

STUDENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

LGBTQ & THE BIBLE – Session 4

Romans: Sin, Judgment, and the Shape of Grace

SESSION FOCUS

The book of Romans is often treated as the final word in debates about sin, morality, and who stands “right” before God. Certain passages—especially Romans 1—are frequently quoted in isolation and used to draw sharp moral boundaries.

This session invites you to read Romans **as a whole argument**, not a collection of stand-alone verses. Rather than beginning with judgment, this study encourages you to follow Paul’s reasoning from start to finish, noticing how his message moves toward humility, shared human need, and grace.

The goal is not to avoid difficult texts, but to engage them carefully, honestly, and faithfully.

OPENING REFLECTION

Take a few moments to reflect before continuing:

- What emotions or ideas come up for you when you hear the book of *Romans* mentioned?
- Have you ever experienced Romans as comforting, confusing, or condemning?
- What assumptions do you bring into this session about sin, judgment, or grace?

(You may want to write a few notes before moving on.)

SCRIPTURE READING

As you move through this session, consider the opening chapters of Romans (especially chapters 1–3).

As you read or reflect, pay attention to:

- Who Paul seems to be addressing at different points
- How the tone or focus shifts from one chapter to the next
- Whether Paul is describing human behavior, issuing commands, or building an argument

Do not rush. Notice where you feel agreement, discomfort, or surprise.

KEY IDEA



Romans is not primarily about identifying the *worst* sinners.

It is about revealing that **everyone stands on equal ground before God—and equally in need of grace.**

PART 1: WHAT ROMANS 1 IS DESCRIBING

Romans 1 describes a pattern of human behavior in which people lose sight of God and begin to define life, desire, and meaning on their own terms. Paul paints a picture of what happens when worship is distorted and relationships unravel.

This chapter includes strong language and a wide range of behaviors, all presented as symptoms of a deeper problem rather than isolated moral failures.

Reflection Questions

- What themes do you notice in Romans 1 beyond sexuality?
- Does this chapter feel more like a diagnosis of a broken system or a list of individual rules?
- What do you think Paul is trying to accomplish by starting his letter this way?

Personal Notes:

PART 2: THE TURN IN ROMANS 2

Romans 2 marks a clear shift. After describing human brokenness, Paul turns his attention to those who feel confident in judging others. The focus moves from “*them*” to “*you*.”

Paul challenges the assumption that moral clarity or religious knowledge places anyone above the need for self-examination.

Reflection Questions

- How does Romans 2 change how you hear Romans 1?
- What warnings does Paul give about judgment and certainty?
- Why might it be easier to identify sin in others than to confront it in ourselves?

Personal Notes:

PART 3: WHERE ROMANS LEADS—GRACE

By the time Paul reaches Romans 3, his argument becomes clear: **no one stands apart from the need for grace.** Sin is described not as a tool for ranking people, but as a shared human condition.

Righteousness is presented not as something earned, but as something received.



Reflection Questions

- How does Paul's conclusion reshape the entire discussion about sin?
- What happens when Romans is read starting with judgment instead of ending with grace?
- How might this perspective affect conversations about faith, morality, and inclusion?

Personal Notes:

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a few quiet moments to reflect:

- Where have I read Scripture selectively rather than holistically?
- How has certainty—my own or others'—shaped my understanding of faith?
- What would it look like to let grace be the lens through which I read difficult texts?

Personal Response:

CLOSING PRAYER

In your own words, or silently, pray for:

- Humility in reading Scripture
 - Honesty about your own need for grace
 - Courage to resist interpretations that harm rather than heal
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OPTIONAL TAKE-HOME PRACTICE

This week:

- Read Romans chapters 1–3 in one sitting
 - Notice how the argument builds and resolves
 - Ask yourself:
Where does this text place me—not above others, but alongside them?
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FINAL THOUGHT

Romans was never meant to be a weapon.

It was written to dismantle moral hierarchy and point everyone toward grace.



Faithful reading does not avoid difficult passages—it follows them all the way to where they lead:

Not to condemnation, but to mercy, humility, and shared hope.

