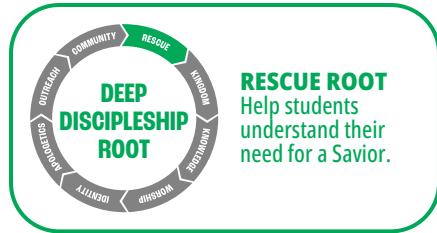


MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ are made righteous through faith in Jesus Christ's work on the cross.

SCRIPTURE

ROMANS 3:21–26



MESSAGE

POINT 1: The difference between works and faith

Read or have someone in your group read Romans 3:21–22

In the Old Testament, a person was considered righteous based on their actions. Did he say and do the right thing? Did she keep all the laws? But there is a big problem with that standard of measurement—no one can keep it. There are over 600 laws in the Old Testament to keep. No one can follow God's standard perfectly because no one is good enough (Romans 3:10) except God alone (Luke 18:19). These verses tell us that through Jesus, righteousness can be found in *believing*, not *earning*.

ILLUSTRATION: Tell a **personal story** about earning your spot in a group—tried out and made the team or band or part in a play. Compare that process to being part of your family. One, you had to prove you were worthy of joining them; the other, you were simply born into.

Thankfully, we don't have to earn our righteousness from God because we could never do it. Because we are infected with a sinful nature (a natural desire to sin), the law reveals our great need for a Savior (Galatians 3:24–26). Faith in Jesus—not our being "good enough"—makes us righteous and grants us entrance into his family.

POINT 2: We all need Jesus

Read or have someone in your group read Romans 3:23–24

The word "all" in verse 23 leaves little doubt about who sinners are. It's *all* of us. There's not a single person you know who is without sin. Because of this one fact, there's not a single person who can earn a right relationship with God. So Jesus did for us what we could not do on our own as a gracious gift of his love. Everyone who places their faith in Jesus is justified (made right) before God the Father (John 3:16–17).

Knowing that we are “all” sinners and constantly make sinful mistakes should affect the way we treat others when they sin against us. Instead of passing judgment on others when they fall short of God’s standard, we should offer grace and understanding because we, too, fall short of the glory of God.

EXAMPLE: Jesus told a parable about a servant who had been forgiven a debt but refused to forgive a debt that a fellow servant had against him. In the end, things did not go well for the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21–35).

Because we all need forgiveness, we should give forgiveness to all.

POINT 3: Free for us, but not for God

Read or have someone in your group read Romans 3:25–26

It’s been said that salvation is free, but it is not cheap. While we receive rescue from our sin and death through the free gift of God’s grace and forgiveness, it did come at an extremely high cost to Christ. He paid for it with his blood. Through Jesus’ work on the cross, we are made righteous.

ILLUSTRATION: Tell a **personal story** of a time you gave something away that came at a great cost to you. (Example: engagement rings cost guys a lot of money, but they give them away to the one they love.)

Just because we receive a gift from someone for free doesn’t mean it didn’t cost them something. Salvation is 100% a free gift from God, but it cost him the life of his Son. Knowing the enormous cost that was paid for our benefit should draw us closer to God. Instead of taking such a gift for granted, we live a life of worshipping Christ as King.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

ICE BREAKER

Everybody gets a chance to brag for a second. What's one accomplishment that makes you feel like a big deal?

DISCUSSION

- What are some ways people try to earn their righteousness?
- What do you think is the difference between self-righteous and righteousness from God?
- Do you feel like your understanding of what Jesus did on the cross has changed at all over time? How so?
- How does knowing what Jesus has done for you change how you view yourself and others?
- When have you felt loved and valued regardless of how well you performed?
- In what ways are you tempted to try to earn value and significance?
- How does it feel to imagine Jesus freely handing over his righteousness to take as your own?
- What do you think your next step in faith should be?

PRAYER

Close by praying or invite someone to pray for your group.

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