

Session Three Homework

This week, we are going to consider Jehovah-Tsidkenu – *God is our righteousness*. When we look to him for not just our salvation, but also for our image and identity, we live that abundant life. When we realize he’s already done all the work, we are free and do not have to be as concerned with what we do, who we hang out with, how others in our lives act. We will also explore how God defines us. His word about us is *much* more encouraging than *Vogue*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Elle* or even *Oprah*! Get ready for some extra work this week – there are short lessons for *five* days!

Day One – God is our Righteousness

First, let’s look more closely at Jehovah-Tsidkenu

1. In the following scriptures, God is described as our righteousness. For each verse, list the result in our lives.

Psalm 129:4

Psalm 145:17

Jeremiah 23:6

1 John 2:1-2

2. Now read Romans 8:1-4. What does this say about our work as compared to God’s work in our lives?

3. Look carefully at verse 4. How completely are the requirements of the law, of behaving and acting a certain way, met in Christ?

4. What is the key to living this free life according to the final words of verse 4?

Today's prayer:

Lord, help me to live today fully aware of your Spirit and your righteousness in my life. As I go throughout my day, help me to remember that my image and identity is not up to me, it is up to you. You have already set me free.

Day Two

Why is this so hard? We *know* the truth about God, that he is our righteousness and we do not have to work so diligently to manage our image. We can grasp it all intellectually, but why is it so tough to live it out? Here comes deceit again. From Genesis to today, lies are the strategy to trip us up. Today we will explore 1 John 1:6-8. The apostle John describes a three-step process in the creation of this illusion about ourselves, an illusion that is far from God's truth about us, and an illusion that hurtles us toward image management.

1. Read 1 John 1:6. How do we lie to ourselves and what is the result?
2. Do you ever find yourself giving an impression of yourself that is not the truth? What about the last time someone said, "How are you?" and you flat-out lied rather than come clean about what was really going on in your heart because you were afraid of what someone would think?
3. John talks about light versus darkness. How do you sometimes live in darkness instead of light?
4. Read 1 John 1:8. How have you deceived yourself? Have you lived any lies for so long that you have come to believe them? Either lies about how good you are *or* about how bad you are?

5. Finally, read 1 John 1:10. We can deceive ourselves for so long, we begin to make God a liar. Sounds blasphemous doesn't it!? (Quick, flip back a few books and read Titus 1:2)

6. If God cannot lie, then what must this scripture in 1 John 1:10 mean?

7. When God approaches us with truth, through his word, worship, a friend or a teacher, do we believe it? Or have we lived in an image-managed world so long that we cannot accept what he says about us? Ponder that, sisters!

Today's prayer

Lord, I want to live in the light. There is no darkness, there are no lies in you. Forgive me for creating illusions about myself, and illusions about you that are far from the abundant life you have for me. Purify my heart and thoughts so I can fully accept who you have called me to be for your kingdom's glory. Amen

Day Three

The woman at the well experienced the ultimate image makeover when her carefully protected image was exposed to the loving light of Christ. Today, let's explore what the bible says about our image in Christ. What does it mean when we look in the mirror and realize that God defines us? That He is our righteousness?

1. Read the following verses and write down what the word says about YOU, sweet sister!

John 1:12

John 15:15

Romans 15:1

1 Corinthians 6:17

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

2. Consider all this life-changing truth. How does this impact your tendency to control your image and how you appear to others?

3. As you read these scriptures and soak in what God says about you, is there any doubt in your heart that you have been born again? Read Ephesians 1:5.

If you wonder at all if your adoption is secure, then take a moment today to ask Jesus into your heart. It's a simple prayer: *Lord Jesus, I know I have sinned and I cannot handle life on my own. I cannot control any portion of my life and I want you to take charge. Forgive me and come into my heart and make me whole. I accept your offer of freedom. Amen*

If you sincerely prayed this prayer today for the first time, then TELL SOMEBODY! Call a member of your small group or other friend and share the news. There's a party in heaven right now in your honor!

Day Four

As we consider our efforts to manage our image, let's not forget the "spiritual" image we like to convey. We often worry about what others think of our spiritual maturity. We like to portray that Proverbs 31 perfect woman image, don't we? Well, someone else in the Bible worried a lot about what others thought, and it got them into a lot of trouble. Let's look at those good ol' boys, the Pharisees.

1. Read Luke 18:9-14. What does Jesus have to say about those pompous, prayin' Pharisees?

2. Read John 5:39. Jesus is talking to the highly religious Jews. What does he accuse them of when it comes to all their study of the scriptures?

3. Do you ever find yourself reading or studying the Bible, and walk away without really encountering the loving God who authored it? Do you ever go through the spiritual motions just to keep up appearances and not to really develop a more intimate relationship with Christ?

4. Read Luke 11:37-43. Here again, Jesus is not at all impressed by the religious image managers. Do you ever see any of these behaviors in yourself?

5. Finally, read Isaiah 1:11-17. Looks like the Israelites priorities were out of whack. Can you relate to this? What does God say is really most important to him in verse 17?

Today's prayer:

God, help me to recognize the things I do in your name that really have nothing to do with you at all. Help my relationship with you be about encouragement, giving life, loving others and living free. Convict my heart when I go through the religious motions and help me to leave my spiritual image up to you.

Day Five

We've examined God as our righteousness, what he says about our image and what he thinks about our religious image management. Let's wrap up the week thinking about how we sometimes use people to manage our image.

1. Read Acts 3:1-2. What kind of person did Peter and John run into when they headed to the temple?

2. What kind of shape do you think a cripple would be in during the first century? Well kept and clean shaven? Freshly washed and smelling of Dial?

3. What do we expect of people as we come to church? What are the images we like to see and portray as we go to our church activities and meetings?

Peter and John walked through the "gate called Beautiful". We too want to walk by the beautiful gate with the beautiful people, but God strategically puts beggars in our way. What does this say about the kind of folks he expects us to love and encourage – and even invite to church?

4. Read James 2:2-5. What does this illustration tell us about showing favoritism to the "beautiful people"?

5. Finally, Jesus himself set the ultimate example by hanging out with the dregs of society. In fact, he chose some of those outliers to be on his first discipleship team.

Read Matthew 9:9-12. Who did Jesus call to be a disciple in this story? Was his a well-regarded profession? A sought-after job title?

6. What did the Pharisees complain about in this story?

7. What point does Jesus make about whom we hang out with?

8. Clearly, Jesus' philosophy was not to catch and clean them at the same time. He was ok with people who were still messy. Who in your life could you encourage regardless of what it might look like to others?

Today's prayer

Father God, help me to worry less about whom I am seen with and worry more about who you want me to share your life-changing reality with. Reveal to me the people in my circle of influence who are messy – those whom you desperately want to love. Help me to love them, even if they don't "look" like me.