

# God and You

Unlock the heart of the Christian message



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*Six discussions on Romans 1 - 5*

**Pete and Anne  
Woodcock**

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## Read this first!

Ask the average person in the street: “What’s Christianity all about?” or: “What is a Christian?”—and you’ll probably get answers like “Believing in God” or “Someone who tries to live a good life”. Most people assume that Christians live (or claim to live) good lives, following rules taught by Jesus. Most people think becoming a Christian is too difficult or makes you a hypocrite. Most people have missed what real Christianity is...

That’s why *God and You* has been written. Just six one-hour sessions introduce you to the heart of the Christian good news, as recorded in the Bible and taught throughout the history of the Christian church. The course (originally called “Scripture Under Scrutiny”) was designed for Australian university students with no church background or Bible knowledge. But it has been developed and expanded for use with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Maybe this is the first time you have ever studied the Bible. Perhaps you’ve never studied any book before. Don’t worry—there are no exams to pass or fail, and no one is trying to “catch you out”. *God and You* aims simply to help you understand the Christian good news.

We will look at part of Paul’s letter to Christians in Rome—the book called Romans in the New Testament section of the Bible. Paul was a top Jewish rabbi who became the most famous leader of the early Christian church. In Romans he summarises the Christian message—in fact, the message of the whole Bible.

In each session there are Bible passages to read and questions to discuss:

- ➊ Most questions ask you what the Bible passage says. This collection of ancient documents, written over hundreds of years and by many different writers, reads like one book by a single author. Which is exactly what the Bible claims—that it is the word of God.
- ➋ **Think about it:** These questions ask if what the Bible says is true. How does it fit with what we see in the world? If the Bible really is God’s word, what it says must be true and make sense even today.
- ➌ **Ask yourself:** These questions ask: “If this is true, then what should I do?” If God is speaking, we should be listening and ready to act on what he says.

We hope that *God and You* will be a real eye-opener and help you to see that the message of Jesus Christ is truly fantastic good news—for our world, for you, for today.

Pete & Anne



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# Says who?

- God has spoken clearly in the Bible, which tells us about Jesus Christ.
- This message is good news—where we learn that we need God’s power to save us.

1. *Imagine you go into the home of someone you know nothing about.*

a. *By looking at the contents and condition of their home, what can (and can't) you find out about them?*

b. *What added dimension would come from a personal letter written by this person to you?*

At the beginning of his letter to the Christians in Rome (chapter 1, verses 1-17), Paul sets out:

- who he is—an apostle.
- what he does—he is “set apart for the gospel of God” and he calls non-Jewish people to trust, obey and belong to Jesus Christ.
- a summary of the gospel (the good news) of God.
- his love for the Christians in Rome.
- why he wants to visit Rome.

We will focus on what Paul says about God’s message. We’ll find out how people like us can know about God, what we can know about him, and what effect that has on our lives.

## BIBLE EXTRACT

### Romans, chapter 1, verses 1-6 and 14-20

*Read this extract from the Bible, and use it to answer the following questions.*

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—<sup>2</sup>the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures <sup>3</sup>regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, <sup>4</sup>and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>5</sup>Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name’s sake. <sup>6</sup>And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ ...

<sup>14</sup>I am a debtor both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. <sup>15</sup>That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. <sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. <sup>17</sup>For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

<sup>18</sup>The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup>since what may be known about God is plain to them. <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of

the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

## DICTIONARY

**apostle (v 1):** *someone who knew all about the life and teaching of Jesus first-hand and was especially chosen by Jesus to teach.*

**gospel (v 1):** *good news from God.*

**prophet (v 2):** *someone who brings God's message.*

**Holy Scriptures (v 2):** *the message of God in written form.*

**David (v 3):** *Israel's greatest king. God promised that he would have a descendant who would rule for ever.*

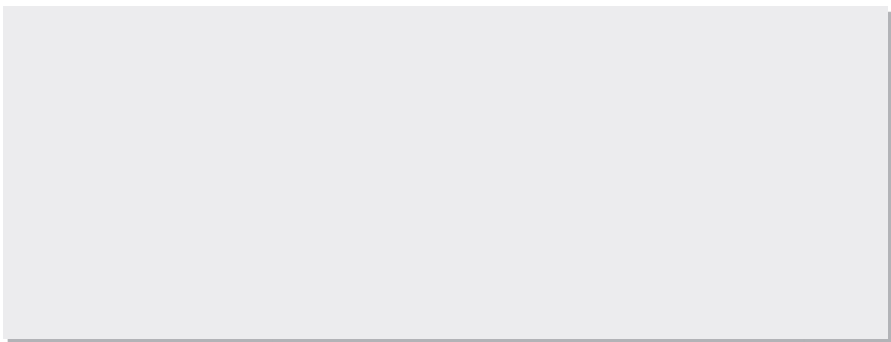
**the Spirit of holiness (v 4):** *the Holy Spirit, who is the third person of the Trinity (the one true God is a Trinity of three persons), with the Father, and the Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son. He is also called the Spirit of God/Christ.*

**Gentile (v 5):** *anyone who isn't a Jew.*

**righteousness (v 17):** *what is right in God's eyes.*

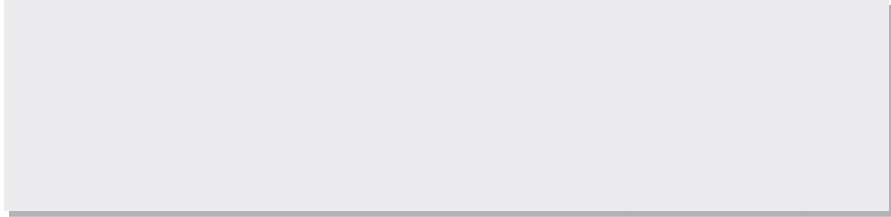
**wrath (v 18):** *right and fierce anger.*

2. *According to Paul, what can people know about God? How do they find out about him (v 19-20)?*



- *Look back to question 1. Is this like (a) or (b)?*

3. *In verse 1 Paul mentions the gospel (good news) of God. How has God communicated this message to us (v 2)?*

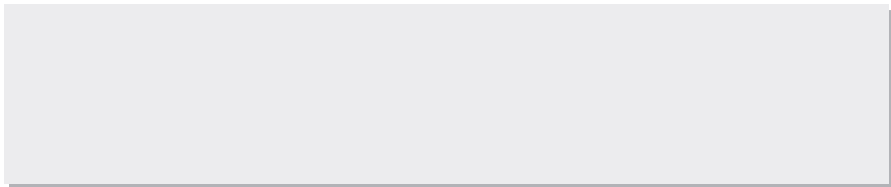


- *Look back to question 1. Is this like (a) or (b)?*

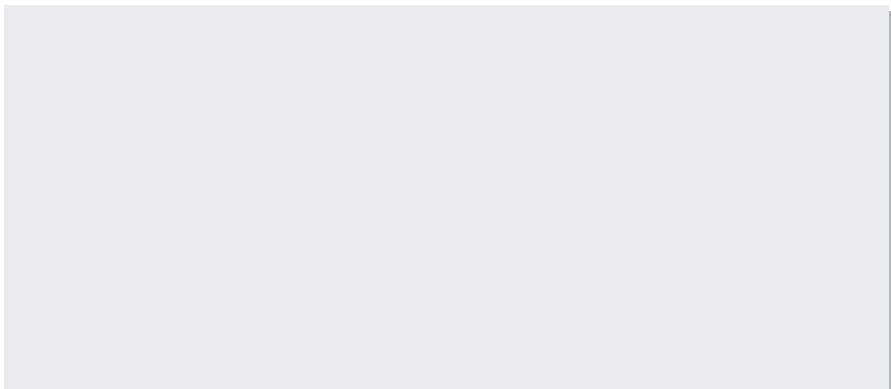
The words of the prophets are found in the part of the Bible we now call the “Old Testament”. The words of witnesses of Jesus, and apostles like Paul, have also been written down, and are found in the “New Testament”. The whole Bible is like a letter written to us by God.

4. *Look at verses 2-5 and 16-17. Summarise:*

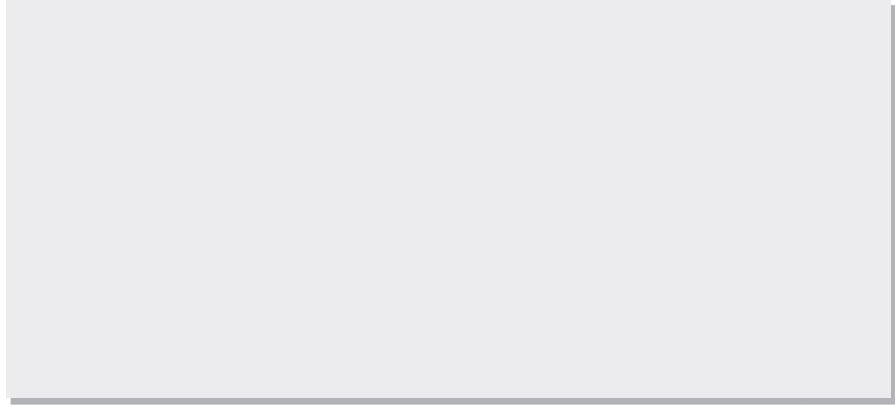
- who God’s message is for.*



- its central themes.*



*c. its effect on people's lives.*



Paul claims to speak with the authority of God—this message is not his own idea. He calls it “the gospel of God” (v 1) and “the gospel of his Son” (see v 9 below). Paul says that he is not a free agent—he calls himself “a servant of Christ Jesus” (v 1), and of God (see v 9 below). He serves them by teaching and spreading their good news.

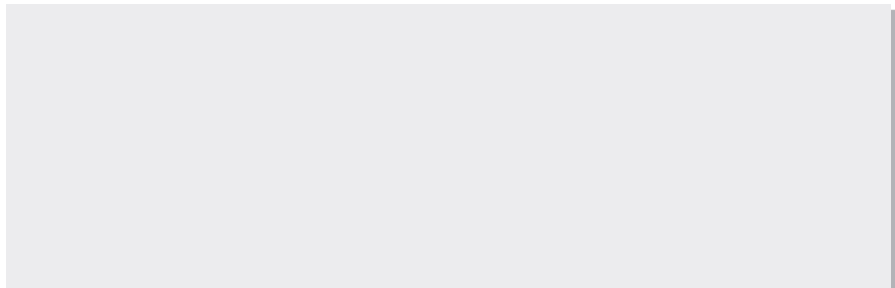
## **BIBLE EXTRACT**

### **Romans, chapter 1, verse 9**

God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you.

#### **5. Think about it:**

*What does God want us to know now? And where do we find this message?*



**6. Ask yourself:**

*In what ways might I need to change my view of the Bible? And of Jesus?*

**7. How does Paul view the gospel of God?**

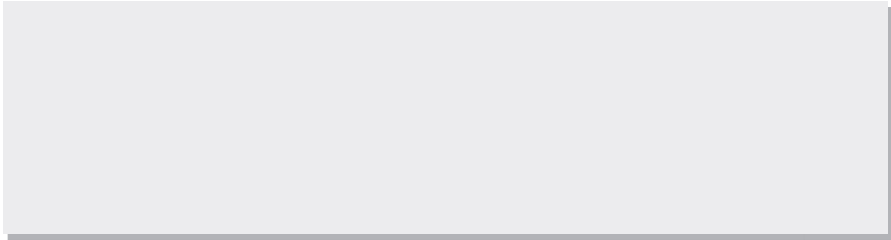
People have many ideas of how God speaks today (dreams, coincidences, voices in our heads), and of what he speaks about (usually guidance for decisions about jobs, relationships, where to live, etc). But Paul is clear: the key thing God wants us to know about is his Son, Jesus Christ. Paul points us to the writings of the prophets (Old Testament) and the teaching of himself and the other apostles (New Testament).

The Bible is where we learn that we need God's power to save us. If we don't find out what the Bible says, or if we read it for other "messages", we will never hear God's message to us.

**8. What do people do with the truth of God (v 18)? Why?**

**9. Think about it:**

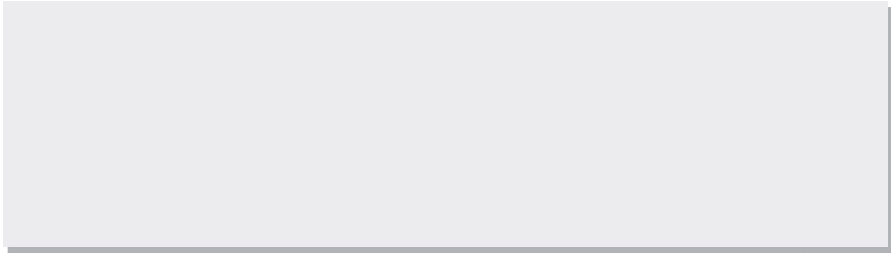
*In what ways do people today “suppress the truth” about God?*



**10. Ask yourself:**

*In what ways am I a “suppressor of the truth” about God?*

*What do I need to do in order to be a hearer of the truth about God?*



**SUMMARY**

God has spoken to our world. He has shown us the truth about himself...

- in creation...
- but above all through Jesus Christ, his Son, as recorded in the Bible.

We need to listen to God by discovering what the Bible says.

**BEFORE THE NEXT SESSION**

- Read Romans chapter 1 v 18 to chapter 2 v 1.
- Think about what is wrong with our world and why.
- What do you learn about God that is new or surprising?