

Midweek 1

Spiritually, Paul's letter to the Romans is very challenging.

What better than to study it together with a supportive group in Learning for Life?

There won't be time on Sunday mornings to explore all that there is in Romans, so I plan to use emails midweek to fill in the gaps and suggest other ways to get involved with the text.

For Week 1, a word of explanation.

We didn't take time to read the passage (Rom 1:1-17). Next week be sure to have a Bible. I'll be using the NRSV, the translation that's in the pews. We'll have copies on hand. (Tiffany: could you make that happen?)

Neither did we have time to look at all that Paul writes about in these verses. Take a look at them now in whatever Bible you use at home. Ask yourself: What stands out for you? (no need to reply here). Any questions?

There are several words you might wonder about:

Apostle means literally one who is sent. The early church reserved this name for those who had seen the risen Christ and who had been commissioned by him to spread the good news. That includes Jesus' eleven surviving close disciples whom he had chosen, plus Paul, and possibly Andronicus and Junia (see Romans 16:7).

Saints in the New Testament refers to all those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Gentiles are all those who are not Jews, whatever their nationality.

Can you describe yourself as being a *slave* of Jesus Christ? What does he want you to do as his slave? Remember, the living conditions of Roman slaves all depended on who their master was. Read John 15:12-17, which beautifully nuances this idea. (John's Gospel was written later than Paul's letter to the Romans. We don't know if and what Paul knew about the stories of Jesus that were circulating orally in the meanwhile.)

Have you ever thought of the gospel as being *powerful*? In what way is it powerful? Is it powerful in your own life?

NEXT WEEK we will look at a long passage, from 1:18 to 3:20, so it will help you to read it beforehand.