



Grace & Truth

Romans 1 Small Group Plan

I once heard Dallas Willard say at a Spiritual Formation conference, “Heaven is an acquired taste. No one will go who doesn’t want to.”

He reminded me of the words I had read by C. S. Lewis, in The Great Divorce,

“There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says, in the end, “Thy will be done.” All that are in Hell, choose it.

This is what Paul meant in Romans 1, as he described God’s action:

“Therefore **God gave them up**” (v. 24)

“For this reason **God gave them up**” (v. 26)

“Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, **God gave them up**” (v. 28).

God is essentially saying, “This is a life you have chosen. It comes with consequences and you have chosen the consequences. I will not force my way of life upon you. Thy will be done.”

God’s alternative life could not have been clearer:

²⁴ A man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

— Genesis 2:24-25 —

⁴ “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?’ ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh.”

— Matthew 19:4-6 —

“Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.”

— Leviticus 18:22 —

⁹ We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers.

— 1 Timothy 1:9-10 —

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- For 2,000 years, social and religious thinkers have read God’s Word and concluded that same-sex relationships are immoral. Why has there been an about-face just within the past few decades?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— CONFUSED EGO —

“God gave them up to dishonorable passions”

Verses 26-27

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

- How does my understanding of God impact my understand of myself (ego)?
- How can a confused view of God lead to a confused ego?
- Review Genesis 2 and Matthew 19 above.
- Why is it appropriate to describe the “one-flesh” relationship, that God created and that Jesus affirms, as an honorable relationship?
- Why is it “dishonorable” (v. 26) for women and men to “exchange” alter or switch out the partners of this “one-flesh” creation designed by God?
- Why does my **BODY** (touch, taste, sight, smell, hearing, sex) need the leadership of my **SPIRIT** (soul, faith, conscience, inner life, ethics)?
- What happens when my **BODY** (touch, taste, sight, smell, hearing, sex) is on its own, without out the guidance of my **SPIRIT** (soul, faith, conscience, inner life, ethics)?

— **CONTAGIOUS EGOTISM** —
“**God gave them up to a debased mind**”

Verses 28-32

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

- Define “egotism” ?
- How can an uncertain sense of who I am (confused ego) set the stage for a selfish life (contagious egotism)?
- Like our “State of the Union Address” Paul gives a “State of the World Address.” His descriptions can be divided into three categories:
 - ✓ **Comprehensive ...**
“unrighteousness” “evil” “haters of God” “inventors of evil”
 - ✓ **Character ...**
“insolent” “haughty” “boastful” “foolish” “faithless” “heartless” “ruthless”
 - ✓ **Relationship ...**
“malice” “envy” “murder” “strife” “deceit” “maliciousness”
“gossips” “slanderers” “disobedient to parents”
- How are these character qualities intensified by fear, confusion and uncertainty?
- Which have you noticed growing alongside the personal identity confusion?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- What part can we play in restoring confidence in God’s view of who we are individually and how we should respond in relationships?
- What can we do to promote love rather than fear in our relationally confused world?
- How can we present to our children and grandchildren a joyful, loving and biblically clear picture of every level of relationship (marriage, family, friendship, acquaintance)?
- Close in prayer, asking God for clarity, courage and wisdom as we live in a world of changing, often chaotic and selfish values.