Women's Bible Study — Handout

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Lesson 6 | *Romans 4:1-21*

The promise that comes by faith

Name:

Date:

PREPARE YOUR HEART

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom, insight, and understanding as you study this passage. Begin by reading the full text above before working through the questions.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

> ***Romans 4:1-3***
> *What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about – but not before God. 3 What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

1. In v1, Paul takes us back to the Old Testament to refer a Jewish patriarch as a great example of justification by faith. a) Look up Gen 12:1-5, 13:14-16, 15:2-6, 17:3-7, 10-11, 15-19 to better understand Abraham's story. Write a brief summary below. b) What do Rom 4:1-3 imply about how people were saved in the Old Testament? See specifically Gen 15:6. c) In other words, is it different than how they're saved in the New Testament and beyond?

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

2. a) V2 says that even if Abraham were justified (made right with God) based on good things he had done, he could boast. Why? b) But then Paul goes on to say, "but not before God," implying that Abraham was not justified by his works (as we see in vv3, 5). Why then can Abraham not boast? i.e., Who is doing the justifying, and thus who should get the credit??

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

3. a) What is another way of expressing that someone has faith, according to v3, and is this faith focused inward on one's self, or outward toward God? b) In v3, Paul uses a new way of speaking about how God justifies the ungodly: Abraham believes (or has faith in) God, and "it

was *credited* to him as righteousness." To understand this better, explain what it means to have money "credited to your account."

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

> ***Romans 4:4-5***
> *Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. 5 However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.*

4. In vv4-5, Paul wants to draw further implications from the words "believed" and "credited" that he used in v3. a) He argues that if you work for something, what you receive is credited to you as what? b) But if you believe God, it's credited to you as what??

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

> ***Romans 4:6-8***
> *David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them."*

5. Paul here turns momentarily from Abraham to focus on another Old Testament character, David, Israel's most distinguished king. a) How does David speak about the sins of those "to whom God credits righteousness apart from works" (i.e., those whom God justifies) in vv7-8? b) How does this add yet another layer to our understanding of justification?

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

6. David speaks of the "blessedness" of those who perceive the astounding good news of their justification. What is a trial you're walking through right now, and how might pondering the reality of these verses encourage you as you face it?

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

> ***Romans 4:9-12***
> *Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. 10 Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! 11 And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. 12 And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.*

7. In vv9-12, Paul returns to Abraham, arguing that he was circumcised (Gen 17:9-12) after he was justified (Gen 15:6). Scholars estimate his circumcision came at least 14 years later. a) Why do you think Paul felt it was so important to emphasize this with respect to justification (especially in light of the standing the Jews felt circumcision afforded them with God)? b) What point is Paul making in vv11-12 about Abraham's "fatherhood"? (HINT: Remember the 2nd theme of Romans!)

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

> ***Romans 4:13-15***
> *It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14 For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, 15 because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.*

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8. The promise that Abraham will be heir of the world (v13) includes the promise of salvation and of his inheritance of a worldwide family of believers and a renewed creation. Why does God have to depend on people receiving this promise by faith, instead of by keeping the law, in order to make good on this promise?

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

> ***Romans 4:16-17***
> *Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed – the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.*

9. We learn here that the promise comes not only by faith, but also by *grace*, in that first, we don't deserve it (we haven't worked for or earned it) and second, it gives us what we could never do ourselves. What are the two things v17 says that we can never do ourselves?

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

> ***Romans 4:17b-22***
> *He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed – the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. 18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – since he was about a hundred years old – and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

10. Although faith exceeds reason, it always has a rational basis, in that it's anchored in how reliable and trustworthy we know God to be. a) What attribute of God do vv17 and 21 emphasize that we can anchor our faith and hope in? b) How might reflecting more on this

attribute and on God's ability to deliver on his promises help you right now with something you're facing that seems "against all hope?"

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

11. Back in question 3, we established that faith is outward facing toward God. a) How do vv20-21 reinforce that? b) How might practicing that actually make you more joyful??

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

> ***Romans 4:23-25***
> *The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

12. How might embracing the reality that God credits his righteousness to us (v24) make us as bold as a lion? See Prv. 28:1.

MY RESPONSE

LESSON NOTES