

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, Jan. 8, 2012

Passage: Romans 1:1-7

Memory Passage: Romans 1:16-17 (This is the theme for Paul's letter to the Romans)

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 1:1-7 & 16:25-27.** What similarities do you find between the themes found in Paul's introduction and his doxology in Romans? If you had read only the first 5 verses of Romans, what would you say was the main point of the letter?

(b) What reasons can you think of that would prompt Paul to write the longest introduction of any of his letters to the church at Rome? What do you notice as common traits in this introduction compared to his other introductions? Uncommon traits?

(c) What do you learn about Paul from v. 1? Can we infer anything theological about the order of Paul's terms (the word order in Greek is the same as it is in English)?

(d) What does it mean to be "set apart for the gospel of God?" Does this describe your calling? Is this the way someone else would evaluate your life? What would be characteristics of a life that is "set apart for the Gospel of God?"

(e) *Family:* Provide pencils/pens & paper for each person in your family and ask them to write the introduction to a letter to someone that is very well known to them (i.e. grandma or a close friend). To help them you might ask, "How would you start a letter to grandma?" Then ask, "How would you start a letter to President Obama?" and have them write the beginning of a letter to him. Have them write more than "Dear Grandma" or "Dear Mr. President" by asking them to also write the first paragraph. Then lead in a discussion about the differences between the informality of the first letter and the formality of the second, one to a person they knew and knew well, the other to a person they did not know well. Then **Read Rom. 1:1-7** and ask them if they think Paul knew the people in the Roman church well or not (he did not) and why they think this (he writes formal, he establishes his authority as an apostle, he writes a longer greeting than in any other letter, he gives an outline of the gospel, etc.). Then spend some time discussing the titles Paul uses to describe himself in v. 1, and remind them that in the 1st century it was normal to identify the sender and recipients at the beginning of the letter (rather than greeting the recipient at the beginning and then the sender signing the letter at the end like we do today).

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Rom. 1:1-7.** Paul uses vs. 2-4 to give some detail about the gospel before describing in more detail his apostleship and finishing his greeting in vs. 5-7. We will look at vs. 2-4 next week, and continue with vs. 5-7 today: From whom did Paul receive his apostleship and why is that important for him to say in this greeting? What is the goal of this grace & apostleship?

(b) What does Paul mean when he says the result of his apostleship would be to "bring about the obedience of faith?" I.e. does the obedience flow from the faith, or is faith the act of obedience, or both? For what purpose does this "obedience of faith" come about, and who is included in the preaching of this gospel?

(c) According to vs. 6-7, who is included in "the nations?" Why is this important for us to understand as we begin the study of this letter? Paul refers to the Romans as those "who are loved by God and called to be saints," and this is the description of every believer as well. "Saint" means "holy one" or "set apart." What comfort should you take from this description? From what have you been set apart, and to what are you set apart? What does it say about your calling, and how should this calling work itself out in the priorities of your daily life?

(d) *Family:* Have each person in your family write an introduction for themselves that follows the format of Rom. 1:1. They will write their name, and then use several descriptive phrases to describe themselves. Write yours out before the lesson so you can read it as an example. Then have everyone read their introduction and explain why they chose the words they did. Then **Read Rom. 1:1, 5-6** and write on your white board each of the things Paul states about himself. As you write, explain each one ("apostle" means "sent one," and vs. 5-6 explain more about his apostleship: Paul was one sent to proclaim the gospel, he received this apostleship from Jesus, it had the purpose of bringing about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles ("the nations"), of which the Romans were, etc.). Then explain that all this information was important for Paul to establish his authority among the church at Rome who did not yet know him personally.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) For the rest of the week we will read through the entire book of Romans. As you read, try to imagine yourself as a member of the church at Rome when this letter is being read aloud in the congregation. For each day write down: (1) Any questions you have (don't worry about answering them right now), (2) Words or phrases that are repeated often, and (3) The main point or topic of each large section (you might have more than one section per chapter).

(b) Today, **Read Romans 1-5**, answering the three questions in (a) above.

(c) *Family*: Find a map in your Bible of Paul's missionary journeys that includes Rome (you can find one here if you don't have one in your Bible: <http://www.christianityoasis.com/dailybread/Acts/PaulsSecondJourney.htm>). Show your family where Rome is, where Corinth is (This is where Paul wrote Romans), and point out other towns they will know like Ephesus, Patmos, Colossae, Jerusalem, etc.) so they get an idea of what this part of Roman Empire looked like. Then enter into a discussion of what it would take to get to Rome from Corinth, or from Ephesus, or from Jerusalem (which is where Paul was heading with an offering for the saints in Jerusalem). Would he need to travel by land? By boat? Both? How many miles is it from Jerusalem to Rome (app. 1440 miles) and what it would be like to travel that distance without cars, planes, or trains?

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Romans 6-10**, answering the questions from Day 3(a).

(b) *Family*: Since you have read chapters 1-10 in your devotions, pick the section (a chapter or part of a chapter) that you most enjoyed reading and read that section/chapter with your family. Give a brief, accessible summary of how that section fits into the flow of Paul's thought in Romans, why it was important to you, and why you think it is important for them to read tonight. Also be prepared to explain the meaning of this section, and find one application for your family to discuss.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Romans 11-16**, answering the question from Day 3(a).

(b) *Family*: Spend time tonight memorizing Romans 1:16-17. These verses contain the theme of Paul's letter, which he will expound upon in the rest of the Romans.

DATE: January 8, 2012

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Paul's Greeting Part I: Set Apart for the Gospel