*divING DEEPER* **Discussion Guide**

**TEXT SUMMARY**

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This week’s sermon begins our series on Paul’s letter to the church in Rome. The text is the first seven verses of the letter, the salutation and greeting.

Paul had never met the believers in Rome, despite the fact that he had often intended to come to Rome (1:13). His intention was to come to Rome, minister to the believers there, and recruit their help to send him on as far as Spain (15:24).

**INTRODUCTION** (observation):

The openings of Paul’s letter follow a familiar pattern, one that was often used in formal letters in the Roman world. But don’t let the familiarity lull you to sleep. Paul, as always, packs a boatload of theology into his salutations, especially his salutation and greetings to the church in Rome.

*1. What does Paul tell us about* ***the gospel*** *in these opening words?*

*2. What does Paul tell us about* ***Jesus****? (look at several verses for this)*

*3. What does Paul say about his readers,* ***the believers in Rome****?*

**DISCUSSION** (interpretation):

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Drill down on the several things Paul tells us about Jesus in just his opening words. Remember that Paul had at one time vehemently opposed the Jesus movement. He now sees Jesus in a whole new light, and he wastes no time in laying out his deep new understanding of Jesus of Nazareth, the One in whom all God’s purposes coalesce.

*Why was it important for Paul to point out several key points about Jesus at the very beginning of his letter?*

*1. …that Jesus was “descended from David according to the flesh”?*

*2. …that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead”?*

*3. …that Jesus was the one by whom Paul had “received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations”?*

**SO WHAT?** (application)

We’re going to see a great deal of this tightly-woven theological language in Paul’s letter. As long as it is, Paul’s letter to Rome will call on us to slow down and examine it a phrase at a time.

For now, let’s consider the larger questions:

*1. Why does it matter that we understand who Jesus is?*

*2. Why does it matter that we understand what the gospel is?*