



## Group Discussion Guide

### Romans 4:1-12

*For groups meeting February 16 evening through February 23 morning.*

Abraham was considered the father of the Jewish nation, and this is exactly why Paul presented Abraham to his readers as an example. Romans was written to Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome, and throughout the letter Paul points out truths that are meant to help both groups in their walk with Christ. We have already read how Paul instructed Jewish believers that they were no better than Gentile believers. He wanted them to understand that salvation comes not through following the Old Testament law, but through faith in Christ. If he could remind them that their own "forefather according to the flesh" (v. 1) was declared righteous by faith, then he could make a strong argument that the same is true for them.

Abraham, Paul wrote, could not boast about anything in God's presence even if he had somehow been justified by works (v. 2). Paul then quoted Genesis 15:6, which stated Abraham's faith in God "was counted to him as righteousness" (v. 3). In the next two verses, Paul contrasted a person who works and a person who "believes in him who justifies the ungodly" (vs. 4-5). One who works has to earn wages (and does not receive a gift), while one who believes in God receives the gift of righteousness.

Paul had already quoted from Genesis, and he then quoted a Psalm of David (vs. 6-8). In Psalm 32:1-2, David wrote about the blessing of being forgiven of sin. He referenced forgiveness three times in three different ways: 1) God's forgiveness of "lawless deeds" 2) God covering one's sin and 3) God not counting one's sin against him. In referencing the life of Abraham and a writing of King David, Paul had laid a strong foundation for his argument that people are justified before God by faith, not works.

Verses 9-12 are focused on the rite of circumcision and whether or not it relates to being declared righteous by God. Paul stated that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness before God gave him the sign of circumcision (vs. 9-10). Circumcision was given "as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised," (v. 11). In other words, this sign was an outward demonstration of the faith Abraham already possessed. This, Paul wrote, made Abraham the father of all who believe, whether they observed this sign or not (vs. 11-12).

## Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to you to learn that in Genesis 15:6, it's recorded that Abraham's faith in God is what caused the Lord to declare him righteous?
2. In your own words, what does it mean to "believe God"?
3. Why do you think Paul used the contrast between a "wage" and a "gift" to explain how people are justified before God?
4. Take a few minutes to read James 2:14-26. Considering this passage and what we already have read in Romans, what would you say is the relationship between faith and works? Why do you think Paul and James addressed this from two different perspectives?
5. Given what you know about King David's life, how do you view his words from Psalm 32:1-2, which are quoted in Romans 4:7-8?
6. How would you explain Paul's statement that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised" (v. 11)?
7. Paul references Abraham as the "father of all who believe" (v. 11), and did so to point out that Jewish and Gentile believers had the same heritage. What does this teach us about the unity we should experience with believers who come from backgrounds that are different than ours?