



Lesson Overview

Week of July 18

1 Life Need:

Discuss the things we often stand for.

2 Bible Learning:

Study how Paul described Abraham's faith.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Poster and Reproducible Sheet—The Romans Road to Life

3 Bible Application:

Explore how we can be righteous through our faith.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Reproducible sheet—True Righteousness
 ■ Words to the children's song, 'Father Abraham'

4 Life Response:

Develop a faith like Abraham's.

Church/Home Theme:
 We are the Body of Christ.

Lesson Focus:

Through faith, stand before God like Abraham.

Lesson Scripture:

Romans 4:1-12

Faith of Abraham

Abraham and Righteousness—How does a Christian stand perfect and right before an almighty, holy, perfect God? We will all have a face to face meeting with God at some point. Should we present Him a list noting all our good, earthly deeds? Is that what Abraham did? Scripture said the patriarch was declared righteous by his faith, not by his good deeds. Abraham stands righteous in God's presence right now not because of all the good he performed in life. He's in good standing because God "credited [it] to him" (Rom. 4:3). "Credited" is a banking term, meaning to put to one's account. When a man works, he earns a salary. Money is placed in his account. But Abraham applied no works toward his salvation; he simply trusted God, and the Father attributed salvation to him because of his faith.

Saved by Grace through Faith—Whether Old or New Testament believers, both groups were saved by grace through faith. David is another excellent example like Abraham. Although a great leader and king, he committed murder and adultery. David did not experience God's goodness and favor because of his clean living. His salvation was freely given by God, not earned. As David said, and as Paul then quoted, "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit" (Ps. 32:1-2). Once God forgives a person's sins, that offense is no longer held against the individual. David speaks of the blessedness centered on what God places upon us, not on what we do for God.

God declared Abraham is in right standing before Abraham was circumcised. Therefore, his righteousness wasn't based on circumcision, but faith. If we are counted righteous by God because of faith, not because of circumcision (or any other ritual), then the blessedness mentioned in Psalm 32 and Romans 4 can be given to the uncircumcised Gentiles by faith.

Good News for Gentiles—Therefore, no one can say (as some did in Paul's day) that Gentiles must be circumcised before God can declare them righteous. Paul emphasized that circumcision of the heart, an inward change, is what matters to God. In Christ, because of His sacrifice, all believers are declared righteous. Like Abraham, even Gentiles can stand clean and upright before God.

As Your Students Arrive

On a board or sheet of newsprint, write, "What does it mean to stand for something?" and ask your students for

their definitions. “To stand” could mean to rise to a fixed position, a posture. A stand is also a point of view—for example, holding an opinion or a particular value. A stand is also an object, something sturdy that is used to hold or stabilize things. Tell them that this week our Scripture study will explore our resolve to stand for the Lord, to maintain unwavering faith in God.

Link to Last Week

Allow some time for sharing about times your students unashamedly shared their faith this past week in some way.

1 Life Need

Discuss the things we often stand for.

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Faith of Abraham

Have you heard anything, yet?” Sharonda asked her friend Dana.

Dana shifted in her recliner and watched her friend unpack the rest of her groceries. Sharonda had insisted on accompanying Dana to the store. Dana had been home since March with doctor orders of no moderate lifting and excessive standing due to her scoliosis, which had worsened severely in the last 10 years.

Dana’s career as a registered nurse had ended. Her job could not accommodate her medical condition, and she was about three years from retirement. Dana’s long-term disability at work was being “reviewed,” and the procedure for applying for government disability benefits was arduous and painstaking.

Still, Dana remained confident in God. She did not know the way through the twists and turns in this season of her life. Indeed, she had never known the way. Dana had trusted and followed Christ for 50 of her 64 years. She worked. She planned. She saved. But most of all, she put her trust in Christ.

“All of this would have me a little stressed out,” said Sharonda from the kitchen. “I mean, you work all of your life, and then you end up not knowing what’s going to happen with your job and your life.”

“I don’t know what exactly will happen,” said Dana. “None of us do. But in faith, I know where I stand and in whom I believe—and that’s the Lord.”

- 1. What are some things people stand for?**
- 2. How do we stand by faith?**
- 3. How do we develop an unwavering faith?**

LESSON FOCUS: Through faith, stand before God like Abraham.

Read the opening story in the student book, then ask your students to form small groups to discuss their answers to **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

For Question 1, people may stand for equal rights, or most importantly for God in whatever situation they face.

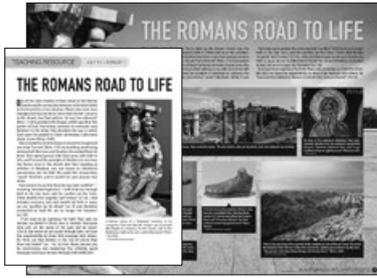
For Question 2, we stand by faith as we stand upon the promises of God and do not allow the winds to move us from our fixed position. We develop a faith that is non-negotiable, unwaveringly anchored in the Lord.

For Question 3, faith is developed by the continual hearing of God’s Word and trust is developed by recognizing His continual presence and promises. Abraham spoke with God often, through prayer, praise, and petition. It doesn’t mean that Abraham never feared or sinned, but his faith in God made him righteous in the sight of God.

How do we develop a faith like Abraham? Today’s lesson challenges every believer to develop an ever closer relationship with God.

2 Bible Learning

Study how Paul described Abraham's faith.



On the poster sheet, read the third paragraph, and on the poster note the photo of the Abraham icon.

ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD

Read Romans 4:1-3 and discuss these key ideas:

- Paul said in looking at works of righteousness, we should consider Abraham's life.
- If Abraham had been saved by the works of his life, Abraham could boast about those good works.
- However, it was the Lord who declared Abraham righteous.
- Paul said that because Abraham believed in the Lord by faith, it was attributed to him as righteousness, and quoted Genesis 15:6.
- Abraham's salvation was based on his belief that God would save him—not

BIBLE EXTRA

Imputed Righteousness

Abraham's faith resulted in a righteousness that was credited to him. This is known as the theological idea of "imputed righteousness." Jesus often highlighted the impossibility of attaining righteousness through human effort. In Matthew 5:20, He told His listeners that their righteousness had to surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees, who had devoted their lives to keeping the law. And so, the only way for someone to be wholly righteous in the eyes of God was for the Lord to impart, infuse, or impute Christ's righteousness through that person's faith in Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

on the basis of anything he actually did.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Paul did not deny that Abraham, the "forefather" (vs. 1) of the Jewish faith, had done good works. But Abraham was just like any other Jew—he would not be saved by any righteous works he had done.

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Abraham Believed God

Romans 4:1-3, KJV

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Romans 4:1-3, NIV

¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? ²If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

The church at Rome consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. In the first three chapters of his letter to the Romans, Paul established that neither group can attain righteousness with God through their own efforts—"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). This is the context in which Paul argued that Abraham's faith saved him.

Abraham's salvation was based on his belief that God would save him—not on the basis of anything he could actually do. So Abraham had nothing to boast about. A reconciled relationship with God requires untainted righteousness, which simply cannot be achieved through human efforts. This righteousness can only be "imputed," or infused to those who own up to their sins, then appeal to God's mercy for salvation. This is the saving faith displayed by Abraham. Paul quoted Genesis 15:6 to show that Abraham's righteousness was "credited" to him, not earned in any way. Paul's point is this: If Abraham could not save himself with his works, then you can't either.

4. Why would Abraham's righteous works not count for his salvation?

5. What resulted from Abraham's faith?



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 418-419 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

As a result of Abraham's faith, God credited the Lord's righteousness to the patriarch.

THE BLESSING OF FORGIVENESS

Read Romans 4:4-8 and these summary statements about the Scripture:

- We are saved by grace. There is nothing we can do, no works of a man's hand that have power to cleanse or redeem us.
- Salvation is a gift. You cannot earn a gift, so

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The Blessing of Forgiveness

Romans 4:4-8, KJV

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Romans 4:4-8, NIV

⁴Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. ⁵However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷"Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

⁸Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them."

A central focus of the Book of Romans is the concept of justification in relation to the salvation of souls. There are three theological aspects to salvation: *justification* is a one-time event that happens when a person experiences saving faith, so that the redeemed individual is seen as legally and spiritually "declared righteous" in the eyes of God. *Sanctification* is the ongoing process of becoming more like Christ throughout our earthly existence. *Glorification* is the one-time event that occurs at the moment of resurrection.

Fallen human nature wants to insist that we can accomplish justification on our own through our good works. Paul wanted to challenge this popular false belief by pointing out its logical flaws. If a person can earn salvation by his or her works, then it's not a gift. In this line of thinking, there's simply no need for God's grace or mercy—entrance into heaven is simply something owed to the individual.

your works also cannot earn you the gift of salvation.

BIBLE EXTRA

Righteousness to Spare

Jews believed that Abraham had so much righteousness in terms of good works that he had a surplus of merit. This merit was allegedly available to all of Abraham's descendants. Many Jews believed Abraham was a perfect example of a man justified by works. Paul fully agreed that Abraham was a righteous man and that, as such, he had something to boast about before people—but not before God.

BIBLE EXTRA

Forgiveness and Righteousness

In order for righteousness to be imputed to the follower of Christ, the unrighteousness, present in the heart of every human being, needs to first be forgiven by God. In this regard, forgiveness is always a necessary precursor to authentic reconciliation. King David often highlights this soul-freeing idea in his psalms, as he experiences the cleansing forgiveness of God—especially after owning up to his own willful disobedience, which often had dire consequences both for himself and for others.

Though David showed great respect for God's law, the king knew that simply keeping the law could not earn his salvation. In addition to the psalm quoted in Romans 4, David made several other comments that indicate he was desperately dependent upon God's grace.

• David said to God, "I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the human hands" (2 Sam. 24:14).

• "Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place. . . . The LORD is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one" (Ps. 28:2, 8).

• Faith is attributed as righteousness for those whose trust is not in their own works but in God.

• Righteousness isn't earned by works—it is received by grace through faith. Those who understand this truth and embrace it (by faith) are considered righteous.

• God restored David to a place of righteousness and honor with no remembrance of the former things.

• His transgressions were forgiven by God, and the Lord would never count those sins against David.

• Anyone who receives the salvation of God is blessed; for in that moment, every past failure, sin, and iniquity is wiped away as if it never happened.

• We become new; we are given a clean slate!

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

Paul said that workers' wages are not given to them as a gift but are rather because it is owed to them (vs. 4). If salvation can be attained by works, then it cannot be called the gift of God.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Paul quoted David's words in Psalm 32:1-2, showing the blessedness of one whose account has been credited with God's righteousness appropriated through faith, apart from works. Because of God's grace, such person's sins are covered, and the Lord will never hold their wrongdoing against them.

BIBLE EXTRA

The People of Israel and Circumcision

Circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham, which became a symbol of separation of the Israelites from their pagan neighbors. Newborn boys were normally circumcised on the eighth day after their birth. The ritual was a requirement for any Gentile male who wished to convert to Judaism. Being circumcised as an adult requires an extended period of rest in order to recover.

BIBLE EXTRA

Gentiles Becoming Jews

The issue of Gentiles first becoming Jews and keeping the Law before they could become Christians came to head at the Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15. James (the most "Jewish-identity" apostle of them all) made it clear that no such burden should be placed upon the new Gentile believers. Paul would fight the rejection of that decision by a group called the Judaizers, who were constantly haranguing Gentile believers for their lack of apparent respect for the Law of Moses. The Book of Galatians is Paul's harshest criticism of this insidious belief.

However, the author of Hebrews wrote that "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (12:14). The only exception, of course, is for the penitent sinner who pleads with God to be merciful in the heartfelt belief that Jesus is their only salvation from their sin, and thus surrenders his life to God. The result of this experience is justification.

Paul appealed to Psalm 32, one of the psalms of David. David understood that his sinfulness would repel him from the holy presence of God unless God, in His mercy, were to forgive and cover over the damage caused by his sins. The repentant sinner can not only experience the soothing forgiveness of God, but is welcomed into the presence of God, as a sinner saved by grace.

6. *Why is salvation described as a gift?*

7. *What is the relationship between God's forgiveness and blessing?*

The Father of All Who Believe

Romans 4:9-12, KJV

9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they

Romans 4:9-12, NIV

9Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness

THE FATHER OF ALL WHO BELIEVE

Finally, read Romans 4:9-12 and note these important points in the Scripture:

- In the New Covenant, the same blessings are for the Jewish believers (who had the covenant of the circumcision) and the Gentile believers (who were not partakers of that covenant but are now considered descendants of Abraham according to the promise and blessed in Christ).
- Abraham received the promise of the covenant before he entered into covenant (signified by circumcision, which was an act of obedience and not a source of righteousness).
- The sign or confirmation of the new covenant

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be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

might be credited to them.

¹²And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Paul then shifted his attention to the Gentiles. He went back to the example of Abraham. The sign of God's covenant with Abraham to make his descendants a nation to be known as God's people was circumcision. Abraham's moment of justification—his belief and trust in the one true God (Rom. 4:2-5)—happened *before* the rite of circumcision was given as the symbol of the Jewish nation and faith.

Abraham's descendants also needed that experience of belief and trust in the Lord in order to become a "child of Abraham" in both the physical and spiritual sense.

Paul added that circumcision was considered a seal of confirmation of the holy righteousness that had been imputed to Abraham. Paul later made it clear that the seal of the new covenant is not circumcision, but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). Circumcision had set the Israelites apart from the Gentiles, but now that the grace of God had come to Gentile and Jew alike, circumcision was no longer needed as a sign of being chosen by God.

Now, according to Paul, circumcision essentially means nothing when it comes to salvation because Christians are set apart by the experience of justification by faith—just as Abraham was. He, then, is the spiritual father of all who follow Christ, because Abraham is the example we follow in matters of saving faith.

8. What was the significance of Abraham's circumcision?
9. Who is the "father" of all followers of Christ?

is righteousness by faith through grace. Just as Abraham received the covenant by faith, both Jews and Gentiles are heirs of the covenant according to God's promise.

- When we walk by faith, just as Abraham walked with God before he received the covenant, then we've also entered into covenant by faith.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

Circumcision became the sign of the Covenant between Abraham and God. This practice would set Abraham and his descendants apart from other nations and peoples.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

Abraham is the father of all believers—whether or not they are physically descended from him.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Faith and Holiness

Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6) and without holiness, no man shall see the Lord (12:14). Ecclesiastes 12:13 sums up how we do this: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (KJV). If we want the abundant life that God promises those who love Him, then one must pursue the One who created Him for His purpose. Without faith to trust Him and without holiness to please Him, life leaves us wanting more without contentment, without peace and without discovery of true purpose.

3 Bible Application

Explore how we can be righteous through our faith.

Make copies of this page and give instructions to each group. Give copies of the words to the children's song "Father Abraham" to the group discussing it. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.



Handout: 'True Righteousness'

Complete the activity on the handout and share your answers with your group. People draw pride from good deeds, patriotism, and service not understanding that works alone does not equal righteousness.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Righteousness That Is by Faith" and discuss answers to **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. Righteousness is the assurance that God is who He says He is and He will do what He has promised to do. His Word is His Covenant and the Holy Spirit is the deposit, a confirmation that what He has spoken will come to pass. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 states, Christ was made to be sin for us that we might be made righteous in Him. When we received Christ as Lord, then righteousness was passed on to us thereby reconciling us to God through His own blood and body upon the Cross.

The Just Shall Live by Faith

Read James 2:17-26 and discuss the answers to these questions: Does faith require corresponding work? How is our faith made known? How is righteousness linked to obedience?

The Children of 'Father Abraham'

Read the words to the children's song, "Father Abraham." You don't have to sing it or do the motions unless you want to, but rather discuss what it means to be a son (or daughter) of Father Abraham. What does he show us about faith? Why is it important to be one of his sons or daughters in faith?

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Righteousness That Is by Faith

Abraham didn't always get it right, but he always trusted God! "By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.' Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death." (Heb. 11:17-19).

The Lord promised Abraham that the covenant would be through his son Isaac, so resurrection would be the only option if Abraham was expected to sacrifice Isaac. Of course, we know that God provided His own sacrifice—a ram caught in the thicket. The Lord tested Abraham's faith and love for Him. Abraham demonstrated that He loved God more than he loved Isaac—his one and only son.

In this life we will all have trials of faith, but settling in our heart that God is faithful is the only appropriate response for the righteousness that is by faith. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21). If God placed everything on the line that we would be reconciled to Him by the sacrifice of His one and only Son, then how can we question His love for us or faithfulness!

According to Hebrews 11, the heroes of faith saw these promises afar off and embraced them by faith. They never lived to see the Messiah, but they understood that the Old Covenant spoke of the promised Messiah; they believed God, and it was credited as righteousness.

10. *What is righteousness, and how can we have it credited to us?*

11. *What are the traits of the anxious and those not living by faith?*

12. *Do you believe you can stand before God in faith today? Explain your answer.*

4 Life Response

Develop a faith like Abraham's.

Faith is fed by a consistent, daily diet of Scripture study, prayer, and praise. If you are tired of vacillating between fear and faith, then resolve that faith is stable when our fellowship with our heavenly Father is our priority and our passion.

Ask your students to read "Living Like Abraham" and do the activity in their student book. How do we develop a faith that is non-negotiable, unwaveringly anchored in the Lord? The answer is to abide in His presence; seek first

the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. God is a way in the wilderness and a river in the desert. Before you read your emails, read the Word of God. Before you listen to the news, listen for the voice of God. The Lord will honor your faith, and He will cause you to triumph!

Lead the class in a closing prayer like this one: "Heavenly Father, thank You that You give us the very faith that we live by. Let our faith in You, in the finished work of Christ, be credited as righteousness for us. As we seek You, may You empower us to live as the righteousness of God through Christ. We worship and adore You, Father. Thank You for anchoring our faith in You; that we trust You in the storm. In Jesus' name, amen!"

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Living Like Abraham

Abraham was considered the friend of God; you invest time in relationships that you cherish. Abraham trusted God in the days of adversity because he knew Him, and he knew Him because he fellowshiped with God. Abraham wasn't flawless in his life, but he had unwavering faith in God caring for him. And when it mattered most, he believed God! Will you believe God when it matters most? Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but God delivers us out of them all!

► *Would you say you have a non-negotiable, unwavering faith in God? If not, decide this week to develop such a faith and write here some things that would help you do so.*

KEY VERSE

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness —Romans 4:3, KJV

What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." —Romans 4:3, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 19 through July 25

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Matthew 5:9-12—Blessed Are Persecuted Believers.
- Tues.** Philippians 1:12-20—Jesus, Not Suffering, Matters.
- Wed.** 2 Corinthians 11:21b-30—Suffering for Christ and the Church.
- Thurs.** Romans 8:18-25—In Hope Our Salvation Is Secure.
- Fri.** Romans 5:12-17—Free Gift of Jesus Brings Justification.
- Sat.** Romans 5:18-21—Grace Leads to Eternal Life.
- Sun.** Romans 5:1-11—Justified through Faith in Jesus Christ.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before you teach next week, read Romans 5:1-11. Ask your students to think of what they feel when they hear the word "hope."