

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)?
 - 27, 57, 87?
 - (Answer: 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)

- 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)
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