



# ***UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE***

*Through the Bible*

*November 17-23*

*Romans 1:16-32*

## *Things to Know*

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## *Studying God's Word **In Community***

*Reminder: Seek to understand and apply God's word, **not** rehash the sermon.*

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## *Sermon Recap*

- The Exchange: Humanity rejected the truth of God and exchanged His glory for idols—worshiping creation instead of the Creator. (Romans 1:21–23)
- The Consequences: Because of this rebellion, God “gave them up” to the very desires they demanded—sin’s deception leading to moral, relational, and spiritual ruin. (Romans 1:24–32)

- The Solution: The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - What we exchanged in sin, Christ reversed by His cross. (Romans 1:16–17)
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## Discussion Questions

1. The Exchange: What are some modern examples of how people “exchange the glory of God for images” (Romans 1:23)? How do even good things become idols?
  2. Why does Paul begin with God’s wrath before explaining His grace? How does this order help us understand the gospel more fully?
  3. The Consequences: How do you see evidence of God “giving people over” in our culture today—and in our own hearts apart from grace? (Romans 1:24–28)
  4. The Solution: In what ways does the gospel reverse the exchanges described in this passage? How did Jesus take on what we deserved so we could receive what He deserved?
  5. How should this passage shape the way we share the gospel—with humility, urgency, and hope?
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## Read

**Read Romans 1:16-32 and make observations about the text.**

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
  - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
  - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
  - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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## Scripture

**Romans 1:16-32**

### **The Righteous Shall Live by Faith**

**16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

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## **God's Wrath on Unrighteousness**

**18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. **19** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. **20** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. **21** For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Claiming to be wise, they became fools, **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

**24** Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, **25** because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

**26** For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; **27** and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

**28** And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. **29** They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, **31** foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. **32** Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

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Romans 1:16-32

# Living on Mission In Community

Romans 1 reminds us that sin is not just breaking rules—it's breaking relationship with the Creator. Every time we trust in idols of comfort, control, or approval, we repeat the same tragic exchange. Yet God's grace is greater. In Christ, He was "given up" so that we would never be "given over." The gospel restores what sin destroyed, renewing our hearts to worship the true and living God. This week, take inventory of what competes for your worship and intentionally replace those idols with gratitude, obedience, and faith in Jesus—will you let Him reverse the exchange in your life today?

*How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?*

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## Optional Breakout Questions

*Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:*

1. How did you feed yourself?
  - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
  - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
  - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

# ***Leader Resources - Nov 17-23***

## **Small Group Curriculum: Romans 1:16-32 — “The Exchange”**

### **Session Overview**

Paul introduces the theme of Romans: the gospel reveals the righteousness of God (vv. 16-17). But immediately, he contrasts this good news with the bad news — the wrath of God revealed against sin (vv. 18-32). Humanity has exchanged the truth for lies, the glory of God for idols, and worship for rebellion. Yet, in Christ, God reverses that exchange through the cross.

Theme: Humanity has traded God’s glory for idols, but Christ restores what sin has broken.

Main Idea: We all face the consequences of exchanging God’s truth for lies, but the gospel offers the only solution — the righteousness of God by faith.

### **1. Opening**

Prayer & Icebreaker:

Begin with prayer asking God to open hearts to His Word and reveal the areas where we’ve exchanged His truth for something lesser.

Icebreaker question:

What’s a time you traded something valuable for something that wasn’t worth it? How did that feel later?

Break briefly into groups of 2–3 and share ways we might subtly “trade” God’s truth for cultural lies in everyday life. End by asking, “How can we pray for each other’s walk with God this week?”

## **2. Scripture Reading**

Read Romans 1:16-32 aloud together.

Encourage different readers for vv. 16-17, vv. 18-23, vv. 24-27, and vv. 28-32.

After reading, pause and ask: What stood out to you from this passage?

## **3. Teaching Points**

### **I. The Exchange (vv. 18-23)**

“They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images...”  
(v. 23)

Commentary:

Paul begins with the wrath of God revealed from heaven because humanity suppresses the truth (v. 18). God’s invisible attributes—His eternal power and divine nature—are clearly seen in creation (vv. 19-20), leaving everyone without excuse. Yet humanity exchanged worship for idolatry.

- John Piper explains: “The ultimate problem is not ignorance but rebellion. They know God and yet do not honor Him as God.”
- Charles Spurgeon adds, “Knowledge is of no use if it does not lead to holy practice.”
- Adrian Rogers calls this section “the great exchange” — the moment the creature tries to dethrone the Creator.

Summary:

The first exchange is worship: glory for images. Humanity takes what is eternal and substitutes it with what is temporary.

Key Truth: Every sin begins with misplaced worship — replacing God with something else.

## **II. The Consequences (vv. 24-32)**

“Therefore God gave them up...” (vv. 24, 26, 28)

Commentary:

Three times, Paul repeats this chilling phrase: “God gave them up.” This doesn’t mean God ceased to care; it means He allowed humanity to pursue its chosen path to its own destruction — divine judgment through moral abandonment.

- Adrian Rogers warns, “The worst thing God can do is to leave you alone in your sin.”
- John Piper notes that God’s wrath is already being revealed — not just future, but present, as societies crumble under the weight of their rebellion.
- Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Sin brings its own punishment. To turn from the light is to walk into darkness.”

The progression:

1. Ungodliness (rejecting God’s glory).
2. Unrighteousness (disordered loves).
3. Abandonment (God gives them up).

The results are relational and moral collapse (vv. 24-27) and intellectual and social decay (vv. 28-32). Every area of life is affected — desires, relationships, minds, families, and communities.

Key Truth: Sin is not just what we do; it’s what we love, worship, and pursue

apart from God. The wrath of God is the natural consequence of rejecting His rule.

### **III. The Solution (vv. 16-17)**

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation...”

Before Paul described humanity’s descent, he announced the only hope — the gospel.

The righteousness we lost in sin is revealed by faith in Christ.

- Piper calls this “the blazing center of Romans”: the righteousness of God revealed not in judgment alone, but in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.
- Rogers reminds: “We are not saved by human righteousness, but by divine righteousness imparted to us by faith.”
- Spurgeon preached, “There is enough power in the gospel to turn lions into lambs and rebels into sons.”

Summary:

The gospel reverses the exchange:

- We exchanged God’s glory for idols → Christ exchanged His glory to rescue idolaters.
- We deserved wrath → Christ bore the wrath for us.
- We were given over → Christ was given up for us (Romans 8:32).

Key Truth: What we exchanged in rebellion, Christ redeemed by His cross.

## **4. Discussion Questions**

1. The Exchange: What are some modern “idols” people worship instead of God? How can even good things (family, work, success) become ultimate things? (vv. 18-23)
2. The Consequences: In what ways do we see the effects of God “giving people up” in our culture today? (vv. 24-32)
3. Why does Paul start with bad news (wrath) before talking about the good news (grace)? What does this show us about the seriousness of sin?
4. The Solution: How does the gospel reverse humanity’s exchange? (vv. 16-17)
5. How does seeing the depth of sin make you more grateful for the grace of Christ?

## **5. Application**

The truth of Romans 1 confronts us: everyone has exchanged the truth of God for a lie in some way. Whether it’s pride, pleasure, or power — every idol promises life but delivers death. Yet Christ has made a greater exchange. On the cross, He bore our guilt so we could receive His righteousness.

So, believer — where is your heart tempted to make an exchange today?

Will you trade God’s glory for lesser things, or will you embrace the greater exchange of grace — Christ’s righteousness for your sin?

## **6. Closing Reflection & Prayer**

Encourage group members to write down one area of life where they are tempted to believe a cultural lie over God’s truth.

Invite them to surrender that to Christ during a time of quiet prayer.

Closing Prayer:

“Lord, forgive us for the exchanges we’ve made. Thank You for not giving us over to wrath but giving us Your Son. May we live unashamed of the gospel — the power of God for salvation. Amen.”

## 7. Memory Verse

Romans 1:16–17 (ESV)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”

## 8. Leader's Notes

- Tone: The passage is weighty — balance truth and grace. Avoid sensationalizing sin; highlight the holiness of God and the hope in the gospel.
- Gospel Thread: Always tie back to vv. 16-17 — God’s righteousness revealed by faith is the solution to the wrath revealed by sin.
- Group Flow:
  1. Start with gratitude and community (prayer and icebreaker).
  2. Read the passage in full before discussion.
  3. Keep Christ central: The passage isn’t mainly about “those sinners out there,” but about every heart apart from grace.
- Cross-reference ideas: Genesis 3 (the first exchange), Romans 3:21-26, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and Romans 8:32.
- End with Hope: Jesus was “given up” so we wouldn’t be “given over.”