

Genesis/Counted Righteous/Chapter 15:1-6

MAIN POINT

The only way I can be right with God is by placing my faith in him. I need to trust the Lord with every aspect of my life.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: What determines whether we believe a promise made to us?

Many event-filled years have passed since God first made His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. Abraham almost lost his wife to Pharaoh and the promised land to his nephew Lot. He almost lost his life and all his possessions in a war with four kings. He still had no child, and his current heir was a Syrian slave. Now we see Abram start to doubt the promises of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What insight, lesson, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**
- 2. Why did Abraham doubt he would ever become a father? Have you found yourself in a similar situation of doubt?**

While grateful for God's promises, Abraham wondered about the value of the reward if he had no son to give it to. Abraham had entered Canaan at age seventy-five with Sarah, who was then sixty-five years old. Several years had passed and the couple remained childless. Abraham may have wondered if he would ever have a son. It seems as though Abraham had little hope God would actually fulfill His promises. Fear and worry were starting to creep into his heart.

Many of us have probably found ourselves in a similar situation where we have been waiting for a promise from God and after a while start to doubt God. Challenge the group to think through their own life compared to Abram.

3. What reasons or personal experiences did Abram have to believe God's promise? What reasons or personal experiences do you have in your life to believe in God's promises?

Abraham had seen God keep His promises over and over again all through his life after God first called Him out of Ur. God had already proven He is big enough to keep all his promises and that he is the one true creator the world.

Deuteronomy 7:8-9 (NIV)

⁸ But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Challenge the group to think through their own personal experiences and what God has said in His word about keeping His promises.

4. How did God respond to Abraham's doubts (vs. 4-5)? Why did God ask Abraham to do this?

To illustrate and emphasize His promise of numerous descendants, God invited Abram to gaze at the night sky and try to count the stars. For those who live in the city, the beauty of the night sky has to compete with artificial lights. As a result, we probably do not see as many stars as Abram did. Imagine standing in a field with no artificial lights to interfere. So many stars fill the sky that counting them is impossible. Remember back to the photo from Sunday.

God knows the culture and upbringing of Abram and that he used to be a worshiper of the moon god. God knew that Abraham had an extensive understanding and knowledge of the stars and with asking Abram to count the stars would know that it would be impossible.

5. What does God's kind of response tell us about His power, character and grace?

God was so patient with Abraham. He was not sharp or quick to reprimand Abram because he was doubting and not trusting in the promises that God had made to him up till that point. God is portraying this picture of a loving gracious father that is gentle with his children during the stumbling's and helping walk with them. God patiently gave Abraham another example for Abram to look at to remind himself of the promises for God and gave Abram even more confirmation of the promises.

When we have doubts about who God is, we can look back at stories from scripture like this one, the other verses that were quotes in this study, and many others to remind ourselves about our great God.

Psalm 147:5 (NIV)

⁵ Great is our Lord and mighty in power;
his understanding has no limit.

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6. How does knowing that God always remains faithful to His Word help us through seasons when our faith is weak?

Abram responded to God's promises by believing Him. This verse is the first appearance of the word "believed" in the Bible, but certainly not the first occurrence of Abram's faith. Abram's belief already had led him to leave his father and move to a land he had never seen. His belief had led him to worship God regularly and to allow Lot to choose the best land because Abram believed God would fulfill His promises. Although he could not understand how God could or would fulfill His promises, Abram trusted God. Trusting what God said after looking at the stars is what helped Abraham through this season of doubt.

This same idea is true for us today. When we look back at scripture we can be reminded of God's promises and will help us walk through the difficult seasons of life.

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)

⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

2 Timothy 2:13 (NIV)

¹³ if we are faithless,
he remains faithful,
for he cannot disown himself.

7. What are some ways that your heart is like Abram's heart? In what ways are you struggling to believe God's promises?

Saving faith is not always perfect faith. Abram himself cried out to God a couple of verses later, immediately after God had just reminded him of the promise He would keep. After everything, Abram's heart was still saying, "Yes, I believe You, but how will I know that You are going to come through?" God credits our faith in Him to us as righteousness, but we also have fears, doubts, and struggles. Scripture constantly reminds us of this type of faith:

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Encourage your group to compare their own walk of faith to that of Abram's and be honest not just about the times that they do believe in God's promises but also about the times that they doubt and struggle as well.

8. Read Romans 4:18-25. How does belief in God's promise result in our righteousness?

Abraham was persuaded by God's promises and by His power to bring them into existence. This kind of faith takes on the character of obedience. This kind of faith in God alone is credited for righteousness.

Paul picks up on this concept in Romans 4:18-25, explaining to Romans that from the earliest days, God has always credited righteousness to His covenant people through faith. Abraham was convinced of God's ability to do as He promised. God has the integrity and

power to be trusted with salvation. As Abraham was completely persuaded God can be trusted, so must we trust God to take care of us in salvation and in all other matters of life.

Conclusion

While grateful for God's promises, Abraham wondered about the value of the reward if he had no son to give it to. Abraham had entered Canaan at age seventy-five with Sarah, who was then sixty-five years old. Several years had passed and the couple remained childless. Abraham may have wondered if he would ever have a son. It seems as though Abraham had little hope God would actually fulfill His promises. Fear and worry were starting to creep into his heart. Abraham was persuaded by God's promises and by His power to bring them into existence. This kind of faith takes on the character of obedience. This kind of faith in God alone is credited for righteousness.

PRAYER

Spend some time thanking God for His promises and His faithfulness to always uphold His end of the covenant, even when we are unfaithful. Take time to thank God for sending Jesus and declaring us His righteous children.



FURTHER STUDY



2 Timothy 1:12 (NIV)

¹² That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

Mark 9:23-25 (NIV)

²³ "If you can't?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

²⁴ Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"



A man will be justified by faith when, excluded from righteousness of works, he by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, and clothed in it, appears in the sight of God not as a sinner, but as righteous.

John Calvin

The only works of righteousness that serve to justify a sinner are the works of Christ.

R. C. Sproul

Additional Resources

Devotionals-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/faith-and-righteousness/>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/abrams-question/>

Articles –

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/how-is-faith-not-a-work/>

Sermon-

<https://www.tvresources.net/resource-library/sermons/faith/>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/god-credits-faith-as-righteousness>