Discussion Guide | Romans 4:16-25| How Faith Works: Against Hope, In Hope

Gathering Question:
What is one way you've seen God at work in your life this week?

Gathering Prayer
Father, by Your Spirit, would you guide us into all truth. Help us to hear and be attentive to Your voice as we work through this study. In the name of Jesus, Your Son, we pray. Amen.

Opening Questions
- What stood out to you in the sermon?
- What insights did you gain?
- What questions did it raise?

Read Romans 4:16-25

Faith: Rational or Irrational?
- When you hear the phrase "against hope, in hope," what do you think Paul is describing? Why does Abraham's situation seem so hopeless?
- Paul says Abraham "faced the fact" that his body was as good as dead and that Sarah's womb was also dead. What does this tell us about the relationship between faith and facing reality?
- Why do you think people sometimes assume that faith requires Christians to shut off their brains or ignore evidence?
- Other words for faith can also be described as belief, trust, reliance, confidence, and dependence. Which of these words helps you understand faith most clearly? Why?

The Reason for Faith: God's Power.
- Romans 4:17 describes God as the one "who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not." What do these two descriptions teach us about God's power?
- How does believing God is the Creator change how you think about what is possible in your life and in the world?
- The resurrection of Jesus shows that death is not too much for God. How does the resurrection shape Christian hope in the face of suffering, loss, and death?

The Reason for Faith: God's Faithfulness.
- Creation and resurrection testify not only to God's power, but also to his character. What do we learn about God's character from creation and resurrection?
- Reflect on this quote from John Stott:
  "There is a fundamental correspondence between our faith and God's faithfulness, so much so that Jesus' command, 'Have faith in God,' has sometimes been roughly but justly paraphrased, 'Reckon on the faithfulness of God.' For whether people keep their promises or not depends not only on their power, but also on their will to do so. Put

differently, behind all promises lies the character of the person who makes them. … Faith always looks at the problems in the light of the promises."

What does this mean in practical terms? How is this kind of faith different from ignoring problems or pretending everything is fine?

Hope

- What is the difference between trusting God to keep his promises and expecting God to give you the outcome you want?
- When you feel discouraged or begin to doubt, where do you instinctively look for reassurance? Do you tend to rely on yourself, seek approval from others, or turn to God?
- Return to Paul's phrase: "Against hope, Abraham in hope believed." What would it look like for you to live with that kind of hope this week—not by denying your circumstances, but by trusting the power and faithfulness of God?

Closing Prayer