

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, June 24, 2012

Passage: Romans 4:1-8

Memory Passage: Romans 8:1-17 (Review)

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 4:1-8 & Rom. 9.** What connections do you see between 4:1-8 & 3:27-31? Summarize the theme of 4:1-8 in one sentence. What word do you see repeated (in various forms) most often in 4:1-8, and what is the definition of this word?

(b) What does Paul mean when he refers to Abraham as “our forefather according to the flesh?” To what act does Paul refer when he asks if Abraham “gained” anything? Why do you think Paul asks this question? Why does Paul choose Abraham to prove his point about justification always being by faith and not by works?

(c) Imagine discipling a new believer through this passage (wouldn't it be wonderful if we all were *actually* discipling new believers instead of just *imagining* such a thing?) and they said, “I don't understand v. 2. Can you explain it to me?” How would you explain it so their young faith could comprehend it? How would you answer follow-up questions like, “So is Paul saying that Abraham *has* or *does not have* something to boast about? *Could* Abraham have been justified by works? Does the phrase ‘but not before God’ mean that he could have boasted before men?”

(d) *Family:* **Read Rom. 3:27-28** and explain that Paul will comment further on the topics found in these verses, namely, boasting (v. 27a) and the truth that justification is by faith, not by works. **Then Read Rom. 4:1-2.** Explain that Paul uses Abraham as his first exhibit to prove that everyone has always been justified by faith because Abraham was the father of the Jews (John 8:33, 39), the one who received the promise from God (we will look at this tomorrow), and he came 430 years before the law (Gal. 3:17). Ask, “Why would Paul now sense the need to prove that men & women have *always* been justified by faith?” (A: Because he wanted to prove to his hearers that what he was teaching was not new. In fact he probably had been accused of teaching newfangled things that were in opposition to the teaching of the Scriptures [OT].) Then ask: “Could Abraham have been justified by works?” (A: No) This provides the opportunity for you to recap Romans 3:21-31 as the foundation for what will follow in chapter 4.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 4:1-8, Gen. 15:1-6, & Rom. 10.** What does God promise Abram in Gen. 15:1? Why would Abram be afraid (remember, context is king!)? Consider the promise God already made to Abram in Gen. 12:2. Should Abram have been fearful? Why or why not? If the biblical narrative stopped at 15:3 how would you evaluate Abram's faith?

(b) What is the promise God makes to Abram in 15:4-5, and how does it differ from the promise made in 12:2? How does Abram respond in 15:6? Given what Abram said in vs. 2-3 does this response surprise you? Why or why not?

(c) What does God do in response to Abram's belief? Is Abram's belief to be considered a “work?” Why or why not? For what purpose does Paul quote Gen. 15:6 as he teaches in Rom. 4:3?

(d) Consider the phrase, “For what does the Scripture say?” These words should be the first words thought or spoken by every believer before answering any question or making any decisions or forming any opinion. Remind yourself of passages such as **Heb. 12:4 & 2 Tim. 3:16-17** and consider: What decisions are you making, opinions are you forming, questions are you answering, or wisdom you are giving about which you have not first asked, “What does the Scripture say?” In light of your answer, what should your next step be? Be ready to share with your group (1) a time that you *did* ask this question and were saved from disastrous results, (2) a time that you *did not* ask this question and experienced disastrous results, and/or, (3) a current situation in which you need help discerning what the Scriptures say.

(e) *Family:* Make a lesson tonight from (d) above by **Reading Rom. 4:3a, Heb. 12:4 & 2 Tim. 3:16-17.** Tell stories of situations from your own life in which you were faithful to seek what the Scripture says & situations in which you were not faithful. Let your family learn from your mistakes and be encouraged by God's faithfulness through your obedience. Then choose situations from your kids' lives, or situations in which they could envision themselves, and show them how to answer the question, “What does the Scripture say?”

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 4:1-8 & Rom. 11.** In the scenario Paul gives in 4:4, why are wages not considered a gift? What is the reason the employer pays them? What has the employee done? What would the employee do if his employer did not pay the wages? What is Paul saying about salvation by using this analogy?

(b) According to v. 5, in the realm of salvation what is contrasted with “work?” In whom do these people believe, what do they believe about Him, and what is the result of their belief? What does v. 5 tell you about Abraham's standing before God? Is Paul only talking about Abraham or is he talking about everyone? How do you know?

(c) How do you square Paul lumping Abraham in with the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), with the assessment of Abraham in Gen. 26:4-5? How does Genesis 26:4-5 square with Abraham's actions in Gen. 16? Do you ever have "Genesis 16" moments in your life where you fail to trust God and His promises? What encouragement is there for you in knowing that, in spite of his lapses in faith, God still credited Abraham's faith to him as righteousness? What should be your response to God when you have a "Genesis 16" moment/season? What will God's response to you be during these seasons if you are justified by faith?

(d) *Family*: Lead your family through (a), (b), & (c) above. Emphasize that Abram's faith was in God & His promise, and that this faith is and always has been a gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9, Rom. 4:16). Illustrate from your own life times when you have been encouraged to press on in your spiritual life, even when you failed to trust God, because of the truth of the gospel.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Ps. 32:1-5, Rom. 4:1-8 & Rom. 12.** Why do you think Paul turns to David as exhibit B in his discourse? What does the phrase "just as" that begins v. 6 tell us about Paul's flow of thought?

(b) In Psalm 32 (of which Paul quotes vs. 1-2 in Rom. 4:7-8), what was David's state in v. 3? What should he have been saying when instead he "kept silent?" What, ultimately, was causing David's suffering (v. 4)? Was this "heavy hand" grace or discipline to David? Why? According to verse 5, what did David change with regard to his actions toward his sin? How did God respond to this change?

(c) According to vs. 1-2, what is the state of the one whose sin is forgiven? Who is now covering their sin and why is this different from the covering in v. 5? What "deceit" is now missing from their spirit? What does the Lord not "count" against them?

(d) Now return to Rom. 4:6-8. How does Paul use David's words to continue the flow of his discourse? What is the action that God takes (stated both positively in v. 6 and negatively in v. 8) that brings about this blessedness?

(e) Contemplate your state as a justified believer: counted righteous, sins forgiven, sins covered, sins not counted, etc. Now think about every instance during the last few days in which you were angry, frustrated, joyless, sorrowful, depressed, desiring vindication, licking wounds, complaining, etc. How should these truths about being justified by faith affect these attitudes? What actions will you take the next time you become angry, frustrated, joyless, etc., in light of the truth of your righteous standing before God? Be specific so you are ready for the next spiritual battle prior to its commencement!

(f) *Family*: It seems that this week the lessons are easily adaptable to family worship! So tonight, work through (a)-(e) with your family, helping them come up with concrete ways to apply the gospel to their lives when they are tempted to sin.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 4:1-8 & Rom. 13.** I am out of both space & time to write this week, so we will have our first, at least *my* first, 4-day week! Spend today reviewing your memory of Romans 8:1-17.

DATE: June 24, 2012

PASSAGE: Romans 4:1-8

Sola Fide: Always!

In Romans 4:1-8 Paul presents 2 exhibits from the OT to prove that justification has *always* been by faith.