

Teen Devotion

Year A – Last Sunday

The Time In Between



One truth shared: God neither sacrificed his justice for the sake of his love—nor did he sacrifice his love for the sake of his justice. God sacrificed himself for the sake of you.

“As I looked,

“thrones were set in place,

and the Ancient of Days took his seat.

His clothing was as white as snow;

the hair of his head was white like wool.

His throne was flaming with fire,

and its wheels were all ablaze.

A river of fire was flowing,

coming out from before him.

Thousands upon thousands attended him;

ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.

The court was seated,

and the books were opened.

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

By the Book

It’s not fair.

How come your siblings can stay out late but *you* have a curfew? How come *you* get a B- on your paper and your classmate (who plagiarized their paper) got an A? How come *you* have to sit on the bench when your teammate (who is always late for practice) gets way more playing time than you?

That happens, doesn’t it? Coaches can sometimes care more about conference trophies than being consistent. Teachers don’t always see the corners that other students cut. And our parents aren’t always balanced in how they parent us versus our siblings.

Not so with God.

In Daniel 7, the “Ancient of Days”—God the Father—enters the scene to preside from his throne of judgment on the Last Day. Such a holy judge neither judges unfairly, nor arbitrarily. He doesn’t wield his gavel with favoritism. He is completely just and righteous.

He’s not like coaches, teachers, or parents who can’t see the full picture: he’s witnessed everything. He meticulously judges by the book—and those books *will* be opened. John’s vision in Revelation explains the books that Daniel saw. John writes, “Then I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book

was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”

So, how do you feel about God judging by the book?

Be it self-determination or self-absorption, our world is inclined to ground our confidence before God in ourselves. “I’m a pretty good person,” we say. “Why wouldn’t God let me into his heaven?” We do our best, and sugar coat our worst. We cherry pick the glamorous, and glaze over the gross—and somehow, we think God might not notice.

But he does. Our God is a judge who judges by the book. And if we insist on earning our entry into heaven by virtue of that book that contains all that we’ve ever done—we’ll find nothing but filthy rags.

But in the courtroom of heaven, we *do* have one who speaks to the Father on our defense. Because God the Father isn’t the only judge presiding. The one pleading your case and pronouncing you “not guilty” is the very Son of God, the King of heaven and earth—your Savior Jesus.

You see, God doesn’t forget nor forgo his justice. He judges by the book. But when you and I would have stood convicted and condemned in the courtroom of heaven, our loving Savior steps in. And those sins on our ledger? Jesus claimed them as his own.

But he didn’t just claim our sinfulness: he claimed the punishment for those sins, too. God’s unrelenting justice dropped on the God-man on Calvary, all because of his unrelenting love for you. Jesus didn’t come to sidestep God’s wrath, but to satisfy it by being the blameless, atoning sacrifice for our sins on the cross.

Can you see how Jesus changes everything? On that day that you and I stand before the Ancient of Days, your God will see your sins buried in Christ’s death. He will see when you were clothed with Christ’s holiness at your baptism. He will see how his Spirit dwells within you. On that day, the books will be opened, and your God will judge by the book! And he will see your name in the book of life!

Prayer: O Ancient of Days, I plead my case before you today because Christ is by my side. Thank you for your unending love that will never give up on me. With my confidence in Christ alone, I will believe and live life because you already see my name in your book of life. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

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By the Book

Starting the Discussion: This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.

What do you think it takes to be a good lawyer? What do you think it takes to be a good judge?

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love." How would you explain this in your own words?

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- While defendants are legally able to represent themselves without a lawyer in a court of law, most lawyers will advise against representing yourself. Can you think of some reasons representing yourself in a court of law is a bad idea?
 1. a lack of knowledge of the law;
 2. a lack of familiarity with legal procedures in a courtroom;
 3. a lack of experience in how to present evidence and question witnesses;
 4. an emotional tie to the case compromises your objectivity and decision making.
- Why is it even more inadvisable to represent ourselves in God's court of law?
- Read Job 16:19-21; Job 19:25-27; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; and 1 John 2:1. Who is representing us in God's courtroom?
- In view of these passages, why can we as Christians look forward to judgment day?

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

God neither sacrificed his justice for the sake of his love—nor did he sacrifice his love for the sake of his justice. God sacrificed himself for the sake of you.

- How do we see God's justice at the cross of Christ?
- How do we see God's love at the cross of Christ?