

Facilitator:

1. Open with Prayer
2. Welcome any newcomers
3. Try to keep your discussion to an hour and a half at the most.

Facilitator: Encourage your members to **BRING THEIR BIBLES** and use them during Connect Group.

CONNECT Group study questions for October 22, 2017

Title: Ground Zero of Our Spiritual Universe—Romans 3:21-26

Read: Romans 3:21-26

21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Review: Read through the outline from Pastor Peppy's sermon, *Ground Zero of Our Spiritual Universe*, and share what God revealed to you from the message.

Question: Justification, redemption, and propitiation are words rarely used in churches today and thus are in danger of disappearing from our Christian vocabulary.

Read the lyrics of the hymn below—sing it if you like—and see if you can pick out lines that define justification, redemption, and propitiation.

In Christ Alone

"In Christ alone my hope is found;

*He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.*

*In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.*

*There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.*

*No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.”*

— WORDS AND MUSIC BY KEITH GETTY & STUART TOWNEND

Question: The previous chapters of Romans are bad news for mankind and for each of us as individuals. In this lesson, the Apostle Paul begins to tell us about the good news of the gospel.

How bad is the bad news, and how good is the good news? Could the bad news be any worse? Could the good news be any better? Explain your answers.

Question: Proverbs 17:15 states: “He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.” Yet, Romans 3:23-24 states: “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

If justifying the wicked and condemning the righteous are an abomination to the Lord, how can we reconcile God doing the very thing he hates? **Facilitator:** God loved the world (each of us) so much that he poured out his wrath on his son Jesus Christ in our place. Encourage any member who doesn't fully understand this answer to talk to Pastor Peppy or an elder.

Question: When Jesus, on the cross, said it was finished, our record of sin was wiped away, the price to free us from slavery to sin was paid, and the wrath of God was poured out on his son in our place. This is justification, redemption, and propitiation.

Give examples of justification, redemption and propitiation from everyday life and explain how all this was accomplished by the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Question: If this is true—and it is—are the people with whom we associate every day guilty or innocent in God's eyes? If they are innocent, what condemns them? **Facilitator:** Have your members read Romans 8:1, paying close attention to “...in Christ Jesus.”

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:21

Question: The passage you just read states that Jesus Christ was made sin so that we become the righteousness of God in Christ.

How do we respond to that? What do we do with a gift like that?

Read: Ephesians 2:8-9

Facilitator: Faith is stated three times in our study passage as the only response to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Ask your group members if they have accepted the gift of salvation. Invite two or three to share their experience coming to faith in Christ.