

Session 6: Peace with God

Romans 5 · Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers what justification opens onto: peace with God, standing grace, and a hope that suffering builds rather than breaks, because God's love is already poured into our hearts and proven at the cross, where Christ died for the ungodly. Then the widest lens in the letter: Adam and Christ, the disobedience that made many sinners and the obedience that makes many righteous, with grace outweighing sin at every point.

Catholic Touchstone. Two Catholic doctrines live in this chapter. Original sin: through one man sin and death entered and spread to all, a sin "contracted and not committed, a state and not an act" (CCC 404), a distinction the Church's reading of Romans 5:12-19 grounds and illuminates. And its glorious asymmetry: by one man's obedience "many will be made righteous" (5:19), made, not merely counted: a verse that powerfully supports the Catholic understanding of justification as real transformation, which itself rests on the Church's full teaching (Trent; CCC 1987-1995).

What You Need to Know

Chapter 5 exhales. Four chapters of courtroom argument resolve into: "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1). Peace here is not a feeling but a state: the war is over, and through Christ "we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand" (5:2). Then Paul builds the chain your group will walk link by link: suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope, "and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (5:3-5). Note the ground of the hope: not optimism about circumstances but a love already poured in, and proven in public: "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (5:8). Verses 9-11 then argue from the greater to the lesser: if God did the hard thing (reconciling enemies by the death of his Son), the remaining thing (saving reconciled friends) is, Paul says twice, "much more" certain.

At 5:12 the lens pulls back as far as it will go: two men, two acts, two humanities. "As sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (5:12). Adam's trespass brought condemnation and death's reign to all; Christ's "act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men" (5:18), "for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (5:19). Two things to hold precisely. First, the parallel is real: what we inherit from Adam is not a bad example but a condition; what we receive from Christ is not a good example but a new condition. Second, the parallel is deliberately broken in grace's favor: "the free gift is not like the trespass" (5:15); where the trespass brought death, grace "abounded all the more" (5:20), superabundance, not mere repair. Notice the word Paul chose for Christ's saving act: obedience (5:19). The study's title just found its deepest root: the obedience of faith is possible because of the obedience of the Son.

A pastoral note for the suffering chain (5:3-5). Someone in your group may be inside a suffering right now that no tidy chain describes. Paul is not saying suffering is good, or that God delights in it; he is saying that for those standing in grace, suffering is not wasted, and hope is anchored below the waterline of circumstance. Leave room for silence when you discuss it; do not force anyone to testify to growth they cannot yet see; and if grief surfaces, receive it, point gently to prayer and the sacraments, and follow up personally.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Genesis 2:17 and 3:19. Paul's claim that death entered through sin (5:12) is Genesis read plainly: "in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen 2:17), and after the fall, "you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19). The group grounds the Adam half of the typology here; a discovery passage, keep it back.

Isaiah 53:11. Paul's stunning phrase "many will be made righteous" (5:19) has a prophetic pedigree: the Suffering Servant, of whom Isaiah says "by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa 53:11). The "many" of Romans 5 is the Servant's "many." A discovery passage; guard it.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS

St. Irenaeus built the Church's first great theology on this chapter's frame. Christ, he wrote, "did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself" (Against Heresies, Book V, preface). His name for Paul's Adam-and-Christ logic is recapitulation: the Son retraces the human story from inside it, standing where Adam stood and, at each station where Adam said no to God, saying yes, obedience unwinding disobedience knot by knot (his knot image is the Eve-and-Mary picture, which waits for this study's last night) until the whole race is offered a new head and a new heredity. Romans 5:19 in one word.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. TERESA OF ÁVILA

By long Teresian tradition, a bookmark found in her breviary after her death carried the lines she had lived by: "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing away; God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices." It is the suffering chain of Romans 5:3-5 compressed into a prayer: a hope anchored not in circumstances, which pass, but in the unchanging God whose love has already been poured into the heart, and which therefore does not disappoint.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: THE CHURCH'S EASTER PROCLAMATION

Once a year, in the dark of the Easter Vigil, the Church sings over the paschal candle words that only tonight's chapter makes thinkable: "O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!" (the Exsultet, Roman Missal). The liturgy dares to call Adam's sin happy, not because sin is good, but because "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (5:20): what God gave in answer to the fall so exceeds what the fall destroyed that the Church, on her most solemn night, sings about the wound through which the greater glory came.

Catechism Connection

CCC 402-404. The doctrine of original sin, stated from tonight's text: all men implicated in Adam's sin, as Paul affirms (Rom 5:12, 19 are the cited verses), transmitted as a fallen state, a sin "contracted and not committed, a

state and not an act" (404). Human nature is wounded and deprived of original holiness, not totally corrupted: a precision that matters next session.

CCC 411. Christ as the New Adam, "who, because he 'became obedient unto death, even death on a cross,' makes amends superabundantly for the disobedience of Adam." Superabundantly is the Catechism receiving 5:15-20 exactly.

CCC 1817. Hope defined: desiring the kingdom and eternal life as our happiness, "placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit." The anchor of 5:5 in catechetical form.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

Title thread, deepest root. 5:19 grounds the whole study: the obedience of faith (1:5) is possible because of the obedience of the Son. Use the observation once, without pointing at the inclusio; Session 15 harvests it.

Exchange reversed. Session 2 planted the exchange (1:23, 25); tonight quietly pays it: what Adam traded away, the New Adam restores with interest. One sentence, no fanfare.

Reign language. Death "reigned" (5:14, 17); grace will "reign" (5:21). Chapter 6 asks who reigns in your body; Session 7 runs the thread. Plant the verb tonight.

Sealed guess: two weeks out. Take-Home 7 carries the bring-your-sheet reminder. Say nothing tonight.

Session Goals

1. The group can name what justification opens onto (peace, standing grace, hope) and explain why the hope of 5:3-5 does not disappoint.
2. The group discovers Genesis 2-3 behind death's entry and Isaiah 53:11 behind "many will be made righteous."
3. The group can state the doctrine of original sin precisely (contracted, not committed; wounded, not totally corrupt) and why 5:19 teaches made righteous, really.
4. The group can explain the asymmetry: how the free gift is not like the trespass, and what "superabundance" means.

Timed Plan (75-90 minutes)

- Opening prayer and Win questions: 12 min
- Build questions 1-2 (peace and the suffering chain, with pastoral care): 25 min
- Build questions 3-4 with the Genesis and Isaiah discoveries: 25 min
- Steelman chain: 13 min
- Send questions, Live It This Week, memory verse, closing prayer: 15 min

If time runs short, pre-chosen cuts: drop the Dig Deeper box, and deliver the Genesis 2-3 grounding yourself in one sentence, keeping the Isaiah 53 discovery live. Never cut the suffering-chain discussion or the steelman answer.

Session 6: Peace with God

Romans 5 · Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Father, you reconciled us while we were enemies; you loved us while we were still sinners. Give us tonight the peace that is not a mood but a fact, the hope that does not disappoint, and hearts open to the love you have already poured in. Through Christ our Lord, the obedient one. Amen.

Win

1. What is the difference between a truce and real peace? Have you experienced both, with a person or with God?
2. Tell us about something difficult that, looking back, built something in you that ease never could have.

Build

Read Romans 5:1-5 aloud.

1. "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God" (5:1). What kind of peace is this: a feeling, or something else? And what do we "stand" in (5:2)?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

A state of affairs, not a state of mind: the hostility described since 1:18 is ended; the war is over. Feelings will lag and wobble; the fact does not. And we stand in "this grace" (5:2): grace is not only the door we entered but the ground under our feet now, a standing relationship. For the group's pastoral benefit: assurance in this passage is anchored in what God did and does, not in the quality of today's emotions. On days you cannot feel peace with God, if you remain in his grace you still have it; and if grave sin has ruptured it, Reconciliation restores it.

2. Walk the chain of 5:3-4 link by link: suffering, endurance, character, hope. Does each link actually follow? And what makes the hope at the end of the chain safe (5:5)? Take this one slowly and gently.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The chain is real but not automatic: suffering produces endurance in those standing in grace (5:2 governs the sentence); outside grace, suffering can just as easily produce bitterness. Endurance, tested over time, becomes character: a self that has been proven. And a proven self dares to hope. The anchor: "hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (5:5). The hope is safe because its ground is already possessed, not still pending. Leader: hold this discussion with care. If someone is inside a suffering right now, do not make them find the silver lining tonight; Paul is promising that nothing suffered in grace is wasted, not that it stops hurting. Silence is an acceptable contribution to this question.

3. Verses 6-11: how does God prove his love, and what is Paul's "much more" logic in 9-10?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

"God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (5:8): the proof is not a feeling reported but an event performed, dated, and public, and its timing is the point: while we were helpless, ungodly, sinners, enemies (Paul's four descriptions in 6-10). The logic: if God reconciled us at maximum cost while we were enemies, "much more" will he save us now that we are friends (5:9-10). The hard part is finished. No one anxious about whether God will finally reject them should be allowed to leave tonight without hearing 5:10.

Read Romans 5:12-21 aloud, slowly; it is the widest-angle paragraph in the letter.

Discovery moment. Say: "Paul says sin came into the world through one man, 'and death through sin' (5:12). He is reading the opening of the Bible. Find the two verses in Genesis 2 and 3 where death is first threatened and then pronounced." Hint if needed: one is about eating; one is about dust.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Genesis 2:17, "in the day that you eat of it you shall die," and Genesis 3:19, "you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Death is not part of the furniture of creation as God intended it; it is an intruder that entered through sin and then "spread to all men" (5:12). This is the doctrine of original sin, and precision matters: what we inherit from Adam is a condition, not a personal crime; "contracted and not committed, a state and not an act" (CCC 404). We are born exiled from a garden we never personally left, with a nature wounded, darkened, and mortal, but not destroyed, a precision that will matter next week. If original sin offends modern ears, invite the group to weigh the universal brokenness the doctrine names and ask whether any rival account explains its universality better.

Discovery moment. Say: "Paul's boldest line is 5:19: by one man's obedience 'many will be made righteous.' A prophet saw this coming: one figure, called my servant, whose suffering would make 'many' righteous. Find him; he is in the most famous chapter of Israel's greatest prophet." Hint if needed: the chapter begins 'Who has believed what we have heard?'

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Isaiah 53:11: "by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities." The "many" of Romans 5:15-19 is the Servant's "many": Paul has been reading Isaiah 53, and Jesus quoted the same song of himself ("a ransom for many," Mk 10:45). Notice what the Servant does: he bears iniquities, and the many are made righteous; the two halves of Romans (3:25 and 5:19) were already joined in the prophet. And underline Paul's chosen word for Christ's saving act: obedience (5:19), "obedient unto death" as Philippians sings. The obedience of faith we have traced since the first night has its source here: his obedience makes ours possible.

Steelman: Made Righteous, or Only Counted Righteous?

Build it at full strength. Say to the group: "Here is the Reformed reading of the parallel, and it is elegant, so give it full weight. How did Adam's sin make you a sinner? Not by your committing it: you were not in the garden. His guilt was imputed to you as your covenant head; you were counted a sinner in him. Very well: the parallel then interprets 5:19 for us. Christ's righteousness makes you righteous the same way, by imputation: counted righteous in him, your legal standing perfect while you yourself remain, in Luther's phrase, at once

justified and a sinner. The symmetry is the argument: if 'made sinners' means imputation, 'made righteous' means imputation. Doesn't the parallel demand it?" Let it stand. Then press.

4. Press: Test the premise against 5:12. Did Adam's sin only change our legal standing, or did something actually happen to us? What actually spread?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Something happened: "death spread to all men" (5:12); death "reigned" (5:14, 17). Adam's sin did not merely put a mark by our names in a ledger; it changed the human condition itself: mortality, darkened intellect, disordered desire: the inheritance your group traced from Genesis 3, as the Church's doctrine synthesizes it (CCC 405). The premise of the imputation reading is too small: "made sinners" names a real condition, contracted and lived in. So the symmetry, honestly followed, proves the Catholic point: if Adam's disobedience really constituted us sinners, Christ's obedience really constitutes the justified righteous: "made righteous" (5:19), grace poured in (5:5), a new condition, which is why Trent teaches that justification truly makes us just, not merely declares us so. And the parallel is not even symmetrical: Paul breaks it in grace's favor three times, "the free gift is not like the trespass" (5:15), "much more" (5:15, 17), grace superabounding (5:20). Grace does not restore us to Adam's starting line; it takes us further up than the fall took us down. Honest scope note: how this real righteousness arrives in an individual life is next session's chapter, and it will name a specific moment most of your group has already lived through.

DIG DEEPER

The happy fault. At the Easter Vigil the Church sings, "O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!" (Exsultet). The line scandalizes until 5:20 explains it: "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." God's answer to the fall was not a patch but an elevation: union with God in Christ exceeds anything Eden held. This is also the deep logic of providence in a wounded life: God does not merely repair what sin ruins; he makes even the ruin serve a greater good, which is why a forgiven sinner can honestly thank God not for the sin, but from inside its aftermath. St. Augustine's converted heart and the thief's cross both hang in that gallery.

Send

1. Which do you actually live from day to day: peace with God as a fact, or a low-grade suspicion that the truce could break? What would change if 5:10 were the ground you stood on?
2. Where in your life right now is the chain of 5:3-4 mid-forged: suffering that God may be working into endurance and character? What would it mean to cooperate rather than just endure?

Live It This Week

- Memorize 5:8 and pray it once each morning, putting your own name in it: while I was yet a sinner, Christ died for me.
- Write down one suffering, past or present, and ask God to show you what he has built or is building through it. If the answer is not visible yet, tell him that too.
- Once this week, offer a specific small hardship (an inconvenience, a pain, a frustration) in union with Christ's obedience, out loud or in writing.

Memory Verse

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Romans 5:8 (RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, New Adam, where we said no, you said yes, all the way to a cross. Reign in us as death once reigned over us. Pour your love into every heart here until hope crowds out fear, and teach us the obedience that unwinds our knots. Glory to you, so great, so glorious a Redeemer. Amen.

Session 6: Peace with God

Leader Reference Card · Every Passage, In Order

- Romans 5:1-5 (read aloud: peace, standing grace, the suffering chain, love poured in)
- Romans 5:6-11 (read aloud: Christ died for the ungodly; much-more logic; reconciled enemies)
- Romans 5:12-21 (read aloud slowly: Adam and Christ; the free gift not like the trespass; grace superabounding)
- Genesis 2:17 and 3:19 (discovery passages: death threatened and pronounced; do not reveal in advance)
- Isaiah 53:11 (discovery passage: the Servant makes many righteous; do not reveal in advance; cf. Mk 10:45)
- CCC 402-404, 411, 1817 (Catechism Connection)
- Memory verse: Romans 5:8