

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, July 1, 2012

Passage: Romans 4:9-12

Memory Passage: Romans 8:18-19

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Rom. 4:9-12 & Rom. 14.** How do vs. 9-12 continue Paul's thinking from vs. 1-8? What word do you see that ties v. 9 to v. 8? To what does this "blessing" refer? To whom do the terms "circumcised" and "uncircumcised" refer?
- (b) What is the function of the second half of verse 9 (i.e. does it answer the question, explain the question, restate a premise, something else)? Why is it important for Paul to establish the recipients of this blessing?
- (c) Re-read vs. 7-8 concerning the nature of the blessing of which Paul is speaking. Write a psalm of praise, or a poem, or, for you concrete literalists like me, write down several bullet points that express your thankfulness and praise to the Lord for accomplishing these things in your life (i.e. "lawless deeds are forgiven," "sins are covered," and "sin not counted against").
- (d) *Family: Read Rom. 4:7-8.* Ask, "In what ways do these truths cause believers to be blessed?" Make a list of these blessings on your white board, and then try to reword each blessing with meter & rhyme so you can either recite the blessings as a poem/rhyme or set them to a familiar tune so they can be sung. **Then Read Rom. 4:9a** and ask, "How would you answer this question & why?" Explain that this week we will study how Paul answers this question.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Rom. 4:9-12, Gen. 15:1-6, 17:1-14 & Rom. 15.** Paul returns to 15:6 in Rom. 4:9-12 with the explanation of what he assumes in Rom. 4:3, namely, how and when faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. What conditions does God place on His people with regard to the covenant (17:1)? How had Abram been doing in these areas (cf. Gen. 16)?
- (b) What is the covenant that God makes with Abraham in Gen. 17? (Extra credit: How does this covenant differ from the covenant found in chapters 12 & 15?) According to v. 11, how does the act of circumcision function? Who was to be circumcised? How does this help us understand the purpose of circumcision (i.e. is it only for Jews? what does this tell us about God's salvific purposes? etc.)?
- (c) According to Rom. 4:10, what was Paul's primary purpose in bringing up Gen. 15 & 17? Why is it so important to know that God credited Abram's faith as righteousness *prior* to him receiving circumcision? Consider the facts found in Gen. 15, Gen. 16, and then Gen. 17. What strikes you most about God's words/actions in light of Abram's actions? What aspects of God's character stand out in His actions in these chapters, and how do you experience these same attributes in your daily life?
- (d) *Family:* Lead your family through a study of Gen. 15-17. You will need to read these chapters in advance to prepare for what you will have them read aloud and what you will summarize, but focus on these ideas: (1) Abram questioned God in 15:2-3 because God already promised him in Gen. 12 that a great nation would come from him and yet God had not given him a child. (2) The promise God made to Abram in chapter 15 was explicitly unconditional, i.e. God made promises but required nothing of Abram. (though implicitly Abram must believe God's promise and father children) (3) Abram (in the very next chapter!) sinned by taking things into his own hands, and yet God still came 13 years later (cf. 16:16 with 17:1) and continued honoring the promises he made. (4) In chapter 17 God requires Abram to "walk before me, and be blameless" so He can make a covenant with him, and God institutes the sign of circumcision (17:11) to mark Abraham's continuing belief in God's promises (his name has now been changed from Abram, which means "exalted father" to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude"). (5) In Rom. 4:10 Paul emphasizes the importance of God crediting Abram's faith to him as righteousness prior to him being circumcised so that he can show that Abram was justified by faith, not by the work of circumcision.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Rom. 4:9-12, Acts 15:1-21, & Rom. 16.** What precipitated the Jerusalem council described in these verses (vs. 1, 5)? Why do you think some would make these claims? Do you think this was a widespread problem or just the teaching of those on the fringe of the church? What clues do you see in Acts 15 that informed your answer? How do you think the Gentiles felt when they were told they needed to be circumcised and obey the law?
- (b) Summarize the input of Peter (vs. 7-11), Paul & Barnabas (v. 12), and James (vs. 13-21). Why did the assembly fall silent (vs. 12)? What counsel did the council provide to the churches (vs. 22-29), and how did the churches respond (vs. 30-31)?
- (c) Why do you think Paul, 8-10 years after this council in his letter to the Romans, needed to continue to address the idea that circumcision was somehow required to receive the blessings of Abraham?
- (d) How do 21st century Christians sometimes bind people into "keeping the law" in order to be saved? In what ways do you drift into this faulty thinking? What signs warn you that you are drifting into this kind of thinking (i.e. like sweaty hands and a rising pulse might warn you that you are becoming angry or stressed), and what should you do when you observe them?

(e) *Family*: Lead your family through (a) – (d) above. Try to get them to put themselves in person at the Jerusalem council, especially as a Gentile, and for them to understand the burden under which some fringe members of the church wanted to place Gentiles. You might even want to reenact the council right in your living room!

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 4:9-12, Gal. 3:6-14, & Rom. 1.** Verse 11b begins a long purpose clause: “The purpose was . . .” What 2 realities does Paul put forth as the purpose of Abraham believing prior to circumcision? We will look at the 1st of these today.

(b) What is important about Abraham being “the father of all who believed?” How was this accomplished? According to Gal. 3, who are the sons of Abraham? How was the gospel “preached beforehand” to Abraham?

(c) Why is Abraham called “the man of faith” (Gal. 3:9)? What was special about his faith? How are those of faith blessed “along with Abraham” and with “the blessing of Abraham (vs. 9, 14)?

(d) In the middle of the long purpose clause (Rom. 4:11b-12) there is a results clause at the very end of v. 11 beginning with, “so that . . .” What is the result that Paul mentions and why is it important to you?

(e) *Family*: **Read Rom. 4:11b** and explain that there were two purposes, according to Paul in these verses, for God justifying Abraham by faith prior to his circumcision: (1) So he would be the spiritual father of the Gentiles so that righteousness would be counted to them as well as the Jews, and (2) He would also be the spiritual father of Jews who are circumcised not only in their flesh but in their hearts. Then walk your family through **Gal. 3:15-29** to show how God accomplished this. You don’t have to cover every point, but emphasize: (1) Paul is making the same major points in Gal. 3:6-14 as he is in Rom. 4:9-12, (2) In 3:15-29 he shows that the giving of the law did not annul the promises made to Abraham, (3) The promises were made to his “offspring” singular, and that offspring is Christ, (4) God always intended the inheritance of salvation to come by the promise, not the law, because it was first and always given by the promises made to Abraham and his seed, (5) The law was given temporarily as our guardian until Christ came and with him the faith of the New Covenant, and (6) Those who are in Christ, the true offspring, are Abraham’s true offspring and heirs to salvation according to the promise made to Abraham.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 4:9-12 & Rom. 2.** According to Paul in v. 12, what is the second purpose of Abraham being counted as righteous prior to circumcision? What is the qualification for those who are circumcised to be considered true children of Abraham? What are “the footsteps of faith” in which Abraham walked, and how are others to do the same? What verses have we already studied in Romans that are brought to mind by 4:12?

(b) Does this requirement apply only to Jews? How do you know? What does it look like in your life to “walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised?” Write down 3 areas of your life in which you need to better walk by faith. Now write down ways that you will accomplish this by applying the gospel, believing in the finished work of Christ on your behalf, and trusting the character & promises of God. Then, widen your application to our church and write down ways we as a corporate body of Christ might better walk by faith in the coming days. Be specific, including actual events like future building plans, future ministries, outreach & evangelism, our disciple-making discipleship ministries, children & youth ministries, our desire to strengthen dads to lead their families, etc. etc. etc.

(c) *Family*: Lead your family through (a) & (b) above.

DATE: July 1, 2012

PASSAGE: Romans 4:9-12

Which Came First?

In Romans 4:9-12 Paul describes 4 realities that answer the question, “Is the blessing of imputed righteousness available for Jews only or is it also available for Gentiles?” (v. 9).