

(Simple advice: If you're new to these notes, here's my advice: **Do not be overwhelmed by these notes as another "home school" assignment, or even that you need to "do" all or any of this outline!** This is written to give you good things to enjoy, because look again at what Paul told Timothy (1 Tim 6:17-18)! I think he was thinking of us at the time: **17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be conceited and not to put their hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in God, WHO RICHLY PROVIDES ALL THINGS TO ENJOY. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share...**) The following ice breaker is just a starter for your group. The message comes after the second bar. Please enjoy!)

CROWD BREAKER: Have you ever done anything for Family Promise? Do you have a testimony?

Do you have a testimony from this week? Write the headlines for the coming week. What is going to happen? What will be your response? —The scribe

Note: Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP. Remember the purpose is to unite, not divide; to fearlessly proclaim the freedom the gospel brings. Any part of these notes might be appropriate as a crowd breaker for your own group. The goal is to create memories on Sunday that will serve for a long time. REMEMBER TO BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study. It's a great devotion, taken slowly through the week.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions raised by Pastor Mark's message this Sunday. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **Remember the purpose is to minister to one another.**

What do you know of what is going on in Canada?

NH has reversed it's law permitting late term abortion. What do you know?

Pastor Mark says, "As I share words, the Holy Spirit, Who is alive and active in us, is going to interpret them to you. God is speaking to us at this time through the book of Romans." **What does this make you think?**

What do you remember of Mark's testimony? ("A form of godliness without power. 'God, if you're real you had better show yourself, because I have better things to do than to go to church on Sundays.' Brothers came over and changed everything.")

What do you remember of Last week? ("Stop focusing on living right, and focus on being in a right relationship. It's a right relationship the compels you to do the right thing.")

What do you know of Abraham? What do you know of Sarah? At what age did he believe God? (75) At what age was the promise fulfilled? (100)

Romans 4: ¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, has discovered? ²If Abraham was indeed justified by works, he had something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." **(What exactly did Abraham believe? What does this say of faith? Can you have faith without taking God literally, at His Word? Apart from believing God and taking Him at His word, is there any other requirement? (PG 13 question: What did Abraham and Sarah have to continue to enjoy for the next 25 years, to produce Isaac?)**

Look up Hebrews 11:¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac on the altar. He who had received the promises was ready to offer his one and only son, ¹⁸even though God had said to him, "Through Isaac your offspring will be reckoned." ¹⁹Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and in a sense, he did receive Isaac back from death. **How did Abraham KNOW that Isaac COULD NOT die? What is the only thing God CANNOT do? (He cannot lie) Look at Genesis 21:11-12:** ...¹¹Now this matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son Ishmael. ¹²But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to everything that Sarah tells you, for through ISAAC your offspring will be reckoned. (emphasis added)

Now look at Genesis 22:6-9... ..⁵"Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told his servants. "The boy and I will go over there to worship, and then we will return to you." ⁶Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac. He himself carried the fire and the sacrificial knife, and the two of them walked on together. ⁷Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" "Here I am, my son," he replied. "The fire and the wood are here," said Isaac, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" ⁸Abraham answered, "God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two walked on together. ⁹When they arrived at the place God had designated, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar, atop the wood.... **Describe what Abraham is thinking. When he told the servants, "The boy and I will go over there to worship, and then WE will return to you," was he lying?**

When he told Isaac, "God Himself will provide..." , was he lying to Isaac? What did Abraham know for certain? What are the chances that the boy will die, if God cannot lie? Is faith a leap from a cliff? How well do you have to know God? How well do you know God? What do you think? Would Abraham serve God if God demanded human sacrifice? What does Jehovah Jireh mean? What has God provided? Take the time to make a list.

4Now the wages of the worker are not credited as a gift, but as an obligation. 5However, to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. **Explain this? What is the difference between "righteousness earned," and "righteousness credited?" On what does each depend? Can works earn righteousness?**

6And David speaks likewise of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

7"Blessed are they whose lawless acts are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

8Blessed is the man
whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

9Is this blessing only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. 10In what context was it credited? Was it after his circumcision, or before? It was not after, but before. **Why is it important that righteousness was credited to Abraham before the circumcision?**

11And he received the sign of circumcision as 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 are not circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. 12And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised, but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. **Did Abraham buy righteousness by circumcision? Is "circumcision of the heart" a New Testament concept or an Old Testament? (Remember Romans 2:29. No, a man is a Jew because he is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise does not come from men, but from God. Look up Deuteronomy 10:16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and stiffen your necks no more. Look up Jeremiah 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and remove the foreskins of your hearts, O men of Judah and people of Jerusalem. Otherwise, My wrath will break out like fire and burn with no one to extinguish it, because of your evil deeds." Again, is "circumcision of the heart" a New Testament concept or an Old Testament?**

Describe discretely the pain of circumcision. What do you think happens to the HEART when it is circumcised? Why is Abraham called "the father of our faith?" Do you take God at His word, or are there still things you question?

Abraham Receives the Promise

(Genesis 15:8–21)

13For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world was not given through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. **14**For if those who live by the law are heirs, faith is useless and the promise is worthless, **15**because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law, there is no transgression. **Read this again. What has Abraham become the heir of? Have you ever noticed this? How did he become the heir of the world?**

16Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may rest on grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of 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 presence of God, in whom he believed, the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not yet exist. **Why is it important to know that "...the promise is guaranteed to ALL Abraham's offspring?" How is he the father of us all? What is the inheritance? Complete this sentence: "I can do... through Christ, who strengthens me." What is our limit?**

18Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." **19**Without weakening in his faith, he acknowledged the decrepitness of his body (since he was about a hundred years old) and the lifelessness of Sarah's womb. **20**Yet he did not waver through disbelief in the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, **21**being fully persuaded that God was able to do what He had promised. **22**This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." **Go back to the PG13 question. Does this make sense? Have you ever noticed that the Bible is graphic and unabashed?**

23Now the words "it was credited to him" were written not only for Abraham, **24**but also for us, to whom righteousness will be credited—for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. **25**He was delivered over to death for our trespasses and was raised to life for our justification. **What do we become heirs of? Who can stand between us and God if we take Him at His Word? Why is it important to know the Word of God? Why is Jesus called the Word of God?**

Follow the truth wherever it leads you. What is the next step? Take time to share. Talk about your biggest takeaway.

Take time to pray for one another. Be blessed. —the scribe