



# ADOPTION: How do I fit into God's family?

## Facilitator's Guide

RESCUE

### 🎯 OVERVIEW

This lesson will dive into the fact that followers of Christ are adopted by God. When we accept Jesus as Lord, our sins are washed away. But we're also accepted into the family of God and given a new sense of belonging and purpose. Our lives were once characterized by sin, death, and alienation from God. Now they're marked by love, righteousness, and acceptance. And once we've been accepted into God's family, it's our job to pass that feeling of belonging on to others.

### ? OPENING QUESTIONS:

- Has anyone here ever felt lonely? What made you feel that way?
- How does it feel to belong to a group, to a family? Why is being in a family important?

### 💬 WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT:

There's a story that goes like this: a young boy spends weeks carefully carving a toy boat for himself. He makes it carefully and loves it. But one day someone steals the boat from the boy, and he becomes heartbroken. A while later, he passes a pawn shop and sees the toy boat for sale in the window. The boy asks how much it costs to buy it back. The shop owner answers, "A lot." So, he works hard and saves his money for months. Finally, he saves enough and joyfully buys back the boat he made. He is delighted to have it back. Do you see where this is going?

We are like the boat. We are made by God and bought by God and loved by God. We are his, twice over. God made us and saved us (we're justified). And God loves us as part of his family (we're adopted). Even though we are completely unworthy of being in God's family because of our sin, God loves us enough to send Jesus as the sacrifice for us, to give us his grace. This saving grace is free through faith in Jesus.

Because of Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross for our sins, we are justified in the eyes of God. Justification simply means that God forgives our sins. And it's even better than that. Not only is the guilt for our sins removed, but we also are seen as righteous and as part of God's family. God doesn't just see an absence of sin when looking at us—he sees a loved member of his family. In reading John 1:1–18 and Ephesians 2:1–10, you will learn how Jesus came to save humanity from sin. Pay special attention to the idea that those who believe are adopted into the family of God.

**Leader's Note:** *Justification* means "to set something right" or "to declare righteous." Remember it this way: when I'm justified, it's "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned. Christ's sacrifice repairs the bridge between God and us that was broken because of sin. *Adoption* means "to take voluntarily as one's own child." Its synonyms include acceptance, approval, and embracing.

**Read:** John 1:1–18 and Ephesians 2:1–10





### **Discuss:**

- According to John 1:1–18, what does it take to become part of God's family?
- According to Ephesians 2:1–10, what does it take to become a child of God?
- How are justification and adoption different? Can you explain the difference between them as if you were explaining it to a small child?



### **A SECOND LOOK:**

Debs Walker saw a bundle of blankets left on a bench. She peered in closely. They moved! It was a tiny baby, wrapped in soaking blankets, left behind by his mom. Debs unwrapped him. He was covered in mold and something called scabies, a skin disease of small, itchy, red spots. He also had a neck injury. Debs knew what she had to do. With her husband Josh, she got the baby the help he needed. They had to make sure the baby was both healed and loved.

When they found the birth mom, they learned the baby's name was Isaiah. They also found out some sad details about baby Isaiah's early life. His mom would dip his pacifier in hot sauce to toughen him up and make him stop crying. Isaiah's mom was living on the streets and didn't have the resources to care for the many needs of a crying baby. But even then, it still doesn't make sense.

Isaiah's mom asked Debs and Josh to take care of Isaiah until she was able to get on the right track to be a parent. Eventually, she realized that would never happen. So, two months after finding Isaiah wrapped in soaking blankets, Debs and Josh were asked to adopt baby Isaiah. Josh said this about becoming Isaiah's dad: "I count it a real honor that God trusted Isaiah into our care." Debs felt the same—Isaiah is a blessing to their family.<sup>1</sup>

### **Discuss:**

- How is the way Josh and Debs adopted Isaiah similar to what God has done for us?
- When Josh and Debs adopted Isaiah, in their eyes he truly became their child, 100 percent. Should Isaiah ever question their unconditional love for him, or think he has to earn their love?
- Do you ever question God's love for you or find yourself thinking that you have to work hard to stay in the family and earn God's love?
- What does it mean to be part of a family? Can any of Isaiah's actions change his status as part of the family? Can any of your actions change your status as part of God's family?



**RATE IT:** Give yourself a 1 to 5 rating. How are you doing at living as God's adopted child?

1

I'm always worried  
I'll lose his love.

3

I find myself working hard to  
earn his love.

5

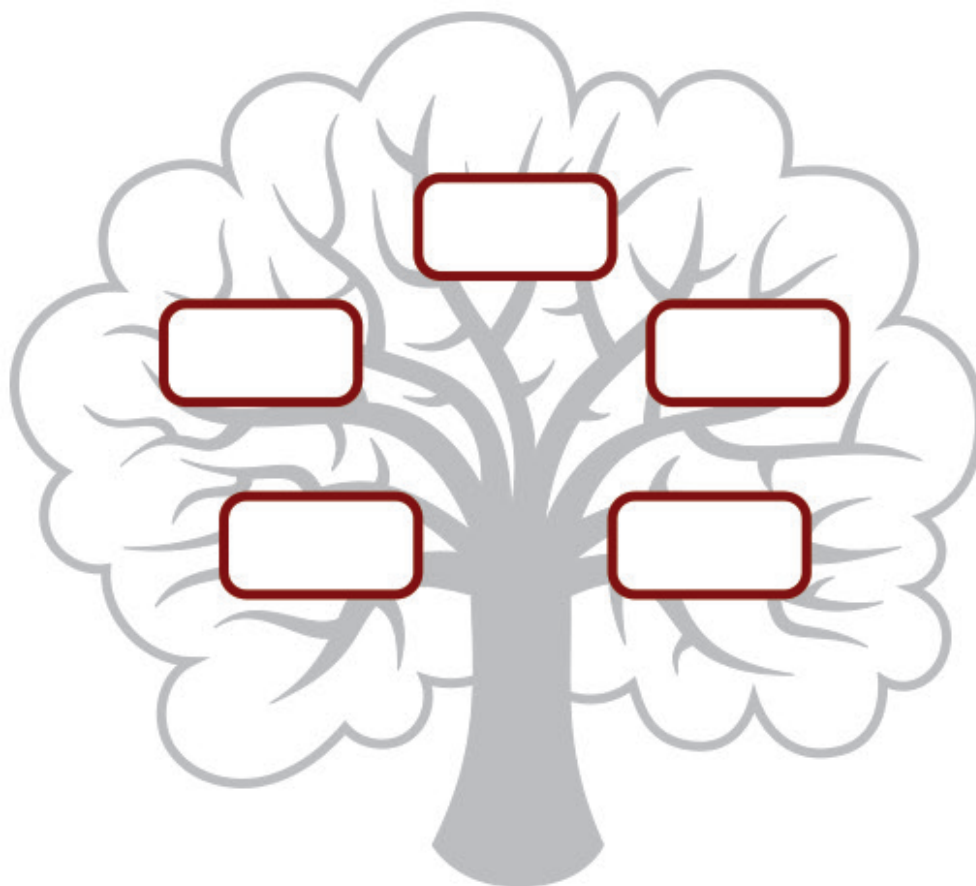
I work hard to serve and  
love others because of his  
love.



### LIVE IT OUT: Faith tree

*What you'll need: Give each student a piece of paper, something to write with, and an envelope.*

1. Do you recognize this picture? Yes, it's a family tree. You probably filled out your fair share of these back in elementary school. Don't worry—this isn't an ordinary family tree. Instead of filling it out with your blood relatives, think about your spiritual family. Who makes you feel like you are loved and accepted unconditionally? Who makes you feel like you're part of their family, even if you aren't related? This may be a friend, a mentor, or anyone who makes you feel like you belong. Write the names of these people in the spaces provided.



2. Now, pick one of those people who has been especially influential. Choose someone who makes you feel like you belong, like you're part of a family. Take the next few minutes to write a letter to that person. Encourage them by specifically explaining what they have done to welcome you and make you feel like you belong. This week, deliver that letter, preferably in person.

While you are writing this letter thanking them for their role in your life, reflect on what they do to make you feel like you belong. Is it something about them? The way they speak to you? The way they treat you? Can you mimic that person? What can you do to show other people love and unconditional acceptance like the person you're writing the letter to?



### ↓ APPLY IT:

If you deeply understand that you are loved and accepted by God, how can you spread that love? When someone really “gets” the concept of justification, it gives them a strong sense of love and acceptance. If you internalize that feeling of love and belonging and make it part of your life, it washes away the insecurities most people feel on a daily basis. It flows out from you to other people. So how can you make others feel the same way? What can you do this week to help people feel like they belong?

#### **Be specific:**

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone that can keep you accountable?

**Leader's Note:** Whenever students make applications, challenge them to be specific. It's one thing to say, “I'm going to trust God more.” The truth is, our students won't really know if they did this, or if they grew in trust over the week. It's another thing to say, “Every morning this week before I eat breakfast, I'm going to tell God that today is his and that I trust him, and I'm going to ask him to give me the strength to replace worries with trust.” Challenge your students to answer the questions under the “Be Specific” section. You can even have them pair up, share their applications, and ask for accountability from their partner.

### 💬 THINK ABOUT IT:

Do you really feel the freedom of being a child of God? It's a pretty amazing experience to be able to love and trust God like a child does. Henri Nouwen's spiritual mentor understood that when he gave him this blessing:

“May all your expectations be frustrated. May all your plans be thwarted. May all of your desires be withered into nothingness, that you may experience the powerlessness and poverty of a child and sing and dance in the love of God the Father, the Son and the Spirit”<sup>2</sup>

\*\*\*Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of LeaderTreks is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by LeaderTreks; neither does LeaderTreks vouch for their content.

<sup>1</sup>Faithwire. “How An Abandoned Baby Started A Movement” <http://www.faithwire.com/go/how-an-abandoned-baby-started-a-movement> (accessed July 26, 2017)

<sup>2</sup>Jimmy Abegg. 2000. *Ragamuffin prayers*. Eugene, Or: Harvest House.