

ROMANS SEASON 3 WHAT WAS GOD THINKING?

CONNECT *BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING*

- What's something valuable or sentimental that you had to sell or give up (whether to move, downsize, or something like that)?
 - Are you a goal setter? Why or why not?
 - Do you enjoy discussing difficult Bible chapters like the ones we've been looking at in Romans? Why are why not?
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TRUTH *UNDERSTAND AND DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURE'S MEANING*

Of all the words that people use to describe Jesus, "offensive" isn't usually one of them. Yet in Romans 9, we're told that God has made Jesus "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." Unbelieving Jews in Paul's day were stumbling over this rock of offense by not believing in the gospel, but we mustn't think they're the only ones who will be faced with the "offensive" nature of Jesus. God has made Jesus offensive to expose and confront something in all of us.

Offensive How?

READ: Romans 9:30-33, Isaiah 28:16, 8:14-15

DISCUSS: What do you learn from the passages in Isaiah about why Jesus might be a stumbling stone for first-century Jews?

When Jesus preached about God's purpose of salvation for the world, he did something very unexpected. He said that he was the new temple. For an Israelite, this would've been shocking, because the temple was central to Israel's identity and the way they experienced God's presence going all the way back to the days of Moses. Jesus became the new meeting place for God and his people. If they were going to embrace Jesus in this new age of God's story of salvation, it would require them to let go of their allegiance to the brick-and-mortar temple.

Offensive to Who?

READ: Romans 10:1-3

DISCUSS: How would you define the "righteousness of God" based on what you know?

Let's recall what "righteousness" means. Righteousness is a right standing with God. Righteousness means a place in his family as one of his children. Righteousness means you're a recipient of the promises he made to Abraham. Rather than receiving God's righteousness by faith alone, those who rejected Jesus sought to "establish their own" righteousness. In other words, they believed that they could secure God's promises on their own terms, without Jesus.

Offensive Why?

READ: Genesis 3:4-5

DISCUSS: What do you think Adam and Eve were hoping to get by becoming “like God”?

We might wonder why God made Jesus offensive. Wouldn't it be less messy to spell it out that a man would come who would become the new temple? Perhaps. But God wanted to do something more profound. When God made Jesus the centerpiece of his plan for salvation, he exposed the “Adam and Eve-ness” inside all of us. At the very root of unrighteousness is a drive to seize control away from God and be our own god – to secure blessing, security, and prosperity for ourselves rather than trusting God. In Jesus, God goes to the very root of the problem and invites us to be healed.

GRACE SEE HOW THE PASSAGE CONNECTS TO JESUS

READ: Genesis 3:4-5

The plan was always Jesus. He fulfilled the law and now offers righteousness to everyone who believes in him. It cost him his life. When we are confronted by the offensive exclusivity of Jesus, we can always remember that the “offensive” One suffered far more than offense; he suffered death. Not only was he offended, but he was killed so that all who believe in him can be made righteous.

CHANGE APPLY THE PASSAGE TO OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS

- Establishing one's own righteousness is, in other words, attempting to secure God's blessings on your own terms. What means do you tend to try and do that with?
- Do you feel like you've given Jesus permission to change plans in your life if he wants? Why or why not?
- When God wants to change your plans, what makes it difficult to trust him? How does this passage address those concerns?

PRAYER RESPOND TO THE PASSAGE IN PRAYER

- Sanctification is a lifelong process of God healing our drive to seize control away from him. Pray for the Spirit's continued strengthening to reject that desire, and to trust God to be God.

Discipleship Check-In

- Have you read your Bible consistently the past week?
- Who is someone you're praying to share Jesus with this week, and what's one way you can love them well?