

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, July 15, 2012

Passage: Romans 4:17b-25

Memory Passage: Romans 8:22-23

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read, Rom. 4:13-25 & Rom. 7.** Rom. 4:13-22 could easily be considered as one passage with the word “promise” linking all the verses. Take note of the word “promise” or “promised” in vs. 13-22 (I have them underlined in my Bible) and write down what you learn about (1) What is promised, (2) Who made and who received the promise, (3) The promise’s relationship to faith and grace, (4) The effects of the promise, and (5) The certainty of the promise.

(b) How can Abraham believe both “in hope” and “against hope” at the same time (v. 18: “In hope he believed against hope”)? What was Abraham believing? Re-read Gen. 15:1-5. Do you see any mention of “many nations” in these verses? Why is Paul correct in interpreting the promise of many offspring (Gen. 15:5) as many nations (cf. Gen. 17:4-6, 16)? What main idea in Romans 4 does this idea affirm, and why is it important in the flow of salvation history and our interpretation of the Scriptures, both Old & New Testaments?

(c) In what things are you currently “hoping against hope” that God will accomplish? Possibly a wayward child to come to faith? A seemingly irreconcilable relationship to be reconciled? A seemingly unalterable event to be altered? Any number of situations may be presenting themselves in your life that seem like you are hoping against hope for a different outcome. Write them all down, and we will return to this list as we progress through out text this week.

(d) **Family: Read Rom. 4:18.** Ask, “To what is the number of Abraham’s offspring compared when Paul writes, ‘So shall your offspring be?’” Then **Read Gen. 15:5** and to find the answer, and ask, “How many stars are there in the sky?” After hearing the guesses, show the video found here http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAVjF_7ensg (the 3D image of the Hubble telescope’s Deep Field & Ultra-Deep Field images) and ask the question again so you can guide them to the answer: “We can’t number the stars!” So what does this tell us? That the number of Abraham’s descendants (believers of all time, those whose faith is credited to them as righteousness) is also innumerable!

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 4:18-25 & Rom. 8.** How does v. 19 help us understand v. 17b? Why would considering his age and Sarah’s barrenness tempt Abraham to “weaken in faith?” What would it look like for Abraham to “weaken in faith?” How do you explain Paul’s assertion that Abraham “did not weaken in faith” in light of the events of Genesis 16 & 17:17-18?

(b) As you read the list you made yesterday, add to it anything you might have left off. Now consider this: What details of each situation have *caused* or *tempted* you to “weaken in faith?” What specifics about these details have caused/tempted you? What does it look like for you to be “weakened in faith” in these areas (be specific here, noting exactly what your life & emotions & spiritual state look like)? Now think one step deeper in the process: When you are tempted, which by definition is a time prior to the sin, what thoughts are you having or responses are you making that might lead you to “weaken in faith?” This is important because when you identify these thoughts/actions, you can fight them so they do not lead to a weakened faith! For instance, you might be tempted, right this moment, to ignore this intimate question, thinking that you don’t need/want to think quite that deeply about your thought process and actions concerning these things, no matter how big of a deal they are in your life right now! So the temptation is: shun the opportunity to apply the Scriptures and for the Holy Spirit to affect change in the way you might be tempted to deal with these “big deal” issues in your life. So fight that temptation with the truth of Scripture: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man/(woman) of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

(c) **Family: Read Rom. 4:18-20.** Now take your family through the pertinent events in Gen. 15-18 explaining Abraham’s varied responses to God’s promise (e.g. chap. 15 God promises Abraham innumerable descendents, chapter 16 Abraham takes matters into his own hands with Hagar when he is 86 years old, chapter 17 God promises again to make Abraham a Father of many nations, then God promises Abraham & Sarah a child but both Abraham and Sarah laugh at the promise). You should tell some of the story and read some of the story, reading the parts that highlight the main events (e.g. 15:1-6, 16:15-16, 17:1-8, 15-21, & 18:9-15). Then explain that Paul tells us in Rom. 4 that Abraham’s heart was consistently turned toward and believing in God and His promises, and the doubt he sometimes had was always overcome by his faith in God.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 4:18-25 & Rom. 9.** What phrase in v. 20 serves as the positive (i.e. what he *did* do) to contrast the negative (i.e. what he *did not* do) phrase, “He did not weaken in faith” found in v. 18? What was the catalyst for this growth (v. 20) and what form did it take (v. 21)?

(b) To what does the phrase “this is why” (v.22) refer? With what other verse in chapter 4 does v. 22 seem to “bookend?” Why was it important for Paul, at this stage of his letter, to repeat Gen. 15:6 again?

(c) Return to the list you made in Day 1 and continued in Day 2. Answer these questions: (1) What promises has God made to you in His word that have bearing upon each situation? (2) In what ways are you tempted to distrust these promises? (3) How can you give glory to God, being fully convinced of God's ability to do what he has promised, in each of your situations as Abraham did in his? (4) Just in case you have not been specific and practical, write down several concrete ways for each situation with which you can combat the sin of disbelief by believing in, and acting in faith upon, God's promises.

(d) *Family*: Make notes on your white board and lead your family through Day 1 (c), Day 2 (b), and Day 3 (c) by choosing something from the life of your family. This can be any situation about which you are praying as a family but have not received an answer, a loved one who is lost and it might be tempting to quit praying for their salvation, a decision or struggle about which your family knows, etc. If you can't think of a situation that would work well, choose one from your life in which your faith grew stronger because you applied these principles.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 4:18-25 & Rom. 10.** To whom does the "ours" refer in v. 24? How are the words, "it was counted to him" applied to this group of people? Was this "counting" done in a different way for Abraham or the same way?

(b) What similarities are there between v. 24b and 17b? If our faith is to be credited to us as righteousness, in whom must we have faith? What has He done? Why was it done? To what does the passive "delivered up" refer?

(c) What are "trespasses?" Does everyone have them, and if so, how do you know? How was Jesus' crucifixion "for" (or a better translation than the ESV's "for" is the NASB's "because of") our trespasses? How was it because of our justification?

(d) *Family*: **Read Rom. 4:23-25.** Ask, "What does the phrase 'delivered up' mean?" Through your discussion, explain the passive nature of this phrase (it was God who delivered up Jesus) and use it as a time to review the teaching from 3:21-26 in which the gospel is explained (see the connection between "delivered up" in 4:25 and "whom God put forward" in 3:25).

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 1-4.** We will now, after 24 sermons, take a break from Romans for a season. We will return to chapter 5 in January. Today, as you read all of the first 4 chapters: (1) Write down any questions you still have (ask these questions in your SS class or home group), (2) Write down the verse that has led to the most growth in your love and adoration of Jesus & why (and be ready to share this in your SS class or home group), (3) Write down the application that has led to the most sanctification in your life & what that sanctification was (and be ready to share this testimony for God's glory in your SS class or home group), and (4) Write down the application that you have neglected most in chapters 1-4 and three ways you will implement it during the coming days (and be ready to share your plans in your SS class or home group).

(b) *Family*: Same assignment as (a) above, with caveats: You may decide not to read the entire four chapters in one sitting with your family (and then again, maybe you should!!!!!!), and you will need to answer the questions for yourself prior to the session so you can guide your family's responses and discussion.

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The Character of Faith

In Romans 4:17c-25 Paul describes the nature of saving faith by providing 2 examples of faith credited as righteousness.