

Acts 3:12–19

Ps. 4

1 John 3:1–7

Luke 24:36b–48

Children of God

**Goal for
the Session**

Children will celebrate that they, together with others from young to old, are children of God.

■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

Focus on 1 John 3:1–7

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” David L. Bartlett

One of the main themes in our passage is the assurance of the present and the promise of the future: verses 1–4. In the Gospel of John, which is the source book for this epistle’s theology, eternal life is understood both as the promise of life with God beyond death and as genuine, fruitful, Spirit-guided life in the present (see the dual assurances of John 11:25–26). Our passage also claims that the relationship between believers and God has both a present and a future, eschatological dimension. In the present believers have the assurance that they are God’s children.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Ronald Cole-Turner

The source of our oddness is the love of God that makes us into God’s children. Knowing that we are loved by such a love, confessing it and consenting to it, we agree to be made different, to let ourselves enter a process of transformation that uproots us from our natural identity and reconfigures the fundamental definitions of our lives. Our birth certificate states our natural identity. Our baptism certificate declares our true identity. By God’s love, we are no longer strangers, orphans lost in the cosmos, without hope or direction except for our own imagination and self-rescue. We are loved, claimed, and redefined as nothing less than God’s children.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Claudia Highbaugh

The most difficult part of this passage is working to open minds to a central kind of relationship that does not define itself by difference. In this text, cooperation is the goal; difference in name and culture and place is a distraction to the goal of right relationship. Children of God attend to right relationships. In the early church, people formed tight communities based on their faith in Jesus. Our job is to work at this sense of relationship one to another, and sometimes that makes us go back to start over.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” William L. Self

The opening chapters of this letter make it clear that Christians do sin. We not only need to have a clear understanding of God’s grace and an experience with that grace through Jesus; we also need to know the power and destructive nature of sin. No compromise can be made with evil. This text makes it clear, and our churches should take note. The journey to the center of the faith proclaims without compromise John’s way of making believers stronger and protecting them against the destructive message of those who would lead them astray. We would do well to learn from him.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:1–7

Focus on Your Teaching

“You’re looking so grown up!” Children yearn to be regarded as grown up. This can be seen in their desire to wear the styles of older youth, listen to music that older siblings like, and be independent. Help learners to be thankful for being a child in God’s family. Offer examples of elders in your church who live for Jesus and gratefully claim the name “child of God.” Help children to develop relationships with faithful youth and adults who can be their guides as they grow up and grow into being a child of God.

Dear Lord, I am so thankful that you love me as your child. Help me grow into full appreciation of this precious gift. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- small table or large box
- white cloth
- cross
- yarn or string
- scissors
- fill-able plastic eggs
- sand or aquarium gravel
- duct tape
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- newsprint or markerboard
- marker
- tape measure
- Bible
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- Color Pack 14, 30
- crayons, pencils

For Responding

- option 1: Color Pack 14, scissors
- option 2: colored copier paper, pencils, markers, scissors, glue sticks
- option 3: copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock, scissors, tape, markers

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, on newsprint or markerboard, print 1 John 3:1: “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.” Cut a piece of yarn or string for each child, making each one a different number of exact inches between 8" and 60". Cut around the books and cut the slits on copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Folding Book), one per child. If you are using option 1 in Responding, cut apart the squares on Color Pack 14. If you are using option 2, bring four pieces of copier paper in different colors for each child; make arrangements for your class to visit a group of youth or adults.

Welcome the children as they arrive and have them help to make a worship table by covering a small table or large box with a white cloth and placing a cross on it. Show learners how to put a small amount of sand or aquarium gravel in one half of a fill-able plastic egg, put on the other half, and shake gently. They can create the sound they want by adding or subtracting sand or gravel. Help learners place a thin strip of duct tape on the seam to seal the shaker. Print his or her name on the tape.

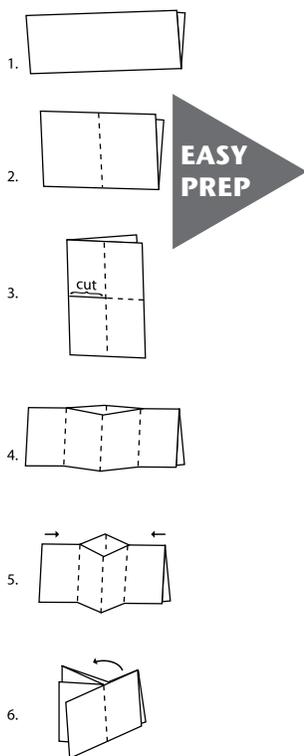
Invite learners to gather around the worship table and use the shakers to accompany their singing of “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy” (Color Pack 30; track 12 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Think together about who uses “shakers” to make music: adults in bands, children in music class, infants. People of all ages can praise God! Place the shakers on the worship table.

I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy
 down in my heart,
 Down in my heart, down in
 my heart;
 I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy
 down in my heart,
 Down in my heart to stay.

God is with us, God is with
 us, praise ye the Lord;
 Praise ye the Lord, praise ye
 the Lord.
 God is with us, God is with
 us, praise ye the Lord;
 Praise ye the Lord always.

Many parts of today's focus scripture are challenging for young children to understand. This session focuses on a small portion of the reading. When children are older, they will explore the reading in more depth.



**EASY
 PREP**

EXPLORING

Open your Bible to 1 John 3 and say this is where the Bible reading is found. Point to 1 John 3:1 on the newsprint or markerboard. Read it aloud as you point to each word. Invite learners to say it with you. Say that these words were written to some Christians who lived long ago. Wonder why it is important to remind Christians that they are God's children. Ask: ✨ Why does God call us children of God?

Give each learner a piece of yarn or string. Demonstrate how to hold one end with both hands and then move one hand along the entire length of the ribbon while reciting the verse. Invite learners to do this as you read the verse in unison. Ask the children to work together to measure each person's yarn with a tape measure. Have learners take turns reporting the number of inches they measured. Respond to each one by using the number of inches to complete this sentence: "A __-year-old is a child of God." Comment that no matter how old we are, we are still called children of God. Set the yarn aside.

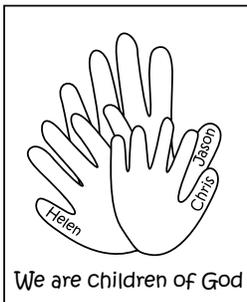
Give each child a book cut from Resource Sheet 1 (Folding Book) and set out pencils and crayons. Lead the children in folding their books, following the diagram in the sidebar. Have each one print his or her name on the cover. Read the booklet in unison, pausing at each page for learners to draw the illustration as noted. Take a moment to sign names to one another's books on pages 7 and 8. Form pairs and have learners practice reading their books to one another. Encourage them to read the books to someone at home and get his or her autograph too. Discuss:

✨ What is exciting about being a child of God?

RESPONDING

Mark the options you will use:

- All God's Children** Children will play a matching game that illustrates the diversity of God's children. Place the cards cut from Color Pack 14 facedown on the table or floor. Have learners take turns choosing two cards. If the cards don't match, have them replace the cards facedown. If they do match, all learners call out, "Child of God!" Invite learners to imitate the facial expression on the cards they match. Emphasize that whatever mood we're in, we're still children of God. Invite learners to tell what they like most about God's love for them.
- God's Children of All Ages** Children will seek out other children of God as they create handprint art. Distribute copier paper and pencils. Have children trace around one of their hands and write their names on the thumb. Comment that there are many more children of God in your church. Give each child two pieces of copier paper and a pencil. Go together to visit a group of youth or adults. Have each child ask two people to trace one hand and write his or her name on the thumb. Back in your learning space, have



Option: Display the connected cross wall hanging where others in the church will see it. Have extra copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Connecting Crosses), markers, and tape available for other members to design, sign, and attach crosses.

children cut out their own handprints and the two they got from others. Demonstrate how to glue the largest handprint in the center of a piece of paper and then glue the other handprints on top of it, going from largest to smallest and lining up the bottoms of the handprints. Have children print “We are children of God” under the handprints. Encourage them to show these to their families and compare the sizes of their hands. They can remind their families that people of all ages are children of God.

- 3. Connected in Love** Children will create a colorful cross display to celebrate being children of God. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Connecting Crosses) and scissors. Point out that they have two connected crosses on their paper. Have learners cut out the crosses, being careful not to cut them apart. Set out markers and have them print their first name on one of the crosses. Invite learners to decorate each of their crosses with a different design. Connect all learners’ crosses edge-to-edge and tape together on the back side. Display the connected crosses in your learning area. Comment that the crosses all started out the same, just like each learner has the same name, “Child of God.” Affirm that we are all connected through Christ’s love—we share the same name—but we also are unique.

CLOSING

Gather with learners around the worship table. Invite them to arrange photos cut from Color Pack 14 around the cross, to remind everyone of the large family of God’s children.

Teach the line, “We are children of God.” Have each one pick up his or her shaker and shake it as each says the line again. Explain that during the closing prayer you will point to them when it is time for them to say their line of the prayer and shake their shakers. Pray aloud:

Dear Lord, when we are babies,

We are children of God.

When we are in elementary school,

We are children of God.

When we are teenagers,

We are children of God.

When we are adults,

We are children of God.

Forever and always,

We are children of God.

And all of God’s children say,

Amen!

Option: Save the shakers for the children to use as they sing in upcoming sessions.

April 18, 2021
Children of God

Grades K-2
Resource Sheet 1

Folding Book

<p>Draw a heart here.</p>	<p>See what love the Father has given us,</p>	<p>1 John 3:1</p> <p>Illustrated by _____ name</p>
<p>Draw a cross here.</p>	<p>and that is what we are.</p>	
<p>Draw a picture of yourself, a child of God.</p>	<p>that we should be called children of God.</p>	<p>Collect autographs from other Children of God.</p>

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Grades K–2
Resource Sheet 2

Connecting Crosses

