

Justification and the Law



Collegiate Quarterly

Teacher's Guide

Surveying the Source

Gen. 15:6; 2 Samuel 11, 12; Rom. 3:20–23, 31; 4:1–17; Gal. 3:19; 1 John 3:4.

Plotting the Course

The students will:

- ▶ Recognize their inability to achieve righteousness independent of God.
- ▶ Understand the relationship between God's role and ours in the plan of

redemption.

- ▶ Accept God's offer of pardon and transformation.

Preparing to Lead

Motion pictures have portrayed the life stories of not one, but two of my congregation's most famous [or should I say "infamous"] members. Noted for their sex crimes and multiple murders, they terrorized two different cities in Washington State (U.S.A.) for years. While incarcerated, they met Jesus Christ and accepted Him as their Savior. The irony

cannot be missed. While they were "free" they were imprisoned by their evil passions and desires. They are now imprisoned for life but set free by Jesus' sacrifice for them. Most of us have never violated human standards to the extent that these two people have. Yet, we too, desperately need Christ's forgiveness.

Materials

lap top computer; stop-watch or timing device; newspapers, news magazines; flipchart or marker-board with markers; song-books or hymnals; notepads and pens

Getting Started

A. Distribute several news sources (daily newspapers, news magazines, and so forth) and/or invite members to peruse the Internet on their laptops if WI-FI is available in your classroom. Ask members to identify and rank the crimes they find in their search. After allowing time for research, have class members share their findings and rank the crimes from worst to the least. Remember that a crime

may not be a legally criminalized behavior but any act of wrongdoing.

Read James 2:10–14. Discuss whether or not those who commit the lesser crimes according to your list are more saved or savable than those who committed the greater crimes.

B. Use the reproducible activity on page 35. Instructions are given on the sheet.

Delving Into the Word

A. Divide into two debate teams. The statement to be debated is: According to the Bible, human works play no role in God's plan of *justification*. The "Paul" team takes as its motto Romans 3:28:

"We hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law" (NRSV)," and Romans 4:5: "But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reck-

oned as righteousness” (NRSV).

The “James” team upholds the dictum of James 2:14, 24: “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? . . . You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone” (NRSV).

Designate a timekeeper to monitor predetermined time limits to insure that “Paul” and “James” have equal time. In phase one, Paul will present first, then James. In phase two, Paul will rebut James, and vice versa. During phase three, both teams will present final summations. Encourage members to derive their reasoning from biblical texts.

B. Say: “Contemporary culture defines success, self-worth, and hence righteousness in terms of what a person does. A common introductory question mirrors this fact: ‘What do you *do* for a living?’

“The inference is clear: You are what you *do*. To ask, ‘Who *are* you?’ might be

perceived as invasive or rude, and would likely be received with a puzzled face, if not anger. However, without minimizing the importance of what we do, the Bible states that our value transcends our accomplishments. We *are* more than the sum of our actions.”

Review the verses in the Logos and Evidence articles for this week, listing them on a sheet of paper or a flipchart.

Discuss: ●What we learn about trust from Abraham’s example. ●What we learn about action from him. ●When discussing David, talk about how failure (negative action) affects our relationship with God. ●What role does faith have in restoring us from failure? ●When reading James, discuss the apparent conflict between Paul and James regarding the role of action (works) in the plan of salvation. Channel the flow of the discussion toward this question: How would faith change my life if I trusted God without reservation?

Discussing the Ideas

1. How can you learn to trust God when everyone else in your life has let you down?
2. How can you overcome the instinct to tie your self-worth to your job or to what you do?
3. How does a strong sense of belonging to God’s family compel you to loving action?
4. How can you avoid the temptation to see others for what they do rather than for

how much God loves them?

5. How can you keep your failures from discouraging you to hold on to God?

6. How do Paul and James complement each other rather than contradict each other?

7. What are you doing to share the good news of completeness through faith with your friends, neighbors, relatives, and co-workers?

Closing the Activity

Sing one or more of the following hymns or other songs of your choosing that focus on the themes of this lesson (our unworthiness, the blessings of trusting God, the transforming work of God in our lives, His forgiveness). Suggested titles include: “My Hope Is Built on

Nothing Less,” “Come Thou Fount” (popularized by David Crowder), and Chris Tomlin’s, “The Wonderful Cross.”

Break into smaller groups of 2 to 4 and pray for one another, asking God to give each one the experience of trusting Him.

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INSTRUCTIONS: Divide into teams. The object is for the *sending* member of each team to elicit the proper word from their *receiving* fellow team members by giving word clues. However, *senders* may not use part of a word itself. For example, “unrighteousness” may not be used as a clue for “righteousness.” Neither may senders use any of the five words in brackets. When a *receiving* team successfully responds, the *sender* proceeds to the next word on the list.

1. **FAITH** [trust, belief, Abraham, blind, hope]

2. **RECONCILIATION** [family, fight, marriage, divorce, children]

3. **JUSTIFICATION** [sanctification, judge, glorification, court, condemnation]

4. **PROMISE** [ring, marriage, keep, vow, pledge]

5. **PARDON** [parole, forgive, excuse, amnesty, punish]

6. **JUSTICE** [judge, peace, fair, reward, lawful]

7. **FORGIVENESS** [pardon, debt, penalty, punishment, demand]

8. **LAW** [officer, order, code, commandments, police]

9. **GOSPEL** [news, music, tidings, preach, Jesus]