



Growth Group Discussion Questions

8. How to be righteous like Abraham

Read Romans 4:1-25

1. Before we begin this study it may be helpful to clarify some terms. ***In your own words, explain what the following things mean: justified; righteous; God's promise to Abraham (Hint: see Genesis 12:1-3)***
2. ***Why would anyone want to be righteous like Abraham – in other words, what's the great blessing of God declaring you righteous? Hint: see verse 13.***
3. Look closely at verse 1-5. ***Most people think that if I do righteous deeds I will be righteous. How is this different to Abraham? What's so wrong about trying to be righteous by doing righteous deeds? So how was Abraham righteous?***
4. According to verse 6-8 it wasn't just Abraham who was righteous by faith. ***What does David teach us about being counted righteous by God?***
5. But what about the Jewish people? Weren't they righteous because they belonged to God's special people? ***How does Paul answer this objection in verse 9-12? Who are Abraham's children really?***
6. "I think I'm righteous – sure, not perfect – but I am righteous because I keep God's law especially the 10 commandments." ***Using Paul's argument in verse 13-15 how would you answer someone who thinks like this?***
7. So Abraham is not righteous by good deeds, by being part of Israel physically, nor by keeping God's law. ***How then is Abraham righteous? What verse(s) in the passage say this? Why does God accept faith as the only way to be righteous in His sight? Hint: see verse 16 and 20.***
8. ***What in particular did Abraham believe about God according to verse 17? How does this make us trust God? How does this give us comfort during the coronavirus pandemic?***
9. Abraham believed God's promise that through his own son he would become the father of many nations – even when it looked so unlikely to come true. We have to have the same faith as Abraham if we are to be righteous like Abraham was. However, God has not promised that we will be the father of many nations like He promised Abraham. ***What then must we believe if we are to be counted righteous by God according to verse 23-25?***

Leaders Notes

1. Clarifying some of these terms up front will help us better understand the argument in Romans 4. Justified simply means that God declares you righteous. The most important thing to any human being is that they will get a favourable verdict from God on the great day of Judgement. Justified is that favourable verdict. (The argument of Romans 3 is that God justifies us even though we are unrighteous and He is righteous to do that because of Jesus – but, as I said, that's Romans 3.) Righteous means 'right with God'. In other words, God accepts you, God endorses you, God approves of you. So, justified is when God pronounces a judgement on you that you are in fact righteous. The background to Romans 4 is that God promised Abraham that God would make him into a great nation and through his descendent all the nations of the world would be blessed.
2. Actually, Romans chapter 5 lists the many blessings that come with being righteous before God, but even here in this chapter we are told that if we are righteous with God, we are Abrahams's children, and if his children, we will inherit the whole world!
3. Verse 1-5 make it so clear that Abraham was NOT righteous by doing good deeds. (works = good deeds). The reason this thinking is so bad is because it tries to turn God into an Employer or Someone who owes you wages. Religion tries to appear humble but actually the idea that we can earn God's approval is very arrogant. As if God will ever be in a position that He has no choice but to give us reward because we deserve it! Abraham was righteous because He trusted in God's promise.
4. The same thing. David sings about the great joy of God counting you righteous apart from good deeds.
5. Paul (himself a circumcised Jewish person), shows us that Abraham was righteous before he was circumcised. Circumcision is the sign that you belonged to God's people. But, as we saw in Romans 2:28-29 physical things don't make you a real Jew. You have to be 'circumcised internally, on the heart' before you are a true Jew. Abraham was righteous before he was circumcised. This shows that being physically part of God's people does not make you righteous. So, the real children of Abraham are only those who have the faith of Abraham, both Jews and Gentiles. Unbelieving Jews and unbelieving gentiles are not Abraham's children.
6. All the law does is show us how sinful we are. We were sinful before the law came. True. But the law comes along and exposes our sin and makes us even more guilty. Besides, if we could keep God's law we wouldn't need God to make any promises nor would we need to trust Him.
7. Abraham is righteous by faith. By believing in God's promise. This has been repeated over and over throughout the passage. Faith in God's promise is the only way to honour God. It is honouring to God because it rests on grace (verse 16) and therefore gives all the glory to God (verse 20). If we trust in anything other than God, even our own ability, we dishonour God and steal glory from Him.
8. Abraham believed that God was able to raise the dead and that God has the power to bring into existence things that did not exist. This makes us trust God no matter what – even if we die. Abraham lost all faith in his own ability (18-20) and even in the face of death when he thought he was going to kill his son Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice. So, when all hope looked lost (verse 18) Abraham did not waiver in his faith because after all, God can do anything – even raise the dead. This is what real faith does. Real faith does not insist on seeing. It believes even when it looks absolutely impossible that God can keep His promises. This gives us the greatest comfort during the coronavirus. Even if we do get sick and even if some of us die, our faith in God is unshaken because He is the God who raises the dead. Nothing can ever, ever stop God from keeping His promises. Only when you have that kind of faith, Abraham's kind of faith, are you righteous before God like Abraham was.

9. We must believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we trust in God who raised Jesus from the dead, and when we believe that Jesus died for our sins and that He was raised from the dead to make us completely righteous – when we trust in that alone, God will count us as righteous. Our faith is the same as Abrahams even though the content of that faith is different. When Abraham took Isaac up Mount Moriah to sacrifice him, he only trusted that God will come through, He did not know how. Abraham only knew that God will provide, some how or other. However, we look back and see that God has provided! Up the same mountain, God sacrificed His only beloved son to deal once and for all with our sins. And God raised Him up on the third day so that we can be righteous before Him.