Paul and Rome

Surveying the Source
Acts 28:17–31; Rom. 1:7; 15:14, 20–27; Ephesians 1; Phil. 1:12.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Understand why Paul and others can be bold for God.
► Know that God is willing to help us, if we are willing to submit to Him.
► Make a commitment to be more courageous for the Lord.

Preparing to Lead
Paul’s Damascus Road encounter with God, coupled with his God-given charisma, compelled him to be a bold preacher for the Lord. We find that he did not run from those who opposed the message of salvation, but rather he fearlessly taught the Word. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom. 1:16, NKJV).

Getting Started
Using a writing board of some kind, draw a vertical line down the middle.
A. On the top left side, write the word Paul. Ask the class to list the characteristics that Paul had to be so bold.
B. On the top right side, write the word Us. Then ask the class to list what hinders us from being as undaunting as Paul.

Delving Into the Word
A. Have a class member read Romans 1:8–17. Say: “There are many things that we can learn from others in the Bible who have walked before us.” Then supply each person with a copy of the activity sheet (p. 31). Ask them to connect the Bible characters with their act of boldness. Discuss their finding with the entire class.
B. Using a writing board, have students make a list of Bible characters who were fearless in their stand for righteousness. Next, along side these names, list the qualities of their character or what impacted them to be so strong in the faith. Discuss with the class if these characteristics are lacking today, and if so, why. Also discuss where these characteristics are found, and why.

Discussing the Ideas
1. What is your walk with God like?
2. How does repeating the same sin over and over again affect your relationship with God?
3. What type of activities, thoughts, and attitudes hinder us from a closer walk with Jesus?
4. When God calls us, do you think it’s a win-win or lose-lose situation? Explain.
5. The next time you are tempted by Satan on your weaknesses, what game plan are you going to put into action?
6. Think quietly about it: Have you given your whole life fully to Jesus? If not, when will you?
7. In what way can you be bold for the Lord this week?

Closing the Activity

Hand each person in the class an index card. Read aloud 2 Corinthians 7:4–7. On the card have each person write today’s date and which of today’s Bible characters has impressed them the most and why.

Then ask them to write down what, if anything, is holding them back from being as bold for God as the person whose name they wrote.

Ask them to make this a matter of prayer this coming week.

Alden Ho, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.
Do You Know Who?

Draw a line from the left side list of names to match their act of boldness for God.

Elijah
Joshua & Caleb
Stephen
Daniel
Gideon
Esther
David
Lot
Enoch
Jeremiah
Abraham
Paul
Manasseh

Elijah
Trusted the Lord to select his army
Joshua & Caleb
Stood up to a big man
Stephen
Repaired altar of God
Daniel
Rebuked the Pharisees
Gideon
Persistently warned God’s people
Esther
Confronted a King
David
Never ashamed of Jesus
Lot
Unflinchingly left homeland
Enoch
Gave a favorable report
Jeremiah
Walked with God
Abraham
Risked life to save others
Paul
Protected strangers from a mob
Manasseh
Openly displayed devotion to God
Jew and Gentile

Materials

- A laptop computer with Internet access (or a copy of the movie, *Finishing Strong*, to show on the computer or in a DVD player, if you don’t have Internet access); multiple slips of paper with Romans 3:31; Romans 6:1, 14, 15 written out in their entirety.

Surveying the Source


Plotting the Course

The students will:
- Understand that we don’t obey God in order to be saved. We obey because we love Him.
- Recognize some of the warning signs of falling into the trap of legalism.
- Realize that even though we are saved by grace, God still expects us to obey Him.

Preparing to Lead

“All legalism, all the sorrow and woe by which you may encompass yourself, will not give you one moment of relief. You cannot rightly estimate sin. You must accept God’s estimate, and it is heavy indeed. If you bore the guilt of your sin, it would crush you; but the sinless One has taken your place, and though undeserving, He has borne your guilt. By accepting the provision God has made, you may stand free before Him in the merit and virtue of your Substitute.”

Getting Started

A. Show to your class one of moving YouTube videos in which Dick Hoyt enters and wins a race for his son, Rick, who has cerebral palsy and is unable to compete on his own. The following link is one of many you can choose from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-SYmlj4kBE&feature=fvsr. Lead a discussion with your class, drawing an analogy between the scenario in the video and what Jesus did for us on the cross. Ask:
- “How do you think Rick feels about his father, knowing how much his father loves him and the great lengths he went to for him?”
- “Seeing this real-life illustration, how does this make you feel about Jesus, who ‘won the race’ for us so we could be saved?”

B. Read the following quote to your class: “Priests and rulers became fixed in a rut of ceremonialism. They were satisfied with a legal religion, and it was impossible for them to give to others the living truths of heaven.” Discuss with your class what Ellen White meant by this statement. Ask:
- “Why does a legal religion make it impossible to share God’s truth with others?”
- “How do we as a church sometimes fall into the same trap today?”
- “How can we avoid this?”

Delving Into the Word

A. Have the class do the activity on page 32. When everyone has finished, review the answers as a class. Then, using all the texts they looked up, work together to compose a summary statement about God’s law. Write it on the board.

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B. Say: “It is a common belief among other Christian groups that because we are saved by faith, we do not have to keep the law.” Then divide into small groups and hand out two slips of paper with the following texts written on them (one text per slip): Romans 3:31; Romans 6:1, 14, 15. (Make multiple copies so that there is a copy of each text for every group.) Ask those with texts to read them aloud to their group. Then have each small group discuss and come up with an appropriate response to someone who believes that we no longer have to keep the law. Allow about 10 minutes for discussion, then select two people to role play in front of the entire group. One of them says, “Doesn’t the Bible say that we no longer have to keep the law?” and the other responds with a Bible answer, based on the earlier discussion. Allow the group to share observations about the role play and to give their suggestions on how to respond appropriately to people who believe this way.

Discussing the Ideas

1. Janice and Jennifer have been friends since high school. Jennifer, who is not an Adventist, is getting married and has invited Janice, an Adventist, to be a bridesmaid in her wedding, which will be held on a Friday night. Janice told Jennifer that she would be comfortable participating in the wedding, but not in the reception, so she has declined the invitation. Jennifer thinks Janice is being legalistic. What do you think? How would you respond in such a situation, and why?

2. Where did the idea that we can be saved by our works come from in the first place? What can we do to guard against this type of thinking? How can we help others who believe this way?

3. In Paul’s day, circumcision was an issue that sparked debate. What are some current issues that could be points of contention in today’s legalism controversy?

4. Thursday’s lesson brings up the subject of cultural differences causing misunderstandings about what is right or wrong. How does one distinguish between a matter that is simply cultural (what’s appropriate varies according to time, place, or culture), and one that is a matter of principle (applies in every situation, regardless of time, place, or culture)?

5. The Bible tells us that we are saved by grace, not by works. So does that mean it doesn’t matter what we do? Explain your answer.

6. A term that is often used today in religious circles is “cheap grace.” Share your understanding of what this means.

Closing the Activity

Close by reading the following quote from the chapter “Faith and Acceptance” in Steps to Christ, page 49: “It is peace that you need—Heaven’s forgiveness and peace and love in the soul. Money cannot buy it, intellect cannot procure it, wisdom cannot attain to it; you can never hope, by your own efforts, to secure it. But God offers it to you as a gift, ‘without money and without price.’ Isaiah 55:1.”

Encourage the class to go home, read the entire chapter, and put the principles found there into practice.

Close with a prayer of dedication and consecration, thanking God for what He has done for us.

Pat Humphrey, Keene, Texas, U.S.A.

1. Ellen G. White, The Bible Echo, July 2, 1894.
Look up the following texts and fill in the blanks:

God’s law leads us to _____________. (Ps. 19:7)

Keeping God’s commandments brings great ________. (Ps. 19:11)

Salvation comes by _________. (Eph. 2:8)

Sin is ____________________________________________. (1 John 3:4)

Breaking God’s law leads to _________. (Rom. 6:23)

Being saved by faith gives us the desire to _____________. (John 8:29)

Love always leads to _______________. (John 14:15)

In the new covenant Jesus ___________________________________. (Heb. 8:10)

God places in us the _________________ to do His will. (Ps. 40:8)

God’s last-day people will ________________________ through faith. (Rev. 14:12)
LESSON 3/July 17, 2010

“All Have Sinned”

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Reflect on their own lives and analyze what role sin plays in it.
► Understand the plan of redemption.
► Interpret the Word of God and what it says about sin.

Preparing to Lead
The wages of sin naturally tilt toward the fallen world. It is no coincidence that Lucifer, having been given a choice, chose humankind and this earth to pervert with his evil deeds. The very nature of the choice that was also given to humans was too irresistible for God’s enemy. When sin entered the world, it changed the course of history forever. It is a seemingly hopeless situation, until we understand and believe that God has provided a way to bring His children back to Him.

Getting Started
A. Google some images of Las Vegas. Mention to your class that this city is often called Sin City due to the uninhibited environment that it provides. As you show the images, discuss why sin seems so attractive. Ask: •“What is sin’s allure?” •“Why does sin often seem harmless, grand, and popular?”
B. Say: “The lesson this week mentions that sin works as a disease or sickness in people’s lives.” Then have your class list the symptoms associated with the H1N1 virus. You can find them at http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/qa.htm. Talk about how a person can prevent getting this flu. This is also discussed on the Web site.
End this introduction by discussing the symptoms of sin and how we can inoculate ourselves against sinfulness.

Delving Into the Word
A. Explore the following website before or during your class: http://web.eku.edu/flash/inferno.

Explain that Adventist theology does not articulate an actual place known as “hell” where those who are lost go when they die. However, the idea of hell dominates most other Christian theology. Dante wrote “The Inferno,” an epic poem about hell and the kind of people who inhabit its different levels. In a discussion about the different levels and who resides in each ring (liars, deceivers, thieves, flatterers, adulterers, and so forth), ask the students to discuss why it is easier for humans to think of an actual place where evil goes rather than to focus on forgiveness and redemption.

Through a re-reading of the week’s Bible verses, discuss why it is easier to
see and judge other people’s sins than it is our own.

B. Use the reproducible chart (p. 33) to list the different types of sins and their effects. This week’s lesson in the CQ Bible study guide gives some biblical examples. Categorize these in the three sections of the chart.

Have the students find other biblical examples to categorize and record in the chart (for example, David’s adultery—flesh; Judas’s greed—heart and mind). Have each student do this individually, then compare their answers. Or do it together as a class.

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. Throughout the lesson, disease and sickness have been used as a metaphor to describe sin. What other metaphors can be used to help us visualize the damaging effects of sin?
2. What is the difference between private and public sins?
3. Brainstorm what a sinful world would look like without the plan for redemption.
4. How did the lesson affect you personally?
5. In your opinion, why did God allow sin into the world if He is all-knowing and knew how much pain and suffering it would cost?
6. Why is hope such an important part of being a Christian?

**Closing the Activity**

Encourage the students to keep a prayer log and an accountability list that deals with their perceived sins. Hopefully, this will help them to determine if they are actually recognizing sin in their lives and doing something about it.

Then have the students memorize Philippians 4:13 and turn to each other to repeat it.

**Fabian Carballo, Colton, California, U.S.A.**
List several biblical examples for each category of sin below.

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<th>Sins of the Mind</th>
<th>Sins of the Heart</th>
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Justified by Faith

Surveys the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Contemplate what it means to be a sinner saved by grace.
► Appreciate God’s unselfish gift of His only Son.
► Evaluate what Scripture means to live by faith alone.

Preparing to Lead
Regardless of the past, “if you take even one step toward Him [the Savior] in repentance, He will hasten to enfold you in His arms of infinite love.”* Like Paul, we can live knowing that our past is wiped clean by the blood of Jesus Christ. “Out of sheer generosity He got us out of the mess we’re in and restored us to where He always wanted us to be. And He did it by means of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 3:24, The Message). All we have to do is to take one step toward His open arms. He has already done the rest.

Getting Started
A. Share a time when what you were required to do—or where you were asked to go—necessitated having faith in someone else.

B. Name one rule in your life that has kept you safe or one rule that seems impossible for you to keep.

Delving Into the Word
A. Have your class members imagine finding themselves in the following scenario:
You are a member of a church committee whose task it is to prevent a church split over theological differences of opinion. Some members feel the church is becoming more like the world and needs more emphasis on the importance of keeping all of the Bible’s rules.
Others say they can never measure up to all the rules and point out that the Bible says we live by grace alone.
In what way, and with what Scriptures from our lesson, will your committee attempt to avert a split?

B. Have your class members imagine finding themselves in the following scenario:
On an Internet social networking site you have reconnected with several classmates who attended the same Christian school that you attended.
You are amazed to find that some feel so beaten up by legalism that they want nothing to do with organized religion. They just want to be friends and ask you not to talk to them about what Christ did

Materials
cloth with dark food stain, Bibles of various translations, paper and pencils, bleach in a glass dish
or is doing for you. How could Paul’s words in Romans 3:19–28 assist you in dealing with these friends?

Discussing the Ideas

1. Many church members during Paul’s day, felt that circumcision was a sign of being part of God’s chosen people. What signs of being part of God’s chosen people have you observed in your fellowship with Christians today?

2. In your experience, is it easier to have genuine faith during a time of personal crises or when things are going well? Why do you answer the way you do?

3. The apostle Paul had to preach and minister to individuals who, because of their cultural orientation, had opposing ideas. How is Paul’s circumstance the same or different from the minister of your congregation?

4. How would you answer someone who asked you this question: “Will people who are very religious and totally sincere but who are not Christians be saved?”

5. Is it easier to feel saved by grace as a liberal Christian or as a conservative Christian? Explain your answer.

6. What does it mean to you to be in the world but not of the world (John 17:16, 17)?

7. In the record books of heaven, do good works count for anything? Support your answer.

8. When you consider the number of generations alive today, does one generation have more difficulty accepting the fact that we are saved by faith alone? Explain your position.

Closing the Activity

Say: “This week’s lesson challenges us to reflect on the fact that we are all sinners.”

Now place a food stain on a cloth to use as an example of our sinful nature. Use a glass bowl of bleach as an example of Christ’s righteousness. Dip the stain into the bleach so the class can see the stain disappear.

Carole Kilcher, Burleson, Texas, U.S.A.

*Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 206.
Directions: Review the texts in this week’s lesson. Place each one you review on the side of the scale that best indicates who is doing the action spoken of in the text. Is it God? Or is it you?

What God does for us  What we do to respond to what God has done for us
Justification and the Law

Surveying the Source


Plotting the Course

The students will:

► Recognize their inability to achieve righteousness independent of God.
► Understand the relationship between God’s role and ours in the plan of redemption.
► Accept God’s offer of pardon and transformation.

Preparing to Lead

Motion pictures have portrayed the life stories of not one, but two of my congregation’s most famous [or should I say “infamous”] members. Noted for their sex crimes and multiple murders, they terrorized two different cities in Washington State (U.S.A.) for years. While incarcerated, they met Jesus Christ and accepted Him as their Savior. The irony cannot be missed. While they were “free” they were imprisoned by their evil passions and desires. They are now imprisoned for life but set free by Jesus’ sacrifice for them. Most of us have never violated human standards to the extent that these two people have. Yet, we too, desperately need Christ’s forgiveness.

Getting Started

A. Distribute several news sources (daily newspapers, news magazines, and so forth) and/or invite members to peruse the Internet on their laptops if WI-FI is available in your classroom. Ask members to identify and rank the crimes they find in their search. After allowing time for research, have class members share their findings and rank the crimes from worst to the least. Remember that a crime may not be a legally criminalized behavior but any act of wrongdoing.

Read James 2:10–14. Discuss whether or not those who commit the lesser crimes according to your list are more saved or savable than those who committed the greater crimes.

B. Use the reproducible activity on page 35. Instructions are given on the sheet.

Delving Into the Word

A. Divide into two debate teams. The statement to be debated is: According to the Bible, human works play no role in God’s plan of justification. The “Paul” team takes as its motto Romans 3:28:

“We hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law” (NRSV),” and Romans 4:5: “But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reck-
Nothing Less,” “Come Thou Fount” (popularized by David Crowder), and Chris Tomlin’s, “The Wonderful Cross.”

Break into smaller groups of 2 to 4 and pray for one another, asking God to give each one the experience of trusting Him.

Daniel Solis, College Place, Washington, U.S.A.

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**INSTRUCTIONS:** Divide into teams. The object is for the *sending* member of each team to elicit the proper word from their *receiving* fellow team members by giving word clues. However, *senders* may not use part of a word itself. For example, “unrighteousness” may not be used as a clue for “righteousness.” Neither may senders use any of the five words in brackets. When a *receiving* team successfully responds, the *sender* proceeds to the next word on the list.

1. **FAITH** [trust, belief, Abraham, blind, hope]

2. **RECONCILIATION** [family, fight, marriage, divorce, children]

3. **JUSTIFICATION** [sanctification, judge, glorification, court, condemnation]

4. **PROMISE** [ring, marriage, keep, vow, pledge]

5. **PARDON** [parole, forgive, excuse, amnesty, punish]

6. **JUSTICE** [judge, peace, fair, reward, lawful]

7. **FORGIVENESS** [pardon, debt, penalty, punishment, demand]

8. **LAW** [officer, order, code, commandments, police]

9. **GOSPEL** [news, music, tidings, preach, Jesus]
Expounding the Faith

Surveying the Source
Rom. 5:1, 2.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Be able to explain the sources of their faith in Jesus Christ.
► Understand the uniqueness of the plan of salvation among all the other ideas in which human beings choose to place their faith.
► Experience a renewal of their appreciation for the significance of God’s redemption and of the future He has planned for us.

Preparing to Lead
While we generally have a positive reaction to the mention of faith, faith is only as good as that in which we place our faith. People have had faith in dictators, cult leaders, and ponzi schemes. We would be justified in regarding such faith as misguided. Perhaps the most misguided of all is faith in faith.

As Christians, we are not asked to have what many refer to as blind faith. Indeed, we are invited to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8). God shows us that He is worthy of our trust by the way He works in our lives and hearts. With that faith, we can then learn about Him, and claim the grace He has for us now and in the world to come.

Getting Started
A. Have your class do the reproducible activity on page 36. After an appropriate amount of time, have the students share their answers.

Ask them if they have ever considered how much of their lives are based on faith in people and things that are fallible.

Explain that as beings with limited knowledge of the future, it is necessary to take certain things on faith. When we trust other people or human inventions or institutions, the risk always exists that they may fail or betray us. For example, bungee cords usually work. Still, there have been many instances where they have not, leaving the people who trusted them in a tight spot indeed. But God cannot fail us or betray us, and His plans for us are recorded in His word.

B. The following variation on activity A may be more effective if you think that class members might be reluctant to share their thoughts and opinions individually, and if your class is fairly large: Have class members break up into groups of 3–5. Give each group a copy of the activity sheet on page 36. Have each group discuss the survey and suggest answers to fit into the categories. Each group will then appoint one member to report back to the class as a whole with their answers. Discuss as in activity A.

Materials
none required
Delving Into the Word

A. Say: “George Plimpton was known for writing non-fiction books based on his participating in many different activities. These activities usually had a fairly steep learning curve, and serious and immediate consequences for mistakes or failure. Examples included playing professional football (Plimpton had the perfect build for, well, writing), and performing in a high-wire trapeze act. He didn’t just write his books, he lived them.

“Hebrews 12:2 describes Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith. He conceived the plan of salvation. But He also came and did what was necessary to make it a plan of salvation for us. His plan necessitated that He play the most central and dangerous role. This is what we have faith in, and Jesus’ act of ‘sealing the deal’ is why we can have faith in it!”

Ask individuals to read the following texts: John 1:14; Philippians 2:5–11; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 13:8. Ask: “What do these passages tell us about our faith and the One we have faith in?

B. Say: “What does the word faith mean to you? For most people, it is a word they hear in church, a part of religious language or ‘Christianese’ that they can put out of their mind after they shake the pastor’s hand on the way out. It may be what they call the impulse that makes them do religious things. Or it may be a term for the set of dogmas and beliefs that make up a given religious system such as the ‘Christian faith’ or the ‘Buddhist faith.’

“All of these definitions have their strengths and weaknesses; but they fall short of the biblical idea of faith, which is trust in a God who has shown time and again that He can be trusted, even when He can’t trust us. But as in human relationships, faith must exist not only in one’s head, but in the heart. It must manifests itself in our actions toward God and our fellow humans.”

Have your class look up the following texts about faith: Romans 3:3; Hebrews 11:1; James 2:14–26; Jude 3. Ask: ●“How do these texts compliment each other?” ●“How do they describe the cycle that starts with belief and then moves through acting upon one’s belief, to sharing the belief with others?

Discussing the Ideas

1. Since our faith is based on what is revealed to us in the Bible, how do we know we can trust the Bible?
2. Why is faith necessary to please—and therefore to have peace with—God?
3. How does the life and ministry of Christ give us hope for the world to come?
4. How is true faith shown by one’s actions in the world at large?
5. What part does the proclamation of our faith to others play in our life of faith?

Closing the Activity

Faith is how God reaches out to us in our imperfect, sin-scarred world.

Discuss how can we use and apply our faith so it becomes stronger.

Say: “Faith is a gift from God. But like other gifts, we can tinker with it enthusiastically for a while, then neglect it, only to find that when we come back to it, it has become rusty and unusable. Let’s not do that. Instead, let’s keep learning more about God. Let’s keep trusting Him, and teaching others to trust Him. You can’t give away what you don’t have.”

Alan Hecht, Takoma Park, Maryland, U.S.A.
**Directions:** List five things in your daily life that require you to have faith in order to function. For example, when you listen to the weather report, it is of no use to you unless you accept that the meteorologist is at least trying to tell the truth according to the available computer models. Then briefly explain what makes it possible to put your faith in these things (past experience of accuracy, et cetera).

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Victory Over Sin

Surveying the Source
Romans 6; 1 John 1:8–2:10.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Acknowledge and examine their own propensity to sin.
► Review the nature and effects of sin, and the solution offered by Christ.
► Intentionally decide to more closely model the sinless One.

Preparing to Lead
It shouldn’t be unsettling to Christians, but here and there Paul’s words in Romans 6 appear to be confusing. Especially key words like died and death. So let’s try to be clear. When we are baptized in Him, we are baptized into His death. We die to our sinful life as we go under the water; and when we arise from the water, we begin a new life of transformation in Him.

Even more so is the effect on us when Christ was crucified. As surely as Christ was raised from death to a new life, so are we, since He died for us, rather than for Himself.

Paul, in fact, says our old selves died with Him on the cross. That death meant we’re no longer sin slaves. Instead, Paul says, we’re now slaves to God and the law of grace, rather than to death and the law of sin.

Getting Started
A. Start the study with a brief and well-planned story of an encounter you’ve had with someone who has a very different view of sin from yours. Follow the story with a forecast of the major issues you feel should be covered today.
B. Begin with a brief true-false quiz. Here are some sample questions:

1. True or False: Though sin is sin, not all sins are equally significant.
2. True or False: Grace is the bridge between our sins and God’s acceptance of us as we are.
3. True or False: It’s not up to Christ to guard us from sinning.

Delving Into the Word
A. Distribute individual cards, one to each member, with single texts—not the content—on each card selected from 1 John 1:8 through 2:10. Select two additional members to read aloud the content of those texts. (The readers should read alternate texts in readers’ theatre style.) Now ask card holders to respond to their text after it is read. Perhaps they can respond by citing why the text is so, how the text is so, or what it means to the Christian life. This may generate wider
discussing today’s study. Follow that with a final point of your own and/or the following quote: “In men whom I find so much of goodness still. / In men whom I find so much of sin and blot / I do not dare to draw a line / between the two, where God has not.”

**Loren Dickinson, College Place, Washington, U.S.A.**

Draw a model or scheme of the process of salvation (sinning, forgiveness, and righteousness). Once drawn, explain your model or scheme to the class.
The Person of Romans 7

Surveying the Source
Romans 7.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Investigate their relationship to God’s law.
► Discover the purpose of God’s law.

Preparing to Lead
God’s law was written in stone and handed to Moses on Mount Sinai. But it also must be written in the hearts of those who choose Christ as their Lord.

The law is not simply rules and regulations by which we should live, and once achieved we don’t have to worry about them. Rather, they form the very fabric by which we conduct our daily lives, because we actually have a relationship with God’s law. Our understanding of the law, its role in our lives, and our response to it is determined by who we believe Jesus is.

Getting Started
A. Divide your class into groups of 3 to 5 people. Have each group discuss the following questions. Have each group appoint a scribe to keep track of the discussion. Allow 5 to 10 minutes for this exercise. Then have each group share their answers with the entire class. ● Have you ever told someone about their faults? How did they take it? ● Have you ever had a friend challenge you on your areas of weakness? If so, how did they point them out to you? Were they gentle and constructively critical, or did they overwhelm you with details and leave you feeling completely discouraged? How did either make you feel? ● Can it be good to have someone point out your weaknesses to you? What would it take for you to listen to such difficult feedback on your personal choices, behaviors, or thought patterns?

B. Divide your class into groups of 3 to 5 people. Have each group discuss the following questions. Have each group appoint a scribe to keep track of the discussion. Allow 5 to 10 minutes for this exercise. Then have each group share their answers with the entire class. ● What resolutions, New Year’s or otherwise, seem to be the easiest to make and break? Why is that? ● What other areas of resolution do we struggle with? ● What types of things do you try not to do, but find yourself doing over and over again?

● Describe the thought processes someone might go through in this struggle. What are the feelings during the struggle and then after—whether they succeeded or gave in? How does this type of struggle play out in your life?
Delving Into the Word

A. Have the class read through Romans 7, answering the following sets of questions as you go: ●Verse 1—How long does the law have jurisdiction over a person? What, therefore, is the only thing that can end the law’s jurisdiction? ●Verse 4—Who dies? What do we die to? Why should there be death? Why should we be joined to another? ●Verses 5, 6—What was life like when joined to the law, and then after dying to the law and being joined to Christ? ●Verse 7—What purpose does the law have in this process? ●Verses 14, 15—What does death to the law and marriage to Christ bring about in our lives? ●Verse 21—What does Paul say this conflict proves? ●What would it mean, then, if someone didn’t have this inner conflict? ●Does this mean that this conflict is a good thing, because it reveals the law? Should we be thankful for this inner conflict?

B. Have the class read Romans 7:2, 3; 9–12; and 14–25, answering the following sets of questions as you go: ●In this marriage analogy, who does the woman represent? Who does her husband represent? Who is the “other man”? ●Why does Paul use a marriage analogy to describe our relationship with the law? What does this say about the seriousness of our relationship to the law? ●How was Paul once alive apart from the law? ●How did the commandments make sin alive in him? Does this mean the commandment causes us to sin? ●How was the commandment originally supposed to result in life? How did it then, instead, result in death? ●After all that, how does Paul come to conclude that the law is “holy, righteous, and good” (NIV)? ●What does this conflict reveal about the law? ●How does doing the things I don’t want to do, and vice versa, reveal the law to be good? ●What are the two different laws Paul sees? Where are they manifest? ●Why is Paul wretched? Who will set him free from this body of this death?

Discussing the Ideas

1. Why is it important to study our relationship to God’s law? How does it help our spiritual growth to understand our relationship to His law?
2. Romans 7:8 says that sin took opportunity through the commandment. How does sin take opportunity through the law? Isn’t the law a statement that cannot be changed?
3. How can we tell if the decrease of the inner conflict is a reflection of spiritual maturity and better discipline or a turning away from God’s law?
4. Is living without God like living without a law? How have you seen this in society? How does this explain nonbelievers who are good, law-abiding citizens?
5. How is sin shown to be “utterly sinful” through the law? (Rom. 7:13, NIV).

Closing the Activity

Conclude by giving each class member a copy of the “My Relationship to God’s Law” worksheet (p. 38). Explain to the class that God’s law has been likened to many things: ●It’s like a road sign that declares our sin. ●It’s like a mirror that reveals our flaws. ●It’s like a friend who points out our weaknesses.

Ask each member to personally consider which item on the worksheet most closely reflects how they see God’s law. Have them write inside their chosen picture what they hear God’s law telling them, and remind them to bring these issues to God in personal prayer.

Candice Jaques, Seven Hills, New South Wales, Australia
My Relationship to God’s Law

Consider the pictures below, and decide which one most closely fits your perspective of God’s law. Write inside the picture what you believe God’s law is personally telling you. Take these issues to Him in prayer.

God’s law is like a road sign.  

God’s law is like a mirror.  

God’s law is like a friend.
Freedom in Christ

Surveying the Source
Rom. 8:1–17.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Know that the Trinity is working together for their spiritual freedom.
► Feel the exhilarating release that comes from the true freedom God offers us through Jesus.
    ► Invite God to release them from something that is hampering their sense of freedom.

Preparing to Lead
I heard a loud metallic crash outside my office window and looked up quickly to see if there had been an accident. I saw a man with a large hammer calmly smashing a police car parked on the opposite side of the road. He was arrested without any sign of a struggle. He had been released from prison a few weeks earlier. Now he was cold and lonely, and Christmas was coming. For him, freedom was miserable. The happiest place for him was in prison with his friends.

Getting Started
A. Divide into pairs and have each pair consider one of the following people:
   (1) a refugee who has escaped from war with two bags of belongings; (2) a person who has just given up smoking; (3) a pastor who has been imprisoned for talking about God’s love; (4) a toddler in a fenced yard; (5) a Christian businessman starting his first business; (6) a mother who has just had a baby; (7) God; (8) a yachtsman sailing single-handed; (9) add other situations to suit your context.
   Ask the pairs: “What has your character been released from, and what restrictions do they still have?”

B. Pass out the reproducible activity (p. 39). Seat someone at the table with a copy of the activity and a pen with colored ink. Stand a mirror in front of them, and have someone hold a piece of cardboard or stiff piece of paper up over their hands so they will have to use the mirror image to see where they are “driving.”
   Instruct the person to draw a straight line down the middle of the “road.” It will be difficult! Have as many students do this activity as time allows. Then discuss the feeling of being unable to control the direction of your life.

Delving Into the Word
A. Take a large sheet of flipchart paper and divide it into two columns: “Living a life ruled by the Holy Spirit” and “Living a life ruled by Self.”
   Divide into small groups or pairs and give each group one of the following
of the person on their left. Pray, asking Jesus to set each person free from their bonds through the Holy Spirit.

Then, circulate a pair of blunt-ended scissors, so each person can cut the wrist-band off the person to their right. Shred the bands if possible.

Give out the strips of card. Ask everyone to write one word or symbol on their strip to illustrate a problem/sin from which they would love to be released. Then wrap the strip around their wrist. Pass adhesive tape around the circle, with each person taping together the strip and emotionally strong?

4. Many people don’t realize how imprisoned they are by their own habits and choices. Focus on a group of people in your community, and discuss what you could do as a class to help them taste true freedom.

5. As a child of God, what would you most like do with your Father?

6. How can we “share in the glory of Christ”? What does this mean to you?

Bible passages to explore: ●Romans 8:1–4; ●8:5–8; ●8:9–11; ●8:12–17.

Ask them to write a description of life under the Holy Spirit’s rule, or under the rule of self, according to the verses they have been given.

When they are ready, ask them to add their ideas to the large sheet of paper. Then invite everyone to spend a few quiet moments reflecting on the two different descriptions and especially the life of true freedom we have in Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

Invite class members to create something simple that illustrates freedom through Jesus. They can use plain white paper and a card, pens, glue, tape, and scissors to create whatever they would like: a sculpture, a poem, a word picture, or a cutout shape, et cetera. Let those who want to, place their work in the center of the group for everyone to reflect on.

Pray, thanking God for the gift of freedom through Jesus.

B. Divide your class into four groups. Give each group one of the following characters to study in Romans 8:1–17:

●God, the Father; ●Jesus Christ; ●the Holy Spirit; ●or self.

Ask each group to write a job description for their character based purely on the information given in this passage.

The description should include: ●job title; ●line manager; ●working conditions—pay, hours, staff benefits, et cetera; ●description of the role—tasks involved; necessary skills; or useful characteristics.

Then have each group write a job advert for their character that could be printed in the local newspaper. Have them present the job description and advert to the larger group as if it is their management team. How might management adjust the descriptions and adverts?

Discuss the roles that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit should play in our lives and the role we have in responding to the freedom offered through Jesus.

Invite them to write their own personal job description as a child of God. Encourage them to live that job description through the week and to bring back stories of their experience to the next class.

Discussing the Ideas

1. Think about a time when you felt totally free. Why did you feel so free, and how could you experience that feeling again?

2. In Romans 8:1–17, which verse or phrase is most about Jesus, God, or the Holy Spirit? Which verse is most about you?

3. If you were imprisoned for being a Christian, what would you do to ensure that you stayed spiritually, physically, and emotionally strong?

4. Many people don’t realize how imprisoned they are by their own habits and choices. Focus on a group of people in your community, and discuss what you could do as a class to help them taste true freedom.

5. As a child of God, what would you most like do with your Father?

6. How can we “share in the glory of Christ”? What does this mean to you?

Closing the Activity

Give out the strips of card. Ask everyone to write one word or symbol on their strip to illustrate a problem/sin from which they would love to be released. Then wrap the strip around their wrist. Pass adhesive tape around the circle, with each person taping together the strip of the person on their left. Pray, asking Jesus to set each person free from their bonds through the Holy Spirit.

Then, circulate a pair of blunt-ended scissors, so each person can cut the wrist-band off the person to their right. Shred the bands if possible.

Karen Holford, Auchtermuchty, Cupar, Fife, Scotland, United Kingdom

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22
CQ RACE TRACK
Look in the mirror in front of you, not down at your hands. “Drive” your pen around the racing circuit as quickly as possible!
Redemption for Jew and Gentile

Surveying the Source
John 12:44–50; Romans 9.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Understand the importance of being chosen by God to do a special work, and know what mistakes they made in the past, and how to avoid them in their walk with Christ.
► Appreciate how God calls special groups of people to His work while still valuing everyone equally and gifting salvation to all.
► Present realistic ideas of how to reach out to the “gentiles” in their lives, and meditate on how they can follow God more consistently in their daily lives.

Preparing to Lead
“By healing the Roman officer’s servant . . . and preaching to the Samaritans, Jesus had already shown that He didn’t share the Jewish prejudice toward others. His love wasn’t restricted to any race or nation. [The disciples] began to understand that their mission would reach beyond Israel—that there was a world filled with people in need.”

John 12:44–50; Romans 9.

Getting Started
A. Put copies of the “Romans 9” activity (p. 40) between the students and the donuts (leaving enough space between each person to discourage collaboration). Tell them that only after they have cut a hole in their paper big enough for them to step through may they have a donut. However, before class begins, take one student aside, and show him/her the secret to getting through. After a few minutes, when the one student has gotten the donut, hand out fresh copies of the activity, but this time have the donut-eating student carefully demonstrate how to cut the paper.
B. As everyone comes into the room, give them either a colored candle or a white candle. Then have all the people with white candles separate. Turn off the lights. (You may need to black out any windows beforehand, or use a room with little natural lighting.) Use the lighter to light only the candles of the people with white candles. Now allow those individuals to light the rest of the candles. Give everyone a couple minutes to make silent observations. Turn the lights back on.

Delving Into the Word
A. Have the class read Romans 9 aloud, each person taking a few verses. *Then ask: “At the beginning of the activity, how was the one student with a donut...
like Israel?” ●“Did being the only one with a donut induce feelings of superiority?” ●“How was the rest of the class feeling?” ●“What parallels can be drawn between this and the people in Bible times and today’s Christians?”

Using a whiteboard, or a piece of paper, map out these similarities and differences using a Venn diagram.

Ask: “When the circle-cutting part of the introductory activity was explained, how did that demonstrate God’s true plan for His chosen people?” Read John 12:44–50. Ask: ●“Did everyone have to listen and obey when the explanation was given on how to get a donut?” ●“Why might you choose not to listen?” ●“Does everyone have to believe in God?” ●“What happens when we do things our own way?”

Have some students read Romans 9:17–19; 2 Peter 3:9; and Romans 9:20–24. Ask: ●“What picture do we get of God in these verses?” ●“What role should His chosen people play?”

B. Read Romans 9. Ask: ●“Did the color of your candle affect how it burned?” ●“Could you even see the color of the candle without the lights on, or only the brightness of the flame?” ●“Did you notice how much brighter it was with all the candles lit versus only a few?” Refer back to Romans 9, especially verses 1–5, 14–17, and 30–33. Then ask: ●“How do the candles illustrate this week’s lesson?” ●“What truths can we learn about God and His chosen few from this activity?”

Read John 12:44–50. On the whiteboard, make a chart. On one side, put reasons to “stay in the dark” (figuratively and literally). On the other, list benefits of being in the light. Ask: ●“Why would anyone choose to stay in the dark” (John 12:42, 43; Rom. 9:31–33)? ●“What is God’s ideal for His chosen people” (Rom. 9:30–32; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 9:17, 20–24)? ●“How is this illustration of light versus darkness appropriate for both Israel and today’s church?”

Discussing the Ideas

1. What mistakes did the children of Israel make when it came to fulfilling God’s purpose? How can some of the same mistakes be seen in today’s church?
2. How can the Lord still reach the unsaved when His chosen people refuse? Why is this not His ideal?
3. Why is having a chosen group important to the Lord?
4. Why did God choose to use a specific ethnic group in the time of the Old Testament, but now chooses to use many people of all ethnicities? What benefits are there to having a group made up of all types of people?
5. How can Satan use our calling as God’s chosen people to hinder God’s work?
6. Change starts in the heart. What attitudes are conducive to furthering Jesus’ work and enlarging His family?

Closing the Activity

Give everyone a piece of graph paper and two different colored pencils. Instruct them to graph their outreach, ministry, and witnessing activities along with their personal spiritual highs. Memorable events can be penciled in on all four lines. Ask: ●“Do times of heightened outreach or witnessing correspond with personal spiritual highs?” ●“Is the reverse also true?”

Underneath their graph, have them list five practical ways they can fulfill their purpose as God’s chosen person in the coming week.

Amanda Ernst, Douglasville, Georgia, U.S.A.


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**Practice Copy:** Try the activity at home during the week before class. (1) Cut out this box from the page. Fold in half along the horizontal line with the arrows at each end. (2) Then cut two slits down from the folded half near each edge perpendicular to the fold (the first lines near each edge). Do *not* snip off the ends of the paper. (3) Cut along the folded edge between the two slits. (4) Make about 40 cuts, alternating each cut: **first come down from the folded edge; then cut up from the unfolded edge.** The cuts need to be parallel to the first side slits you made. (5) Finally, *carefully* open up the hole in the card. It will unfold accordion style. If cut correctly, the hole will be large enough for you to step through.

Continue cutting toward the last downward cut that is shown on the right, alternating cuts as shown on the left. Your last cut should be up toward the fold.
The Election of Grace

Surveying the Source
Romans 10, 11.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Determine methods of spreading the gospel to “all the world,” therefore fulfilling God’s mission.
► Identify obstacles to salvation and realize that God is still “working on us.”
► Learn the lessons of history with respect to grace, soul winning, and salvation.

Preparing to Lead
After Paul introduced the plan of salvation in Asia and Greece, he planned to travel to Spain to continue his work there as well as in Italy.* He wanted the cooperation and assistance of the brethren in Rome, so he wrote a letter to the Christians there. After evangelizing a sector of our society, how can we cooperate with others as we go to new territory after beginning at “home”?

Getting Started
A. Say: “In Bible times, the Jewish Christians presumed they were the only ones who should be saved and did not wish to share the knowledge of Jesus with the Gentiles. Do we also presume that Jesus came to save only us and therefore others are too sinful to be introduced to Him and the grace He offers freely?”

Take time to discuss this question. Then discuss soul-winning methods which may be applicable to reaching various types of individuals in your city or town such as business persons, people of other faiths, drug addicts, street persons, co-workers, et cetera.

B. Choose two food crops grown in your area. Google the growing methods of your chosen plant. Share this information with the class. Ask: ●“Is there perfection at each stage?” ●“Does grafting take place in the crops?” ●“How can crop growth be equated with Christian growth?” ●“How can we nurture Christian ‘seedlings’ through to harvest?” ●“Each plant is different, but what similarities exist in growth patterns and methods of cultivation to ensure a better harvest?”

Delving Into the Word
A. Divide the class into groups of three or four people. Give each person in all the groups a copy of the reproducible activity on page 41. After each group has finished the activity, reconvene as a class to discuss their findings. Also consider asking the following questions: ●“Is salvation only for those who seek for themselves?” ●“Are there possibilities that persons in elevated positions in government and society might think salvation is not for them?” ●“How similar or different
is soul winning now?” ● “How about in countries where there is freedom of speech and religion versus countries where there are restrictions?” ● “Is there a right or wrong way, time, or place to worship God?” ● “What role should ceremony and customs play in worship?” ● “What does Jesus mean when in John 14:6, He says, ‘I am the way.’ ” ● “Why or why not is there hope for persons who once believed in Christ but became discouraged and turned away?” ● “Are we deserving of salvation (Ezek. 18:4)?” ● “Is salvation for all people (Rom. 11:23)?” ● “What role does the law have in our salvation?” ● “Does God give second chances if someone turns down salvation the first time? Support your answer from the Bible.”

B. Have class members in groups of two take turns giving a Bible study with the aim of convincing the other person that salvation is available to everyone despite background, gender, ethnicity, etcetera. Use the conversion of Paul, the request of the Ethiopian eunuch for baptism, Nicodemus’ enquiry about salvation as examples. Have the students find the relevant texts to support their argument. Discuss various methods Jesus used to encourage people to accept salvation. Discuss how these methods can be used today to encourage people you know to accept Jesus Christ.

Ask: ● “What role can television, the Internet, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, My Space, or blogs, play in taking the gospel around the world?” ● “How could you use books and tracts in soul-winning endeavors?” ● “What role does prayer have in the salvation of souls?”

Use concordances to find texts that show what methods can be used to determine the validity of those who claim to speak for God (1 John 4:1–3).

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. Use Romans 12 as a basis to discuss how we can serve others and encourage them to have a new life in Christ.

2. What methods would you suggest to fellow believers to use in soul-winning endeavors to reach persons who do not profess Christianity?

3. How can we use our different spiritual gifts, or the fruit of the Spirit, in soul-winning activities?

4. What is the task given by God to each Christian in the area of evangelism? How can we accomplish the mission of preaching to the entire world?

5. What is the relationship between preparing to share the message and willingness and zeal? (See Romans 1:16, 17.) What role does prayer have in our ministry to those who are not Christian?

6. After having received the grace and forgiveness of God, how eager should we be to share the good news with everyone?

7. Do God’s chosen people have a greater right to salvation than anyone else?

**Closing the Activity**

Ask: “If you were to lose your most precious possession because of harsh economics, poor management, natural disasters, war, oppression, etcetera, how would it affect your salvation?” Then discuss the story of Job. Ask your class if they could be like Job, who in the end remained true to God. Ask: “What opportunity can you create that will allow you to tell the ‘good news’ to others, even to casual acquaintances (1 John 4:7–11, 15–17).”

Ask: “Like Paul, we have received salvation. What responsibility does this place on us to share this information with others?”

Beverly I. Henry, Mandeville, Manchester, Jamaica, West Indies

*The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 468.*
**Directions:** Based on the texts in the chart below, identify examples and methods of soul winning and of persons making decisions to follow Jesus. What motivated these people and why? Not all texts necessarily involve a specific individual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Soul Winning Example</th>
<th>Person and Motivation</th>
<th>Method Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luke 15:8–10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 15:11–32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>John 4:1–42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Love and Law

Surveying the Source

Romans 12, 13.

Plotting the Course

The students will:

► Appreciate that the laws of God are ultimately expressions of His love—even tough love.

► Understand how they can choose to hate the sin they love.

► Realize that submission is essential, but it doesn’t always have to be done publicly to experience God’s love.

Preparing to Lead

Read to the class at the beginning:

“The substitute teacher (sub) entered a class of 16-year-olds who were known to be quite disruptive. Sam sat in the back facing his friend, Reuben.

“What's your name? Where are you from? We don't do any work in this class, Sir!” Sam said to the sub. The sub managed to get the class to do some work, on the understanding that they could ask him personal questions at the end. Reuben became disruptive and, in accordance with the rules, backup was called for immediately.

“Reuben, you're not working as promised,” the sub stated.

“Look! I’ve done half a page in this one lesson alone!”

“Do you have a question you’d like to ask me at the end, Reuben?”

Reuben hastily scribbled a few more lines, and was reasonably quiet, as was the rest of the class.

Getting Started

A. Divide the class into two groups. Ask them to select someone to take notes. The instructions for each group are:

● “Think of four situations or activities that make you happy.” ● “Say why each one makes you happy.” ● “Are there rules/laws governing those situations or activities?” ● “How do those rules/laws contribute to your happiness?” ● “Do you think about the rules/laws when you are enjoying yourself?” ● “Do you think the rules/laws are bad? Why or why not?”

Bring the class together and ask the notetakers to report back.

Ask: ● “Why do some people think the rules/laws are good while others think they are bad?” ● “Who or what makes a rule/law good or bad?”

Remind the class of Reuben’s role, then ask: ● “What did Reuben do so he could ask the sub a personal question?” ● “What was the sub’s approach?”

B. Divide the class into three groups. Ask them to select a notetaker. Give each group a newspaper story that fits the theme of this week’s lesson and a sheet of paper and a pencil. The instructions for each group are for two or three individuals to share the reading of the story, then have the entire group:

Identify the materials

Bibles, pencils, sheets of paper, three newspaper clippings of bad news

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the good person/s and the bad person/s in the story. Also have each group answer the following questions: ●“What rules were broken or upheld?” ●“Explain if the rules were good or bad.”

Bring the class together to discuss the nature of Reuben’s submission. Ask if submission should always be public, particularly when dealing with God. (Obtain different students’ opinions and suggest that we can submit to God in secret.)

Delving Into the Word

A. Use the reproducible activity on page 42. After the groups have finished, have the entire class explore these questions: ●“Why do we have laws?” ●“How can we learn to love a law that is fair but that also seems oppressive?” ●“How easy is it to feel at ease with a law that you like as opposed to one that you don’t like?” ●“If you don’t steal, lie, commit adultery, et cetera, are those commandments always uppermost in your mind? Explain.” ●“Why does the application of rules in love make one happier?” ●“Do people who try to rigidly keep the commandments focus on love or on difficulties with their lifestyle as they confront the restrictions of rules? Explain.”

Close by saying: “God’s laws are expressions of His love for us, even of His tough love.”

B. On slips of paper, write the following texts: Exodus 20:8–11; Romans 12:9, 10; Romans 12:16; Romans 12:17–19; Romans 13:8–10. Then number the papers 1 through 5. Selecting a number at random, ask the person with that number to read the text aloud from a Bible. After each text is read, discuss the following questions: ●“What is the main rule(s) the text is referring to?” ●“Are there benefits for (a) keeping that rule? (b) for not keeping that rule?” ●“Which benefits in (a) and (b) are longer lasting and lead to more personal and communal happiness?” ●“How can a person who loves to do wrong change?”

Conclude with the thought that God’s laws are expressions of His love, and sometimes His tough love, for us.

Discussing the Ideas

1. Based on Romans 13:9, 10, what is the connection between law and love?
2. How does Romans 13:9 help us to understand that self-love is not wrong?
3. The law of love surpasses religious rules and civil laws. What does the law of love require of us that religious rules and civil laws do not? Read James 2:8, 9; 4:11; and 1 Peter 2:16, 17.
4. In Romans 13:13, Paul lists dissension and jealousy with the orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, and debauchery. Why do you think he does this?
5. If the law of love surpasses civil laws, does this mean we do not have to obey civil laws? Explain your answer.
6. When might obeying the law of love mean that we will have to disobey civil laws?

Closing the Activity

Remind the class that the reason Jesus died is because He knew people would sin. But because of His unconditional love for us, He died so that we can choose to have victory over sin.

Read to the class in a quiet but deliberate voice, the four verses of hymn number 317 in The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal. Read the chorus only after the fourth verse. Finish with prayer.

Albert A. C. Waite, Berkshire, United Kingdom
**Directions:** Divide the class into small groups. Have them write in the right column the correct Bible text that matches the appropriate text paraphrase in the middle column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Text</th>
<th>Text Paraphrase</th>
<th>Match the Correct Text to the Paraphrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lev. 26:43</td>
<td>God’s law shows us how to live.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exod. 20:8–11</td>
<td>Abusing God’s law for one’s own purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deut. 7:12</td>
<td>Do the right thing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 19:7</td>
<td>Punishment for disobeying God’s law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 119:18</td>
<td>Follow God’s law, and He will keep His covenant of love.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 119:165</td>
<td>God’s law is good when used properly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 5:17</td>
<td>God’s law teaches us how to worship Him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 23:15</td>
<td>Let me see how wonderful God’s law is.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rom. 12:9</td>
<td>God’s law is perfect. It refreshes us.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rom. 12:17–19</td>
<td>People who follow God’s law have peace.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rom. 13:8, 10</td>
<td>Love doesn’t harm. It fulfills the law.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Tim. 1:8</td>
<td>Putting a spin on God’s law to achieve one’s own end—to kill Jesus</td>
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The Heart of Christianity

Surveying the Source
Romans 14, 15, 16.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Appreciate the difference between judgment and discernment.
► Consider how rules can be important in our lives, faith, and church.
► Explore how to stand for right and make the best choices in kinder ways and how we influence and encourage others by the choices we make.

Preparing to Lead
One of the curious aspects of our celebrity culture is that whenever someone becomes famous, people begin to ask questions about their status as a role model. In a sense, they are looked up to, but whether they represent sufficient achievement or values to be truly considered a role model is often questionable. Yet in Romans 14 and 15, Paul urges that as Christians we are all role models to someone. We represent God by our actions and choices, and so we need to be mindful of how we influence others.

Getting Started
A. Collect food ingredients that are not pleasant on their own (flour, corn meal, salt, cocoa powder, sugar, jelly crystals, et cetera). Blindfold two volunteers and ask them to taste a small amount of each ingredient. Have water available for them to rinse out their mouths. Can they tell the difference between the different substances? Are there some they would like more of? Say that this is a kind of judging known as discernment. Ask how this is different from the judgment Paul talks about in Romans 14. State that we need to be able to distinguish between what is right and wrong, good and evil.
B. Ask students to think about what life might be like if there were no rules. At first, they might think this would be a relief from the restrictions that rules place on them. But how would it work in practice? This is similar to the situation in which some of the early Christians found themselves. They had been in different religions that had many rules. But when they chose to follow Jesus, they realized that some of these rules were not so important. This was what Paul was talking about in Romans 14 and 15. Read 1 Corinthians 10:23, 24. So might some rules be good for us? Is doing what we want always best?

Delving Into the Word
A. Distribute copies of the reproducible activity to class members (p. 43). Working individually or in pairs, ask class members to rewrite the texts in their own
words, not just updating the language but also applying the verses specifically to their lives today. Have Bibles available for class members to use in completing this activity. Some different translations will be helpful for them to get a better grasp of the meaning of the texts; and reading through Romans 14 will give a broader context for these three verses.

When completed, ask class members to read their version of the texts to the class. Compare and discuss any differences that arise between the various “translations.” Emphasize Paul’s focus on living in such a way as to encourage one another. If your class has a permanent meeting space, these versions of the texts could be placed on a notice board or wall as reminders of this activity in coming weeks.

B. In a 2008 report in *Adventist World*, General Conference president Jan Paulsen made the following statement: “It is more important to be kind than it is to be right.” Divide the class into two groups. Assign one group the task of arguing for this statement, while the other group argues against it.

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. How would you explain the difference between judgment as a bad thing and discernment as a good thing?
2. How do rules help make life better?
3. The Bible urges us to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8, NLT). Do we also need to “taste and see” to know that things are wrong? Explain.
4. Think of someone you admire. How do they influence your life?
5. How concerned should we be about how our choices or actions influence or affect others?
6. Do you consider yourself to be a role model? Why or why not? If yes, for whom?
7. What is one thing you could do this week to encourage someone in their faith or to making a positive life choice?

**Closing the Activity**

Say: “At the end of his letter to the Romans, Paul lists many friends and colleagues with whom he had worked. It is significant that such an important church leader, missionary, and evangelist gave such space to supposedly ‘little people.’ Paul recognized the importance of thanking those who had supported him.” Next, tell each group to base their arguments primarily on Romans 14–16; but they can draw on any biblical references that support their case. Direct class members to engage thoughtfully with what Paul is saying in these chapters. Provide pens and paper for taking notes.

After preparation and discussion time, allow each side to present their arguments, whether using formal debating procedure or simply allowing representatives from each group to explain how and why they agree or disagree with the statement.

When both sides have presented their arguments, lead a discussion in which each side can reflect on these questions from both perspectives: ●“Why is it important to be right?” ●“Why is it important to be kind?” ●“Is one more important than the other?” ●“Do you think Paul would agree with Jan Paulsen?” ●“Reflect on whether the ‘debate’ was conducted in a kind or unkind manner.” ●“How was that helpful or unhelpful to making sense of the question being explored?”

**Nathan Brown, Warburton, Victoria, Australia**
“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17).

“For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men” (Rom. 14:18).

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom. 14:19).