

Holier Than Thou

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Lesson Title: “Holy Justice” (pp. 65-78)

Session 5

December 31, 2023

The main point of this lesson is: God’s holiness requires that He exercise justice.

Focus on this goal: To help adults appreciate the gravity of their sin and the enormity of God’s placing their guilt on Jesus

Key Bible Passage: 2 Samuel 6:1-8

Before the Session

Using a Bible dictionary, Internet search, or discussion with your pastor, prepare to explain the meaning of propitiation. (Step 6, p. 75)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Ask participants to brainstorm what people exercise on a regular basis (body, rights, mind, will, stock options, etc.). Analyze whether people exercise these things because they are required to or choose to.

Read the main point of this lesson statement (p. 76). State that in this session the group will explore the implications of God’s holy justice.

Step 2. Righteousness and Justice, Part 1

Ask: What would be the implications if God were NOT holy? Use the first paragraph of Day One (p. 65) to add to the discussion.

Read Deuteronomy 32:4. Inquire how people might feel about that description of God. Ask: Does the fact God is morally pure also require He be vengeful? Why? Discuss Day One, activity 1 (p. 65).

State grappling with the vengeful justice of God requires understanding how humanity and God view sin and righteousness. Discuss the first part of Day One, activity 2 (p. 66). Compare those definitions of “right” with what God says is right and how He views sin.

Step 3. Righteousness and Justice, Part 2

Ask: How and why might people use the true statement “God is love” to make a false statement about God? Why is it ironic many people want God to be love yet not want God to be just? Use Day Two, activity 1 (p. 67) to aid in the discussion of that question.

Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 18:22-25. Ask: What was Abraham asking of God? What did he conclude about God? What will we understand about sin and justice when we reach the conclusion Abraham did? Read the Day Two Note (p. 68). Discuss Day Two, activity 2 (p. 69).

Request adults visualize a person heading downstairs into a dark, dangerous cellar. A loving God puts His hand on that person’s shoulder, restraining him from descending further, but that person continues to shake off God’s hand. Eventually God will remove His hand and give that person what he demands. Ask: Is that an indication of God’s love, justice, both? Explain. Declare: We don’t have to exercise sin. “We, like Adam, choose our fate” (p. 68) when we have a low view of sin.

Step 4. Low View of Sin

Note 2 Samuel 6 details consequences of a low view of sin. Discuss Day Three, activity 1 (p. 70). Read Exodus 25:12-14. Stress that rather than following those commands, the Israelites treated the ark the same way the pagan Philistines did in 1 Samuel 6.

Ask: How might we have described Uzzah’s actions?Say: The writer states, “No wonder we’re so confused by judgment at times. We’re too busy giving bad things good names” (p. 70) What are some examples of that?

Ask adults identify from 2 Samuel 6:7 (NIV, see p. 70) what Scripture calls Uzzah’s actions. Consider reasons Uzzah acted so irreverently. Ask: Why might we begin to regard the holy as common? Why and how must we guard against that?

Ask if adults agree that “it confuses us that the same God who is praised for His kindness can seem so cruel” (p. 70) and why. State part of the confusion is because we equate God’s wrath with human wrath. Analyze how God’s wrath is different from human anger and vengeance. Discuss Day Three, activity 2 (p. 71).

Invite a volunteer to read the last paragraph of Day Three (p. 71).

Step 5. Mercy and Justice

Discuss Day Four, activity 1 (p. 72). Invite a volunteer to read 2 Peter 3:3-9. Evaluate how that passage states similar truths as Romans 2:3-5. Ask: What are the real questions we should be asking about God’s justice?

State many people are uncomfortable with the Old Testament because of its many instances of God showing wrath, but there are actually “more stories with mercy” (p. 72). Invite volunteers familiar with the Old Testament to describe how God showed mercy to Adam, Lot in Sodom, the Israelites in Egypt, and David. Invite responses to Day Four, activity 2 (p. 73).

Ask: How does God’s mercy toward sinners present a heavenly dilemma? Refer to the Day Four Note (p. 73) as part of that discussion.

Step 6. Heaven’s Dilemma Solved

Ask the writer’s question from Day Five (p. 74): “What did the holy God do to make sure He could offer forgiveness while not compromising His righteousness?” Discuss Day Five, activity 1 (p. 74).

Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 26:36-39. Explore why Jesus didn’t want to drink that cup. Ask: Why did God answer “no” to Jesus’s prayer?

Read the Day Five Note (p. 74). Ask: How does that make God both just and the justifier? Invite a volunteer to read Romans 3:23-26. Explain the meaning of propitiation.

Discuss Day Five, activity 2 (p. 75).

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Ask: What are implications of God’s holy justice? How can understanding the gravity of our sin help us have a higher view of God? What must our response be to this God who is both just and justifier?

Close in prayer.

