

LEADER NOTES – Romans 4:1-15– 3/4/07

1- 5 – [Before you launch into this passage a review of Genesis 12 – 25 (especially the first few chapters) might be helpful to understand the life of Abraham.] The teaching of the day was mixing faith and works and law and obedience and reward and blessing all together. Paul wants to refer to scripture alone for the explanation of justification. Abraham was the “forefather” of the Jews and the beginning of their identity as God’s people. Even he was not justified by works. The passage Paul references (Gen. 15) references God’s promise of an heir. Abraham trusted (believed, exercised faith in (all the same word) God to fulfill His promise. Abraham’s faith is essentially the same as ours – one looking forward and the other backwards – but both looking to the good news (gospel) of Christ (John 8:56; Galatians 3:14-18). Faith, itself, is not righteousness. Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness making righteousness still and always the work (the gift/grace) of God. God justifies the wicked, the undeserving, the lawbreaker, while the OT law justified the law keeper. Our justification is for the glory of God, not man.

6-8 – Now Paul uses David as a different example. David is under the Mosaic Law, while Abraham was not. David speaks of what is NOT credited/counted to a man, while Abraham was credited with righteousness. For David, the “man after God’s own heart” there is the presumption of righteousness, yet no good work is involved, instead sin has been committed. For Abraham, good works are present, but it is his faith that is credited as righteousness. Part of the hope for us here is that sin does not cancel justification. Though David was chastised to bring him to full confession and repentance and his sins produced havoc and humiliation in his life and family, yet God did not withdraw his favor/grace. David’s faith (humility and brokenness) resulted in God’s forgiveness.

9 - 12 – Abraham’s faith was reckoned as righteousness (Gen. 15) before he was circumcised (Gen. 17), thus making circumcision a symbol given to those who have trusted (faith) in God, rather than a point of pride. Abraham is, therefore, the father of those who have faith, but are uncircumcised, as well as those who have faith AND circumcision. Therefore, faith is the way for all people!

13-15 – If “the inheritance” came to those who live by the law, then faith would be emptied of its value and the promise of God through Abraham would be put out of operation. If a promise has conditions added to it later, then the character of the One who made the promise would be compromised. The God of grace and the God of judgment are one and the same. They cannot be pitted against each other by making obedience to the law a condition to receive the promise. To do so would make our salvation impossible.

Leaders Notes:

Everett F. Harrison, The Expositor’s Bible commentary, Zondervan Publishing
John Stott, Encountering the Gospel’s Power, Intervarsity Press

Devotional/Group Questions:

Who We Really Are, Romans 1-7, Serendipity House
Romans, Life Change Series, NavPress
Find Freedom, Romans, Bill Hybels, Willow Creek Resources
John Stott, encountering the Gospel’s Power, Intervarsity Press

Group Leader Guide

Important preliminary details:

- Update your **roster** and return a copy to Kirsten@cvcwired.com. – make sure everybody in the group has a way to contact you and vice versa, so that you can share leadership and know who is coming or who needs help/prayer.
- Pray for and encourage your group to grow spiritually and numerically (you may have to become two groups – so begin to develop an apprentice leader).
 - KNOW - help people know each other better and more personally, but don't rush this.
 - CHALLENGE - give people permission to raise the bar of commitment for each other, without judgment.
 - ENCOURAGE - Help each other adopt spiritual habits that will strengthen your faith. Be creative, encourage manageable next steps and consistency, not perfectionism.
- **Don't** feel you need to discuss every question for the week in your Life Team gathering. Cover the ones you consider most important, including some of the application questions. Allow questions and be willing to research the questions you can't answer.
- **Pray** – as a group with simplicity, honesty and no pressure to perform.
- Have fun – laugh and be relaxed as well as disciplined. Plan something social as the group needs it.

Pray each day, before you **Dive In** to God's word, that God the Holy Spirit, will be the teacher of your mind and heart. Pray for the **friends** in your Life Team to be faithful to study and receive God's truth for themselves today.

ICEBREAKERS – Don't feel you have to use them all. Using at least one helps people get comfortable with each other and opens them up to sharing.

- Have you ever had faith in a "great deal" that turned out to be a scam that promised something for nothing?
- In what situation do you have a hard time having faith?

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| ___ When I'm flying | ___ When I need surgery |
| ___ When teaching my teenager how to drive | ___ When doing public speaking |
| ___ When facing challenges at work | ___ Other |

DAY ONE

The Jews were extremely conscious of their special covenant relationship with God. They were recipients of the law and the circumcision, not to mention the legacy of the patriarchs. They regarded Abraham as their "father," but what they forgot was that, through Abraham's posterity "all peoples on earth" would be blessed. Abraham's legacy was meant to be for the inclusion of the gentiles, not their exclusion.

1. Read Romans 4:1-15. What are the words and phrases that seem important to you? Are any words repeated several times?

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2. In what sense is Abraham the father of us all (4:1,16)?
3. How do you feel and respond when you receive an unexpected gift from someone? Is there a difference from the way you feel when you receive wages from your job? Why?

DAY TWO

4. Romans 4:10 asks WHEN Abraham was credited as righteous: after or before he was circumcised? Why would this make a difference?
5. This is a feeling question. Reread 4:7-8, which comes from Psalm 32:1-2. What is your own sense of blessing as you read these words?
6. Are you ever tempted to think of faith as a virtue or an achievement that deserves God's reward? What's wrong with this notion, especially if we are "saved by faith?"

DAY THREE

7. What was Abraham believing about God that God chose to credit as righteousness?

8. How did David describe what God does when He credits righteousness to a person? Vs. 6-8 How was his description and his circumstances different than that of Abraham?

DAY FOUR

9. Are there ways in which you are still living as if you have to EARN God's love? Claim the truth of 4:5 as your encouragement and thank God for his forgiveness.

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10. Circumcision was outward sign of the righteousness Abraham had by faith (4:11). What are the signs of a Christian's righteousness by faith? (For ideas check out John 13:35; Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:47; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; I Peter 3:21)

DAY FIVE

11. Why is the promise of God worthless if it is only inherited by those who practice perfect obedience? (14-15)

12. What are some of the promises that God has given to those who follow Him in faith? Which promise do you especially need to hold on to these days? Which one do you especially need to encourage someone else to hold on to?