

Adult Teaching Resources

June 16, 2019



Easter Season (April 21-June 2)

Resurrection Realities

Acts 16:16-34 – “Doubled Deliverance”

Pentecost Sunday (June 9)

Genesis 11:1-9 – “What Did You Say?”

Season After Pentecost (June 16-November 24)

Trinity Sunday

Romans 5:1-5 – “Imaginary Numbers”

On the Road with Jesus

Luke 8:26-39 – “A Bad Day for Pigs”

Luke 9:51-62 – “A Hard Row to Hoe”

www.nurturingfaith.net

Subscribe to *Nurturing Faith* to access the core Bible content for this lesson.
Find links and videos related to this lesson.

Imaginary Numbers

Romans 5:1-5

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Bible Background

“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1

Some passages and Theological ideas from scripture are easy to understand. Some passages from scripture and Theological ideas from scripture or more difficult to comprehend today, we will spend time in Paul’s letter to the church at Rome, reading about separate references to God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

While this is not a lesson about the Trinity, it does provide an opportunity for us to boast in our salvation.

Opening

After everyone arrives for class, ask each person to find a partner. Share the digging deeper from our lesson writer about the Trinity.

“One of the most difficult puzzles any of us face is trying to get our heads around the theological concept of the “Trinity,” a church doctrine that developed over time and was affirmed at the First Council of Constantinople in 381 CE. There, a gathering of church leaders ratified a statement declaring that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit existed as one essence or substance (*ousia*) expressed through three “persons” (*hypostaseis*).”

Then, ask partner to share with each other their views and ideas about the Trinity.

What is the Trinity?

How important is the Trinity in their Journey?

When and where did they learn about the Trinity?

How do they incorporate the trinity in their everyday Faith Journey?

When you pray, who do you address your prayer to?

Give each person time to share with their partner, and then as time allows open the floor for larger group discussion and conversation, asking for volunteers to share their ideas and answers.

Reading the Bible

By what are we Justified? (Faith)

What do we have with God through Jesus Christ? (Peace)

In what do we boast? (Our Hope of sharing the glory of God, our sufferings, endurance, character, hope)

What does suffering produce? (Endurance)

What does endurance produce? (Character)

What does character produce? (Hope)

What does Hope do? (Does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts)

When did Christ die? (While we were still weak, at the right time)

When and how did God prove his love for us? (While we were still sinners)

By what have we been justified? (His blood)

By what will we be saved? (By his life)

By what have we received reconciliation? (In God through our Lord Jesus Christ)

Making Connections

When is it appropriate to be proud? When is it inappropriate to be proud? When is it appropriate to boast? When is it inappropriate to boast?

How do you define peace? Where and how do you obtain peace?

Our lesson writer says, "Our present life of fellowship with God through the Spirit is just a foretaste of the life that lies ahead for us, Paul taught." In your opinion, what lies ahead for us?

How do you celebrate and boast in the peace given to us by God?

How do you define sufferings? Where and how do you obtain suffering?

How do you handle trials and sufferings? What role does God play for you when things get rough?

Have you ever boasted in your suffering? When did you do that? How did you do that? How did others perceive you're boasting?

What do you think that believers gain by suffering? Is suffering worth it?

How do you define savior? Who or what saves you?

Making Connections *continued*

In vs. 6-11, Our Lesson Writer lists four descriptive adjectives of the believers former state: weak, ungodly, sinners, enemies of God. What does it mean to be weak? When have you been in that state? How did God show up for you?

What does it mean to be ungodly? When have you been in that state? How did God show up for you?

What does it mean to be a sinner? When have you been in that state? How did God show up for you?

What does it mean to be an enemy of God? When have you been in that state? How did God show up for you?

What has God done for us? How has that changed our lives?

So What?

In the large group share these words from our Lesson Writer, “Paul’s notion of boasting about what God has done may not sit well with us, perhaps because we have all known people whose insufferable self-righteousness or certainty come across as offensive. The apostle did not instruct his friends to boast of their faith in the streets, but he urged them in worship or personal conversations to express a confident hope that was grounded in God, effected through Christ, and experienced through the Spirit.”

As a group that is sensitive to not being self-righteous or offensive, how can we appropriately boast about what God has done?

Make a list of your class’s answers on the board or large sheet so that everyone can see. Engage your group in conversation about the list, paying attention to the attitudes we have about the faith life we have chosen to live.

Looking at this list, even though we try to not seem inappropriately boastful, does anything look like it is boasting, or bragging?

How do you think others who are not believers would view this list?

What attitude or stance do you think we should take, firmly believing, yet remaining sensitive to those who don’t believe?

The Challenge

This week, using ideas from the group discussion and trying to remain sensitive to others, boast about God in your life this week, appropriately.

Prayer

Loving God, you have done so much for us and literally have transformed our lives. We celebrate and honor you for who you are. May our boasting be worthy and appropriate of you. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

For lack of a better term—Theologians refer to the three persons of the Trinity as “hypostases,” a word that means “underlying state” or “underlying substance,” as the derivation of the word suggests. Though perhaps more precise, the word doesn’t communicate to most people, so “persons” is commonly used.

The text—The Revised Common Lectionary text for the day is Romans 5:1-5, chosen because it is just long enough to reference the deity as God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Verses 6-11 follow naturally from these verses, however, connected by “for” – verses 1-5 set the stage for verses 6-11. Thus, we’ll use vv. 1-11 as our text.

Chosen by God—God did not have to save us and bring us into relationship, but freely chose to do so. To illustrate the power of grace and choice, consider an animal shelter where people may adopt unwanted dogs or cats and take them home to become beloved members of their families. Other animals are left to remain unloved until they are “put to sleep.” God has chosen to make a way for *all* people to overcome death and find a lasting home. Unlike pets in the pen at the animal shelter, we also have the option of choosing whether we will accept God’s grace, “this grace in which we stand” (v. 2a).

Looking forward—In a book entitled *Surprised by God*, James W. Cox tells a story about a black preacher from Chicago named D. E. King. Someone asked Rev. King why black Christians were always joyful in their worship, even when they faced many difficulties and things were not going well. The pastor explained, “We rejoice in what we are going to have.”

The famed church father Augustine made a similar comment in a written commentary on Psalm 64, a psalm of deep lament in troubled times:

“Now let us hear, brothers, let us hear and sing; let us pine for the city where we are citizens ... By pining we are already there; we have already cast our hope like an anchor on that coast. I sing of somewhere else, not of here: for I sing with my heart, not with my flesh.” (“Commentary on Ps 64,” on v. 3, in Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* [London: Faber, 1967], 315).

Citing the source—The Spurgeon quote comes from an early publication of Spurgeon’s sermons, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons, Parts 261-272* (Passmore & Alabaster, 1878), 462. I have also seen the quote attributed to “Anonymous” and “an old Scottish preacher.” Spurgeon was not Scottish, and his sermon does not attribute the quote to anyone else, implying that it is original to him, or that he was repeating a commonly known saying.

Digging Deeper *continued*

The power of hope—Can you remember times in your life when it seemed that your very sanity depended on hope? Consider asking the class to share times of personal trial in which a sense of hope helped them to survive – and even to thrive.

Self-sacrifice—We sometimes speak of a close friend as someone who “would take a bullet” for us, and that we would likewise risk our lives for them. A spate of mass shootings in recent years has brought with it stories of people who willingly put themselves at risk – and sometimes died – in an effort to save others. Are there many people in your life that you’d sacrifice yourself for? Would you even consider risking your life people you don’t even know, whether you thought they deserved it or not? These could be good questions for class discussion.

Now and later—One way to illustrate the present-future dynamic of how Christians experience salvation could be to think of a gift certificate for a purchase or service. When we receive the gift card or certificate, we own something in prospect: it is ours, but we haven’t yet experienced or fully acquired it.

Consider leading the class to think of other ways (such as being named in someone’s will) to illustrate this dynamic between present assurance and future possession.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Does God cause our sufferings?

Paul insisted that we boast even in our sufferings, arguing that suffering can make us stronger. Should that lead us to think he is suggesting that God intentionally brings suffering into our lives for that purpose?

In 2008, pop rock singer Kelly Clarkson had a hit with a song that proclaimed “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger” – and that is possible – but not guaranteed. Whether trouble makes us stronger or beats us down is largely a product of our own attitude and the supportive resources available to us.

Paul believed that enduring difficulty could strengthen those who trust in God for support: “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (vv. 3-5).

This does not mean that Paul believed God was in the business of sending suffering for the purpose of making believers stronger, a variation on the common folk-confession “I believe everything happens for a reason.”

To say we believe God can work in us through the constant love that “has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit,” and that God can bring us out of the experience as stronger people, does not require us to believe that God has targeted us with trouble as a learning exercise.

Note as well that there are no shortcuts in gaining strength from suffering, as Paul speaks of several stages: those who learn from suffering first find a way to endure. Endurance implies holding on over a significant period of time. Such patient endurance contributes to the development of personal character. Those whose character has been seasoned by trials learn to have hope – and as long as we have hope, we will not be ultimately disappointed. The word translated as “disappoint” more commonly means “shame” or “dishonor.” Those who put their hope in God through the power of the Spirit will not be shamed, but can believe they will live in God’s love.