



June 21 – The Remedy

Weekly Reading – Romans 1-5

This Week's Passages – Mark 7:14-23 & Romans 5:6-11

Main Point

Our deepest problem is a sinful heart, and our only hope is the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Key Verse

Romans 5:8 – But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Try to emphasize this verse throughout the lesson, building up to the Weekly Challenge to memorize the verse this week.

Life Group – The Flow

- 15 minutes – Conversation and relationship-building
 - 5 minutes – Looking back
 - 5 minutes – Introduction (icebreaker, activity, or illustration)
 - 30 minutes – Study and apply the Bible
 - 5 minutes – Application exercise
 - 10 minutes – Pray Through the Passage & Prayer Requests
 - 5 minutes – Conclusion
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Looking Back (5 min)



Use this time to celebrate obedience and encourage growth. Invite members to share how they sought to apply last week's challenge and what God taught them along the way. Focus on God's faithfulness and the progress He is making in our lives, not on perfect execution. Scan or click the QR code for last week's challenge.

Say:

Last week, we challenged ourselves to become a steady source of hope and encouragement to others.

Discuss one or more prompts:

- Did anyone have an opportunity to encourage someone this week?
- How did trusting God's promises affect your response to difficulty?
- What did God teach you through last week's challenge?

Introduction (5 min)

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Ask:

- Have you ever tried to fix a problem, only to discover later that you were treating the symptom instead of the cause?

Examples:

- car problems
- medical issues
- home repairs

A warning light may appear on your vehicle, but replacing the light doesn't fix the engine. A doctor may treat a symptom, but lasting healing requires identifying the root issue. We often approach our spiritual lives the same way. We focus on our behavior, habits, and mistakes while ignoring the deeper issue beneath them.

Transition to Background:

“If we’re going to understand God’s remedy, we first need to understand the world into which Jesus and Paul spoke. Let’s take a moment to look at the historical setting behind today’s passages.”

Background

The Background and Christ Connection sections are designed to provide context and a gospel lens for the lesson. Feel free to summarize these sections rather than reading them word-for-word.

Mark 7

The events of Mark 7 took place during Jesus’ ministry in Galilee as opposition from the Pharisees and scribes continued to grow. Jewish religious leaders placed significant emphasis on ceremonial purity laws and the oral traditions that had developed around the Old Testament. These traditions governed everything from handwashing practices to food preparation and were viewed by many as marks of spiritual faithfulness. By Jesus’ day, many people equated outward cleanliness and religious observance with righteousness before God. Against this backdrop, Jesus challenged deeply held assumptions about what truly makes a person clean or unclean before the Lord.

Romans 5

The book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul around A.D. 57 while he was likely in Corinth during his third missionary journey. Unlike many of Paul’s letters, Romans was written to a church he had not yet visited. The congregation in Rome consisted of both Jewish and Gentile believers who were learning how the gospel united people from very different religious and cultural backgrounds. Throughout the letter, Paul carefully explained humanity’s universal need for salvation and God’s provision through Jesus Christ. Romans 5 comes immediately after Paul’s discussion of justification by faith and highlights the blessings that belong to those who have been reconciled to God through Christ.

Transition to Christ Connection:

“The people who first heard these passages wrestled with many of the same questions we face today: What is wrong with us, and how can we be made right? Before we study the text, let’s consider how the gospel answers those questions through Jesus Christ.”

Christ Connection

Jesus did more than identify humanity’s problem—He came to solve it. While religion seeks to clean up external behavior, the gospel transforms the heart. Through His death

and resurrection, Jesus provided the forgiveness, righteousness, and reconciliation that sinful people could never achieve on their own. The remedy for our deepest problem is not self-improvement but salvation through Christ.

Transition to Passage 1:

“With that foundation in place, let’s look at Jesus’ diagnosis of humanity’s deepest problem in Mark 7.”

Study and Apply (30 min)

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says and how we can apply it in our lives this week.

Passage 1 – Mark 7:14-23

READ THE PASSAGE – Have a volunteer read Mark 7:14-23.

What Defiles a Person

[14] And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand:

[15] There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.”

[17] And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable.

[18] And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him,

[19] since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

[20] And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him.

[21] For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,

[22] coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

[23] All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” (ESV)

Commentary

Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

Mark 7:14–15

Jesus cut to the heart of the matter. He called the whole crowd to him and announced that the source of godly living was from “within and not from without.” Notice that Jesus took the religious leaders to a deeper level in answering their objections to “unwashed hands” by proceeding to talk about “unclean foods.” Jesus in essence was rejecting the religious leaders’ approach to God’s Word. They were concerned about surface piety and purity, while Jesus was concerned about internal purity. This alone brings true godliness.

Mark 7:17–19

Jesus gave a general announcement to the crowd about the source of true holiness, but he gave a more detailed private explanation to his disciples. Jesus’ statements to the disciples seemed to puzzle them. These statements ran counter to their Jewish upbringing about dietary restrictions and godly living. Jesus said, “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” He was declaring that true obedience results from a love of God from the heart, not the outward acts of keeping the rules. True holiness is internal. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matt. 5:8). Our heart attitude, not the keeping of rules, determines the purity and power of our relationship to God.

Notice the phrase, “In saying this Jesus declared all foods ‘clean.’” This indicates the source from which true defilement originates. The Jewish dietary laws were about ceremonial impurity. Jesus was saying that the food we eat is digested and the waste is eliminated, but sin begins in the heart and produces true impurity in our lives. Jesus implied that our fellowship with God is not affected by unclean hands or unclean foods, but by personal sin.

Mark 7:20–23

Jesus showed how the observance of external rules does not correct the “nature” of the heart. The heart is the core for motivation, deliberation, and intention. He gave a list of behaviors and characteristics that come from the heart.

“Evil thoughts” is the spring from which all the other “bad” attitudes and activities arise. Jesus was making it clear that doing the right things does not mean that a person is “right” on the inside. No amount of hand washing can change the selfish nature of the heart or make it clean. There is only one way. His name is Jesus. By trusting in him for our salvation, we can be changed from the inside out.

Guide Discussion

You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage. I do encourage you to use the Reflective question to provide more engagement from your Life Group.

1. Good for Students. According to Jesus, where does sin begin?

2. **Discuss.** Why is it easier to blame circumstances, other people, or temptation than to acknowledge the condition of our own hearts?
3. **Deeper Dive.** How does Jesus' teaching challenge the idea that people are basically good and simply need better behavior or better circumstances?
4. ★ **Reflective** - write answers on an index card. When you struggle spiritually, what is your first instinct: to try harder, hide better, blame circumstances, or run to Christ? What does that reveal about what you believe is your deepest problem?

Teaching Insight

The Teaching Insight is intended to help you identify and emphasize the main truth of the passage. Consider using it as a brief summary after discussion or a way to clarify the lesson's central message if your group gets off track.

Say:

"Jesus' words were unsettling because they shifted the focus from external behavior to the condition of the heart. Before moving on, let's consider the key truth He wanted His listeners to understand."

Jesus taught that humanity's deepest problem is not external behavior but internal corruption. Sin flows from the heart and reveals our need for more than moral improvement. Because our problem is deeper than our actions, God's solution had to be deeper than behavior modification - it required the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Transition to Passage 2:

"If Mark 7 revealed the diagnosis, Romans 5 revealed the cure. After exposing humanity's sinful condition, Paul pointed believers to the hope found in Christ's saving work."

Passage 2 - Romans 5:6-11

READ THE PASSAGE - Have volunteers read Romans 5:6-11

[6] For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.
[7] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—
[8] but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
[9] Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

[10] For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

[11] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (ESV)

Commentary

Romans 5:6

Paul introduced a third benefit of salvation—that of having God’s love—in 5:5. In 5:6–11, the apostle developed this theme further with stirring language and comparisons. In particular, he described the vast gulf between divine love and human love. Paul set the stage for illustrating the radical difference of God’s love by first stating it as a basic fact of the gospel. Paul wanted his readers to clearly understand the nature of God’s love.

First, God loved us when we were helpless. This means that apart from Christ we were completely unable to make any positive move toward God. Second, Christ died for us when we were ungodly. We could claim no moral goodness so as to make the case that we might be worthy of His death. If anything, we were the opposite! Third, Christ gave His life for us at the appointed time. The Scriptures teach us that God had salvation by the cross and resurrection in mind even before the foundation of the world (see Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:18–20).

Romans 5:7–8

Paul could imagine a rare scenario in which someone might be willing to die on behalf of a just person or a good person. However, the greatest imaginable case of human love cannot begin to compare to divine love in which while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:9–10

Paul continued his discussion by making two greater-to-lesser arguments. The argument is that if a greater premise is true, then a lesser premise can be held to be certain with equal confidence, if not more. Paul had stated his “greater” premise in verse 8: God showed His love by saving sinners when we were at our worst—helpless and ungodly. Since this amazing display of divine love is true, how much more can we trust the promise that we will be saved through Him from wrath. That is, we as believers have nothing to fear about the end-time judgment because we no longer are under God’s wrath. Our sin-debt has been paid in full by a loving God who gave His only Son to die in our place (see 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).

Moreover, because God loves us so amazingly, we can trust the promise that we will be saved by His life. This wraps the totality of Christian hope in a life-changing package. The justified not only escape God’s wrath in the judgment but also are saved to

experience the fullness of life as God intends. Here Paul had in mind not only a superior quality of life—life in Christ—but also longevity of life—that is, eternal life.

Romans 5:11

Paul captured the totality of the believers' benefit as having been obtained on the basis of reconciliation through Jesus Christ. From one point of view, Christ's sacrifice was an atonement that averted God's wrath from those who deserved His judgment because of their sins. In this section, however, Paul emphasized that Christ's sacrifice was the demonstration of nothing less than divine love for sinners.

Guide Discussion

1. **Good for Students.** How does Paul describe our condition before Christ saved us?
2. **Discuss.** Why is it difficult for many people to believe that salvation is received rather than earned?
3. **Deeper Dive.** How does the gospel dethrone the false belief that we can save ourselves through morality, achievement, religion, or self-improvement?
4. ★ **Reflective - write answers on an index card.** Where do you find yourself acting as though God's acceptance must still be earned rather than received through Christ?

Teaching Insight

Say:

"The gospel becomes most beautiful when we understand the condition from which we have been rescued. Paul's words remind us that our salvation rests entirely on God's grace rather than our own efforts."

Paul emphasized that Christ did not die for people who have cleaned themselves up. He died for the weak, ungodly, sinful, and hostile. The gospel is not God's reward for improved behavior but His gracious rescue of those who cannot save themselves.

Transition into Application Exercise:

"Knowing the truth is important, but Scripture calls us to respond. Let's take a few moments to consider what today's lesson reveals about our own hearts and where we may still be tempted to rely on ourselves instead of Christ."

Application Exercise (5-7 min)

Heart Diagnostic

Time: 5-7 minutes

Supplies: Index card

Instructions

Give everyone an index card.

Prompt:

Complete this sentence:

"I often believe I would be okay if only _____."

Examples:

- I were more disciplined
- my marriage improved
- my finances stabilized
- people approved of me
- I could overcome this sin

Then ask:

- Does that answer reveal a symptom or the deeper issue beneath it?

Then:

- How does the gospel address the deeper issue?

Transition into Year of Prayer:

"Understanding God's Word is important, but Scripture calls us to respond with both faith and obedience. As we've considered the condition of our hearts and the hope we have in Christ, let's spend a few moments praying through these truths and asking God to continue His work in us."

Pray through the Passage (10 min)

Led by the Prayer Champion:

Read the verse/passage, then read the prayer prompt out loud. Allow a few moments between prompts for reflection and prayer. Encourage members to personalize each prayer by filling in the blank with their own response.

Prompt 1 - Confession

Mark 7:21–23 – For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, [22] coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. [23] All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

- Lord, show me where sinful desires are taking root in my heart and defiling my walk with You.

Prompt 2 – Gratitude/Faith

Romans 5:8 – but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- Lord, help me remember that my salvation rests in Christ alone and not in _____.

Prompt 3 – Response/Obedience

Romans 5:11 – More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

- Lord, help me find my joy in You this week instead of in _____.

Prayer Requests, Praises, and Follow-Up

Take a few minutes to ask the group for updates from the previous week’s prayer requests. Encourage the group to celebrate answered prayers.

Next, identify specific needs that can be prayed for throughout this coming week.

Record requests and praises, share them with the group during the week, and follow up on them at the next gathering.

Transition into Conclusion:

“Jesus showed us that our deepest problem is not merely our behavior but our sinful hearts. Paul reminded us that God did not leave us in that condition but provided a remedy through the death and resurrection of His Son. As we conclude, let’s remember the hope we have—not in our ability to fix ourselves, but in Christ’s power to save and transform us.”

Conclusion (5 min)



Scan or click the QR code and share the link in your Life Group's group chat (e.g. GroupMe, text or email thread, etc.) so they can see This Week's Challenge. Encourage your group to keep these questions in mind, review/memorize the Key Verse during the week, and engage in the Year of Prayer reading plan this week.

Final Takeaway

After discussion concludes, read the takeaway statement:

Our greatest problem is not what we do but who we are apart from Christ, and our greatest hope is not self-improvement but the saving grace of Jesus.

This Week's Challenge

Reflect:

This week, pay attention to moments when you are tempted to rely on your own effort, morality, discipline, or performance to gain acceptance before God. When those moments arise, intentionally remind yourself of the gospel: Christ died for you while you were still a sinner.

- Where are you most tempted to trust yourself instead of Christ?
- What recurring struggle reveals your need for God's grace?
- How does the gospel free you from trying to earn God's acceptance?
- What would change if you truly believed Christ has already done what you could never do for yourself?

Memorize or Review Daily:

Review daily and/or memorize the **Key Verse** from this passage to remind yourself that you can do nothing to earn your way to heaven, and that God's love alone is what saves you.

Romans 5:8 - But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Read:

This week's reading is **Romans 6-10**. You can access the Year of Prayer reading plan [here](#).

Prayer

Either pray something like the guide below, or invite someone in the group to close in prayer.

Father, thank You for showing us the true condition of our hearts and for not leaving us without hope. Forgive us for the ways we try to fix ourselves, justify ourselves, or earn Your favor through our own efforts. Help us rest fully in the finished work of Christ, rejoice in Your grace, and walk this week in the freedom that comes from knowing we are loved, forgiven, and reconciled to You through Jesus. Amen.