

EXERCISE:

Study the life and character of Abraham.



chapter Gen 12, 13



chapters Gen 15,16



chapters Gen 17,20,21



chapter Gen 22

What do you learn from the man Abraham?

Read the stories about the life of Abraham. How did Abraham live with God? Describe this.

What can you learn about the story of the promises of God and the fulfilment thereof?

How did Abraham deal with these promises? Look especially at the story of Ishmael and Isaac.

Which altars did Abraham build and particularly where were they and what was the occasion?

What were the blessings which Abraham received from God during his lifetime?

Were there any promises which remained unfulfilled?

What do you learn from Abraham for your own life?



Rom 4:13-25

Read the tekst about the life of Anraham and apply this to your own life.

Ask yourself four questions:

1. Is there a word from God for me personally in this tekst?
2. Is there a promise from the Father for my life?
3. Does Jesus ask me to apply anything?
4. Decide to do something about this and ask Jesus to help you with this.

Going deeper

In Matt 5:6 Jesus plants an important seed for the culture of the Kingdom of God. He says to His disciples that those who hunger for righteousness will be filled, as He himself is. This is the culture within which the kingdom can bear fruit.

Righteousness

According to the dictionary righteousness means: correctness, according to the law or your feelings. It means having a clean conscience. One of the characteristics of God is that He is righteous.



Ex 9:27

Pharaoh says here that God is righteous and that means that He is right. According to the law he is in the right.

Which characteristics of God are mentioned here?



Deut 32:4

What is meant by the righteousness of Abraham?



Rom 4:13-17



Gal 3:6-9,14



Jak 2:18-24

Abraham heard God speak on different occasions and then acted accordingly to follow the directions.

Two noticeable stories from the life of Abraham. The story in which Abraham let his nephew Lot make the choice. Lot chose the part of Sodom. Abraham trusted God and went to live in the wilderness; he believed that God's blessing would follow him there.

In the second story, once the promised son Isaac had been born, Abraham does not hesitate to sacrifice Isaac when he is roughly aged 13. He trusted God and acted upon that which he had heard.

The kingdom of God and righteousness

If we take a closer look at the kingdom of God we see that God intended a kingdom within which righteousness, righteous living and the Kingdom are closely connected.

What should we be seeking?



Matt 6:33

Notice the word 'its'. In the kingdom of God it is not about your righteousness and you think or feel about it, but about God's, the kingdom, righteousness. He determines the culture of the kingdom. The rules of living are there so that everyone can live in the kingdom in peace and joy. So that one can live in love with God and others.

Jesus, the righteous one


Righteousness is the character of God and of His Kingdom. We see this also in Jesus.

Why is Jesus anointed with the oil of joy?

 *Hebr. 1:8,9*

Jesus showed in his lifetime what it means to live a righteous life.

How does Jesus judge?

 *John 5:30 (farsi 29)*


Here we see that for Jesus, righteousness means God the Father being above all things and that Jesus does what He hears the Father saying.

The practical outworking of this can be read in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus teaches His disciples about varying themes.

Revenge versus forgiveness

 *Matt 5:21,22*

Be free of personal feelings of revenge or bitterness, because the attitude of heart in the Kingdom is love. This may sometimes mean laying down your right to be right. This is just what Jesus did when He was declared guilty.

 *Matt 5:23-25, 44,45*

Forgiveness is a key thing in the Kingdom of God. It is about your heart, let it be motivated by forgiving love towards those who do evil unto you. A heart free of personal revenge.

Unpure versus pure

 *Matt 5:27-29*


Purity begins in your heart. The law says that we must not commit adultery but Jesus goes much further; He is talking here about what goes on in your heart. If we allow all sorts of impure thoughts in our heart, a place which no one can see, then we are in the same bad place as those who commit adultery. Righteousness in this instance means choosing to be pure of heart. Who you are in your heart is important.

Dishonesty versus honesty

 *Matt 5:37*

Let your yes be yes and your no, no. In other words, be honest and trustworthy.

Exterior versus interior

 *Matt 6:1-4*


Jesus shows us here that it is not about how wonderfully you can pray or how you put in the offering. What is important is what you tell God with your heart and give with your heart.

In the gospels we see Jesus teaching lessons but him also living them out. He is living from the heart which is devoted to the Father. He is honest, pure, forgiving, full of love. In Him we see the law being fulfilled.


Now you

We often struggle with the reactions of our heart. It is not easy to forgive or to live a pure life. In this world in which we live there are continually challenges and difficult or tempting moments. So how can we become more like Jesus?

Who purifies us and keeps us pure?

 *John 15:3-7*

How have I been made righteous – How can I stand before God as righteous?

 *Rom 1:17, 4:5, 8:10, 10:4,10*

The answer is not that difficult. It is only by faith and not by your own works.


You no longer look at the things you do wrong (a result of living by the law) but you look at what Jesus has done for you.

Do I not have to do anything to be made righteous before God?

Apart from believing, you can do nothing. By faith you have been made completely righteous to God. You stand righteous before Him. You can never become more righteous than you already are!


This comes by Jesus living in you. He is holy, He will lead you and His righteousness shall be expressed through your whole being. It will manifest itself in your deeds.


What does James say about faith?


 *Jam 2:18-26*

It says that through believing, Jesus comes in us by His spirit. This is what makes us righteous. You have chosen Jesus to be Lord of your life and the result is that you are willing to live as Jesus did. Just as radically as He did, listening to the Father and doing what He shows you.

EXERCISE;

 Ask God the Father if He will show you what is in your heart. Ask Him to show you your deepest thoughts about these subjects.

 Have a good think about yourself, if you live an honest, pure life full of love and forgiveness. If this is not the case, write down what you are currently struggling with and which areas you are going to let God's spirit deal with.

 Discuss your struggles with your mentor, ask your mentor how they manage to overcome these areas. Talk together about Romans 7 and 8. Invite the Holy Spirit in to work in the areas you struggle.

Reading task: the letter to the Romans – study the words justified and righteousness.

Going deeper, part 2

What was the righteousness which became evident in the early church?

 Acts 2:43-47

 Acts 9:36

 Acts 10:1-4

In the early church they devoted a lot of attention to the poor and oppressed. That is why they were looked upon favourably by people.

What does Jesus say about this theme?

 Matt 25:31-37

Here we see a link between entering the kingdom and looking after the unlovely. God has a very special place for the oppressed, the lost, the orphans and the widows and the strangers.

Mishpat

 Micah 6:8

The word righteous derives from the word mishpat. This means giving people what is due to them. This can be punishment, protection or care. It can also clearly mean bringing correction.

In the Bible this word is repeatedly used when talking about the needs of widows, orphans, strangers (immigrants) and the poor.

Doing what is right is also linked to faithfulness and humility. This attitude can clearly be seen in the early church.

Mishpat is also trying to stop or prevent those who exploit, abuse, create misunderstanding and allow ungodly deeds.

Tzedakah



Luke 14:12-14

“The situation in which people are on good terms with God and therefore give themselves to putting every relationship right in life.”

An attitude of putting things right, offering fair distribution of goods and opportunities, including the following things:

- Helping a single mother where possible.
- Helping an assylum seeker, who cannot read their papers because they are in a foreign language, to understand what they say.
- Giving a child who has no longer sees his father as a result of divorce some extra fatherly attention.
- Meeting the needs of the physically disabled, the elderly, those who are hungry.
- Offering to pay for a family to go on holiday because they cannot afford it themselves.

EXERCISE



Discuss with your mentor any situations you see which are not right. Ask yourself if you can do anything about these.