

Parent Guide

THEO™

Teaching Children God's Word

God's Heart Volume 3

LESSON 7 - Justification

In this lesson, Luther and Belfry accidentally break Theo's valuable statue while playing a game of soccer. They try to tape it together, but it's a mess. Theo, rather than punishing them, forgives them and takes the opportunity to teach us about justification. We try to justify ourselves in many ways –“I'm not as bad as that guy,” or, “the devil made me do it,” or “no one's perfect!” Theo teaches that all of us have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The only way we can be saved is if someone without sin takes our place. Only Jesus can do this, because He is fully God and fully man. We see how Barabbas (whose name means “son of the father”) was set free, while Jesus (the Son of the Father) took Barabbas', as well as the rest of mankind's, place on the cross. Not only did Jesus take our sins upon Himself, but God places His righteousness on us who believe. This is justification.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Romans 3:23 (all fall short of God's glory)

Romans 8:10 (Spirit is life)

Luke 18: 9-14 (the Pharisee and the Tax Collector)

Galatians 2:16 (not justified by works)

James 2:14-22 (works are evidence of saving faith, justification)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Luther and Belfry break Theo's precious statue when they play soccer in the house. How do they react to breaking it? How does Belfry respond?
2. We do all sorts of things to justify ourselves when we do something wrong. Can you think of some ways we improperly respond when we do something bad?
3. What does it mean to justify someone? Remember the illustration of one man taking another man's punishment in the courtroom?
4. Because of our sinful nature, we cannot justify ourselves to God. Someone without blame must do it for us. Who is that person? How did God justify us through him?
5. How does Theo respond to Luther and Belfry when they break the statue? How does this mimic God's grace to us? Remember, because of Jesus, not only does God forgive our sins, but He goes even further: He clothes us in righteousness!

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Give everyone a piece of paper (plain, notebook, or construction will work). Have everyone tear up their piece of paper and try to put it back together. They can't do it, right? These torn pieces represents our lives before God. What can we do to make ourselves right in His eyes? Using cellophane tape or glue, try and piece the torn pieces back together. Once you've completed this, hold it up for everyone to see. Does it look the same as an untorn piece of paper? Obviously not. This is man's way of taping himself together before God. It doesn't work. Now take another piece of paper the same size as the torn one and, using a crayon, draw a cross on it. This piece of paper represents Jesus and His death on the cross for our salvation. It is perfect, it is untorn. Now, have the child say, "I believe in Jesus, and thank Him for taking away my sins on the cross." Place the paper with the cross over the torn one and tape it, so that when the child holds it up they are one. We are still torn because of sin, but when God looks at us He sees the perfect righteousness of His Son Jesus. This is justification!

FINAL THOUGHT

Jesus died on the cross in our place, in order to justify us to God and clothe us in His righteousness.

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for taking our place on the cross, for dying for our sins. May we be like the thief that saw Your righteousness and repent of our sins. Without you, we'd always be broken.

In Your name we pray, Amen

NIGHTLY DEVOTIONS

This lesson's devotionals will include various passages from the Bible. Read the passage each night and follow the devotional questions.

Day 1

Read Romans 3:23. Paul says that we are all sinful and fall short of God. However, Christ justifies us by His work on the cross. Think about why it is only Christ who can justify us to God. Praise Him and thank Him for His work on the cross tonight.

Day 2

Read Luke 18: 9-14. In this parable, Jesus teaches that it is impossible to earn justification, or to do anything that would forgive your sins. It's simply through a belief in Jesus that we can be justified. We are born broken and only Jesus can fix us.

Day 3

Read Galatians 2:16. As we learned last night, it is not by works that we are justified. Why not? Why can't we earn our justification ourselves? Think about Luther and Belfry trying to fix the broken statue themselves—how did it turn out? Not so good! Tonight as you pray, remind yourself that it is your faith in God and Jesus that justifies you.

Day 4

Read James 2:14-22. While works don't save us, good works are evidence of a saving faith. When we do good deeds, we do them because we are justified. We aren't earning our salvation, but act because we are saved—good deeds are the fruit of our salvation! Think tonight about what good deeds you might be able to do this week and why you would do them.

Day 5

Read Romans 8:10. Because of Jesus' act on the cross, we are able to receive His Holy Spirit, which gives us life. Remember, nothing we do justifies us, other than our faith in Jesus. Pray tonight that the Spirit would encourage you in your faith and help you do good works when opportunities arise.

Day 6

Reflect tonight on justification. Because Jesus loves you, He died on the cross to remove all of your sins. Because of God's grace, He now justifies sinners through faith. We could never do this by ourselves, because we are sinners. Thank Jesus tonight for dying on the cross for you. Pray that you would live a life worthy of His great sacrifice.

LESSON 8 - Adoption

In this lesson, Theo brings home a new friend, Bumper the dog, and adopts him into the family. Luther and Belfry fear Bumper is going to replace them and try to get rid of him—until Bumper saves them from Scratch the cat. Theo describes the historical context of first century adoption to teach how believers in Jesus Christ are adopted into God's family. In Rome, adoption was a legal process that made a child part of a family, but more than that, the family loved and cared for the child unconditionally as if it were their own. Paul describes our relationship with God in the same terms. God adopts anyone who puts his or her faith in His son, Jesus Christ. Through Christ, we're made heirs with Christ to all of God's blessings. And, because we're secure in Christ, nothing can separate us from God! Because we're His children, God loves us unconditionally and will protect and care for us.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Romans 8:15-23 (adopted heirs of God)
Galatians 3:25-26 (faith in Christ)
Colossians 1:14 (saved from darkness)
Galatians 4:6-7 (help of the Spirit)
1 Peter 1:3-5 (imperishable inheritance)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Theo act toward his newly adopted pet? Do you remember some of the nice things he does for the dog?
2. God desires that we belong to His family. How does He adopt us as His children?
3. Because our belief in Jesus allows us to be adopted by God, we're treated as the children of God. What are some ways God might act toward us once we're adopted as His children?
4. In Biblical times, adoption was more than a legal act. It made a child a vital part of the adopting family. How should we behave once we're made children of God? How do you think a child of God should act?
5. Nothing can separate us from God's unconditional love. How does this encourage us when we struggle to obey Him?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Gather drawing paper and drawing utensils. Tell your family that everyone is going to draw a “family portrait.” Have everyone draw the family and Jesus together. How can your children show that they are children of God? How might they represent this adoption with color, symbols, etc? Remind your kids that it is through our faith in Jesus that allows us to be adopted by God. Once you’ve finished drawing, have everyone share their family picture and describe how they chose to depict themselves and the family as adopted children of God. Spend some time discussing ways you can live up to God’s graceful adoption.

FINAL THOUGHT

God adopts anyone who puts their faith in His son, Jesus Christ. Because we’re secure in Jesus, nothing can separate us from God.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for adopting us as Your children and loving us unconditionally. Because of Jesus, we’re secure in You and nothing can ever separate us from you. May we live as obedient and loving children.

In Jesus’ name, amen.

NIGHTLY DEVOTIONS

This lesson’s devotionals include various passages from the Bible.

Day 1

Read Romans 8:15-17. Paul says that we’re adopted as children of God and heirs of God. An heir inherits the things of his or her father, in this case God the Father. This means we inherit His blessings and most amazingly, salvation and eternal life! Thank God tonight for adopting you as His child.

Day 2

Look at Roman 8:23. As Christians, we’re waiting for the return of Jesus and the completion of our inheritance—salvation. While we’re adopted now, our adoption is fully complete when we enter heaven with God. Pray tonight for steadfastness in your faith.

Day 3

Read Galatians 3:25-26. What makes us a son or daughter of God? Answer: Our faith in Jesus and His work on the cross. Pray tonight that you would continue to be faithful. What are some practical steps you might take this week to grow in faith?

Day 4

Read Galatians 4:6-7. When we put our faith in Jesus, God gives us the help of the Holy Spirit to encourage us and remind us of our adoption. The Spirit helps to guide us in God's Truth. Pray tonight for the Spirit to show you ways to better obey God and to glorify him.

Day 5

Read 1 Peter 1:3-5. Notice Peter's description of the inheritance a child of God receives: it's imperishable, it cannot go away! God promises us an eternal inheritance as His children. Thank God tonight for His gracious inheritance and for His guarding of you (verse 5).

Day 6

Reflect on what it means to be adopted by God. It is because God loves us that He adopts us as His children. We should then live our lives obediently to His commands and instruction. Jesus paid the price of our adoption when He died on the cross for us. Praise God as you pray tonight.

LESSON 9 - A Day in Prayer

Whenever we pray, we have a private audience with the Creator of the universe! In this episode, Theo prays throughout the day, from morning to bedtime, and illustrates each verse of the Lord's Prayer. Theo reminds us of Jesus' words, that those who ask not, receive not. Luther and Belfry try to find some food, but can't find any on their own. It isn't until Belfry asks Theo for food, that he receives it. This is just like praying to God: if we ask, we receive. However, it's important to remember that when we pray, we pray with the right motives, seeking God's desire for our lives, not our own wishes and desires.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Matthew 6:9-13 (Lord's Prayer)

John 14:13 (whatever is asked, He will do)

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (pray without ceasing)

Psalms 7:17 (praise the Lord)

Matthew 7:7-11 (ask and it will be given)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Luther and Belfry try to find some food on their own, without asking Theo. How does that turn out for them? How does Belfry end up getting a piece of cheese?
2. Theo reminds us that when we pray, we pray directly to the Creator of the universe. We should take this privilege seriously, praying with the right motives. What are these motives? What are some incorrect motives?
3. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray that God's will would be done. Sometimes God's will isn't exactly what we want, isn't easy, or simple, but we must remember that God's will is always perfect and pleasing to Him. How can we obey His will? How can prayer help us?
4. Do you remember how Jesus prayed in Gethsemane before being crucified? What did He ask God? He asked that God might spare him, if it was His will to do so. Jesus then yielded obediently to the will of God, even though it meant going to the cross. What can we learn from Jesus' obedience in prayer?
5. The Apostle Paul says to pray without ceasing (meaning prayer should be as natural as breathing!). How can you be more mindful of prayer throughout your day?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

For this activity, everyone in the family will create a prayer schedule for themselves. Gather paper and writing utensils. Share ways you each can pray throughout the day, from morning to night. You don't have to account for every minute of the day, but try and come up with a few items to pray for in the morning, afternoon, evening, and night. Create a schedule on the paper by marking the hours in the day and listing what you might pray (for example: Lunch Time, thank God for providing food to eat). Once everyone has completed their schedule, share them with the family. The schedules can be folded up and carried with you throughout the day as a reminder of what to pray for.

FINAL THOUGHT

Prayer is an incredible privilege where we get to speak to God directly. We should always seek His will and desires when we pray.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we praise You for Your power and Your grace. Thank You for allowing us to speak to You and for listening to our prayers. Helps us understand and accomplish Your will. May we be prayerful every day.

In Jesus' name, amen.

NIGHTLY DEVOTIONS

This lesson's devotionals include various passages from the Bible.

Day 1

Read Matthew 6:9-13 (the Lord's Prayer). Jesus teaches us how to pray. Notice how we praise God for His power and how we should pray for God's will to be accomplished. How can you pray specifically for God's will to occur in your life and surroundings? You might pray tonight for your school, church, friends, and family.

Day 2

Read John 14:13. Jesus says that whatever you pray in Jesus' name, God will answer. This doesn't mean that if you ask for something selfish God will grant it to you, but that if you pray for God's will to be done in the world, it will be accomplished. Remember, our prayers should be specific and according to His will, always with a motive to please God.

Day 3

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Paul says to pray without ceasing. Remember how Theo said prayer should be as natural as breathing? How can this be? Can you think of some ways to pray throughout the day? Not all prayers have to be long, some can be quick bursts of thanksgiving when, for example, you're about to eat your breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Think of ways to pray more often tonight.

Day 4

Read Psalm 7:17. Prayer isn't just about asking God for things, it's also important to praise Him and thank Him for all He's done for us. When you pray tonight, thank and praise God for the specific things He's done in your life.

Day 5

Read Matthew 7:7-11. When we ask God with the right motives, He will provide for us. Remember, God knows what is best for us and will give us good things that He knows will best help us. Pray tonight that you would better understand what's best for you. Ask that God would provide for you.

Day 6

Reflect tonight on prayer. Praise God for the wonderful opportunity we have to speak directly to our Creator! Pray tonight that God would guide your prayers to have godly motives. Pray tonight for discernment in how to pray—remember, God gives us the Holy Spirit to help us understand His Word and how to pray!