



# SESSION 6 - HIDDEN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Breaking the hard ground of misplaced righteousness & pride

## LEADER'S NOTES

### Testimony Discussion

- Can you share a time when God took you on a journey of humility?
- How did this reshaping change your relationship with God for the better?

We are going to explore some examples of misplaced righteousness.

### 1. Outward religion begins to replace inward surrender



#### Read Matthew 21:1-11

Ask & discuss: what do you notice from this passage?

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, crowds gathered in praise, speaking Scripture as they welcomed him. At the centre stood Jesus — the perfect expression of righteousness — living in complete trust and obedience to the Father. His righteousness flowed from God's authority, not force. Zechariah had foretold that a king would come 'righteous and victorious', yet 'lowly and riding on a donkey' (**Zechariah 9:9**). Jesus' entry fulfilled this, and the crowds celebrated, though they did not understand the kind of kingship he embodied. His humility and surrender did not match their expectations of how God's Kingdom would come. Seen in this light, the righteousness we have received in Christ can quietly become hidden beneath our assumptions about how God **should** work. When this happens, our worship remains genuine, but our hearts may not be fully open to the ways Jesus wants to reshape our understanding of his Kingdom. Today this can look like knowing how faith works, without taking time to know Jesus personally or surrendering our lives to his will.

Where is your worship masked by assumption of who God is or how he should work?

This is not a new pattern. The same prophet who spoke of the humble king entering Jerusalem also confronted misplaced righteousness in his own day. Zechariah addressed a community rebuilding its religious life outwardly while resisting inward change. God questioned their fasting and practices; were they truly for him, or just habit? (**Zechariah 7:4-12**). Yet their hearts remained hardened to God's shaping. Take some time to read and reflect on this passage together.

What areas of your heart/life do you need to re-surrender to God?

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## 2. Faith becomes more about performance than intimacy



This can happen when we focus on what we do for God instead of growing in relationship with him. Scripture warns against honouring God with our words while our hearts remain distant: 'These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules' (**Isaiah 29:13**). Zechariah echoed this, urging God's people not just to maintain religious activity but to return to the Lord with open, responsive hearts (**Zechariah 1:3**). Today this can look like staying busy with the things of God while our relationship with him quietly becomes performative.

Check in with your intentions – have any areas of your faith become performative / habitual?

## 3. Praise is offered without repentance



In **Matthew 21** the crowds celebrated Jesus, yet many were unprepared for how his Kingdom would unsettle their hearts and call for change. Luke shows that even as they rejoiced, Jesus wept over Jerusalem, grieving hearts that could praise him while resisting repentance and renewal (**Luke 19:41–44**). Today this can look the same – praise offered while repentance is resisted. Faith remains expressive, but the heart stays hardened. Without repentance, renewal slows and the deeper transformation God longs to bring remains out of reach.

Is there anything in your heart that feels resistant to change, even as you continue to worship and follow Jesus?

Hearts are softened through humility and trust. Pride is not always loud; it often appears as quiet certainty – the sense that we already know what faithfulness requires. Over time, this can close us off to God's leading, not through rejection but through assumption. **Romans 1:17** draws us back to a different posture: God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel and received by faith. We never move beyond dependence. We do not start with grace and then sustain ourselves by effort; we are continually invited to receive what God gives. This is the Spirit's work among us. He softens what has grown hard and keeps our hearts responsive to God. Where righteousness has become guarded or performative, the Spirit leads us into humility, repentance and trust. Slowly and quietly, he restores righteousness as something relational.

Give some time and space to allow the Holy Spirit to renew righteousness.

You may want to play some worship music (suggestion: [Who Else, Gateway Worship](#)) and encourage personal prayer and reflection.



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## JOURNAL



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Read Matthew 21:1-11

What do you notice from this passage?

Where is your worship masked by assumption of who God is or how he should work?

What areas of your heart/life do you need to re-surrender to God?

RIGHTEOUSNESS



## 2. Faith becomes more about performance than intimacy

Check in with your intentions – have any areas of your faith become performative / habitual?

## 3. Praise is offered without repentance

Is there anything in your heart that feels resistant to change, even as you continue to worship and follow Jesus?

‘For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed – a righteousness that is by faith from first to last.’

Romans 1:17

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