

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, May 6, 2012

Passage: Romans 3:9-18

Memory Passage: Romans 8:1-8 (Review)

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Rom. 3:9-18 & Rom. 12.** What is the purpose of Paul's first question in v. 9? How does it link the previous section with what he is about to say?
- (b) Although the ESV inserts the word "Jews" into the second question asked in v. 9, the Greek says only, "Are we any better off?" To whom do you think the "we" refers (i.e. We Christians, We Jews, We Gentiles, Paul himself [as he used "us" in v. 8])? Why does he ask if this group/person is any better off, and how does this question help you identify the referent to "we" in the previous question? Given what he says in the last part of v. 9, do you think the ultimate meaning of the text is changed if any of the choices (e.g. Jews, Gentiles, Christians, Paul) are used? Why or why not?
- (c) Why does Paul use the word, "under" when describing every person's relationship to sin, rather than saying, "all are sinners," or "all are guilty of sin?" What does it mean for a person to be "under" sin? Are *you* currently "under" sin? If so, what should be your response? If not, what is your relationship to sin?
- (d) *Family:* Prepare before the lesson by gathering a rope & a blanket. To begin your lesson, ask for 2 volunteers. Tie one end of the rope around the waist of one volunteer, and place the blanket over the head, "ghost" style, of the other. You hold on to the end of the rope tied to your child's waist, and then lead them through exercises of trying to do what they want to do and go where they want to go. Also, ask the one who has the blanket over their head to try, without sticking their hands out of the blanket or raising it up, to get to another room, or get a drink of water, or some other tasks. Then lead in a discussion of why these tasks were difficult, leading them to understand that they were both in bondage to, and under the control or power of, the blanket/rope (or the holder of the rope). **Then Read Rom. 3:9** and explain what it means to be "under sin" using the object lesson of the rope & blanket (One aspect is to be in bondage to its power, another is to be under its penalty). Also show that Paul is summarizing one of his major points of 1:17-3:20: Everyone, without Christ, is under the power and bondage of sin.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Ps. 14:1-3, Rom. 3:9-18 & Rom. 13.** Paul now turns to the Old Testament to show that what he has charged in v. 9 is nothing new. He begins by using quotations from Ps. 14. As you read the claims of Paul in light of Ps. 14, why does Paul change David's "good" (Ps. 14:1) to "righteous" (Rom. 3:10)?
- (b) What does "no one understand" (v. 11)? How does not understanding relate to not being righteous? If "no one seeks for God" then how do men & women come to Christ (i.e., does the truth that no one seeks after God hinder, help, or fuel our evangelism?)? To what and from what has everyone turned aside, and why does this make everyone worthless? Why would Paul say that someone created in the image of God is worthless? What parallels do you find between vs. 10-12 and 1:18-32?
- (c) How does the gospel counter each of the failures found in vs. 10-12? How has the gospel changed your life in each area of failure (lack of righteousness, lack of understanding, lack of desire to seek Christ, turning aside to your own ways, forsaking Christ, lack of ability to do good, etc.)?
- (d) *Family:* Take a long piece of string (and I mean looooooong, like 100 feet or more) and make a path to be followed throughout your house. Make sure the path comes in view, at least twice, of a table upon which you have placed a bowl of candy or fruit. Your path should eventually end up at this bowl of goodies as well. Take your family to the beginning of the string and say, "If you follow this path to its end you will find a surprise that you will be able to sample!" Then set them free to follow the path. Hopefully (at least for the sake of this lesson!), someone will veer from the path and get to the goodies when they see them but before they follow the path to the end, and therefore, "turned aside to their own way." **Read Rom. 3:10-12 & Deut. 29:18-19** & explain that people without Christ reject Him and follow their own sinful desires and try to provide for their own salvation, but Jesus died to provide forgiveness of our sins and become our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30).

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Rom. 3:9-18 & Rom. 14.** Paul now moves from the universality of sin to specific examples. He begins with the sins of our speech with some vivid pictures! What does Paul mean when he says that the throats of the unrighteous are "open graves?" What is he intending to convey by saying "the venom of asps is under their lips?"
- (b) David quotes verses from 3 Psalms in vs. 13-14: Psalm 5:9, 140:3 & 10:7. Read each of these Psalms and write down what you learn about the character, heart & actions of the people spoken of in the verses Paul quotes. In what ways do the people spoken of in the Psalms compare and/or contrast with the people of whom Paul speaks in Rom. 3?
- (c) Just as James uses the tongue as the supreme example of sin, Paul chooses speech to be the first example of the universality of sin in those who are without Christ. What does this reveal to us about the speech of one who claims to be a

Christian? How should Christians manifest Christ's righteousness in the area of our speech? How have you seen the grace of God directed toward you in the area of your speech since your study of James and your commitment to all of the specific applications brought about by that study (as well as your study of Rom. 1:29-31)?

(d) *Family*: **Read Rom. 3:13-14** and have your family draw pictures of each of the 4 word pictures that are presented. As they draw and show their drawings, explain in practical terms the character & types of speech to which they refer. Also point out that Paul quotes 3 Psalms to include all of the organs of speech: throat, tongue, lips, & mouth! Help them to see why speech is such an indicator of one's heart, and remind them of what you learned in your study of James (esp. 1:26 & 3:1-18).

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Is. 59:1-8, Rom. 3:9-18 & Rom. 15**. Who is being spoken of in the Isaiah passage? What have they done to incur this assessment? How does this setting inform our understanding of Paul's meaning as he quotes Is. 59:7-8 in Rom. 3:15-16?

(b) Paul quotes Ps. 36:1 in v. 18. What is the relationship between v. 18 & vs. 10-17 (i.e. a summary statement, the grounds/reason for the sin found in the earlier verses, just another sin Paul desires to highlight)? What is its relationship to all the teaching Paul has given us from 1:18-3:18? What does it look like for you to live with, "fear of God before (your) eyes?"

(c) How do verses 14-18 help us understand the world in which we live, and what should be our response to it? How should we respond to others, whether in or out of the church, who live their lives in such a way that, "in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known?" How should these truths affect the way we evaluate our own actions?

(d) *Family*: **Read Rom. 3:18** and explain that the unrighteous person is one whose actions and speech (vs. 10-17) are governed by their overarching sin of not fearing the Lord. **Read Prov. 1:7, 29-33, 8:12-13, & 2 Cor. 7:1** and teach your family what it means to fear the Lord (remember that to "fear" means that we show reverence for and worship that which we fear, which means we listen to and obey the Lord when we fear Him).

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 3:9-18 & Rom. 16**. How does the gospel counter each of the sinful actions and thoughts listed in 3:13-18? How has the gospel changed *your* life in each area of sinfulness listed, especially not having known the way of peace and having no fear of God?

(b) Take a moment to summarize Paul's teaching from Rom. 1:18-3:18. Try to include his main points, the flow of his argument, and the implications he asserts, and try to do this in one paragraph or less. Now write down at least 3 *new* applications from this section that will guide you during the next week in obeying what you have learned.

(c) *Family*: In the process of Scripture memory it is very important to regularly review what you have previously memorized. Our memory assignment this week is to review Romans 8:1-8, so spend tonight helping your family review these verses.

DATE: May 6, 2012

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Total Depravity

In Romans 3:9-18 Paul continues his argument that all men are subject to God's judgment by bringing a charge against all men and supporting evidence for that charge.