

LIGHTHOUSE GROUP CURRICULUM

Romans chapter 4

LEADER'S STUDY

No other way

Romans 4

What is happening?

In this chapter Paul is pointing to God's promise to Abraham as the example of His grace and how to obtain it. Abraham is counted as righteous before God because of faith. He believed God would keep His promise. Paul is telling the recipients of this letter that people are not made righteous because of their work and that God's forgiveness is a gift. It is not a wage to be earned. He is saying that right relationship with God can only come through faith, belief that God keeps His promises, and not through good works or adherence to the law. In fact, Paul points out through David that people who are forgiven by God's grace, receive a gift. Those people have great joy in receiving a gift that they do not deserve.

Where is the gospel?

This idea of receiving something that we don't deserve was a difficult truth for people reading this letter to hear and it is still difficult today. The idea that our good works cannot earn us right relationship with God is unlike anything else in life. After all, if you work hard, you can achieve a lot. You can earn great wealth and influence. You can purchase things that you want. You can be in control of your life. This is so ingrained in our world and our culture that we are upset when we see people receive something that we worked for, but they didn't. When that happens, it is an assault on our sense of fairness and justice. The gospel, however, is different. It is saying that forgiveness and right relationship with God is only a gift. We can't earn it. It only goes to those who don't deserve it. You might even be asking, where is the justice in that? All of us have lived a self-led life and are incapable of earning right relationship with God by our works. Justice would be punishment for our sin. It would be receiving what we do deserve. Mercy is not receiving what we deserve. Mercy is always exercised at the expense of justice. But this chapter shows that through Jesus' life, death and resurrection God exercised justice and mercy at the same time (v25). Jesus died so that justice for our sins could be paid. Because of that God could show mercy and justice together. Not only that but now God shows grace (receiving something we don't deserve) by crediting Jesus' perfect obedience to our account. The good news of the gospel is that all of us can receive what Jesus deserves because He paid for what we deserve. Access to that is only through placing all of our faith in Jesus, there is no other way.

As you prepare for this week, ask yourself questions like this; Are there ways that I am hoping my works can make me right with God? Do I view myself as better than others based on what I do? How does this challenge my thinking or my behavior? Do I have joy in knowing that God has forgiven me? Are there ways that I am still trying to earn or deserve God's favor? How is God calling you to think and to live differently? How does this change your perspective today? How is God calling you to respond based on this scripture? Spend some time reading and meditating on this chapter as you prepare for your meeting. Be willing to share this with your group and invite them to join you in sharing how God is asking them to respond to His word. Be willing to share areas that He is calling you to "follow Him" and make clear "I" statements about how you are going to align with Him.

Some helpful scriptures: Genesis 15; Galatians 6:12; Hebrews 11; Ephesians 2; 2 Cor 5:18-21. What other places in scripture speak this same truth?

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INTENTIONAL BIBLE READING

READ Romans 4

and meditate on it.

Read in the ESV or similar word-for-word translation.

Read it again in the NLT to get a thought-for-thought perspective. (The New Living Translation is particularly helpful with this passage)

Try to summarize the passage in your own words.

Every verse of scripture is pointing to the gospel. Look for how this passage points to Jesus and what He has done.

POTENTIAL STUDY QUESTIONS

These are just questions you might ask to help your group discussion. Don't feel like you need to answer all of these as a group

What is significant, surprising or confusing from these verses?

What seems to be the main point of this letter?

How does this portion of scripture point to Jesus and the gospel?

What parts of this passage are challenging to your current way of thinking?

What did you discover or learn about God and His character from this passage?

What parts of this passage can you relate to?

Look at one or two key words and define them really clearly, then look at them in context with that definition. Does this change your understanding?

Why did God bring me to this scripture today?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

How is God calling you to obey, based on this passage?

or

What is your "I will" statement?

(Encourage everyone to steer clear of "we" or "us" or "Christians" statements)

With whom are you going to share what you have learned?

(This is a critical part of growth that is often overlooked. If we can share it with someone else it means we really understand it, it cements it in our own minds, it makes us accountable to the truth and it blesses the one who hears it. Rom 10:17)

Based on this passage, what can we pray about and how should we pray?