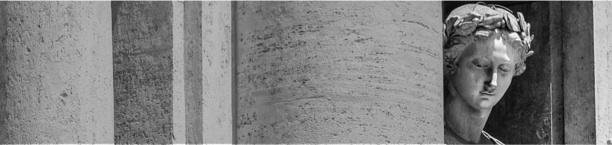
How would you treat a college applicant who does not meet your entrance requirements on any level? This applicant has already flunked out of college once and has a cumulative GPA of 1.5. Would you accept this applicant and award them grants and scholarships as if the one applying was a straight-A student who possessed a demonstrative academic capacity to "rise above the rest"? Well, in this case the college chose to accept the applicant – *me!*

Not only was this a lesson in God's love and grace it gave me insight into the essential unity of the Church. Every college student community shares this in common-- they were each accepted. Acceptance levels the ground. All are equally accepted. Once accepted, your prior GPA, previous school, and preceding accomplishments will no longer define you. Acceptance "resets" your life. Life is not about who you were, it is about who you are and who you will be. This drama will be lived out among those who are as "accepted" as you!

Paul has a challenge before him. He wants to mend a division among the Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome. This division, if left unaddressed, threatens the life and mission of the Church in Rome. How do you mend a divided church? You mend a divided church by reminding them that both Jews and Gentiles share a common lineage, a common grace, and a common acceptance. There are no insiders and there are no outsiders. Jews do not enjoy a "greater grace" because of their bloodline and Gentiles do not enjoy a "greater grace" because God is judging Israel. If you are "saved", you are saved solely by God's grace through faith in God, "the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God." (Romans 4.25).  This is true for all people: Jew and Gentile, the short and the tall, the smart and the dumb, the rich and the poor, the fast and the slow, the young and the old… This is true for all people, in all places, in all languages, for all time!



LifeGroup

Resource Guide

# for the week of 28 September: RUINED by faith

God's acceptance -- there is no better foundation for experiencing relationships (friendship, family, LifeGroups) than our common experience of being accepted by God through Jesus Christ!

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

Mark

*You are accepted. never confuse your perception of yourself with the mystery that you really are accepted.*

on Paul’s letter to the Romans…

*– Brennan Manning, The Ragamuffin Gospel*

Getting to know one another better ...

There are 2 kinds of people in the world. Those who love watching NFL games and those who couldn't care less! Which are you and why? If you get no joy in watching the NFL (Go Chargers!) what is your favorite thing to watch on TV?

# Reviewing Romans 4…

Read Romans 4. What words/ideas catch your attention? Why?

Read Genesis 15. You cannot begin to understand this chapter without being familiar with this chapter. What does God promise Abraham?

What does it mean for God to "credit/reckon it to him as righteousness"? (Genesis 15.6) What is being “credited/reckoned”?!

What do you think is Paul's main point in writing about Abraham? How might referring to Abraham help mend the division of believers in Rome?

Read Romans 4.16-25. Do you think faith is a "work" and "righteousness" a reward for this work? Why or why not?

Read Romans 4.18-19. This is a reference to Genesis 15.5… What does it mean for faith to "hope against hope”?

How does God’s relationship with Abraham help you understand His workings in your life?

# Reflecting on Romans 4 together…

Jews and Moslems claim to be sons of Abraham but not many Christians make much of this identification that is a big deal for Paul. Why does God want us to see ourselves as children of Abraham?

Paul says that neither circumcision, good works, or keeping the Law of the Torah will make us righteous before God. What are customs, religious/spiritual habits or practices, in our culture today, that might give us a false assurance of righteousness?

Last Sunday, Mark taught the "faith" Paul describes in Romans 4 has 3 characteristics: it is life-changing, life-giving, and life-saving. How did you/do you think about "faith"? How does our understanding of "faith" contribute to our relationships and experience of community as a LifeGroup?

Read Romans 4.17. Paul describes a Promise-Keeping God as the One who "gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist." What might this mean for your life?  What promise(s) are you waiting for God to fulfill in your life?

Are you willing to risk disappointment in order to cry out to God to give life to the "dead things" in your life? Or to create in your midst what does not yet exist? Why or why not?

If the foundation of our relationships, as believers, is our common acceptance in Christ, how do we express acceptance without abandoning expectations and accountability?

My prayer requests (think of what you want to share in advance)

# Highlighting...

**Sign up for HER Significance: An All Day Women's Retreat – Oct 4** Doesn't a day off sound amazing? This will be a day for you to press pause and slow down so that you can connect with others and be refreshed. Register online at www.faithsandiego.org.

**Register now for the Men’s Retreat**Oct 17-19 @ Camp Cedar Crest**.** This year’s theme is *Forge: Men of Honor.* Men, go online to [www.southwestfoursquare.org](http://www.southwestfoursquare.org) to register.

# Praying for my group...

**Children’s Ministry Musical Rehearsals**Sundays, Oct 5-26, 12noon-1:30pm   
in the Children’s Center

**Inspired Hands –** Oct 18, 9am-2pm   
in the Children’s Center

**Third Sunday Prayer –** Oct 19, 6:30pm-8pm in the Worship Center

**FORGE Men’s Retreat**Oct 17-19 at Camp Cedar Crest

**Pumpkin Fest –** Oct 25 11am-2pm