

Romans 4

Kairos Questions

Read Romans 4

1. (This first question is strategically placed at the beginning of each week's study in order to give you the opportunity to respond to the weekend message in an unhurried, prayerful way. Sharing your response with those in your Kairos group offers you a safe place to receive feedback and encouragement; it also allows the community—the body of Christ—to help you discern the gracious activity of God in your life. In light of that, be as honest as possible with your answer.)
What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be most helpful, eye-opening, or difficult to grasp? Explain.

2. In Romans 4, Paul shines a giant spotlight on the faith of Abraham and makes the point—which would have been a very controversial one in Paul's day—that Abraham is the father of all those who believe (v. 16), irrespective of their ethnic or religious origins. As Paul redefines the family of Abraham according to a different criteria—that of faith—how do you think his Jewish audience would have responded? What do you think would have been running through the minds of the Gentiles (non-Jews) as they're hearing this letter read for the first time?
 - a. According to Romans 4:2-3, was it Abraham's good deeds (i.e. circumcision) or something else that made him acceptable to God?

 - b. When you hear the word "belief" or "believe" what comes to mind? How does that image or concept square with what Paul says about belief in Romans 4?

 - c. In some religions, forgiveness or grace as a free gift is a foreign concept. Instead, you get into heaven or "earn" the favor of your god(s) by living a

good life. How does the Gospel that Paul explains and defends in Romans 4 differ from that message?

1. In Genesis 12, God promises Abraham that he will make him into a great nation, that through him all the families on earth will be blessed. Despite insurmountable obstacles, including his wife Sarah's inability to conceive a child, Paul says that Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise (v. 20). Would you describe your faith right now as more of a wavering or non-wavering faith? What would you attribute that to? How does Abraham's faith—which, according to Paul, grew stronger as Abraham grew older—challenge or strengthen your own?

1. Faith has this extraordinary ability to help us face the truth about our situation and yet still believe that God will intervene. It never compels us to deny the reality of what's really going on. According to Paul, Abraham knew full well that his body and Sarah's womb were both as good as dead (v. 19). And yet he continued to hope "in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing" (v. 17). As a result, Abraham became the father of many nations (v. 18). Is there an area of your life where you need to follow Abraham's example and focus on believing? If so, and you're comfortable sharing it, what is that area of your life?

2. One of things we learned in this weekend's message is that God binds himself *not* to the one who lives a morally superior life, *not* to the one who thinks God owes him a place at the table, but to the one who is humble enough to believe. As a follower of Jesus, have there been times when you've fallen back into the trap of earning God's favor or approval rather than simply appreciating the gift you've been given and allowing that to shape your attitudes and actions? Why do you think it's so difficult for us to jump off the treadmill of religion, of wanting to earn God's favor or approval through the good things that we do?

3. After four weeks in Romans, how would you explain the Gospel to someone who has never heard it before?