

Prov. 8:1–4, 22–31

Ps. 8

Rom. 5:1–5

John 16:12–15

God with Us

**Goal for
the Session**

*From Paul’s words of hope, children will affirm that hope in
God’s grace is for them.*

■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

Focus on Romans 5:1–5

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Margaret P. Aymer

Through Jesus Christ, the Roman church has peace with God and access into the grace of God. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, it also has had the love of God poured into the hearts of its members. All of this underscores that the affliction or oppression of the Roman church is not the result of divine displeasure and should not, therefore, cause the Roman church shame. Rather, all evidence to the contrary, the church is awash in the gifts of God and, despite its affliction or oppression, is filled with divine favor and love.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Linda E. Thomas

Paul tells the believers in Rome that because they believe that Jesus is the Son of God, God brings them to a place of highest privilege and they stand there presently. So whatever their place or station in life, in whatever circumstance they find themselves, they can rest assured that God gives them special honor and freedom now. Because of this, they can boldly and merrily anticipate developing into the complete person God always intends for them and for us to be. Following Paul’s message to the Romans means that becoming all God intends for us to be begins *now*. This too is part of the real peace we have with God.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Michael Jenkins

Paul does not say that whenever the world breaks us, we will inevitably heal back stronger. It is simply not true. Some who suffer are broken for good, and they do not get well again. Paul is no magician, nor does he advocate a simpleminded optimism. What Paul does promise is that our suffering need never be wasted. Because we belong to God in Christ, because God has poured his love into our hearts, that which we suffer can produce patient endurance. This endurance can form the character of the God who gives God’s self away for us all, and this character produces hope, hope that will never disappoint because God is more faithful than we can ever imagine.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Richard L. Sheffield

Hope is not just the result of “being hopeful,” or “wishful thinking,” or how much we hurt. Hope happens because—as Paul wrote, again about suffering—“we know that all things work together for good for those who love God” (Rom. 8:28), even bad things like suffering and pain. Hope is not something we “work out” but something we take in. “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” (5:5). Our faith (endurance and character) and God’s love, freely given, are the substance of hope.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Romans 5:1–5

Focus on Your Teaching

Rather than try to explain the Trinity to children, this session focuses on something for which they are naturally disposed: spiritual practices that connect them with Jesus and God. Scientific evidence shows that spirituality is part of our being from birth. The spiritual nature is closely connected to relationships with each other and with God. Now is the time to build these connections in the brain. And the stronger the bond with God or a transcendent being, the less likely the child is to be involved in risky behavior in adolescence and beyond.

Holy God, I want to open myself to you and help the children I teach to do the same. In Jesus' name. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- white cloth
- Christ candle
- Bible, bookmark
- offering basket
- Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- Color Pack 1, 34
- Resource Sheet 1
- copies of Resource Sheet 2

For Responding

- option 2: modeling clay or play dough; paper towels or plastic place mats; *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- option 3: Resource Sheet 1, newsprint, markers, sticky notes, pencils or pens
- option 4: newsprint, marker, smooth stones from a craft store, black fine-tipped permanent markers, scrap paper, clear sealing spray

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the children arrive, place a bookmark at Romans in the worship table Bible.

Invite the first children to arrive to arrange the worship table with the white cloth, Christ candle, Bible, Color Pack 1, and offering basket. When everything is ready, gather around the worship table. Invite a child to receive the offering. Ask:

✠ What does this white candle represent?

Light the Christ candle. Say that we light the Christ candle as a reminder that Jesus is always with us.

Comment that the color of the cloth is different from last session. Ask:

✠ What color was the cloth last session? What special day was it?

Explain that today is Trinity Sunday, which is always the Sunday after Pentecost, and that *trinity* means “three.” Ask:

✠ What other words start with “tri” that stands for three of something? (*triple, tricolor, triplet, tricycle, triangle*)

Explain that Trinity in the church stands for three ways that God is present in our lives: creator, Jesus, and Holy Spirit. Or in traditional language: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

EXPLORING

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table, open it to the bookmark, and read the name of the book (*Romans*). Explain that after the four Gospels and the book of Acts, the New Testament has many letters written to people of the first churches. Many were written by Paul. Ask the children if they can recall recent stories about Paul.

If your group is made up of mostly older children, distribute Bibles and look at the books of the New Testament. Count the number of letters. Younger children can be included if paired with an older child.

Tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (Paul and the Roman Church). Ask:

✪ Why did Paul write a letter to the believers in Rome?

Read the paraphrase of Romans 5:1–5 on Resource Sheet 1. Ask the children to raise a hand each time they hear *God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit*. Ask:

✪ What do you think Paul wanted the Romans to know?

Show Color Pack 1. Tell the children that this symbol is for the Trinity, where each point stands for one way God is made known to us and the three are woven together, showing how they interact.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Trinity Labyrinth). Explain this Trinity symbol will be used like a finger labyrinth. Ask a child to read the words at the points of the figure. Play “Harp Music” ([Singing the Feast](#)). Tell them to begin at any point by placing one finger on the “path.” As they move their finger slowly to the next point, they should think about the way that God is present to them through that person of the Trinity. For example, if they begin at the point that says *Son*, they think about how God is present to them through Jesus until they reach the next point. Then they continue with the next way that God is present to them. Explain that they can go around the path more than once. When the music stops, they stop.

Conclude Exploring by noting that moving around a labyrinth is called a *spiritual practice*. Spiritual practices help connect us more closely with God.

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children.

1. Question Game Paul wrote to the Romans to answer their questions about God. This game will encourage children to speak aloud their questions about God. Teach the children the chant in the sidebar. Rehearse it three or four times. Then have everyone else stand in a circle, make fists with both hands, and hold them in front of their bodies. “It” walks around the circle, saying the chant and bumping one fist for each word in the chant. Ask for a volunteer to be “It” or demonstrate this yourself. The person in the circle who is fist-bumped on the last word of the chant says a number between one and ten. “It” counts off individuals in the circle until the number is reached. That person asks one question about God, and then becomes “It.” After several rounds when everyone who wishes has asked a question, ask:

✪ Where can you go to find answers to your questions about God?

2. Meditation with Clay As children reflect on the ideas in Paul’s letter to the Romans, they place God in their lives. Give each child a lump of modeling clay or play dough and a paper towel or plastic place mat. Explain that they are to work with the clay as they think about some questions about God that you will ask them. They don’t answer out loud, just think. Set “Celebration Music” ([Singing the Feast](#)) to repeat play softly.

EASY
PREP

Chant

Who is God?
What do you say?
What’s your question
about God today?

Suggest that they work with the clay for a moment or two to soften it. Then quietly ask the following questions, allowing time for children to think and mold the clay after each one.

- ✿ What part of God's creation seems most amazing to you?
- ✿ Who helps you to have hope in God?
- ✿ When do you feel God is close to you?
- ✿ What does it feel like to have hope in God?
- ✿ What does it feel like to ask God a question?

After the last question, collect the clay and suggest that they continue to think about God and God's hope.

- 3. Encouraging Messages** Children will write messages to encourage others to recognize hope in God, just as Paul did. Read aloud the last sentence in the paraphrase of Paul's letter on Resource Sheet 1. Ask the following questions. Write the children's answers on newsprint in short sentences or phrases:

- ✿ What could you say about God's love to a person who is sad? Who is worried? To encourage someone to keep trying?

Give four or five sticky notes and pencil to each child. Invite the children to read the answers on the newsprint and choose a few they like best. Tell them to write their favorites on the sticky notes, one to a note. When they finish, talk about where they might leave their notes at home for family members to find.

- 4. Reminder Rocks** Children will decorate rocks as reminders that they have hope because of God's love and care. Together, make a list of words or phrases and images that convey the hope they can have because they know about God's love and care. Print the words on newsprint for younger children to copy. Give each child a rock and a black fine-tipped permanent marker to decorate it. Provide scrap paper so they can test their designs and adjust them to the size of the rock. When learners are finished with their rocks, place them on several layers of newspaper and spray with a clear sealing spray. As they dry, talk about where the children will place their rocks at home.

CLOSING

Gather at the worship table. Sing "I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing" (Color Pack 34, [Singing the Feast](#)). Substitute "hope" for "sing."

Pray:

Loving God, we are thankful that your love is shown through Jesus, and we learned from Paul that we can hope because your love fills our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

To each child, say, "Thank you for coming. See you next week."

I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing

I'm gonna sing when the
Spirit says sing,
I'm gonna sing when the
Spirit says sing,
I'm gonna sing when the
Spirit says sing,
and obey the Spirit of the
Lord.

Paul and the Roman Church

based on Romans 5:1-5

Paul and his friends traveled to many places to tell people about Jesus Christ. But travel was difficult in those days and it took days, even months, to get from city to city, certainly from country to country. Paul wanted very much to visit the churches of Rome in Italy. But try as he might, he couldn't seem to get to this city, where he knew some of the people. Paul did the next best thing for his time; he wrote them a long letter.

Paul told the believers in Jesus in Rome that he really wanted to come and tell them about Jesus in person. He had heard good things about their strong faith and he wanted to help them be even stronger. But, alas, he had to settle for writing a letter instead.

One of the things he wanted to tell them is from the fifth chapter. I said it was a long letter. There are 16 chapters. Paul wrote:

Because of Jesus the Christ, we can be at peace with God. When we stand with Jesus, we can be proud of the hope of God's glory together.

But that isn't all! We don't have to be upset because we have problems. We know that with God and Jesus those problems can make us better to be strong during them. Then we build good character. And that good character gives us hope.

But this isn't just any hope. It is a hope that comes to us because God's love fills our hearts through the Holy Spirit, the gift from God and Jesus.

And Paul's words to the believers in Rome also are words to the church right here today.



Trinity Labyrinth

