set our hearts and minds before the Lord and ask Him to speak to us. The first question in every lesson allows us to do just that. It will ask you to read through the passage and record what the Lord speaks to your heart. **I believe this is the most important part of the workbook.** First John 2:27 tells us: *As for you, the anointing you received from him {Jesus} remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you.* The Spirit of God who resides in all Believers is your teacher, so listen closely to His still small voice. Allow Him to impress His truths upon your heart before moving along in the lesson and seeing the things He showed me.

GO: It's time to sit at our Lord's feet and study His Word! As you open up your Bible, I want to let you know that I have used the New International Version as my main text. Since I've consulted several other versions, whatever translation you hold in your hands will carry you beautifully through this study!

FURTHER STUDY

Each week we will be looking at a complementary or parallel passage to one we have studied in Romans. This will remind us how God's Word proves Itself, while allowing us to further explore a certain principle or topic. I will be sharing a message each week on these passages.

SOURCES

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TO KNOW HIM MORE

To know Him more
What does that mean?
He is my Savior
His fruit I've seen

On bended knee
Before the throne
I gave it all
I am His own

I live each day
My Lord to please
This heart within –
I know He sees

What more am I
To say or do?
I serve Him gladly
And speak what's true

I read His Word
I stop and pray
Know more about Him
Each passing day

But is there more
Required of me?
I think I now
Begin to see

It's not the knowledge
Or gifts I give,
The way I serve Him
Or how I live

It all comes down
To just one thing –
To really know
My Lord and King

The facts I've gathered
Won't draw me near
The relationship –
That's what is dear

And from this flows
The thoughts and deeds
A righteous life
Comes as He leads

This truth – it changes
Everything
How I read the Word
How I see the King

I count as loss –
Each thing I've gained
To know Him more
My only aim

May nothing ever
In all my life
Compare to the greatness
Of knowing Christ

So just like Paul
My goal alone –
Know Him more and more
'Til He takes me home

TO KNOW HIM MORE:
SEEKING GOD THROUGH THE LETTER
TO THE ROMANS

WEEK 1: REBELLION	10
<i>Set Apart for the Gospel, Mutually Encouraged, A Terrible Exchange, A Depraved Mind, Righteous Judgment</i>	
WEEK 2: DEATH IN VAIN?	35
<i>Righteousness and the Law, Outward vs. Inward, Faulty Logic, Gaining Righteousness, Apart From Works</i>	
WEEK 3: BEWITCHED	57
<i>Worthless Promise?, Peace with God, Reconciliation, Adam and Christ, Freed From Sin</i>	
WEEK 4: KEEP IN STEP	78
<i>Live For Christ, Whose Slave?, Death and the Law, Sin and the Law, A Constant Struggle</i>	
WEEK 5: PRINCESSES	101
<i>How to Live?, An Obligation, A Sustaining Hope, The Called, No Separation</i>	
WEEK 6: SEEING GOD'S GLORY	122
<i>Children of Promise, God's Sovereignty, The Potter, Confess and Believe, Hearing and Receiving</i>	
WEEK 7: MERCIFUL GOD	144
<i>Temporary Hardening, Engrafted, Disobedience and Mercy, Living Sacrifices, Grace Gifts</i>	
WEEK 8: EXERCISING FREEDOM IN LOVE	165
<i>Love in Action, God Ordained Authorities, Continuing Debt of Love, Disputable Matters, No Stumbling Block</i>	
WEEK 9: WARNINGS AND ENCOURAGEMENT	186
<i>Encouragement, Knowing Your Role, Tentative Plans, Greetings, Parting Wisdom</i>	

Week One
REBELLION

God has so much He wants to impart to us through His Word! Paul's letter to the Believers in Rome is packed with countless wonderful and life changing principles. May we ask the Lord to open our hearts so we can receive all He wants to reveal.

In our first week together, we will be looking at the opening words of this powerful book. We will quickly realize that Paul jumps right into some heavy duty truths. The power of the gospel is clearly presented in the first chapter of Romans. So are the consequences we face, and the downward spiral that results, when we try to take God out of the picture. We will also begin to get a glimpse of the righteousness of our Heavenly Father.

As I prepared each week of lessons, the Lord gave me a verse or two to pray over all the ladies who would choose to walk this path with me. I have also prayed them over myself. The one He gave me for this first week is Ephesians 3:20-21:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Let's commit to praying these verses every time we sit to study God's Word this week, and have an expectation of how He is going to bless as we invest more of ourselves in Him.

Lesson One ~ Set Apart for the Gospel

Lesson Two ~ Mutually Encouraged

Lesson Three ~ A Deadly Exchange

Lesson Four ~ A Depraved Mind

Lesson Five ~ Righteous Judgment

Week One, Lesson One
SET APART FOR THE GOSPEL

I hope you're excited about this journey we are about begin through Paul's letter to the church at Rome! Before we get into the Scriptures, let's begin by setting the scene.

GETTING STARTED

I trust you took my suggestion and read through Romans. If so, I'm confident the Lord has already encouraged and challenged you through it! Any time we approach the study of a book of the Bible, it's important to start with some background information which gives the context and historical setting. Once the stage is set, we can dive into the Scriptures with a better understanding of who is saying what to whom, and why it is being said.

THE AUTHOR

Romans is a letter or epistle written by the apostle Paul to the church in Rome. It's believed to have been penned around 57 AD while Paul was in Corinth at the end of his third missionary journey. Unlike most of his writings, this was sent to a church he never visited, and a people he knew only through their reputation of faithfulness to Christ (1:8). His hope was to visit this church after taking the offering he collected from the Gentile churches to the needy saints in Jerusalem (Acts 19:21). The apostle finally made it to Rome around 60 AD: not as a missionary, but as a prisoner. Although he was in chains awaiting an audience with Caesar, he ministered to the Christians in Rome as well as others beyond its borders. It's believed Paul wrote Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon while incarcerated in that city.

THE CHURCH AT ROME

The church in Rome is unique in that little is known about how and when it was started. It is clear that neither Peter nor Paul visited there before 60 AD. It may have been founded by converts from their ministries who ventured to this imperial city. It's also possible it was started by Jews who came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ at Pentecost, when the promised Holy Spirit came down in power and might, who went back home and shared the Good News (see Acts 2). The church most likely began in the synagogue with Jewish Christians. When Emperor Claudius *ordered all the Jews to leave Rome* (Acts 18:2), the population of Gentile Believers began to grow. By the time this letter was written, the congregation was a mix of both Jews and Gentiles. Most commentators conclude that the majority were Gentiles.

The letter to the Romans was written to a church that was sound doctrinally. Because they never had any apostolic teaching (15:20), Paul greatly desired to visit and take them deeper in their understanding of and relationship with the Lord. He also longed to give them practical ways to put their faith into action. Since he was prevented from being there in the flesh (1:13), he decided to pour out his heart and teach them through a letter. It was also his way of introducing himself so when he was able to visit, they would already have a connection.

THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Paul penned this letter to the Believers in Rome (1:7a). It's considered to be a treatise (or formal, systematic explanation) of theological principles. It is *placed first among Paul's epistles, not because it was the first written, but because of the length and importance of the Epistle itself* (Barnes). The theme of this portion of Scripture is justification by faith. The key verses are 1:16-17: *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from 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 is broken down into two distinct sections: chapters 1 to 11 are mainly theological while chapters 12 to 16 are largely practical.

Now that we have a framework for this powerful book of the Bible, we can to study it and dig for the deeper truths. We'll be taking it in small portions because there is so much for us to uncover! I hope you're ready because here we go...

Passage for Today: ROMANS 1:1-7

Please read the passage and share any insights, questions, comments or anything that comes to your mind regarding it. This will be our practice in each lesson. We need to read and digest the Word and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal things to us first. I will then share with you the things God has shown me.

THE MAN (*Romans 1:1*)

Paul begins this letter by identifying himself, as was his custom. He refers to himself as a servant or bondservant, depending on your translation. The Greek word that is used here is *doulos*. It is defined as *a slave (literal or figurative, involuntary or voluntary; frequently, therefore in a qualified sense of subjection or subserviency)* (Strong).

What can we learn about Paul from this proclamation?

Since Paul never visited the church at Rome. He only knows the Believers there by their reputation. I imagine they know him in the same way. Through both his words and actions, Paul considers himself a slave of Jesus Christ. Someone who has no rights or will of his own, and who is at the beck and call of His Master at all times. An individual whose sole purpose is to serve and please the Lord.

When we think about who Paul is and the qualifications he possesses, it makes this perspective even more sobering. The apostle gives us his resume in his letter to the Philippians: *If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless* (Phil. 3:4-6). Sounds pretty boastful, don't you think? Not the words of a slave to Christ, that is until we read the next verses. They put everything into perspective: *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead* (Phil. 3:8-11).

Paul was powerful, highly educated, and extremely motivated. He was going places in the Roman world, impressing the influential and persecuting those who professed the name of Jesus. Until Christ Himself met Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19). From that point on, everything changed. He surrendered himself to Jesus: body, soul, and spirit. And he never looked back.

Not only does Paul consider himself to be a servant, but he also refers to himself as an apostle. In the general sense, an apostle is someone who has been sent (that is what the word itself means). When Paul uses it, he's referring to the office of apostle. This is someone who was directly commissioned by Christ.

When we tie being a servant and an apostle together, what picture is Paul painting of himself?

Paul knew who he was: a bondservant of the King of Kings sent by the Lord to preach the Good News. It wasn't about him or what he wanted to do. The Romans knew that firsthand, since he had been wanting to visit them for years. It's like Paul was telling them that he didn't have a choice. He was an ambassador for Christ and was simply carrying out His Master's business.

The final designation Paul makes for himself is that he has been *set apart* or *separated* for the gospel. The Greek word used here is *aphorizo*. It means *to mark off from others by boundaries, to limit, to separate... in a good sense: to appoint, set apart for some purpose* (Thayer).

Does Paul's description of himself in any way reflect how you see yourself?

None of us saw Christ in the flesh or even post resurrection like Paul did. I imagine not many of us have been called to full-time Christian ministry, nor have we been deemed apostles. Yet everyone who knows Jesus as Lord and Savior is a servant of the Most High and has been called to spread the gospel. Christ's final words before ascending into heaven are called the Great Commission: *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matt. 28:19-20). We all have a responsibility to share the truths of God wherever He plants us. Paul puts it this way in his second letter to the Corinthians: *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us...* (II Cor. 5:20). God has chosen to use His children to be His hands and feet in this dying world. We, like Paul, have been set apart for the Lord and for the work He has for us. May we be ever mindful of this call and carryout His plans in His power and for His glory

THE MESSAGE (*Romans 1:2-4*)

After introducing himself, Paul shares about the message he's been called to preach: the gospel.

What is the gospel?

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were inspired to write the four gospels which appear at the beginning of the New Testament. What do they recount? The story of Christ. The word *gospel* means *Good News*. It proclaims that man can be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus. That's the best news this world has ever heard! I love how Paul reminds the Romans and us that the gospel is not a new concept. It was promised to and proclaimed by the prophets of old. From the commission of the very first sin came the promise of a Savior. One Who would shed His blood for us and ultimately crush the head of Satan (Gen. 3:15). Jesus is woven throughout the Old Testament. His coming was prophesied through many different voices in the first thirty-nine books of the Bible. We looked at one very specific prophecy in the Introductory Message to this workbook (Isaiah 53). God

had the plan in place before the first sin was committed, spoke it to the saints of old, and then Jesus accomplished it to the letter. In a sense, that's what the gospel is: the description of the fulfillment of God's promise to send the Messiah.

We learn much about Jesus from verses 3-4. Actually, all the basics that are crucial to our faith are in there. First, He is God's Son. Next, He is human or of the flesh, specifically, a descendant of King David which had been prophesied. And finally, He rose from the dead.

Please take a closer look at v. 4 and explain what it is saying.

I hope that question wasn't confusing. At first glance, the intent of v.4 may seem pretty straight forward. At least it did to me. But when I looked at it more closely, I found a gem I wanted to make sure we didn't miss. Although v.3 begins by saying Jesus is God's Son, v.4 tells the proof of that claim: His resurrection. How often do we think about it that way? Jesus was this man who did miracles which were for the purpose of confirming His deity, yet it was His resurrection from the dead that sealed the deal. Anyone can walk around and say they are whomever they wish, but can it be proven? Is there evidence to support their claim? If Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, He would have been just like any other man who pretended to be something He wasn't. The bigger effect of that would be devastating: we would all still be dead in our sin and separated from God without any hope of reconciliation. Paul puts it this way in I Corinthians 15:17: *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.* But Jesus was raised from the dead and we who bow our knee to Him are raised with Him from being dead in our sin to alive in Christ!

THE AUDIENCE (*Romans 1:5-7*)

In our final verses for today, we see Paul addressing the Believers in Rome. He explains that it is not only *through* Christ but *for* Him that the apostle shares the gospel. In the *Getting Started* portion of this lesson, it was mentioned that the congregation in Rome was made up of Jews and Gentiles, yet there were more of the latter. This verse confirms it. It also reminds us that Paul's commission was not merely to preach the Good News, but to specifically (although not exclusively) do so to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

At the end of v.5, the call to the Gentiles is to obedience that comes from faith or obedience to the faith, depending on your translation. What can we learn from this, and how can we apply it to our own lives?

How often, in our churches, Bibles studies, Christian books, television and radio stations, and even in our conversations as Believers, do we hear the concepts of faith and obedience tied together? I would venture to guess it's not often enough. It breaks my heart how we tend to be quick to speak of our faith but not the obedience it requires. Nowhere else is this more glaringly apparent than in the sharing the gospel. How many times have you heard this statement, *All you have to do is believe in what Jesus did on the cross and you will be saved.*? Is that true? Yes, but it's incomplete. The statement above deals with faith, and we do need faith in what Christ accomplished for us to become a child of the King. But that is only the beginning of our journey. Let's take a look at Colossians 1:21-23: *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-- if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant (underline mine).*

Is this the gospel you heard? It is not the one that was shared with me. I accepted the Lord when I was twelve years old yet didn't realize I had any responsibility in this commitment until my freshman year of college. I thought all I had to do was pray the prayer and ask Jesus into my heart. I didn't understand that although I could do nothing to earn my salvation, for it is a free gift which I only needed to accept, God did require something of me once I became His child. I don't believe the verses in Colossians are saying that to keep our salvation we need to continue in our faith, for then it would be a work. I do believe they are telling us that the proof that we're saved is that we have continued in it by pursuing God and growing in Him.

Does this mean that if we are not seeking, obeying, and serving God every minute from when we accept Jesus until our lives on this earth end, we're not really saved? Please explain your answer.

I hope that question didn't pop into your mind as you read the previous paragraph. Either way, I feel it needs to be addressed. God says His followers will bear fruit that will last (Jn. 15:16), and the only way we can do that is if we abide in Him (Jn. 15:5). That means remaining in or staying close to Him by spending time in His Word and in prayer (both corporately and individually). Our walk with God *is* our relationship with Him. Although we all go through dry spiritual seasons, there must be evidence of obedience to the faith for us to be certain the commitment we made to Christ was real. Just saying a prayer doesn't get you saved. God tells us: *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved* (Rom. 10:9-10). If we believe in our heart what we're confessing with our mouth, then we will walk *in obedience that comes from faith* (v.5).

THE CHOICE

In the first seven verses of this deep, theologically rich letter, God inspires Paul to present some powerful, foundational truths. They require a response.

Perhaps you came across this workbook without knowing much about the Bible or the God Who penned it. Maybe these things about salvation sound vaguely familiar, but you never really knew what they meant. This could all be completely new to you. What a privilege it is for me to share Who Jesus is and what the gospel is all about! The Bible tells us all have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and our sin separates us from a holy God. Romans 6:23 sums it up this way: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*. Sin is the bad things we do, whether big or little, seen or hidden. It earns us death or eternal separation from God. If you have ever told a lie, had a bad thought, lost your temper... then you have sinned. As we begin to really examine our hearts, it becomes clear that we have messed up in some way which disqualifies us from going to heaven and living in God's presence. That's the bad news, but the good news is the gospel!

God never changed His standards. Sin will always bring spiritual death, yet He sent His Son Jesus Christ. *God made him who had no sin {Jesus} to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God* (II Cor. 5:21). Jesus was fully God and fully man. He lived a perfect life then just before His death on the cross, took on all the sin of the world and died in our place. An amazing sacrifice, yet it's not the end of the story. Although Christ died for all sin, His death doesn't cover mine until I admit I'm a sinner and acknowledge there's nothing I can do to work my way to God or pay for my transgressions. It is when I ask Jesus to come into my heart, forgive me of my sin, and be my Savior and the Lord of my life that I am saved. It's the same for you and anyone who ever has or will walk this earth. If you have never done that, I encourage you to bare your heart before the Lord and receive His gift of salvation. Once you do, please tell someone about it! A friend who is a Believer, a pastor, the woman leading you in this Bible study—someone! This is just the beginning of your journey, and you will need someone to come alongside you to help you get started and lay a strong Biblical foundation. My contact information is at the beginning of this workbook. I would love to hear from you and know I have a new sister in Christ! Welcome to the family!

If you made a commitment to Jesus, please write a sentence or two describing what you did and date it so you will never forget the day you gave your life to Him.

Praise God for our new sisters in Christ! I would ask that each of us take a moment and pray for anyone who made that decision or is considering surrendering their life to Jesus. I am so thankful that our prayers transcend time and space. What you just lifted before the Lord may covered someone today, or may be stored in the heavenlies for a dear sister who has not yet been introduced to Jesus!

For those of us who already have a commitment to the Lord, a response is still required. May we each consider some questions and take them before the throne: *Do I see myself as a servant of the Lord, one who has been set apart for God? Am I sharing the truths of the Word as Jesus opens opportunities? Does my faith express itself in obedience to the Father?*

Please record your answers to the questions above or whatever the Lord put on your heart in response to what He showed you through the portion of Scripture we studied today.

What a wonderful time we had together in the Word, and this is just the beginning! I can't wait to see what God has in store for us tomorrow!