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Discovering Your Freedom in Christ SESSION 2: SET FREE FROM MEASURING-UP

What we want students to learn: For students to learn that in Christ, they have been set free from the pressure to “measure up.” In Christ, they have value.

Main Scripture: Romans 8:31–39

Session Snapshot: Teenagers receive so many messages from culture about their value. They constantly compare themselves to the standards set by others. And overwhelmingly, they don't feel like they add up. They don't feel as pretty or as put-together as the people they follow on Instagram and Snapchat. They don't feel as athletic as the other guys or girls on the team. They don't feel as smart as their friends. Or as funny. Or as popular. Or as accepted. Overwhelmingly, many of our students don't feel like they add up, and they doubt their self-worth. Into this environment of doubt, the Gospel speaks life and light. In Christ, God sees teenagers as invaluable. There is no condemnation, no judgment, no comparison-making for God's children. They are eternally valuable and immeasurably worthy because the Father has welcomed them in the name of the Son. When students truly internalize this, it changes everything about how they see themselves.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each Small Group Leader's Guide comes with a **Teacher Prep Video**. These are simply short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your Truly Free Lesson 2 Teacher Prep Video, simply click on the link below:

Lesson 2 Teacher Prep Video (<https://youtu.be/YEnPZI3aNZ4>)

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Paul is the author of Romans.
- **Time frame:** Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of 56-57 AD.
- **Purpose:** Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. Also, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, a level playing field needed to be given to all Believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point for this lesson is found in verses 31-33 (though verses 37-39 will serve as an exclamation point). What we want students to know is that God is for them (vs. 31). No one can bring any “charge” against them. No one can condemn them. They are above the arrows that the world shoots at them. Why? Because God loved them so much that He sent His Son to redeem them. In the face of such a lavish gift, a gift that once-and-for-all validates their value and worth, what can the world throw at them that can have any real effect on their standing?

When our students understand that they are spoken for and that God's love perfectly covers them, it frees them from feeling the need to measure up to the standards the world around them puts on them.

THE TAKEAWAY

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The takeaway for this session is to help students realize what it means that God has spoken for them. God's love validates them. Perfectly. God's love is a seeking love. It is a redeeming love. And it is a validating love. Nothing can come between God's love and our students. In Christ, they are enough. Period.

The outflow of this truth is that students should be able to look at themselves with unshakable confidence. They should see themselves as "bulletproof," ultimately immune to the messages they receive every day from the world around them that say they aren't good enough, or that they don't measure up. This extreme assurance of their worth and value is grounded in God's love for them and should empower them to boldly live their lives without the need to meet the world's unrealistic and misguided standards.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: an introductory activity called **Getting Started**; the Bible study section called **Digging In**; and an application-focused segment called **Wrapping Up**.

GETTING STARTED

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This lesson will utilize pages 13-17 in the **Truly Free** Student Book.
 - This activity will use page 13-14.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - None

FIRST, instruct your students to turn to page 14 in their Student Books. Explain to them that you want them to embrace their inner dreamer. Ask something like:

- **What have you always wanted to be? Not the practical, wise, smart response. The free-wheeling, heart's desire, truly gigantic dream response! How would you respond? Would you be an actress? An athlete? A social media influencer? Choose the one thing you have always wanted to be and write it in the blank at the top of page 14.**

THEN, after you give students a second to write their response, have them go around and share what they'd be. When they are done, say something like:

- **OK, now that you've revealed what you would LOVE to be one day, you need to take a second and think about how you will get there. Think for a moment about the steps required. Don't miss any! Think through how you'll get from where you are to where you want to be and write those steps in the blanks on the page.**

Allow students a few minutes to write their answers. When they have finished, call on any volunteers who want to share their process.

NEXT, when you've finished allowing a chance to share for anyone who wants, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **So, look at what you've written at the top of your page. Is your goal realistic or purely make-believe? How realistic is your goal?**
 - Answers will vary.

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- **How would you feel if you were able to achieve it? How would your life change?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Think of what you want to be. If you achieved it, would the world say you were a success? Why or why not?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **How would it make you feel if you achieved what you wanted, but people looked down on you or otherwise judged you for some reason?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Look at the steps it took to get there. Were there any that relied on other people's approval or acceptance? Could you have achieved your goal if you couldn't get people on your side?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, when you've finished, say something like:

- **This was a fun activity. But I hope it made you think for just a moment. A lot of times, we allow others to influence how we define ourselves. We constantly compare ourselves to others, whether we even realize it or not. Even when we think about the things we want to accomplish, we often measure them against other people's definitions of what is good or acceptable. The worst is when we allow this comparison game to impact how we see ourselves. But the good news is that the Gospel has something to say about this. Let's check it out.**

If there are no more comments or questions, transition to the *Digging In* section of your lesson.

DIGGING IN

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize pages 15-16 in the *Truly Free* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - You'll want to make sure students have something to write with, and a Bible or Bible app.

FIRST, instruct students to turn to page 15. Direct their attention to the three "truth statements" on pages 15-16. Explain that you are going to be reading a passage of Scripture, filling in the blanks in the various truth statements, and then discussing each point.

Instruct students to turn to Romans 8:31-39. While they are finding the passage, provide some context for the book using the "Details" portion of your Lesson Plan. When students have located the passage, read or have a volunteer read Romans 8:31. When you finish, ask for anyone who thinks they may know how to fill in the blanks for the truth statement. The correct response is, "FOR ME." When they've written that down in the blanks provided, lead them in a brief discussion using the questions on page 15. The answers are written below:

- **Give some examples, not necessarily from your personal life, but how teenagers can be "against" other teenagers. How does this play out?**
 - Answers will vary but may include responses similar to the following: Students share secrets that they were supposed to keep in confidence; students gossip about one another; they may spread lies or take the opportunity to belittle or otherwise bring down others.
- **When someone tries to tear you down, how does it make you feel?**

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- Answers will vary.
- **What happens when YOU are the one bringing yourself down? Give some examples of what this might look like.**
 - Answers will vary. But help students see that sometimes, we are our own biggest critic. We can pick apart our image, accomplishments, and actions. We can bring ourselves down by an overall low self-image.
- **God is 100% for you. He's all in. What does that mean to you? How would you explain it?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **How does God being "for you" change the way you interact with the world around you?**
 - Answers will vary.

Help students see that they can never underestimate what it means to have God in our corner. Say something like:

- **It's so easy for us to say something like, "God is on our side," or "God has our back." What Paul is saying in vs. 31 is so, so much bigger than that. God, the Almighty Creator of the Universe, isn't just in your corner or on your side. The perfect, eternal God is united behind you in support of you. He is all in. He is WITH you. He is aligned with you against the world. From this reality flows assurance, and confidence, and boldness, and humility. It is a powerful, foundational truth that helps us understand the rest of what Paul says in this passage.**

THEN, have students continue with the passage. Read or have a student read Romans 8:32-34. When you have finished, ask students how they think the truth statement might be completed. Instruct them to write down "MY VALUE" in the blank spaces. Then, lead students in a brief discussion by asking:

- **God is for you. But more than that, He has spoken for you. From God's perspective, your value is a done deal. He's taken care of that for you. How can we be confident that this is the case?**
 - Answer: Because He didn't spare His Son. Why does this make a difference? Because if He would give up His Son for you, there's nothing He won't do.
- **The world brings "charges" against us all the time. We just talked about this. What does Paul say here about the validity of the charges others bring against us?**
 - Answer: There's nothing to them. They don't stick. They wouldn't stand up in "God's court" because you've already been spoken for by God.
- **When Paul says God justifies us, do you know what he means? And can you guess what it has to do with others speaking against us?**
 - Answer: Paul uses a legal term to talk about how in Christ, the debt of our sin has been forgiven. We talked about this last lesson. God has justified us. That means made innocent. But it's more than that. It means made whole and made RIGHT. In God's eyes, if you are in Christ, you are seen as holy and above reproach and without blame in any way (Col. 1:22). In other words, there is nothing anyone can say against you.
- **Paul says in vs. 34 that Jesus died to save us from the condemnation that others bring against us. Jesus purchased your worth and value on the cross. What impact does this have on how you compare your value to other people?**
 - Answers will vary.

Before moving on, help students see that ultimately this means that God has stated, once and for all, that they have value. They matter. Say something like:

- **God gave up His Son, Jesus, to purchase you. To buy you back from the death your sin earns for**

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you. He went to the cross for you. That's how valuable you are to God. You are worth everything to the Most High. Because this is true about you, there is **NOTHING** that anyone can say about you that can bring you down even a notch. No one can take away your worth. No one can speak against your value. You have been set free from trying to live up to the standards of the world. In Christ, you are worthy.

NEXT, have students look at the final truth statement on page 16. Read or have a student read Romans 8:35-39. When you have finished, ask students how they think the truth statement might be completed. Instruct them to write down "Unending Love" in the blank spaces. Then, lead students in a brief discussion by asking:

- **Look at verse 35. Paul is asking a rhetorical question. He's essentially saying, "Nothing, not even this stuff, can separate us from the love of Christ." Look at that list. Do you see the things you deal with represented on that list? Explain.**
 - Answers will vary. At first, they may be inclined to say that they don't deal with these. But help them see that they do. They experience tribulation (tough times), distress (times of confusion or times of fear), persecution (people making fun of them because of their faith), famine and nakedness (times where they worry about their needs being met), and so on.
- **Look at vs. 37. To conquer means to win. Big time. So what does it mean that when it comes to overcoming the things the world throws at you, you are MORE than conquering with God's love on your side?**
 - Answers will vary. But it essentially means that there is nothing that can beat us. Nothing.
- **Check that list out in 38-39. That's a lot of stuff. Circle the things on that list that can come between God's love and you.**
 - Answer: Trick question! There aren't any!
- **God is for you. Jesus died to give you value and worth in God's eyes. And NOTHING can come between God's love and you. How do these truths help you overcome the external and internal voices that say you don't measure up?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, finish this portion of your lesson by saying something like:

- **God is for you. He chose to send His Son to once-and-for-all validate you. His love covers you. You are, essentially, bulletproof. There is nothing the world can throw at you. There is no standard that you don't meet. You are set free from every voice and every measure that says you aren't good enough. In Christ, you are enough. And that is as hopeful a message as there is.**

Ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to the **Wrapping Up** portion of your lesson.

WRAPPING UP

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize page 17 in the *Truly Free* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have something to write with.

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FIRST, instruct students to turn to page 17 in their books. Remind them, as you did in the first session, that the most important thing for us to do when we encounter God is to respond to Him. Remind them that this time in the session is for them to consider how they have been changed by the truths they have just learned.

THEN, remind them that the prompt on page 17 is a way to help them think about how to apply what they have learned. Have them read the question and come up with their answers. (As a reminder, this specific format will be a repeating feature for these small group sessions.) You can have them take a moment and fill it out on their own and then share their answers with the group, or you can process the question as a group discussion. Either way, take some time to allow students to work through the question and consider how they are changed by what they learned.

FINALLY, when you've allowed time for students to process, close your time with a message of encouragement and prayer.

Don't forget to inform students of the devotions located on pages 35-42 in their Student Books. Provide them with a schedule or some structure as to when you would like for them to work through them. (The first devotion is on page 35.)