

# GOING DEEPER

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

March 6, 2016



### THE STORY OF GOD'S GLORY

1. the GOSPEL
2. the GOSPEL
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# Discussion Guide

## Man

### Connecting:

45 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a way of connecting with one another so that you might partner in the work God is doing in your lives.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (Graciously thank group members for their honesty if they state they have held back.)

### Getting Started:

10 minutes

- Do you ever feel like things are not the way they are supposed to be? Could you explain?

### Diving Into the Text:

60 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- USING THE NOTES, EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF GOD'S WRATH.
- READ ROMANS 1.16-32 ALOUD, SLOWLY. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, ALLOWING SPACE TO PONDER PAUL'S WORDS ABOUT THE GOSPEL.
- ACCORDING TO PAUL, THE GOSPEL REVEALS NOT JUST WHO GOD IS (ROMANS 1.17) BUT ALSO WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD (ROMANS 1.18-32). WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD?
- IF YOU COULD SUM UP WHAT IS WRONG IN A SINGLE STATEMENT, WHAT WOULD IT BE? COULD YOU ELABORATE UPON YOUR STATEMENT?
- HOW DO PEOPLE TYPICALLY DESCRIBE WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD? IN YOUR MIND, WHICH ANSWER, THAT OF THE GOSPEL OR THAT OFFERED BY PEOPLE, MAKES THE MOST SENSE OF LIFE AS WE EXPERIENCE IT? COULD YOU EXPLAIN?
- PAUL NOTES THAT OUR REFUSAL TO FULFILL OUR CREATED PURPOSE OF WORSHIP LEADS US TO ALL MANNER AND SORT OF DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR. SIMPLY PUT, WE ARE WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD. IN WHAT WAYS, MIGHT A REFUSAL TO WORSHIP LEAD US TO THE LIFE PAUL DESCRIBES? HOW MIGHT WORSHIP PROVIDE A CORRECTIVE TO THIS LIFE?
- DO YOU FIND IT EASY OR DIFFICULT TO ORIENT YOUR LIFE AROUND GOD IN WORSHIP? WHAT EFFECT DOES THIS HAVE UPON YOU?
- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO ADMIT THESE THINGS TO GOD?

TO ONE ANOTHER?

- CONSIDER CLOSING BY CONFESSING (ADMITTING OUR REJECTION OF GOD) TO GOD AND ONE ANOTHER AS AN EXERCISE OF FAITH. THIS IS NOT AN EXERCISE TO BRING SHAME OR GUILT BUT ONE MEANT TO BRING INTO THE LIGHT WHAT NEEDS TO BE DEALT WITH. YOU MIGHT CONSIDER ASKING GOD FOR GRACE TO BE HONEST AND AUTHENTIC WHEN SPEAKING, AND FOR THE GRACE TO BE GRACIOUS AND NON-JUDGMENTAL WHEN LISTENING. CONSIDER ASKING FOR THE GRACE TO RESPOND TO GOD IN TRUE WORSHIP.

## CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND *WRATH*

IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, THERE WERE COMPETING IDEAS CONCERNING THE GODS AND ANGER. THE DOMINANT GRECO-ROMAN UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT THE GODS WERE INHERENTLY ANGRY; THAT IS, ANGER WAS AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF THEIR CHARACTER. THIS CHARACTER OF ANGER IS ONE OF THE DRIVING THEMES OF VIRGIL'S *AENEID*, AESCHLUS' *PROMETHEUS BOUND*, AND OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES*. IN ORDER TO AVOID THE ANGER OF THE GODS, A PERSON HAD TO OFFER CONTINUAL SACRIFICES AS A MEANS OF APPEASEMENT. THE GREEK PHILOSOPHERS DISAGREED WITH THIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE GODS AND ARGUED THAT ANGER WAS A VICE BENEATH THE GODS, VIEWING THEM INCAPABLE OF SUCH A RESPONSE.

THE GOD OF ISRAEL REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE FITS NEITHER OF THESE DESCRIPTIONS WITH RESPECT TO ANGER. CONTRARY TO THE GODS OF THE GREEK PHILOSOPHERS, THE GOD OF ISRAEL CAN AND DOES GROW ANGRY. THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE, GOD'S ANGER IS REFERRED TO AS WRATH, HIS DIVINE INDIGNATION AND PUNISHMENT OF SIN. UNLIKE THE GRECO-ROMAN GODS, THE GOD OF ISRAEL WAS NOT WRATHFUL BY NATURE BUT MERCIFUL. MERCY WAS AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF HIS CHARACTER AND WRATH WAS HIS ACTIVE RESPONSE TO SIN. WHEN FACED WITH THE DISOBEDIENCE OF PEOPLE, GOD GROWS ANGRY AND RESPONDS, PUNISHING THE MISDEEDS OF PEOPLE (PSALM 106.32; HOSEA 13.9-11; EZEKIEL 7.8-9; JOHN 3.36; ROMANS 1.18; EPHESIANS 5.6; COLOSSIANS 3.6; REVELATION 19.15). THIS RESPONSE CAN BE DELAYED AND METED OUT AS A FINAL JUDGMENT (ISAIAH 13.9; ZEPHANIAH 1.15, 18; DANIEL 8.19), BUT THE TYPICAL RESPONSE OF GOD IS TO DEAL WITH SIN IN THE PRESENT (ROMANS 1.18). HOWEVER, GOD DOES NOT REMAIN ANGRY/WRATHFUL BECAUSE THIS IS NOT WHO HE IS. INSTEAD, HIS ANGER PASSES AND HIS MERCY COMES TO THE FORE AS HE HEALS AND RESTORES THOSE WHOM HE HAS DISCIPLINED (PSALM 103.8-10; JEREMIAH 3.12-13).

## THE TEXT

### ROMANS 1.18-32: *WHAT IS WRONG?*

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE HOUSE CHURCHES OF ROME WAS WRITTEN TO A FRACTURED CHURCH. THE EXACT NATURE OF THE DISPUTE IS NOT

STATED EXPLICITLY, BUT IT SEEMS TO HAVE INVOLVED TWO GROUPS WHICH PAUL REFERS TO AS THE "WEAK" AND THE "STRONG" (ROMANS 14.1-15.13). THESE GROUPS SEEM TO BE MARKED BY A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION CONCERNING ADHERENCE TO ASPECTS OF THE TORAH AND THE GENERAL STANDING OF JEWS VERSUS GENTILES, BUT TO SAY THIS WAS A JEWISH-GENTILE DEBATE IS PROBABLY AN OVERSTATEMENT. IT DOES SEEM THAT BOTH SIDES LOOKED DOWN UPON THE OTHER, VIEWING THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE GOSPEL AND THEIR JOURNEY OF FAITH TO BE SUPERIOR TO THAT OF THE OTHER PARTY (ROMANS 2.1, 17-24; 14.1-15.13). PAUL HAD NEVER VISITED THIS CHURCH BUT HE NEEDED THE ROMAN CHURCH TO UNITE IF HE WAS TO TRAVEL TO SPAIN IN ORDER TO PREACH THE GOSPEL (ROMANS 15.23-33). THEREFORE, PAUL SOUGHT TO MEND THE FRACTURE IN THIS CHURCH BY PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL TO THEM (ROMANS 1.9) WHICH WOULD MAKE THEM ALL "STRONG" (ROMANS 1.11). PAUL NOTES THAT HE IS NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL BECAUSE IT SAVES BOTH JEW AND GENTILE, HIS FIRST VOLLEY AT LEVELING THE GROUND BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS (ROMANS 1.16). THE QUESTION REMAINING IS, WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

PAUL NOTES THAT THE GOSPEL BEGINS WITH THE REVELATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS (ROMANS 1.17). AT THIS POINT, PAUL BEGINS AN EXPLORATION OF GENESIS 1-6. IN SO DOING, HE ARGUES THAT THE GOSPEL NOT ONLY REVEALS THE NATURE OF GOD, BUT IT ANSWERS THE FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS OF WHO PEOPLE ARE AND WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD (ROMANS 1.18-32).

WHILE THE GOSPEL REVEALS WHO GOD IS, HE IS RIGHTEOUS (ROMANS 1.17), THE GOSPEL ALSO REVEALS WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD. PRESENTLY, THE WORLD IS EXPERIENCING THE WRATH OF GOD, HIS ANGRY RESPONSE TO THE GODLESS AND WICKED BEHAVIOR OF PEOPLE. BY NATURE, WRATH IS GOD'S RESPONSE TO THE DISOBEDIENCE TO PEOPLE, BUT PAUL IS CAREFUL WITH HIS WORDS, MAKING A CLEAR POINT. THE GOSPEL REVEALS GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS BUT PEOPLE HAVE RESPONDED BY REJECTING GOD (GODLESSNESS) AND WHO HE IS (WICKEDNESS OR "UNRIGHTEOUSNESS"). THIS REJECTION IS NOT ACCIDENTAL BUT INTENTIONAL ON THE PART OF PEOPLE BECAUSE GOD HAS REVEALED WHO HE IS CLEARLY. HE HAS PLACED WITHIN CREATION SIGNS POINTING TO HIS POWER AND NATURE SO THAT PEOPLE ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE. THEY KNOW THROUGH WHAT HAS BEEN MADE WHO GOD IS AND THE PROPER RESPONSE TO HIM. HERE, PAUL IS EXPLORING GENESIS 1-2, NOTING THAT THE GOSPEL BEGINS WITH A REVELATION OF GOD AND OUR PURPOSE AND ROLE AS HIS CREATION. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD IS PEOPLE HAVE INTENTIONALLY REJECTED THESE.

THIS REJECTION CAME ABOUT THROUGH A CONSCIOUS CHOICE. PEOPLE KNEW WHO GOD WAS AND THEIR PROPER RESPONSE TO HIM, BUT THEY REFUSED TO MAKE THIS RESPONSE. THEY REFUSED TO GLORY OR THANK HIM FOR THE GIFT OF LIFE HE HAD GIVEN THEM. THIS IS A CLEAR ECHO OF GENESIS 1 AND GOD'S INTENT

THAT ALL OF CREATION, INCLUDING PEOPLE, PROCLAIM HIS GLORY (WORSHIP!). RATHER, PEOPLE TURNED TO A FUTILE AND FOOLISH WAY OF LIFE. THIS OCCURRED WHEN THEY SOUGHT TO BE WISE, AN ATTEMPT WHICH LEFT THEM FOOLISH. HERE WE FIND A CLEAR ECHO OF GENESIS 3, PARTICULARLY GENESIS 3.6 WHERE EVE OBSERVES THAT THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT CAN MAKE HER "WISE." THE ORIGINAL PEOPLE CHOSE TO REJECT GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THEM IN AN EFFORT TO GO THEIR OWN WAY, TO BE THEIR OWN GODS, BUT THEIR PLAN BACKFIRED. RATHER THAN BECOMING THEIR OWN GODS, THEY EXCHANGED THE WORSHIP OF THE CREATOR FOR THE WORSHIP OF CREATED THINGS. PEOPLE DISCOVERED (OR FAILED TO REALIZE) THEY WERE MADE TO WORSHIP AND THEIR REFUSAL TO WORSHIP GOD WOULD LEAD TO THE WORSHIP OF SOMETHING ELSE. HERE, PAUL BEGINS TO EXPLORE GENESIS 4-6, LEADING UP TO THE DECLARATIONS OF GENESIS 6.5, 11-12 CONCERNING THE SPIRALING SINFULNESS OF PEOPLE.

GOD RESPONDED TO THE REJECTION OF PEOPLE BY HANDING THEM OVER TO THEIR SINFUL REJECTION WHICH LED THEM TO SEXUAL IMMORALITY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THE PARALLEL HERE BETWEEN GENESIS 2 AND ROMANS 1. PAUL DOES NOT SINGLE OUT SEXUALITY BECAUSE HE VIEWS IT AS THE MOST HEINOUS OF SINS BUT BECAUSE IT IS THE ASPECT OF LIFE MOST TIED TO THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S TRINITARIAN LIFE IN GENESIS 2. THUS, PAUL'S POINT IS SIMPLE. WHEN PEOPLE REJECTED THEIR ROLE, THEY LOST AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE TRINITARIAN LIFE AS IT WAS MEANT TO BE EXPERIENCED. THIS LED TO THE DEGRADATION NOT ELEVATION OF PEOPLE. THIS WRATHFUL RESPONSE WAS NOT PUNITIVE AS MUCH AS IT WAS CORRECTIVE, BUT PEOPLE DID NOT RESPOND. THEY DID NOT TURN BACK TO GOD OR THEIR CREATED PURPOSE. THEY CONTINUED IN THEIR WORSHIP OF THE CREATED ORDER RATHER THAN GOD WHO MADE THEM AND WAS THE RIGHTFUL RECIPIENT OF PRAISE. NOTE THE RECOLLECTION OF THE PURPOSE OF CREATION HERE.

BECAUSE PEOPLE REFUSED TO TURN BACK TO GOD, HE HANDED THEM OVER TO THEMSELVES ONCE MORE, ALLOWING THEM TO PURSUE THE LUSTS AND PASSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THEIR REJECTION OF HIM. ONCE MORE, THE PLACE THIS REJECTION IMPACTED WAS THE SEXUALITY OF PEOPLE. PEOPLE REJECTED THE VERY NATURE OF THEIR BODIES, THUS REJECTING THE TRINITARIAN LIFE WHICH WAS TO BE THEIRS, THE PENALTY FOR THEIR ERROR. HOWEVER, THIS WAS NOT ENOUGH TO TURN THEM BACK TO GOD. THE CONTINUED TO REFUSE TO RECOGNIZE GOD, CHOOSING NOT TO EVEN RETAIN A GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. THEREFORE, GOD GAVE THEM OVER ONCE MORE TO THEMSELVES, ALLOWING THEIR MINDS TO BE DEPRAVED. AT THIS POINT, THE NATURE OF GOD'S WRATH IS CLEAR. IT IS A HANDING OVER OF CONTROL FROM GOD TO US. OR, IN OTHER WORDS, GOD REFUSES TO PROTECT US FROM OURSELVES. THE RESULT IS WE DESTROY OURSELVES. WE PURSUE ALL MANNER OF BROKENNESS AND THE BREAKING OF OTHERS UNTIL WE COME TO THE POINT THAT EVEN THOUGH WHAT IS RIGHT IS ALL AROUND US, WE CALL WRONG RIGHT.

THIS IS WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD. GOD HAS GIVEN US OVER TO OURSELVES, TO PURSUE THE LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF REJECTING

HIM AND OUR CREATED PURPOSE OF WORSHIP. WE BEGIN TO WORSHIP CREATION WHICH LEADS US TO SPIRAL INTO DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR. THIS IS THE CONCLUSION TO WHICH HUMANITY CAME IN GENESIS 6 WHEN GOD CHOSE TO DESTROY THE WORLD. HOWEVER, PAUL IS NOT CONCERNED WITH THE TIME BEFORE NOAH. HE IS CONCERNED WITH THE PRESENT TIME. HOWEVER, HE USES THIS INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WHAT WENT WRONG THEN IS WHAT IS GOING WRONG NOW, A POINT HE MAKES IN CHAPTER 3 AFTER HE DEALS WITH THE FRACTURE IN THE ROMAN CHURCH (ROMANS 2.1-3.8).

### **ROMANS 3.9-20: WHAT IS WRONG NOW?**

WHAT WENT WRONG BEFORE NOAH WAS PEOPLE REJECTED GOD AND THEIR CREATED PURPOSE OF WORSHIP. ACCORDING TO PAUL, WHAT WENT WRONG THEN IS WHAT IS GOING WRONG NOW. THE LAW (KNOWING WHAT IS RIGHT!) HAS GIVEN THE JEWS NO ADVANTAGE OVER THE GENTILES BECAUSE THE REALITY IS ALL PEOPLE CONTINUE TO REJECT WHO GOD IS. PAUL MAKES THIS POINT BY COLLECTING A SERIES OF VERSES FROM THE PSALMS, PROVERBS, ISAIAH, AND ECCLESIASTES.

PEOPLE DO NOT SEEK GOD OR ATTEMPT TO LIVE HIS LIFE (RIGHTEOUSNESS). THEY TURN AWAY AND FIND THAT IN SO DOING, LIFE BECOMES WORTHLESS. NO ONE SEEKS TO DO GOOD (GLORIFY GOD) BUT USE THE VOICES INTENDED FOR PRAISE FOR POISON AND THE BODIES MEANT FOR GLORY FOR HARM. THE REASON IS THAT NO ONE FEARS (WORSHIPS) GOD.

WITH THIS STARK STATEMENT OF HUMANITY, PAUL MOVES TO A NOTE OF HOPE (ROMANS 3.21-31). IT IS POSSIBLE, ONCE AGAIN, TO LIVE AS WE WERE CREATED TO LIVE. THIS IS POSSIBLE IN THE PERSON OF JESUS. HOWEVER, THE POINT WHICH NEEDS TO BE GRASPED BY THE ROMAN CHURCH IS THAT NOT ONE OF THEM IS BETTER THAN THE OTHER. EVERY PERSON FALLS SHORT OF THEIR INTENDED PURPOSE OF GLORIFYING GOD (ROMANS 3.23).

### **REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:**

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD? I CAN'T COUNT HOW MANY TIMES I HAVE MUTTERED THIS PHRASE OR SOMETHING LIKE IT. I FIND THAT I TYPICALLY TALK LIKE THIS WHEN I TURN ON THE NEWS OR OPEN UP THE NEWSPAPER. I FIND MYSELF MUTTERING, "WHAT IS WRONG WITH PEOPLE?" I SUPPOSE I COULD RIGHTFULLY SAY THIS OF MYSELF, AND AT LEAST ONCE A DAY DO. WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME? EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE BROKEN. NOTHING SEEMS TO BE RIGHT. PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE WITH THEIR WORDS, WITH THEIR BODIES AND WE CELEBRATE IT. REALLY!?! PEOPLE GO HUNGRY THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN, AND WE IGNORE IT. WHAT IS THAT ABOUT? PEOPLE DESTROY THEIR BODIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS DOING WHAT FEELS GOOD. HOW DOES IT FEEL GOOD TO DESTROY YOURSELF? THESE AND SO MANY OTHER THINGS CANNOT BE THE WAY THINGS ARE MEANT TO BE, BUT IT SEEMS THAT THIS IS THE WAY IT IS, THE WAY IT WILL ALWAYS BE. HOWEVER, THE GOSPEL REMINDS ME THAT IT WAS NOT MEANT TO BE THIS WAY

AND WHY IT IS OFF KILTER. THE GOSPEL REMINDS ME THAT WE WERE MADE TO GLORIFY GOD. ALL OF CREATION POINTS TO THIS REALITY, BUT WE REJECT REALITY. IT FEELS SOMEWHAT BENEATH US TO HONOR AND GLORIFY GOD, TO LIVE FOR SOMEONE, ANYONE OTHER THAN OURSELVES. WHEN WE REFUSE THE VERY ONE WHO MADE US AND HIS PURPOSE FOR US, GOD REFUSES US. IT IS CALLED WRATH. HE REFUSES TO GUIDE OR PROTECT US BUT HANDS US OVER TO OURSELVES, AND WE DESTROY OURSELVES. I HAVE EXPERIENCED THIS TIME AND AGAIN IN MY LIFE. WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD? I AM. SO, WHAT IS THE SOLUTION? FOR THAT, WE CONTINUE TO LOOK TO THE GOSPEL.

### **REAL LIFE WITH YOU:**

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD? IT DOESN'T TAKE A ROCKET SCIENTIST TO SEE THAT THINGS ARE NOT AS THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE. SO MUCH VIOLENCE, SUFFERING, HATRED, SHAME, AND DESTRUCTION. LIFE IN THE RAW IS ANYTHING BUT BEAUTIFUL, AND THERE IS NO ESCAPING IT. THE VIOLENCE AND SUFFERING FOLLOW US, BREACHING EVEN THE MOST STALWART DEFENSES. SO WHAT IS WRONG? IS IT WRONG? IF IT ISN'T, LIFE IS PRETTY HOLLOW. THE GOSPEL HELPS US ANSWER THIS PRESSING QUESTION ABOUT OUR WORLD. IT REMINDS US THAT WE WERE MADE TO WORSHIP, ALL OF CREATION MADE TO DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD. WHAT WENT WRONG IS US. WE DECIDED THAT IT WAS BETTER TO BE OUR OWN GOD, ONLY IT DIDN'T WORK SO WELL FOR US. WE WERE MADE TO WORSHIP, NOT BE OBJECTS OF SELF-WORSHIP. SO, WE EXCHANGE OUR WORSHIP OF GOD FOR THE WORSHIP OF HIS CREATION AND EXPERIENCE GOD'S WRATH, HIS RESPONSE. SIMPLY PUT, GOD ALLOWS US TO GO OUR OWN WAY AND WE DESTROY OURSELVES, EXCHANGING GLORY FOR DESTRUCTION. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD? WE ARE. WHAT IS THE SOLUTION? THE GOSPEL PROVIDES THAT TOO, BUT LET'S PAUSE BEFORE WE GET THERE. THIS WEEK, TAKE SOME TIME TO SIT WITH THE IDEA THAT PERHAPS WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD IS US. THE WORLD IS OUT OF SORTS BECAUSE WE ARE OUT OF SORTS. WE HAVE REJECTED OUR CREATIVE PURPOSE AND CREATOR. CONSIDER TAKING TIME TO ADMIT THIS TO GOD, SOMETHING CALLED CONFESSION. YOU MIGHT TAKE SOME TIME TO CONFESS THE VARIOUS WAYS YOU REJECT HIM AND HIS PURPOSE FOR YOU, NOT AS AN EXERCISE TO INDUCE SHAME BUT AS AN EFFORT TO BRING OUT HIDDEN THINGS SO THEY MIGHT BE DEALT WITH, AND THEY CAN BE DEALT WITH. THIS IS THE HOPE WE HAVE IN THE GOSPEL.



SENIOR  
PASTOR  
**BLAKE**  
SHIPP

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