

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, April 22, 2012

Passage: Romans 2:25-29

Memory Passage: Romans 8:14-15

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Gen. 17:1-14, Rom. 2:25-29, & Gal. 5:2-6.** What importance would circumcision hold for a Jew? What did it represent? Why might a Jew think circumcision would be a benefit to them?
- (b) According to Paul, how is circumcision of any value (lit. “profit” or “gain”)? How does one’s circumcision become “uncircumcision” and what does this mean? What would have been the response of a Jew who read Paul’s letter?
- (c) In Gal. 5:2-3, what does Paul mean by “accept?” What is the requirement of the one who depends on their circumcision for salvation in this way (v. 4: “you who would be justified by the law”)? Why is Christ of no advantage to this person?
- (d) How does Rom. 2:25-29 connect with 2:17-25? How does it fit with 3:1-8? What is the place of 2:25-29 in the argument Paul is making in 1:18-3:20?
- (e) *Family: Read & explain Gen. 17:1-14.* Remember to emphasize God’s promise to Abraham & his descendants (v. 7) and the penalty for not keeping this covenant (v. 14). Explaining circumcision might be touchy for you depending on the ages of your children and what you have or have not taught them. However, it is such a strong part of understanding how God works in covenant with His people that it should not be ignored, even for younger children. If you are not comfortable explaining in brief what circumcision is (i.e. the process of removing the foreskin of a male. For Hebrew children this was done on the 8th day after their birth, and it was the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham. It was the primary mark of Jewish identity.), then try to explain it without the human anatomy reference: God instructed the children of Abraham to make a physical mark on 8 day old boys that was the sign of God’s covenant . . .

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Deut. 10:12-16, 30:1-10, Jer. 4:4, & 9:25-26.** What was Moses’ primary concern in Deut. 10? Explain the reason for the “therefore” in Deut. 10:12-16, and what Moses meant by “circumcise the foreskin of your heart.”
- (b) In Deut. 30, what happens to God’s people when He circumcises their heart (i.e., what are the results of them being circumcised of heart)? Upon what are God’s blessings contingent upon, and how is this related to having circumcised hearts?
- (c) For what is Jeremiah calling in 4:4 (look at the context of 3:6-4:4)? What do you learn about other nations and their lack of physical circumcision compared to the physically circumcised Israel with regard to obedience? How does this square with what you have learned so far about the ultimate meaning of physical circumcision?
- (d) Considering what you have learned so far today, how would you answer this question: “So which is it!? Is God supposed to circumcise our hearts or do we circumcise our own hearts?” Even without the NT teaching we have/are going to consider, what should the nation of Israel have understood from the OT about the connection between physical & spiritual circumcision?
- (e) *Family:* Ask your family, “What does God require of us?” After a discussion, **Read Deut. 30:1-10** and have your family write down (either on your white board or on their own piece of paper) (1) everything God requires of His people, and (2) what God promises to do when His people obey Him, and (3) how this obedience comes about. Help your family see the connection between the obedience required that results in His blessing and the provision of this obedience in His act of spiritual circumcision (i.e. God changing our heart and granting us the obedience He requires).

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Rom. 2:24-27 & 1 Cor. 7:19.** To whom is Paul referring in v. 26? How does a non-Jew keep the precepts of the law? If they kept the precepts of the law, would they not become circumcised in obedience to Gen. 17? Why/why not?
- (b) Why can Paul claim that an uncircumcised person who keeps the law will have “his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?” What is he saying about this person’s standing in God’s covenant? Based on your study of the OT yesterday, do you think the Jews that heard Paul’s letter read should have expected this truth or should it have surprised them?
- (c) How does a person “keep the law?” How do *you* keep the law? Are you required to keep the law? What does keeping the law gain a person, and are there some people who keep the law and gain nothing spiritually while others keep it and reap spiritual gain? If so, what is the difference, and if not, why does Paul teach what he teaches in Rom. 2?
- (d) *Family: Read Rom. 2:25-26.* Ask, “What do these verses mean?” Facilitate discussion with questions like: “How can a person who is circumcised (a Jew in covenant with God) be considered uncircumcised (someone outside of God’s covenant)?”

and vice-versa. Help them apply what they learned this week about God's work in us that leads to our obedience, and tell them that Paul is addressing those who think their circumcision will save them from God's judgment regardless of their obedience.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Rom. 2:24-29, 7:6, 2 Cor. 3:3-6.** Is Paul speaking of a literal condemnation in v. 27 or is he speaking of the uncircumcised ones who keep the law as having a testimony that will condemn those who were circumcised but not obedient?
- (b) To what does Paul refer by "the written code" (lit. "the letter," see v.29)? With what is Paul contrasting the written code? How do Rom. 7:6 & 2 Cor. 3:3-5 help you understand this contrast, and what purpose does this contrast have in 2:27-29?
- (c) Is Paul saying that Jews who are circumcised cannot be saved? Why? What is he saying in v. 28 about the original purpose of the covenant of circumcision? Is Paul in new territory or uncharted ground with this assertion? How do you know?
- (d) How does Paul define a true Jew in v. 29? How is this true Jew the same as a New Covenant believer? How is he/she different? Are their differences or their sameness more important? How does this conclusion support verses Paul has already written so far in Romans?
- (e) *Family:* **Read & teach Ez. 11:19-20 & 36:26-27.** These verses help us see what God means when He promises to circumcise our hearts as New Covenant believers, and reminds us that all of our obedience to God's laws are a result of Him granting us the ability and desire to obey. Then **Read Rom. 2:28-29** and explain Paul's concluding statements in relation to Ezekiel's explanation of the New Covenant.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Rom. 2:24-29, 4:1-18, 9:6-8, 22-26, Gal 3:29, Eph. 2:12-20, & 1 Pet. 2:4-10.** Write down what you learn from these verses concerning God's plan to provide a people for Himself.
- (b) Does God have a separate plan to provide salvation for the Jews (the circumcision) than He does for non-Jews (the uncircumcision)? According to these verses, does He have a separate plan of salvation for the Jews & the church?
- (c) In Rom. 2:29 Paul says that for the one who is a true Jew, "his praise is not from man but from God." What does He mean by this? Write down at least three ways that believers receive the praises of God rather than the praises of men when we live by the circumcision of the Spirit rather than any letter of the law. In what ways are you prone to seek the praises of men rather than God? What activities mark a believer who has had their heart circumcised by God (see Phil. 3:3)?
- (d) *Family:* **Read Rom. 2:25-29** recap what you have learned this week. Help your family understand how Paul's teaching in this passage sums up what he has been teaching since the beginning of chapter 2, and how it fits in to the longer section of 1:18-3:20. Then spend some time working on your memory verses, and even practicing all the verses we have memorized so far in chapter 8. Make it a joyful & encouraging time, reminding everyone how to give hints when someone forgets a word or phrase, and how to give encouragement to each other as you recite the passage.

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Who Is the True Jew? (Part II)