

Guide for Sunday “house church” 3.15.20

Good morning – Pastor Josh here. I know this Sunday is a little different than our normal gathering but I think it gives us a unique opportunity that we can really lean into. We are not the first people in history to not be able to meet all together freely in one building on a Sunday morning and perhaps this will give us a greater love for our freedoms and give us the opportunity to challenge ourselves to dive into God’s word and lead our families in a new way over the next month.

The author of Hebrews teaches that gathering all together each week, hearing the word of God proclaimed and encouraging each other is best, but in certain circumstances that’s not always possible so we will make the best of it during this season.

As I said in my previous video explaining our plan for the next 4 weeks, which can be viewed on the NWH website, I am not planning on preaching a sermon each week in this format but want to encourage each of you to have a little church service together in your homes where you are praying together, reading scripture, wrestling with the text and applying it to your life in this specific season. We will also do our best to create an outline with questions that will help you with the text, and guide your time of study; whether that’s by yourself, with your family, with a group of friends, or with your community group.

Each week I will do my best to give you a brief word of encouragement and context to the text and then release you to do the fun work of exploring the most incredible love letter of all time!

*a note to parents having church with your children – please watch the [video from Pastor Curt titled “Object Lesson Ideas for Romans 9”](#) before you start your Sunday house church for helpful tips on how to help lead your children.

SUNDAY GUIDE FOR ROMANS 9

- Start your time by reading **Psalm 27**. Share a couple of observations from this psalm.
- Pray together – pray that God would give you his wisdom and comfort as you read his word and meet with him.
- Read **Psalm 118** together. Share a few observations from this psalm.
- [Watch the short video message from Pastor Josh Carstensen titled “Romans 9 Intro.”](#)
- Read all of Romans 9 out loud – then use the following notes to help understand what Paul is communicating.

1. Verses 1-5

Notice Paul's tone! – He is so burdened for his fellow Jewish brothers and sisters to be saved. He wants them to know Jesus more than anything. They had a significant advantage over all other people at that time (verses 4-5) to know God, yet many of them missed the main point – salvation comes through faith in Jesus NOT by trying to be righteous.

- **Question** – Does your heart break like Paul's for those who do not yet know Jesus? How can you increase your heart's burden for those who don't know Jesus yet?

2. Verses 6-13

Paul explains that salvation does not come to people just because they come from the Jewish nation. The truth is that salvation is not passed from parent to child. Each individual person needs to make a choice to have faith in order to be saved.

In verse 11 Paul answers the question "Why did some of Abraham's descendants love God and some did not?" He gives a couple of answers

1. God chose to bless some and not others
2. God's choice was not based on any individual's behavior
3. God's choice was based on his purposes of election

*note of Election – In my humble opinion the doctrine of election is the most challenging theological doctrine to grasp. It's one that we need to trust even if we don't fully understand how or why it is true. At the core of election is God's mercy and grace. If you would like to do additional reading on election, attached is an article to better understand this doctrine from Timothy Keller that I believe will be helpful.

While we affirm the doctrine of election – we also fully affirm the free-will choices of people, these two truths often seem impossible to reconcile but the Bible teaches that both are true, and this is a mystery that we must live under.

Question – How does this doctrine make you feel? Be honest! This is one of those moments where in humility we need to say, "God there are things about you that I will never fully understand this side of heaven."

3. verses 14-33

This doesn't seem fair – how can God choose some to have faith in Him and not others; and humans still be responsible!!!! (verse 14 and 19) – the short answer is that there is no injustice on God's part.

Here Paul uses the example of Pharaoh – this is a fun example and a mind bender – God uses Pharaoh to show his power and mercy to the world. In the example of Pharaoh two truths happen; God hardened Pharaoh's heart but Pharaoh also hardened his own heart -

- God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21, 7:3, 9:12, 10:1,20,27)

- Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15,19, 32, 9:7,17,34)

POINT TO PONDER - Paul says God is not unjust. Because God made us and has the right to do with the world what he wants. The good news here is that if God is the most glorious being, the wisest, the most loving, and has all knowledge and power, we can trust that he will do what is best even if we don't fully understand why.

Big idea

Paul wants everyone to know that what saves us is not our works (behavior) while trying to be good (or righteous) vs 30-33. He knows that many people will think that if I work really hard at doing the right things God will love me, and he says again and again and again what saves you is faith- not works! What saves you is God's grace and mercy – not your effort.

Question – how might I live differently after reading and studying this chapter?

Close in a time of prayer.