

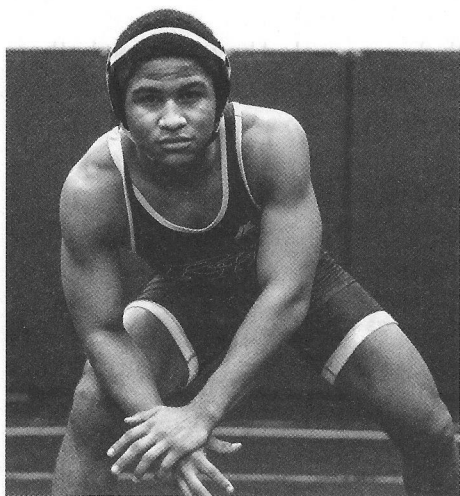
YOUTH UNIT III: Standing In the Faith
YOUTH GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Justified by Faith in Jesus
YOUTH TOPIC: Boasting or Faith?

LESSON 10
DATE: May 5, 2024

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 3:21-30
PRINT PASSAGE: Same

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

“Bragging Rights” The American Professional Wrestling and Entertainment Company (WWE) published a list of the top 30 Wrestlers of all time. Although each wrestler has a different stage name, outfit, and reputation, one thing that many of them have in common is they brag about their skills and ability to win over their opponents. Those who made the list have national, and some even have an international reputation for winning many wrestling matches, money and prizes.



That list of the top five wrestlers starting with number one are Stone Cold Steve Austin, Hulk Hogan, The Rock, ‘The Nature Boy’ Ric Flair, and ‘Macho Man’ Randy Savage. <https://www.sportbible.com/wwe/news-the-top-30-greatest-wrestlers-in-history-have-been-ranked-20210424> Without even seeing or hearing them, just reading their names indicates some of what they brag about to show their superiority to their competition. This bragging can also work to intimidate less experienced wrestling competitors in a way that keeps the wrestlers distracted so they cannot focus on doing their best to win the wrestling match. Some commentators suggest that all of this is just for show and parts or most of the wrestling matches may be staged entertainment rather than true athletic competitions.

When you hear the “stage names” used by wrestlers to attract fans and leave a lasting impression on people, the names provide insight into what each one

would like fans and potential fans to believe about the wrestler and what the wrestler sees as the skills or power he/she has that makes the wrestler qualified to be a champion. In interviews inside and outside of the wrestling arena, wrestlers boast about using the characteristics reflected by their name to continue to build their reputation and advance their wrestling careers.

The names wrestlers choose, or the managers choose for them, can be considered bragging about their abilities to win as wrestlers. Bragging is to speak highly of one's own skills, reputation, or natural abilities, typically to impress or intimidate others. People who brag for a long time can come to believe they are what they brag about, and that their success is based on bragging. The top five wrestlers of all time named by WWE describe themselves as macho man, nature boy, the rock, hulk, and stone cold.

The wrestlers all have talent, but none is greater or has more power than our God. For many of them, their reputation will fade over time if they do not expand their career beyond the wrestling arena, but not God.

KEEPIN' IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- ❑ Do you have a favorite professional wrestler or professional athlete? If so, who and why?
- ❑ If you had to create a bragging name that represented how you want others to see you, what would it be? Could having that name (nickname) make you become better or similar to how you want others to see you?
- ❑ Does our bragging impress God? Why or why not?

KEEPIN' IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

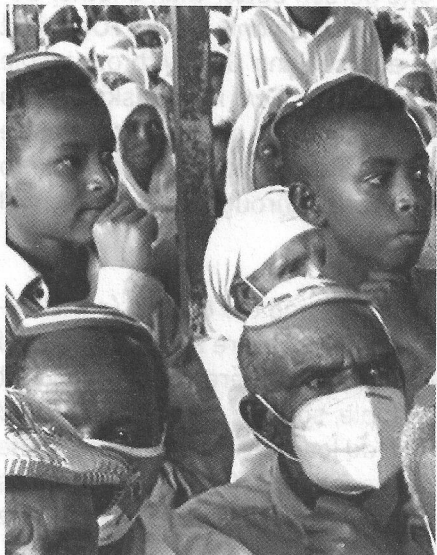
KEY VERSE: "For there is no distinction, ²³ since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴ they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Romans 3:22b-24

Romans 3:21-30: "²¹ But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, ²³ since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴ they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put

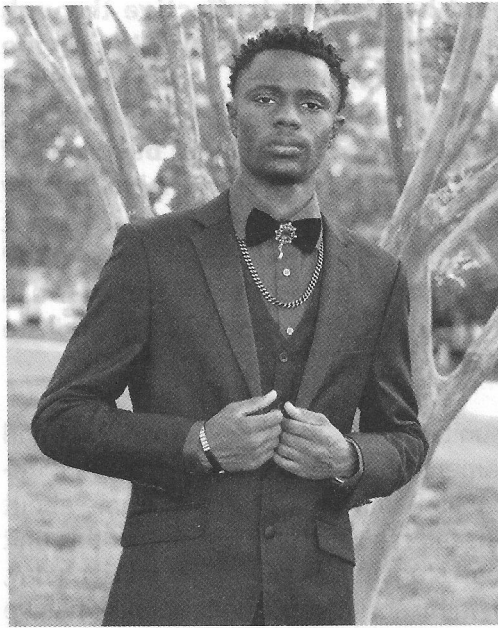
forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.” ²⁷ Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

This lesson is the first lesson of a new unit entitled “Standing in the Faith,” and all four lessons are from the New Testament Book of Romans. The book of Romans contains teachings from the Apostle Paul to the church in Rome about 58 years after Jesus’ crucifixion, death, and resurrection. The goal of this unit is to encourage each student to continue standing on faith in Jesus. Each day, Christians face challenges and tests of faith; so, we must understand what we believe, why we believe it, and in whom we believe.

The Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Romans to the church in Rome to settle the conflict between the Jewish believers and the Gentile (non-Jewish) believers. The Jewish believers wanted the Gentiles to follow all the Jewish laws (over 200 hundred in addition to the Ten Commandment), customs, festivals, and practices that the Jewish believers thought of as a requirement to please God. Paul was born and raised in the Jewish faith, but as an adult he accepted Jesus



Christ as his Savior, converted to Christianity, and became a leader in the church. Before he became a Christian, he was a very devout Jew observing the Jewish laws. He was a respected and powerful leader in a group of Jews known as Pharisees. Pharisees prided themselves on their knowledge and ability to keep the law including the Ten Commandments from Moses and over 200 additional laws. Paul was so widely respected and persuasive as a Pharisee, he convinced Jewish leaders to authorize him to find and put Christians in prison because Christians were rumored to be a threat to the Jewish faith and the government.



Once Paul accepted Christ and became a Christian, he was able to persuade many of the Christian leaders to accept him. His willingness to risk his life to preach the gospel, his miraculous testimony, leadership skills, and strong faith in Jesus, resulted in him becoming a leader in the church. Much of his work as a leader in the early church was to convert those who were not Jewish (known as "Gentiles") to faith in Jesus Christ. He traveled to many cities to share the gospel message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and worked with those who accepted salvation to start churches in various

countries where he, along with other church leaders, traveled to share the good news about Jesus.

Although Paul did not start the church in Rome, he wrote to them because they were divided over whether the Gentile Christians had to keep all the Jewish laws. The goal of the letter was to unify the Jewish and Gentile Christians. Paul's letter explains to the believers that the law can only point out our faults. The law does not erase our faults or make one person better than another because no one can keep every single law but Jesus. Since only God is 100% just and 100% holy, it is only by trusting in God and seeking God with our whole heart that we can be righteous and holy through Him. God is not asking us to compete to be better than one another, but to help each other become more like God. Doing good things will not erase our sin and make us acceptable to GOD, but repenting of our sin and accepting salvation through Jesus Christ will allow us to please and be one with God.

Paul's letter may have shocked the Jewish believers and the Gentile (non-Jewish) believers because Paul said the Jews and Gentiles were all the same, and there was no distinction. Many of the Jewish believers were probably taught from childhood that they were the chosen people, so they may have believed God loved them more. But Paul tells them that God loves everyone. Some of the Gentile believers may have felt like they were second class Christians, or not as important, but Paul lets them know that through Jesus (not the law), everyone (Jew and Gentile) was considered equal.

Paul had many accomplishments, both as a Pharisee before he accepted Jesus and as a leader in the Christian church that he could brag about; but, he understood that his accomplishments did not make him better than anyone else. Paul's education as a Pharisee, the power given to him to find and put Christians in prison, and the fear many Christians had of him (when he was a Pharisee) was not a reason to brag. The many churches he started, the large numbers of people who accepted Jesus when he preached, his adventures escaping shipwreck and assassination attempts as a Christian leader were not reasons to brag. In Galatians 6:14a (NLV), Paul states "I do not want to be proud of anything except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

Many non-Christians base their personal worth, value, and potential for future success on their accomplishments, good looks, persuasive speech, or connection to and favor with influential people. This is similar to the wrestlers who count on their tough names or intimidating costumes to win a wrestling match. None of these things can substitute for faith in Jesus, the secret weapon that always causes us to win in the final analysis—when we trust and believe in Jesus for our salvation. We can never work hard enough or be good enough on our own to become righteous without Jesus because Jesus is our righteousness.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ Have you observed a situation where bragging and competition between two people hurt their friendship? Give examples (without including names) of how competition can hurt a friendship?
- ▣ When do people need to hear about God's unconditional love the most: When celebrated for winning competitions, or when they lose? When getting good grades, or when flunking a test or class? Why?
- ▣ Ask students to, daily—during the week, write three reasons why they need Jesus' unconditional love; and then pray that each student and teacher will prayerfully identify someone they can encourage by telling them about Jesus' unconditional love.
- ▣ End the class with a prayer that people the students know who feel unloved will come to know the unconditional love of Jesus.