

“Getting It Right” (Justification)
(Study 2 of “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” Series)

Opening Questions (10 Minutes)

1. If someone had to live your life for a day, what are one or two rules they would need to keep in order to be you for the day?
 - Give an example or 2 from your life or you can use Hope CG Pastor Sid Druen (e.g. you need laugh very loudly and run about 5 minutes late to everything)
2. How do you feel when you *keep* a rule for yourself that you’re proud of?
 - If you’re having trouble thinking of a rule you have for yourself like this, think about something that other people do that makes you respect them.
 - Here are some examples, if needed: being on time, texting people back, saying “please” or “thank you,” not giving one word answers, hard work, yes means yes
3. How do you feel when you *break* a rule for yourself that you’re proud of?
 - How do you feel about someone when he or she breaks this rule?

Let’s take a look at how the Bible understands the power of rule-keeping (“justified by works”) and how God looks at rule-breakers (“the ungodly”)...

Scripture Study (10-15 Minutes)

Read Romans Chapters 4 and 5, verses 1-8 and 1-2 (first in the ESV, then the NLT)

1. Be quiet for 30 seconds. Think or write. Now what are your first impressions?
 - What’s your emotional, gut-reaction?
 - Ask a question you have (or can think of).
 - Volunteer a thought or comment- about a verse or the whole passage.
2. What is the harm of a rule-keeping mentality?
(Rule-keeping is justified by works (ESV) and acceptance by good deeds (NLT), e.g. 4:2)
 - What rules do you keep to feel “alright” with God?
 - How does *keeping* these rules lead to pride or boasting in your life?
 - How has *breaking* these rules led to despair or shame in your story?
3. How does being *counted* alright (“justification by faith) lead to peace and joy?
(Counted alright is “justified by faith” (ESV) and “right in God’s sight” (NLT), e.g. 5:1)
 - How is being counted alright different from rule-keeping for acceptance?
 - If life’s joys and peace are gifts from God, how does that change our response to *keeping* your life rules?
 - If life’s joys and peace are gifts from God, how does that change our response to *breaking* your life rules?

Scripture Passages (Paul’s Letter to the Romans 4:1-8; 5:1-2)

Romans, Chapter 4 and 5- English Standard Version Translation (ESV) 4:1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

7 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans, Chapter 4 and 5- New Living Translation (NLT) 4:1 Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? 2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. 3 For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." 4 When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. 5 But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners. 6 David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it: 7 "Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight. 8 Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of sin.

5:1 Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. 2 Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

Group Discussion (25 minutes)

Can I get one or more volunteers to read the below quote out loud?

“To answer the question “Does God love me?” the reflex response of many is to ask themselves another question: “Well, let’s see. How am I doing?” Whether the person is in a loving relationship with God is determined by how that person is “doing” in terms of meeting God’s standards [or our own standards for ourselves]

Such a person confuses our “who” and our “do.” Who we are in relationship with God is not determined by what we do; rather, what we do is determined by who we are. [...]

The command to imitate God (that is, to be holy as He is holy) is based on the family relationship with Him that His grace has already established. In essence Paul says, “Make who you are determine what you do.” He does not say, “Remember what you do determines who you are”

The identity God’s grace establishes determines the behavior we imitate. Who we are establishes what we do — and not the reverse!

God’s grace motivates our behavior; our behavior does not manufacture His grace. We live in response to His love, not to qualify for it or to make Him produce it. Our obedience is a prayer of thanksgiving, not a bribe for blessings. [...]

What we do must not determine who we are, but who we are by God’s grace should determine what we do.” (From an interview with Bryan Chapell)

1. What are your first impressions?
 - What strikes you about this quote?
 - How do you personally relate to it?
2. What does Chapell mean by “make who you are [our ‘who’] determine what you do [‘our do’]”?
3. According to Chapell (and the Book of Romans), how does believing God loves us “as we are” change the “why” of loving God and others?
 - Why does gratitude feel different than bribery? Or obligation?

- How does God caring more about *who you are* than *what you do* make you want to spend more time with him?
4. How does God loving who we are in Jesus change how we view *ourselves* in our relationships?
- Do you evaluate other people's love for you by how you keep your or their standards? How so?
 - Do you have a relationship where the standards don't matter? If so, how does that relationship feel different?
5. How does God loving who we are in Jesus change how we view *others* in our relationships?
- Do you evaluate your love for other people by how they keep your or their standards? How so?
 - How does the way God loves us help us feel different about other people?
 - For instance, how does God's love...make us less angry and less demanding? Help us make fewer rules and keep score less?

Group Prayer (*15 Minutes*)

Ideas for Communal & Personal Prayer (Share for yourself, pray for person to your right)

1. What's one *burden* you need prayer for- for relief or healing?
2. What's one *sin* you'd like to (re-)confess to God?
3. What's one *deed* in your life or community you'd like to praise God for?
4. What's one *desire* stirred by this time together with God that you can pray for?