

Romans

Week 1

As I was preparing for this message, I was reminded of a strange memory I have. Maybe some of you know what I'm talking about ... you have this memory from a really long time ago, but it's from so long ago that it may or may not make sense, and you question whether it actually happened to you.

Well, I have a memory like this, and who knows, maybe it's actually two memories blended into one. But this is what I remember:

One of the first churches I attended, my parents helped build. The church was out in the country and had a pond. I learned how to swim in that pond. One day, my brother and I were outside exploring and searching for crawdads, and I have this memory of us finding a crab. And then it gets fuzzy, because the next thing I remember is being back home in our little kitchen, cleaning the crab and hearing my dad and brother talking about how to cook it.

Slide 1: What is the strangest memory you have from your childhood?

So, my dad proceeded to get out a pot and put cold water in it. He then placed the crab or crawdad or whatever it was in the cold water, then put the pot on the stove. I remember my dad telling us that we had to put it in the cold water and then slowly boil the water so that the crab would not climb out when it got too hot. Because apparently, if you do it this way the crab will sit there and not know it is dying, and it will stay in the pot.

Thinking back on this obscure memory kinda makes me sad, and a little grossed out. I feel bad for the crab. But I also think there is a lot we can learn from this weird memory ... about how all of us fall into sin. So how does it happen why do we sin even though we know the truth about God?

Sin usually takes root when we want to do something we know God doesn't want us to do. But still, we take the time to rationalize it, and

eventually we give in and do it. And usually, we feel bad and promise to never do it again. But the thing is, once the sin has been tried once, the temptation to repeat it increases and we find it harder and harder to stay away. So we stay in the pot, just like the crab, even though we should be jumping out and living the life God is offering us.

In Genesis, we learn that God created the world. Let's take a walk in the Garden of Eden for a moment. God created the world because he desired to have a relationship with humanity. So he created Adam and Eve and placed them in a wonderful place, where all of their needs were met and everything was wonderful. And he gave them freedom to move about as they pleased. His only rule was that they not eat from one particular tree in the garden.

Point 1: God desires to give you life.

During the next several weeks, we are going to look at some verses from the book of Romans, which is a letter written by a man named Paul to a church in Rome, telling them about how God loved all people from the beginning, but they turned away from Him. See, an age-old question is: If we know God, why do we keep on sinning? And this was one of the big questions Paul was addressing to the Romans.

[Author Note: Our students sit around tables, and several times during the message, each table reads passages from Scripture together and then answers a series of questions. If this won't work in your group, feel free to read the verses yourself and then ask the questions to the entire group.]

At your tables read, Romans 1:29-32.

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things

deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

What sins in this passage are still relevant to us today?

Which ones are the hardest for you to avoid?

Even if you are a Christian why is it still hard to avoid sin?

Point 2: No matter how warm and cozy sin feels at first, it will eventually lead to death .

We all like to think that we know sin is wrong and that we have the power to say no. We think we know where to draw the line and back away when we get too close. But that's not how sin works. It's usually more like this: A little sin lures you into the pot of cold water, and you convince yourself that everything is fine; a little sin won't seriously hurt anything. But this mindset and behavior eventually increases to a *lot* of sin, slowly boiling you to death, like that crab.

Let's think back to the Garden of Eden for a minute. You might know how that ended up. I often hear people jokingly blaming Adam and Eve for all the sin that exists in the world—but in all honesty, if it wouldn't have been them, it would've been someone else.

We like to blame or condemn others for their actions that we can clearly see are wrong. We focus on their sin while ignoring our own sin. The Romans did it, too!

Read Romans 2:1-4.

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

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