

HOW TO USE THIS GROUP GUIDE

CONNECT (10 MINS)

- Pick one or more of the warm-up questions and have all the group members give a response to the question(s).
- Make sure everybody gets a chance to speak. Don't let talkative people dominate the conversation, but graciously welcome everybody to participate.

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TRUTH (15-20 MIN)

- Read the scriptures and paragraphs in this section to clearly communicate what the Bible says about the week's topic.
- **"DISCUSS" sections:** These sections get people discussing the practical implications of the truth being discussed. Have one or two people give an answer, but don't spend too much time on these questions.

GRACE (5 MINS)

- Read the grace scripture and section which shows how the passage points to Jesus Christ and God's grace.
- This section is really important, because it shows that life change begins with the grace of God and not our own efforts.

CHANGE (10-15 MINS)

- Have everyone give an answer to each of the change questions.
- Take a good amount of time here. Really encourage people to think through how they can practically put truth into action.

PRAYER (10-15 MINS)

- Read through the prayer focus points and have one or two people in the group pray.
- Make sure not to rush through prayer. The things we want God to change in our lives will often happen through prayer.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (2 MINS)

- This final portion aims to get people reading the Bible for themselves and thinking about engaging others with the gospel.

WEEK 5

SEASON 1
THE GOSPEL. OUR NEED.

ROMANS

GROUP GUIDE



CONNECT

*BREAK THE ICE AND
GET PEOPLE TALKING*

- Tell of your experience with earning wages—a paycheck, allowance, etc.
- What has been your experience with the contention that Christians are judgmental or bigoted?
- What is something from Romans that has stuck in your mind over the course of our studies?

TRUTH

UNDERSTAND AND DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURE'S MEANING

In our passage for today, Paul is getting to the heart of not only his primary theological thrust of his letter to the Romans—that justification is given, not earned—but also using this framework to set up some criticisms of the community of faith based on divisions of race and observance of the Law, namely circumcision. Paul deeply wishes that his readers understand that belonging to the covenant community of God is achieved only through Christ, and only through faith in him. There is no amount of obedience or good works that can justify man before a holy God.

We find ourselves in the family of God by faith, not by works

READ: Romans 4:1-8

DISCUSS: What do you think it means that Abraham's faith was "counted to him as righteousness"?

Abraham is the father of the Jewish faith. He was the patriarch through whom God's promise of a nation of people and of land came into fruition. He is also upheld as a man of righteousness and great obedience to God. However, Paul makes it very clear that not even this Patriarch, revered for his obedience was justified before God because of his works. Rather, it was Abraham's faith in God that granted him righteousness and justification.

We find ourselves in the family of God in order to be forgiven

READ: Romans 4:9-12

DISCUSS: Why do you think Paul contrasts circumcision and uncircumcision in these verses?

Paul's point here is twofold. Firstly, he is using a practical point of application for his readers—specifically his Jewish audience—regarding the matter of justification by faith apart from observance of the Law.

Secondly, he is continuing to address the growing tensions between his Jewish and Gentile audiences, specifically with regard to matters of classism arising within the faith. By illustrating that Abraham was justified and made righteous before his circumcision, he seeks to dismantle the Jewish sense of elitism by way of observance of the Law in addition to faith in Jesus, and the various ways this was held over Gentile believers (see also Rom 2:25-29; Gal 5:1-15).

GRACE

SEE HOW THE PASSAGE CONNECTS TO JESUS

Faith alone is counted as righteousness

You and I find ourselves in the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ alone. That is, by belief and trust in his sinless life, unjustified sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection conquering sin and death. He was everything you and I were always meant to be, but could never achieve. He alone is entitled to look upon humanity—upon each and every one of us—with judgment and scorn. Instead, he freely gives all that he alone has earned. He welcomes us, as sinful and broken as we are, into his family, and to his table. And, in all this, we have so much greater a revelation of God than heroes of faith like Abraham ever did—and yet, he too believed. By God's grace, we belong to the household of faith, and therefore, our faith is counted to us as righteousness.

CHANGE

*APPLY THE PASSAGE TO OUR
THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS*

- Have you found yourself reducing the practice of your faith to simply moral living? How can this change?
- What might you say to someone struggling with feeling either a sense of elitism or a sense of fear in their faith? Which of these tends to come out more in you?
- How can your church community be supportive as we all strive to quiet the temptation toward earning justification?

PRAYER

RESPOND TO THE PASSAGE IN PRAYER

- Pray for God's grace to completely outshine the tendency to earn his favor in each of our lives and hearts.
- Pray that God will give you opportunities to love others well who also struggle with attempting to earn God's favor.

Discipleship Check-In

- Have you read your Bible consistently the past week?
- Who is someone you're engaging with the gospel?



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