



Essence Week Three

Opening Prayer

God, you know us personally and you love us deeply. Help us to hear from you today as we process.

Talk It Over

- Looking at our cultural, community, and own life, what are some of the ways we might look for acceptance and love from other people?
- In your own words, how would you compare someone who is trying to earn their acceptance versus someone who walks in confidence of their acceptance?

Read Philippians 3:8-9 (NIV)

At its core, “righteousness” is a relational word in the Bible. It means to be welcomed, received, or to be found with favor. From a Biblical perspective, we can say the opposite of righteousness is rejection.

In other words, when it comes to God, many of us may have a propensity to try and earn our acceptance and love with him in hopes of avoiding being unwelcomed. However, we are clearly instructed to find our righteousness from God and in God. This righteousness is a key piece of our identity in God.

- Has trying to earn your righteousness from God and in God ever left you feeling guilty, anxious, judgmental, rigid, unsatisfied, or so on?
- Can you think of a time you ever felt rejected? This memory can be from any period of your life. Share a little bit about that experience. What did you feel? What were you seeking and what actually happened? What would have helped the situation sting less?
- How has your understanding of your identity and acceptance in God changed over the course of this series? What ideas are you trying to embrace more and more?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21

The Gospel teaches us that righteousness is a gift we receive from God and that we can each stop trying to extract acceptance from other sources. The message of Jesus teaches us that the tone of our relationship with God is not determined because of our past or present behavior or condition, but rather by of God’s love and Jesus story.

- Take a few minutes to quietly reflect on your biggest failure or a deep hurt caused by rejection. Knowing what you know now about your identity, value, and righteousness being found in God, ask God to help you understand how he views your hurt, pain, mess, and brokenness. What words, images, and ideas is God offering you? Once a few quiet moments have passed, consider sharing about your reflection time with God.

(Continued on next page.)

Read John 15:5 (NIV)

We are accepted, welcomed, and made right with God; going even further, Jesus implores us to stay connected to him. It's through our connection to him that we learn the rhythms of his boundless grace and love directly from him. It's through our connection with him we most often come to see ourselves the way he sees us and learn to walk out our right standing with God.

- Share about a loving relationship you have in your life that you are grateful for this season. What is about this person and your relationship that makes the relationship feel loving?
- When it comes to your relationship with God this season, in what ways are you experiencing God's love and acceptance?
- When it comes to your relationship with God this season, how are you best connecting with him?

Closing Prayer

God, we want to believe our identity is found in you. Help us to see ourselves the way you see us. Help us to remain connected to you and your love. Transform us to be the people you invite us to become.