

Family Discipleship Guide

The Law, the Conscience & the Secrets

Romans 2:12–16 | About 30 minutes

BIG IDEA:

We don't need to prove we're better than someone else. We all need Jesus.

FAMILY MEMORY PHRASE:

The Law exposes us.

Our conscience reminds us.

Our secrets can't hide from God.

Jesus forgives us.

1. START: Who's Better?

Have everyone answer a few silly comparison questions:

- Who is the best cook in the family?
- Who has the messiest room?
- Who can run the fastest?
- Who is most likely to finish the snacks?
- Who is best at following directions?

Then ask:

“What happens when we start comparing ourselves to other people to decide whether we're good?”

Explain:

We compare ourselves all the time.

We might think:

- “At least I didn't do what they did.”
- “I'm nicer than them.”
- “I don't get in trouble as much.”
- “I go to church.”
- “I'm a pretty good person.”

But there's a problem.

God doesn't ask whether we're better than the person beside us.

In Romans 2, Paul takes away our ability to say, “I'm good enough.”

2. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS WRECKER #1: THE LAW

Read:

Romans 2:12–13

Then read *James 2:10*.

Try this illustration:

If you have a basketball hoop nearby, use it. Otherwise, just imagine one.

Ask:

"If the goal is to touch the rim and Dad gets one inch away while you are three feet away, did either person accomplish the goal?"

No.

Being closer doesn't mean you reached the standard.

–Talk about it

That's one of the problems with self-righteousness.

We look at someone else and say:

"Look how much better I'm doing!"

But we're looking at the wrong standard.

God's Law shows us God's righteousness and also reveals something about us:

We've fallen short.

Discuss

Younger kids:

What's one rule that's sometimes hard for you to obey?

Older kids/teens:

Why is comparing our behavior to somebody else's behavior so tempting?

Adults:

Who are you tempted to compare yourself to so you can feel better about yourself?

Family takeaway

Say together:

"Being better than somebody else doesn't make me righteous. I need Jesus."

3. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS WRECKER #2: THE CONSCIENCE

Read:

Romans 2:14–15

Paul says our conscience can accuse or excuse us.

Explain to younger kids:

Your conscience is that awareness inside you that tells you something is right or wrong.

Ask:

“Have you ever done something wrong and felt bad about it before anybody even knew?”

Let everyone think of an age-appropriate example.

Maybe you:

- lied,
- took something,
- said something mean,
- lost your temper,
- blamed your sibling,
- disobeyed and hoped nobody noticed.

Ask:

“Why do you think we sometimes try to hide after doing something wrong?”

Connect it to Adam and Eve.

After their disobedience in the Garden, hiding followed.

Here's the important part:

Our conscience isn't meant simply to make us feel terrible.

Recognition of sin should cause us to realize:

“I need help. I need forgiveness. I need Jesus.”

Family takeaway

Say together:

“My conscience reminds me that I need Jesus.”

4. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS WRECKER #3: THE SECRETS

Read:

Romans 2:16

Explain:

Self-righteousness isn't only a comparison problem.

-It's also a concealment problem.

Sometimes we want people to see the best parts of us while we hide the parts we're ashamed of.

Ask:

Imagine this... What if every thought you had today appeared on your television for the whole family to see?

You'd probably want to...

UNPLUG THE TV!

Why?

Because all of us have things we'd rather keep hidden.

Discuss:

- Why are we afraid of people discovering our mistakes?
- What makes admitting you've sinned difficult?
- Do you think hiding sin makes the guilt better or worse?
- Why is being completely known by God scary?
- How could being completely known and still loved by God be freeing?

Then say:

God already knows what's in the basement.

We don't have to pretend with Him.

The answer to our secrets isn't becoming better at hiding them.

The answer is Jesus.

5. WALK IN THE LIGHT

Read:

1 John 1:5–9

Ask everyone to listen specifically for what the passage says about light, darkness and confession.

Then ask:

“According to this passage, what does God do when we confess our sins?”

Bring the family back to the point:

Self-righteousness says: “Hide it.”

Jesus invites us to bring it into the light.

We don't confess because we've made ourselves righteous.

We confess because we need God's forgiveness and cleansing.

6. FAMILY RESPONSE: RHYTHM + RELATIONSHIP

Give everyone two simple practices for the week.

RHYTHM: Ask God to search you.

Read *Psalms 139:23–24*.

Each night this week, pray:

“God, search my heart. Show me anything I’m hiding, and help me walk with You.”

Pause for 30 seconds of silence.

Let everyone privately talk to God.

(Nobody has to announce their private sins to the family.)

RELATIONSHIP: Don’t hide.

Encourage each family member to have trusted, godly people they can be honest with when they struggle.

The principle is simple:

Ask God to search you. Allow godly people to truly know you.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Father,

Search our hearts and show us what’s really there. Forgive us for the times we’ve compared ourselves to others and thought we were better. Forgive us for the things we’ve tried to hide. Thank You that we don’t have to pretend with You.

Thank You for Jesus. Help us walk in the light, confess our sins and experience Your forgiveness. Help our family become a place where we can tell the truth, receive grace and help one another follow You.

Jesus, replace our self-righteousness with gratitude for Your righteousness and mercy.

Amen.

One Question for the Week

Put this somewhere the family will see it:

“Am I trying to look righteous, or am I letting Jesus make me righteous?”

And when someone messes up this week, instead of beginning with “How could you do that?”, try beginning with:

“Let’s bring it into the light. What happened, and how can we take it to Jesus?”

That reinforces the heart of the whole lesson: The Law exposes us, our conscience testifies, and our secrets can't remain hidden, but the destination isn't despair. It's Jesus.