GENESIS PRACTICAL THEOLOGY | STUDENT HANDOUT

LESSON 12

RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH, SECURED BY PROMISE

Abram Believes, and Yahweh Binds Himself to the Covenant

MAIN IDEA **God counts the believer righteous by grace through faith and secures His promised offspring and inheritance by His own covenant faithfulness.**

Lesson Objectives

- Trace the two visionary panels of Genesis 15 and their offspring-and-land structure.
- Explain belief, crediting, and righteousness in Genesis 15:6.
- Distinguish justification by faith from justification by works.
- Describe the covenant rite and identify what is certain and disputed.
- Connect the smoke and fire to Yahweh's presence at Sinai.
- Explain Paul's use of Abraham in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 and James's complementary emphasis.

Teaching Overview

Genesis 15 answers Abram's unresolved questions about offspring and land. God responds with His word, a sign in the stars, a declaration of righteousness, a prophecy of exodus and return, and a covenant theophany in smoke and fire. The apostles later use 15:6 to explain how sinners are counted righteous by faith rather than works.

Key Scripture Passages

- Genesis 15:1–21 — primary passage.
- Genesis 12:1–3; 13:14–17; 14:17–24 — earlier promise and immediate context.
- Exodus 19:16–20; 20:18–21; 24:3–8 — Sinai smoke, fire, fear, and covenant.
- Jeremiah 34:18–20 — explicit biblical parallel involving divided animals and covenant violation.
- Romans 3:21–4:25 — justification by faith apart from works.
- Galatians 3:6–18 — Abraham's family, promised offspring, law, and inheritance.
- James 2:20–24 — works as the evidence and maturity of living faith.

I. THE WORD OF THE LORD ANSWERS FEAR AND CchildlessNESS

Scripture: 15:1–3

- How does this scene connect to Genesis 14?
- Record the meanings of "shield" and "reward."
- What tension does Abram name?

TERM	STUDENT NOTES

magen	

Discussion Question: How does Genesis 14 sharpen the meaning of “shield” and “reward”?

THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE Where are you tempted to measure God’s faithfulness by visible results?

II. GOD PROMISES AN HEIR AND NUMBERS THE STARS

Scripture: 15:4–5

- What does God reject and what does He promise?
- How do the stars function as a sign?
- Trace “offspring” from one heir to a multitude.

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zera	

Discussion Question: What changes between Abram’s proposed solution and God’s promised heir?

THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE What human solution competes with patient trust in God’s promise?

III. ABRAM BELIEVES, AND GOD CREDITS RIGHTEOUSNESS

Scripture: 15:6

- Define belief, crediting, and righteousness.
- Write the difference between gift and wages.
- Record the ground, instrument, and fruit of justification.
- Why is faith not a meritorious work?

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he'emin	
hashab	
tsedaqah	

Discussion Question: What is the object of Abram's faith?

THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE What are you relying on for right standing before God?

IV. GOD CONFIRMS THE LAND PROMISE THROUGH A COVENANT RITE

Scripture: 15:7–12

- What does "I brought you out" recall?
- List the certain features of the covenant rite.
- List the principal interpretations of passing between the pieces.
- What uncertainty should be preserved?

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berit	
karat berit	

Discussion Question: Why does God begin with what He has already done for Abram?

THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE How should divine initiative shape your assurance?

V. THE PROMISE PASSES THROUGH EXILE, JUDGMENT, AND RETURN

Scripture: 15:13–16

- Outline the sequence: stranger → oppression → _____ → _____ → return.
- How do 400 and 430 years relate?
- What does the Amorite statement reveal about judgment?

Discussion Question: How does "know for certain" redefine what assurance looks like?

THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE How does God's patience in judgment correct your assumptions?

VI. THE SMOKING FIREPOT AND BLAZING TORCH PASS BETWEEN THE PIECES

Scripture: 15:17–21

- What do smoke and fire signify?
- Record the strongest Sinai parallels.
- Who passes between the pieces, and who does not?
- What does "unilateral" mean here, and what does it not mean?

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tannur	
ashan	
lappid	

Discussion Question: What do smoke and fire communicate about God's presence?

THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE How should holy presence produce both confidence and reverence?

VII. PAUL READS GENESIS 15:6 AS THE PATTERN OF JUSTIFICATION

Scripture: Romans 3:21–4:25; Galatians 3:6–18; James 2:20–24

- How does Romans 4 use Genesis 15:6?
- Why do circumcision and the later law not create righteousness?
- What does Galatians 3 teach about offspring and inheritance?
- How are Paul and James complementary?

Discussion Question: How does Paul's contrast between wages and gift prevent faith from becoming a meritorious work?

THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE How will justification by faith shape worship, evangelism, and obedience?

THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE

Sphere	Application Prompt
Personal	Where am I seeking righteousness, assurance, or control through my own performance?
Family	How can our household practice honest prayer and patient trust when fulfillment is delayed?
Church	How should justification by faith alone shape preaching, membership, worship, and discipline?
Ministry	How can I call for obedience without implying that works earn acceptance with God?

Questions for Reflection

- How do Abram's questions differ from refusal to believe?
- Why does Genesis 15:6 exclude boasting?
- What does crediting language add to the meaning of righteousness?
- Which parts of the covenant ceremony are clear, and which interpretations remain disputed?

- How do smoke and fire connect Genesis 15 with Sinai?
- Why does Paul appeal to Abraham before circumcision and before the Mosaic law?
- How does James protect justification by faith from becoming empty profession?

Personal Notes

Key Takeaways

- One truth about God: _____
- One truth about humanity: _____
- One key interpretive insight: _____
- One connection to Christ or the gospel: _____
- One remaining question: _____
- One response of faith or obedience: _____

Final Summary

Complete after the session: Genesis 15 teaches that __.

Resources Used

- Kenneth A. Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, New American Commentary, Genesis 15.
- Victor P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Genesis 15.
- No additional outside source was used.