Lesson 1 Objective

That class members will
1) understand why idolaters are guilty and what their rejection of God has done to their bodies and minds;
2) see the danger of judging others for things we do ourselves, since all sin is liable to judgment; and
3) sense the need to avoid hypocritical judgmentalism.

Lesson Preparation Idea

1. Look up the word “sin” in a Bible dictionary.
2. Pray that God will use the truth of this lesson to help free your students from any struggle with sin they may be having.

 Romans 1:1—2:16

Romans 1:1-17 in Brief

Paul began his Letter to the Romans by affirming his apostleship and his special commission to further the Gospel. This Gospel centers on the person of Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human, whom God the Father raised from the dead.

Paul’s appointed ministry from Jesus Christ was to the Gentiles, including the Romans. And just as Paul was called to be an apostle, so believers in Rome were called to belong to Jesus Christ and to follow Him wholeheartedly.

Paul desired to visit the Christians in Rome. He desired not only to bring spiritual blessing to them but also to benefit from their spiritual gifts. Paul understood the importance of mutual encouragement.

Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because it represented the power of God that made salvation possible. That salvation is available to all who believe, first to the Jew, then for the Gentile. The righteousness of God, received only by faith, is revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

God’s Wrath (1:18-23)

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. —Romans 1:18

Since Paul’s primary focus in Romans is salvation through Jesus Christ, he set the stage by pointing to human sin and the subsequent need for redemption. The one who does not sense a problem (sin) will not seek a solution (salvation). Paul began by affirming that God’s wrath was being revealed against the wickedness of all those who suppressed the truth (vs. 18). This is something that is occurring even now, as people continue to believe their own deceptive hearts.

The individuals described in Romans 1 were certainly worthy of God’s wrath, for they suppressed God’s truth. The word “suppress” means “hold down with force.”

Like a ball held under water, however, God’s truth will one day rise explosively to the surface. What

Questions and Activities (about 9 minutes)

1. Headline writing. Ask each of your students to write a headline about the most evil or unjust act they have heard about recently.
When everyone is done writing, have your students give their names and read their headlines. Explain that Paul began Romans talking about God’s response to the problem of sin.

- **Truthfulness game.** Because the Lord is holy and just, He must deal harshly with the kind of sin that makes light of God’s truth (vs. 18). When that kind of rebellion is left unchecked, it rapidly destroys individuals, families, and societies.

  Suppressing truth takes a concerted effort. To demonstrate this, instruct two volunteers to leave the room and find out something that is true about one but not the other—something the class doesn’t already know (for example, that one of them is a coin collector). While they are out of the room, explain to the others that the object of the game is to determine which of the two is telling the truth.

  Once the two volunteers have identified something unique about one of them, have them come back into the room and tell you what they’ve determined. Announce to the class, “One of these two is a coin collector” (or whatever the unique quality might be). Then have the class members begin asking questions designed to uncover the truth. By giving brief answers to the questions asked, each volunteer must try to convince the class that he or she is the one of whom the quality is true. After the class has asked four to five questions, have class members vote on which of the two is telling the truth. Then reveal the truth.

- **God has made the truth about Himself obvious to everyone through His creation.** Everyone has the opportunity to know and embrace that truth; therefore, those who reject it will be held responsible (vss. 19, 20).

  Romans 1:18-23

  is the truth these individuals suppressed? The character of God and His invisible qualities revealed in creation.

  God’s eternal power and divine nature are demonstrated through what He has made (vss. 19, 20). This is known as natural revelation because God uses the created order to disclose a part of Himself. Special revelation, in contrast, is the disclosure of God’s character through the written words of Scripture.

  God is an invisible spirit (see John 4:24; Col. 1:15). Though the physical eye cannot see Him, His existence is reflected in what He has made.

  Because God has disclosed Himself in creation, all people stand condemned before God. The condemnation of those who suppress God’s truth is justified because ignoring the revelation of God in creation is indefensible.

  **WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO HAVE NOT HEARD?**

  **What happens to those who have not heard the Gospel? Would God condemn people for not accepting a message they never received?**

  Romans 1 makes it clear that God has revealed Himself to all people, regardless of their exposure (or lack of exposure) to the Gospel. Before people suppressed God’s truth, they could see His power in the natural order. According to Paul, they could see His invisible qualities, including His holiness—and the absence of holiness in themselves. Before suppressing the truth, every person could sense his or her “disconnectedness” from the Creator of the universe, and their consequent need for reconciliation.

  In rare cases this inner need for redemption has driven people—people who have never heard the Gospel—to acknowledge their sinfulness and to ask for reconciliation with the God who has revealed Himself in nature. Hebrews 11:6 paints this as a starting point—believing in God’s existence. For all who seek Him (Acts 17:27), God will prove Himself a rewarder. Acts 10 and 11 provide a case study of one who sought God sincerely and to whom God revealed Himself savingly in Jesus Christ.

  In most cases, however, the inner need for redemption is repressed or ignored, and people seek out substitutes for God. They have sunk so deep that only the special revelation of God—the Bible—can pull them out. For these who are lost, we must continue to preach the Gospel.
Romans 1:24-32

Romans 1:21-25 indicates that these individuals worshiped the creation instead of the Creator. By seeing the intricate design of the universe, they could clearly understand the nature of God. Instead of glorifying God for His power, however, they looked for substitutes. In their foolishness they refused to give thanks to God. Their thinking became futile and their hearts were darkened.

When people turn from God’s truth, their ability to perceive truth becomes impaired. This should motivate us to study and apply the Scriptures (God’s special revelation) on a consistent basis.

Ask Yourself . . . How strong is my commitment to the study of God’s Word?

These individuals turned away from God to create their own deities patterned after various creatures. Notice something of a descending hierarchy: man, birds, animals, and reptiles. These individuals went from bad to worse, creating deities after increasingly weaker creatures. Serving and worshiping idols yields virtually nothing but alienation from God. Anything we elevate above the Lord can become an idol—money, possessions, success, power, even relationships. Our source of ultimate security and peace should always be God.

This is a Roman statue of a centaur, a mythical half man, half horse. Paul told the Roman church that rebellious people exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like humans and animals.

Ask Yourself . . . Do I place more security in accomplishments, wealth, or people than I do in God?

Condemnation of the Idolater (1:24-32)

Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. —Romans 1:28

Because of their idolatry, God abandoned the Gentiles (or gave them over) to their depravity. Instead of attempting to restrain their wickedness, God simply allowed their sin to run its course. He removed His influence and permission.

Questions and Activities

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What have you come to understand about God through His creation?

Pairs discussion. Those who suppressed the truth refused to give God the respect and thanks that belonged to Him. They trusted in objects that could never provide security, purpose, or meaning (vss. 21-23).

Have your students get together in pairs and discuss the following question.

When people look to something outside of God for security (for example, money, possessions, position, relationships), what fundamental truths are they rejecting?

Possible responses: They are rejecting the truths that God is the only source of true security, and that the feelings of security that the objects of idolatry provide will one day vanish.

Have each pair write out its answers. After a couple of minutes of discussion, ask each pair to read its list aloud.

Condemnation of the Idolater (1:24-32)

Section Summary

When people refused to respond to the light of truth, God allowed them to degrade their bodies and minds. They became sexually impure, and among other things, engaged in homosexual activity.

Possible responses: They are exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like humans and animals. Paul wrote that God removed His influence and permission.

Consequences list. Because of their idolatry, God gave people over to their desires. They became sexually impure, engag-
ing in homosexual activity (vss. 24-27).

Paul spoke of actively homosexual men who “received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion” (vs. 27). That application might include sexually transmitted diseases. However, it’s a general principle that sins can have negative consequences for those who commit them.

Draw a vertical line for a two-column chart on a whiteboard or piece of newsprint. At the top of the left column write the word “SIN”; at the top of the right column, write the word “CONSEQUENCE.” On the left side of the line, list some of the sins mentioned in verses 24-32. Ask your students to suggest some of the natural consequences of these sins; then have them get up and write their answers in the second column. When you are finished, your chart might look something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIN</th>
<th>CONSEQUENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>heterosexual sin</td>
<td>unwanted pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homosexual activity</td>
<td>sexually transmitted diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>envy</td>
<td>dissatisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>murder</td>
<td>death penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strife</td>
<td>social unrest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deceit</td>
<td>distrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malice</td>
<td>emotional coldness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greed</td>
<td>financial crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gossip</td>
<td>ruined relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slander</td>
<td>ruined reputations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrogance</td>
<td>friendlessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senselessness</td>
<td>disorder and chaos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXTRA

Depending on the translation, Paul characterized homosexual acts as “indecent” or a “perversion” (vs. 27). Yet such acts are widely accepted in our society.

How would you respond to someone who believes that homosexual activity is not sin?

These rebellious people dismissed God and participated in allowed their willful rejection to produce its natural and inevitable consequences, which in this case were deadly.

What did God give the Gentiles over to? Verse 24 indicates it was sexual impurity. Paul was writing from Corinth, the location of Aphrodite’s temple. At the time Romans was written, this temple housed hundreds of temple prostitutes who were used sexually as an act of worship to false gods. These degrading acts were believed to provoke the gods into doing similar acts, which resulted in increased crops and larger families. Such religious prostitution was common in Roman culture. In this way these pagans exchanged the truth of God for a lie (vs. 25a).

The exchange of God’s truth for lies involved an exchange in worship. People served the creation instead of the Creator (vs. 25b). As soon as Paul wrote this and recognized the utter falsehood of this substitution, he burst forth in praise and sealed his exclamation with an “Amen.”

In verse 26 we read for the second time that God “gave them over”—this time to sexual perversion. Unlike the immorality of the cultic prostitutes, these sexual sins were private. Individuals perverted God’s gift of sex in the context of homosexual acts (vss. 26, 27). Men and women exchanged natural relations (between men and women) with unnatural relations (men with men and women with women).

The natural result of exchanging the truth of God for a lie was the exchange of natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. For this twofold exchange, they received the due penalty for their perversion. Sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis and gonorrhea killed hundreds of thousands of people in ancient cities like Corinth and Rome—wherever these acts were common. Sexually transmitted diseases were as much a problem then as they are today.

Homosexual practice is consistently condemned in Scripture (see Lev. 18:22; I Cor. 6:9, 10; I Tim. 1:9, 10). The only sexual relationship recognized as God-honoring is a heterosexual one within the context of marriage (see Gen. 2:21-24; Matt. 19:4-6).

While engaging in sex within marriage is a gift from God, sexual intercourse outside of, or prior to, marriage is a sin against oneself and God. As Christians we must be careful to guard this area of our lives. God requires sexual purity of those who would follow Him.

In Romans 1:28 we read for the third time that God “gave them over” —this time to a depraved mind. These Gentiles put God’s reasonable boundaries out of their minds, and God responded by abandoning them to warped thinking. Out of this mind-set comes all kinds of evil deeds. From this we can see that the intent in the mind always precedes the sinful act (see Mark 7:20-23). As Christians we are commanded to take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ (see II Cor. 10:5). We accomplish this by guarding what goes...
into our minds (see Phil. 4:8) and by testing the truthfulness of our thoughts by comparing them with the Word of God.

Ask Yourself . . . Do I guard what goes into my mind?

Romans 1:29, 30 define for us what is meant by “what ought not to be done” (vs. 28). Paul categorized the behavior of these individuals into four kinds of active sin: wickedness (the opposite of righteousness), evil (the profound absence of empathy, shame, and goodness), greed (the relentless urge to acquire more than one needs), and depravity (a constant bent toward immorality).

These four basic kinds of active sin in turn express themselves in specific ways. Those whom God has let go are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God haters; they are insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless (vss. 29-31).

The sinful behavior of these individuals was not due to ignorance of God’s commands (vs. 32). Rather, they sinned despite their knowledge of God, making them all the more responsible. Not only that, but they also applauded these practices in others. Perhaps seeing others do these things filled them with a sense of self-justification. In any case, they received what they deserved—spiritual death.

Condemnation of the Moralist

(2:1-11)

You . . . have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

—Romans 2:1

In Romans 2:1-11, Paul switched gears and dealt with the Jewish moralist who was in full agreement with Paul in regard to the condemnation of Gentile wickedness, but was unaware of his or her own failure to honor God. Perhaps Paul encountered this attitude when he preached in the synagogues during his missionary trips. His words are deliberately shocking, intended to knock the spiritually arrogant off their pedestals.

The person who condemns the adulterer has entertained lustful thoughts—adultery of the heart. Those who would judge the murderer harbor rage and resentment—a murderous attitude (see Matt. 5:21-28). Though there are obviously degrees of sin, all people have turned away from God and are in a state of condemnation before Him. Though we may be skilled excuse makers, we are all without any adequate excuse (Rom. 2:1).

Ask Yourself . . . What’s my favorite excuse?

Possible response: People who willfully participate in sin often engage in a great deal of rationalization about their actions. If they see others do the same things or worse, they are better able to suppress feelings of guilt that stem from their sinful behavior.

Condemnation of the Moralist

(2:1-11)

Section Summary

Paul turned his attention from blatant wickedness to the moralist’s self-righteousness. Paul warned hypocritical judges that they were condemning themselves and trying God’s patience.

Questions and Activities

(aabout 12 minutes)

Paul told those who smugly pointed out the sin of others that they were condemning themselves because they did the same things. Those who pass judgment on others while doing the same things will not escape God’s judgment (vss. 1-3).

Why do the sins of others often seem more serious than our own, even if we have done the same things?

Possible response: We often see our own sins in a more gracious light because we usually
have a long list of reasons why we did the particular thing. We know it was wrong, but we had an excuse. When we see someone else doing the same thing, we assume they’re doing it for more diabolical reasons.

Paul warned his readers not to see the patience of God as a stamp of His approval on their lives. Rather, they were to respond to God’s goodness by turning away from sin (vs. 4).

**What would happen if God justly punished every sin right as it occurred?**

Possible response: Every infraction of God’s law would instantaneously meet with righteous judgment—physical and spiritual death.

**Patience boundaries.** The day is coming when God’s patience will end. Those who have remained unrepentant will feel the full force of God’s wrath (vs. 5).

Ask people to explain the point at which their patience is exhausted. For some, it might be after two or three warnings. For others, it might be when a person keeps repeating a mistake and refuses to make corrections.

**How do you typically express your frustration when your patience runs out?**

- **Statement reaction.** God will give to each person according to what he or she has done. He will reward and punish people appropriately, first the Jew and then the Gentile. God will show no favoritism when He judges (vss. 6-11).

Read the following statement to your students and ask for their reactions.

Paul said that those who did good will inherit heaven and those who do evil will go to hell; therefore, the apostle taught that salvation depends upon works.

God’s judgment is based on truth (vs. 2). There is an objective moral standard by which the hearts of all people are measured. That standard is nothing less than the flawless character of God. Appearance count for nothing. (Paul understood that by outward appearances the Jew might have seemed righteous in comparison to Gentiles.) God judges according to a set standard (His own goodness), so in reality both the moralist and the “sinner” stand condemned.

Since the Jews were guilty of doing what they condemned in others, they would not escape God’s judgment (vs. 3). Paul no doubt thought back to his own experience as a Jew. At one time he considered himself righteous because of his law-keeping efforts. On the road to Damascus, he discovered the futility of his thinking.

Perhaps some of these Jewish moralists had misinterpreted God’s kindness and patience as a lack of intent to bring judgment against their sin (vs. 4; see Eccl. 8:11). On the contrary, God’s kindness was intended to lead them to repentance. Though God did not always punish sin immediately, judgment was still coming. The millstone of God’s justice grinds slowly but surely.

**Ask Yourself . . . How has God been patient with me?**

Scripture indicates, however, that there is a time coming when
God’s patience will be exhausted. In Romans 2:5 Paul said the Jews, through self-deception, stubbornness, and impenitence, were inviting divine retribution upon themselves. Their sinful actions and attitudes were building up a reservoir of divine wrath that will one day break forth like a dam under tremendous pressure.

In Romans 2:6-11 we are told that God will judge people according to their works (see 1 Cor. 3:10-15). He quoted Old Testament Scripture to that effect (Rom. 2:6; see Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12).

A person’s habitual actions indicate the state of his or her heart. Those who habitually engage in good works show their hearts have been regenerated (Rom. 2:7). They understand that the glory, honor, and immortality they seek can only be found in a dynamic and obedient relationship with Jesus Christ. Those who habitually engage in bad deeds demonstrate their alienation from God (vs. 8). Such people are not God-seeking but self-seeking, and thus reject the truth about their sinful condition.

Paul was not saying good works can save a person. The apostle stated later in his letter that no one can be declared righteous by observing the law (see 3:20; Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5). Good works don’t result in salvation; they simply attest to the salvation that has already been received by faith.

Paul’s words apply to all people—both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 2:9, 10). No one is exempt. God’s just recompense is without regard to ethnic background (vs. 11). “First to the Jew” simply means that historically God has dealt with Israel first, and then the rest of the world. All who continue to do evil (indicating their unsaved state) will suffer God’s wrath. All who continue to do good (as evidence of their regenerate hearts) will receive glory, honor, and peace through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Section Summary
God will judge the secrets of each person. Those who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. Those who did not have the law will be judged according to how they responded to their consciences. All will give an account of themselves to God.

Questions and Activities
(about 8 minutes)

Obedience case study. Gentiles who sin and refuse to repent, even though they do not have the law, will still perish. Jews who have the law and refuse to obey it will likewise be punished. Obedience is what counts, not just knowing what is right and wrong (vss. 12, 13).

Read the following scenario to your students and ask for their responses.

A man was arrested for going sixty-five miles per hour through a residential neighborhood. The police finally stopped him in front of a school building. The man pleaded ignorance because he did not see any speed-limit signs—in fact, none were posted in that area.

If you were the judge in this man’s court case, how would you rule? How does this relate to the final judgment?
Paul explained that the Gentiles had consciences that accused or defended them according to the appropriateness of their actions. They would one day be judged according to how they responded to these promptings of their consciences (vss. 14-16).

Ask your students to list some questionable activities for which there may be no written law but that would negatively affect their consciences. [Possible response: taking office supplies home from work for personal use.]

*How can a person’s conscience be desensitized over time?*

**Following Through**
(about 5 minutes)

The problem of personal sin can be discouraging. At every turn it seems we are violating God’s standard. But thanks be to God for sending Christ to free us from the power of sinful habits we are humanly unable to break!

Ask your students to think of an object at home they have been meaning to throw away. Whatever the item, ask them to let that object represent a sinful habit or attitude they wish to overcome. Ask them not to throw that object away until they have asked God to help them make that change and have in fact made the change. Then, as a symbol of their faith in God’s help for sinners, have them throw the object away.

**Looking Ahead**

Next week’s lesson confirms that all people—Jew and Gentile—stand condemned before God. No one has a spiritual advantage over another; sin is the great equalizer.
Paul began his Letter to the Romans by affirming his apostleship and his special commission to further the Gospel. This Gospel centers on the person of Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human, whom God the Father raised from the dead.

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The natural result of exchanging the truth of God for a lie was the exchange of natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. For this twofold exchange, they received the due penalty for their perversion. Sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis and gonorrhea killed hundreds of thousands of people in ancient cities like Corinth and Rome—wherever these acts were common. Sexually transmitted diseases were as much a problem then as they are today.

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**Ask Yourself** . . . Do I guard what goes into my mind?

Romans 1:29, 30 define for us what is meant by “what ought not to be done” (vs. 28). Paul categorized the behavior of these individuals into four kinds of active sin: wickedness (the opposite of righteousness), evil (the profound absence of empathy, shame, and goodness), greed (the relentless urge to acquire more than one needs), and depravity (a constant bent toward immorality).

These four basic kinds of active sin in turn express themselves in specific ways. Those whom God has let go are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God haters; they are insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless (vss. 29-31).

The sinful behavior of these individuals was not due to ignorance of God’s commands (vs. 32). Rather, they sinned despite their knowledge of God, making them all the more responsible. Not only that, but they also applauded these practices in others. Perhaps seeing others do these things filled them with a sense of self-justification. In any case, they received what they deserved—spiritual death.

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**Condemnation of the Moralist**

*(2:1-11)*

You . . . have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

—Romans 2:1

In Romans 2:1-11, Paul switched gears and dealt with the Jewish moralist who was in full agreement with Paul in regard to the condemnation of Gentile wickedness, but was unaware of his or her own failure to honor God. Perhaps Paul encountered this attitude when he preached in the synagogues during his missionary trips. His words are deliberately shocking, intended to knock the spiritually arrogant off their pedestals.

The person who condemns the adulterer has entertained lustful thoughts—adultery of the heart. Those who would judge the murderer harbor rage and resentment—a murderous attitude (see Matt. 5:21-28). Though there are obviously degrees of sin, all people have turned away from God and are in a state of condemnation before Him. Though we may be skilled excuse makers, we are all without any adequate excuse (Rom. 2:1).

**Ask Yourself** . . . What’s my favorite excuse?
Reference himself righteous because of his law-keeping efforts. On the road to Damascus, he discovered the futility of his thinking. Perhaps some of these Jewish moralists had misinterpreted God’s kindness and patience as a lack of intent to bring judgment against their sin (vs. 4; see Eccl. 8:11). On the contrary, God’s kindness was intended to lead them to repentance. Though God did not always punish sin immediately, judgment was still coming. The millstone of God’s justice grinds slowly but surely.

Ask Yourself . . . How has God been patient with me?

Scripture indicates, however, that there is a time coming when God’s judgment is based on truth (vs. 2). There is an objective moral standard by which the hearts of all people are measured. That standard is nothing less than the flawless character of God. Appearances count for nothing. (Paul understood that by outward appearances the Jew might have seemed righteous in comparison to Gentiles.) God judges according to a set standard (His own goodness), so in reality both the moralist and the “sinner” stand condemned.

Since the Jews were guilty of doing what they condemned in others, they would not escape God’s judgment (vs. 3). Paul no doubt thought back to his own experience as a Jew. At one time he considered himself righteous because of his law-keeping efforts. On the road to Damascus, he discovered the futility of his thinking.

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THE SEPARATION OF JEWS FROM GENTILES

When the people of Israel were about to enter the promised land, God commanded them to remain separate from their pagan Gentile neighbors (Deut. 7). They were not to make any treaties with them, intermarry with them, or expose themselves to any forms of pagan worship. While separate, however, they were also to serve as a beacon to draw the nations to the living God (Gen. 18:18; Isa. 60:3).

Most of the people of Israel took separation from the Gentiles to an extreme. For instance, it was against Jewish custom to associate with Gentiles in any way (Acts 10:28). Gentiles ate the unclean foods prohibited in the law (Lev. 11); hence, Gentiles were unclean. Mixing with Gentiles rendered a Jew ceremonially unclean, as did entering a Gentile building or handling articles belonging to Gentiles. One was not even to sit at a table with someone who was not a Jew; to do so was to contaminate oneself. These traditions even caused some of the apostles to hesitate in reaching out to the Gentiles with the Gospel (Gal. 2:11-16).

In Christ there are no ethnic distinctions when it comes to salvation or Christian principles. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile—we are all one in Him (3:28).
God’s patience will be exhausted. In Romans 2:5 Paul said the Jews, through self-deception, stubbornness, and impenitence, were inviting divine retribution upon themselves. Their sinful actions and attitudes were building up a reservoir of divine wrath that will one day break forth like a dam under tremendous pressure.

In Romans 2:6-11 we are told that God will judge people according to their works (see I Cor. 3:10-15). He quoted Old Testament Scripture to that effect (Rom. 2:6; see Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12).

A person’s habitual actions indicate the state of his or her heart. Those who habitually engage in good works show their hearts have been regenerated (Rom. 2:7). They understand that the glory, honor, and immortality they seek can only be found in a dynamic and obedient relationship with Jesus Christ. Those who habitually engage in bad deeds demonstrate their alienation from God (vs. 8). Such people are not God-seeking but self-seeking, and thus reject the truth about their sinful condition.

Paul was not saying good works can save a person. The apostle stated later in his letter that no one can be declared righteous by observing the law (see 3:20; Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5). Good works don’t result in salvation; they simply attest to the salvation that has already been received by faith.

Paul’s words apply to all people—both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 2:9, 10). No one is exempt. God’s just recompense is without regard to ethnic background (vs. 11). “First to the Jew” simply means that historically God has dealt with Israel first, and then the rest of the world. All who continue to do evil (indicating their unsaved state) will suffer God’s wrath. All who continue to do good (as evidence of their regenerate hearts) will receive glory, honor, and peace through His Son, Jesus Christ.

**The Law and Judgment (2:12-16)**

All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. —Romans 2:12

God’s judgment is based upon how people respond to the revelation they are given. The Jews were given a special revelation of God’s boundaries in the law of Moses. Though the Gentiles did not have a written code of conduct, God enabled them to distinguish between right and wrong. The revelation took the form of an internal law, or what we know as conscience.

Those “who sin apart from the law” are clearly Gentiles (vs. 12). Since the Gentiles were not the recipients of the law, their judgment could not be based on the written code of Moses. God judges people according to the light they have received. Their judgment was based upon the law God had written upon
Romans 2:12-16

Based upon the natural impulse of their hearts, that agreed with the essence of the law. God has given every person some innate sense of right and wrong. Though this intuitive knowledge is often suppressed, it is there all the same, and so all people are held responsible for their actions.

The conscience bears witness to the law written on the hearts of Gentiles. The conscience is that inner faculty that evaluates actions and thoughts. The conscience can either accuse or excuse a person’s behavior. Of course, the Holy Spirit plays a major role in this inner dialogue. The Christian who is filled with God’s Spirit will be able to rightly distinguish between true and false accusations or rationalizations.

Ask Yourself . . . What have my thoughts been doing recently—accusing or defending?

God will judge all of humanity (Jews and Gentiles); the agent of His judgment will be Jesus Christ; and His evaluation will focus on secrets of people’s hearts (vs. 16). Sometimes people do good things that are actually rooted in selfish intentions. Other times people may appear guilty of a wrongdoing when there was no bad intention. Sometimes people internalize blame for the sins of others. On the great day, all that is hidden will be revealed—there will be no second-guessing when it comes to motives. God’s judgment will be impartial, perfect, and absolutely just.

Verses 14 and 15 are a parenthetical statement by Paul, interrupting the train of thought between verses 13 and 16. The backdrop to these verses is that the Gentiles were looked down upon by the Jews because they did not have the Mosaic law. But Paul pointed out that there were Gentiles who did the things spoken of in the law, revealing that its requirements were written on their hearts.

This doesn’t mean the Gentiles fulfilled every aspect of the law. Rather, it refers to things they did, based upon the natural impulse of their hearts, that agreed with the essence of the law. God has given every person some innate sense of right and wrong. Though this intuitive knowledge is often suppressed, it is there all the same, and so all people are held responsible for their actions.

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SEPTEMBER 2, 2012

Powering

COOKING SCHOOL
MINISTRY

RECIPÉ FOR SUCCESS
VICTORIA QUEEN’S
PASSION FOR PEOPLE
AND CULINARY ARTS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY
The daughter of a minister, Victoria Queen went to church every week as a child growing up in Batesville, Arkansas. But once she reached adulthood, Queen felt stifled by rules of strict morality. Although her rebellion didn’t result in drug addiction or sexual promiscuity, it did mean turning her back on God’s involvement in daily life.

Instead of following God, Queen poured herself into obtaining an education and pursuing career goals. She opened her first restaurant at age 25 and later took over the food and beverage service at a country club. She supervised banquets and hosted campus guests working for the president of a private college. Then she worked for a major corporation as the catering director at two universities. Queen didn’t attend church on Sundays; her devotion belonged to her career. During her rise in the culinary industry, she obtained a master’s degree in business administration at Arkansas State University.

But some practices in the corporate world began to bother Queen. For instance, she witnessed salaried leadership running up huge alcohol tabs on travel expense accounts, as hourly workers would be limited to less than 40 hours of work per week to keep them from receiving full-time benefits.

Queen went out on her own again, opening a bar and restaurant.

Queen began to sense God tugging at her to return to Him. One Sunday morning she shocked her staff by saying she wouldn’t be working that day—she planned to go to church instead. At the service, a weeping Queen recommitted her life to Jesus. Feeling convicted, Queen closed her successful bar and restaurant and moved to Springfield, Missouri, to further her education at Missouri State University.

One day a friend asked Queen to drop off a donation at Springfield Victory Mission www.victorymission.com, which serves needy and homeless in the area.

“I didn’t even know rescue missions existed,” says Queen, now 57. While there, she picked up a mission newsletter. Talking to Executive Director James M. Harriger, Queen learned of Victory Mission’s plans to open a trade school that would cater to those in recovery. Queen left her résumé. Harriger hired her to develop the new Victory Trade School, which opened with four employees and nine students in 2003.

“I came to realize making a lot of money is not that important,” Queen says.

Queen devised a plan to gain National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation certification for the new trade school. She also acquired accreditation through the North Central Association, certification with the Missouri Department of Higher Education, and participation in Title IV Pell grants for the school. Students are billed $15,100 for the one year of study, which includes tuition, meals, and lodging. But students don’t
pay any of the costs because they receive a full scholarship in exchange for the unpaid restaurant work they provide. Students rotate as waiters, cashiers, dishwashers, grill, prep, and other positions. Pell grants as well as donations from churches and individuals enable students to avoid incurring school loans.

“Victory Mission helps a lot of people who can’t help themselves, but Victory Trade School helps people help themselves,” Queen says.

VTS started recruiting graduates from recovery programs such as Teen Challenge and the Salvation Army. Although around half the students have a history of drug or alcohol troubles, early on Queen established a zero-tolerance substance abuse policy. Students are subject to urine analysis or breath tests at any time. They are accepted into the culinary arts program only if they have been drug-free for a year.

Food preparation instruction is done in conjunction with classes in the VTS Christian discipleship program called PREP: Prayer, Reading Scripture, Education, and Praise to God for His blessing. The day starts with prayers and Bible reading. Students are required to attend daily Bible-based classes as well as Sunday worship services at a local congregation of their choosing.

“They are dealing with relationship issues, authority issues, motivation issues,” says Queen, whose husband, Alan, is chaplain at the parent Springfield Victory Mission organization. “They may not know how to get a job or how to be a good employee. At VTS they learn how to handle anger, disappointment, and pressure—without resorting to substance abuse.”

Less than three weeks after VTS began, Queen opened Cook’s Kettle Restaurant as a commercial enterprise. In the heart of a city center inhabited by the homeless, Cook’s Kettle serves reasonably priced breakfast and lunch. It also functions as the culinary laboratory for VTS. It’s not fast-food burgers and fries. Two classically trained chefs instruct students on how to craft salads, soups, specialty sandwiches, and pastries. Students learn everything from making salad dressings to following intricate recipes.

In 2010, VTS opened a second location—the Branch Bistro—three blocks away to meet the growing need for a venue to train culinary arts students.
Initially, Queen taught all VTS classes. Now there are 16 employees. Queen, who is president of VTS, says God has sent overqualified staff willing to work for less money.

“Many are fed up with the coarse language, alcohol use, and drug abuse of those working in the secular marketplace,” explains Queen, who earned her doctorate in 2012 from Saint Louis University in higher education administration. “Victory Trade School is a Christian atmosphere, and the staff love to mentor others.”

Since 2003, VTS has graduated 150 students from 15 states. They are certified in areas such as food preparation, customer service, customer controls, and restaurant marketing. All have been placed in the workforce.

John Allen enrolled in the VTS culinary arts program in 2010. Under the tutelage of certified executive chefs Chadwick Isom and Brian M. Romano, he quickly excelled. Allen, motivated as never before, absorbed as much as he could from the experienced and skilled teachers. He worked up to 70 hours a week to gain experience not only at the Branch Bistro but also at VTS banquets and other catering events.

After graduating from VTS in 2011, Allen became general manager and executive chef at a new downtown Springfield eatery, Aviary Café and Creperie. He knew he didn’t want to return to his old stomping grounds in Bakersfield, California.

“There was a lot of baggage waiting for me,” says the 29-year-old Allen, who had kicked a decade-long methamphetamine addiction at Teen Challenge. “I had a lot of friends and family that used drugs.”

Business at the Aviary Café and Creperie has been booming. Allen believes it’s because God is pleased with those he has hired. The restaurant’s kitchen staff includes three VTS graduates and various workers on parole or probation.

“Most of the guys have made bad choices and would have a hard time finding employment elsewhere,” Allen says.

Queen’s goal remains for VTS students to graduate as productive citizens who are debt-free, sober, and accountable to God and to fellow Christians. And to be people who know a thing or two about food.

**DAILY BIBLE readings**

- **SUNDAY**
  - 1 Kings 17–19

- **MONDAY**
  - 1 Kings 20–22

- **TUESDAY**
  - 2 Kings 1–5

- **WEDNESDAY**
  - 2 Kings 6–8

- **THURSDAY**
  - 2 Kings 9–13

- **FRIDAY**
  - 2 Kings 14–17

- **SATURDAY**
  - 2 Kings 18–20

I balanced a pot on my hip, grabbed a wooden spoon, and called over my shoulder. “Hey, can someone check the sauce?”

My husband stuck his head through the kitchen doorway. “Smells good in here.”

I blew out a breath. “It’ll taste good too, if I can get it all ready in time. See if the sauce is hot.” I nodded toward the microwave then jabbed my spoon in the direction of the dining room. “Is the table set?”

“Sure is.” Bryan strode to the microwave and opened the door. “Sauce looks perfect. It’s steaming.”

“Great. Go ahead and take it to the table.” I glanced at the clock. In ten minutes, our guests would arrive. Ten minutes to stir and mix, taste and cook, prepare and place. Then, all I wanted to do was sit and feast, and enjoy getting to know the new family from church.

I stuck the wooden spoon into the stew and gave it a twist as Bryan lifted the sauce bowl out of the microwave and moved to the next room.

I turned back to the stew. Bubbles popped to the surface. It did smell good. I leaned over and took a deep breath.

A sniffl e sounded behind me, followed by a tug on my pantleg.

I looked down.

Jayden glared up at me. His two-year-old lip quivered.

“What’s wrong, honey?”

He pointed toward the living room. “Sister mean.”
“What happened?”
He folded his arms across his chest.
“Told toy.”
I sighed. “Did she take your penguin toy away again?”
He stared at the floor. “I no like penguin.”
“But it’s your favorite.”
“No like.” He sat down and scowled. Tears rolled down his cheeks.
“Well, our friends are coming in just a minute. Maybe you want to go put together a puzzle while we wait.”
“No like puzzle.”
“How about your blocks, then? Sister won’t take your blocks.”
“No like blocks.”
“Your train set?”
“Hate train.”
I squatted down in front of him.
“Well, you just don’t like anything, do you?”
“Me mad.”
“Yes, I see that.” I stood back up and took the stew off the stove. Then, I picked up a ladle and spooned the stew into a large serving terrine.
“What dat?”
I glanced down. “Stew. You want some?”
He sniffed. “Like stew.”
Ah, that was the problem. Jayden was hungry. And like his daddy, he got grumpy when he was overdue to eat.
I ladled a bit of stew into a small bowl, blew it cool, and set it on the kitchen table. “Sit on up and eat.”
He did.
Five minutes later, he licked his lips, pushed back his empty bowl, and grinned. “I play sisters now. We play penguin. Puzzles too.”
“Okay, you go play.”
He trotted off.
As I carried the stew terrine to the dining room table, I wondered if it wasn’t only Jayden and Bryan who got cranky when they were hungry. Maybe I was that way too.
Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry...” (John 6:35).
So when I’m anxious and irritable, when nothing seems right, when I “no like” life, maybe I’m just hungry for more of Jesus. Perhaps it’s not about sister being mean or the penguin or the puzzle. Maybe it’s just about needing to gobble up more Scripture, chew on more truth, do more than just nibble at the corners of my prayer life. Perhaps I need to fill up on more time with God, tasting the goodness of His presence with me.

On the days when my husband seems inconsiderate, when I don’t like my job, when people don’t treat me like I think they should, before I start casting blame, I’ll try to remember Jayden and make sure I’m all filled up. Then I can hold onto a much better attitude, even when someone is just a little bit mean.

Mario Schalesky
is the author of several acclaimed novels. Find out more about her and her books at www.VividGod.com
A quarterly expositional study of each book of the Bible, the *Disciples Bible Study* equips anyone wanting to study the Bible with a deeper understanding of Scripture. This study offers Biblical translation in the New International Version.

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*One per teacher recommended.*

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An in-depth and challenging student book, this Bible study is designed with thorough verse-by-verse interpretations and lesson questions, maps, charts, and photos, helping students prepare for the study of God’s Word in advance.

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Well suited as a church bulletin insert or for outreach within the community, this weekly take-home paper for adults is filled with inspiring articles about famous Christians and Christians whose insights demonstrate following Christ.

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