

What About My Jewish Friend?

(Insights from Romans 9-11)

Rabbi Barney Kasdan, Grace Point Church, February 4th, 2018

I. The Paradox (Romans 9:1-6)

- The Rabbi's Grief
- Glory, Covenants, Torah, Worship, Messiah!
- Word has failed?

II. The Prayer (Romans 10:1-4)

- Israel's Salvation
- Zeal + Knowledge
- Messiah is Goal
- Whoever trusts

III. The Promise (Romans 11:1)

- Messianic Jews
- Messianic Gentiles
- The Olive Tree
- Partial Hardening
- All Israel saved?

This Week's Discussion Guide:

Welcome to "Week 4" of our small group session!
We are glad that you have taken this journey with us digging into God's Word with others. We pray this is a time of growth, encouragement, and fun as you deepen friendships and make new friends along the way!

Looking Back:

Each week we'll look back and have an opportunity to share with our group how the week went and also share a few things to help us get to know each other better. What is something encouraging or not so encouraging that happened since our last meeting?

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention or raised a question for you or challenged you?

Three times in Romans 9-11 (Romans 9:18, 11:7 and 11:25) the word 'harden' 'to cause to be stubborn' is used. The greek word is 'skleruno'. This greek word is the origin of our medical term sclerosis, as in 'sclerosis of the liver', in which the hardening of tissue prevents the organ from performing its normal function. Biblical writers use this term figuratively, suggesting that one's conscience or will is like an organ of the body and that repeated abuse steadily decreases its ability to function as God originally intended. God allows hearts to be hardened after a period of time of not choosing to yield to God's promptings. Can you think of a time where your heart became hardened more than it is today because of a lack of responsiveness on your part to God? How long was this season and what caused your heart to eventually soften?

In Romans 9:1-2, Paul writes that he has great sorrow and unceasing anguish over the resistance of so many Jewish people regarding Christ. What we get upset over (little or big things) gives us an opportunity to see into our hearts. What has caused you sorrow or anguish lately? What should we do with these strong emotions?

In Romans 10:13, Paul says, "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Who has surprised you that they are now part of the 'everyone' who has called on the name of the Lord?

LOOKING UP: (DIGGING DEEPER)

1. Some passages in Scripture are harder to grasp than others. Romans 9-11 is one of the challenging passages and can be a motivation for us to keep studying and asking God for insight.

The longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119 which was written by King David. Almost all of the 176 verses talk about the important role God's word plays in how we grow in our faith. What do you see in the following verses from Psalm 119 that could help motivate you to spend more time interacting with God's Word?

Psalm 119:9-11, 98-100, 105, 165

Which of the benefits of interacting with and obeying the Bible is most motivational to you?

Can you think of any challenges people face when it comes to spending time reading or listening to the Bible?

2. One of the biggest mistakes people make when reading the Bible is taking a verse out of context. Reading a verse in context means reading the verses that surround it to see how they impact the meaning of the verse. For the verses below, read each one and reflect on what possible misinterpretations could be made.

Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 18:19-20, Romans 13:8

Next, read the context of each verse and reflect on how that impacts your understanding of the verse.

Jeremiah 29:10-14, Matthew 18:15-18, Romans 13:6-7

3. Another way to read a verse in context is to compare it with what other passages say on the same topic. How can Galatians 6:1-5 help us to better understand the teaching of Matthew 18:15-20?

4. Studying the Bible gets better with practice. As a small group, let's practice by reading Ephesians 4:29-32 and then answer five questions to help us understand and apply God's truth to our lives.

- What is this passage about?
- What don't you understand or do you have questions about?
- What does the passage tell us about people and how to relate to them?
- How could this passage change how we live?
- What principle or word from this passage would you like to continue to think about?

Looking Forward:

This last section is based on passages like the one below.

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. 23 For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. 24 You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. 25 But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

James 1:22-25 (NLT)

Let's all take a few minutes to silently pray and reflect back on last week's message and what we discussed in our group. As we reflect, let's all pray and ask God for a specific application that He might prompt us to live out this week.

To help us as we reflect, here are some possible applications to get us thinking ...

- After reading a portion of Psalm 119, I want to read the entire chapter and write down the benefits of God's Word
- After reflecting on Ephesians 4:29-32, I want to ask God for opportunities to edify (build up) others this week with my words. As God gives me opportunities, I will be intentional in providing words of encouragement.
- After reflecting on how some hearts are hardened toward God, I will pray for some I know who currently have a hardened heart and ask God to do what is needed for their heart to soften toward Him.

Speaking of prayer, before you wrap up, be sure to pray that God would help us build strong friendships this season as we meet together.