

STUDY NOTES

A LETTER TO THE ROMANS *at* NEW CITY CHURCH

www.newcityphx.com/sermons

The following content is based on the message “Father Abraham and The Overlapping Stories” on 3/19/17 at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://www.newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective community groups.

PRAYER

Pray and ask God to lead the discussion as everyone gets to share.

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 4:1-12

SCRIPTURE AS NARRATIVE

As we engage the Scripture as a narrative, we'll find these continuously overlapping stories that we can look back through the lens of Jesus. Paul is trying to get the Roman church to ask: What did Abraham discover about being made right with God? Paul answers that by placing us in overlapping narratives of Abraham and David. He is hoping that we stop and look into these stories in order to better know, love, and trust God.

- *How have you discovered what it means to be made right with God?*

FATHER ABRAHAM

Abraham is known as the father of the faith. He is the main character in the story of God choosing one to communicate His desire to choose all in the ever-expanding, multiethnic family of Abraham. Abraham's faith in God's promise to bless him with this family caused him to MOVE and allowed God to expand His reach. God's promise to Abraham included us (or as Paul's trying to communicate in Romans, Jews and Gentiles alike), and once we receive that promise ourselves, we are to have faith like Abraham and also MOVE like him.

Having a faith that moves allows God to expand His reach.

- *How does a faith that moves expand the reach of God?*

- *In what ways have you experienced someone's faith moving in such a way that God's reach expanded?*
- *How can you expand God's reach by putting your faith in movement?*

What we can learn from the father of the Jewish nation is that he believed God, and from that was made righteous. It wasn't about anything that Abraham did, but it was about the faith that he had. To be right with God requires us to receive His free gift, to believe His promise. The moment we boast about what we have done to be made right with God, we have taken the gift and made it our own thing. Paul is communicating that this included the Jewish sign of the covenant—circumcision. It never was about being circumcised, but about having the faith that led that person to receive the sign of the covenant (be circumcised).

- *How do you find yourself trying to earn God's free gift even after you have already been given it?*

KING DAVID

Read Psalm 32:1-3. Paul brings in another hero of the Jewish people and reminds them that while these Roman Christians were united in their sin, they were also united in the joy of forgiveness. *This is Good News!* You can almost feel Paul urging us, the church, to confess our sin so that we do not waste away—to embrace the Good News of God's forgiveness!

- *How does confession unite us in our sin? How should confession lead us see unity in to forgiveness?*
- *How does confession lead to life for our bones rather than feeling like we are wasting away like David wrote about?*

WHAT THE GOOD NEWS CAN GIVE ALL PEOPLE

Paul ties the example of Abraham and David to the church's faith in Jesus. Read Romans 4:20-25. Paul brings it full circle in reminding a church, ever-prone to division, that we have a:

New Status: we are right with God and forgiven
New Family: we, too, are included in God's family
New Future: our lives are transformed, so we bless others

- *What is encouraging about the faith of Abraham and David when we look at their stories?*
- *How can our faith move as a community group? Pray for strength to have a faith that moves as a group.*