

Acts 3:12–19
Ps. 4
1 John 3:1–7
Luke 24:36b–48

Remember Who You Are

Goal for the Session

Tweens will investigate 1 John's portrait of God's children and aspire to live out this identity each day.

■ 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

YOU WILL NEED

- white cloth
- gold or yellow streamers or ribbons
- Christ candle, matches
- Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*; CD player
- study Bible
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- colored pencils or fine-tipped markers
- Color Pack 14, 31
- fine-tipped permanent marker

For Responding

- option 1: Color Pack 15, scissors
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2, materials listed there
- option 3: newsprint or markerboard, markers, digital or cell phone cameras, laptop or tablet with presentation software

Alleluia! Allelu!

Alleluia! Allelu! Jesus has been raised!
 Alleluia! Allelu! Let his name be praised!
 The angel at the break of day
 Rolled the giant stone away.
 Alleluia! Allelu! Jesus has been raised!

Focus on Your Teaching

Most tweens, like most adults, live busy and complicated lives. In this busyness it is easy for them to forget who they are, their true identity as God's children. Being a child of God may feel like a "secret identity" to them—they may not want others to know they are Christians and participate in the life of the church. Help them explore how in their caring actions for others, their identity is truly revealed. Empower them to embrace this identity and grow in discipleship.

Holy God, be with me as I live out my identity as your child. May my words and actions reveal you to these tweens in small and large ways. Amen.

■ LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, if you are using option 1 in Responding, cut apart the photos on Color Pack 15. If you are using option 3, find out what kind of permission is required to post photos of members on your church Web site or to show them in worship.

Greet tweens as they arrive. Ask volunteers to spread the white cloth in the center of your meeting space, arrange some gold or yellow streamers or ribbons on it, and place the Christ candle on it. Gather around the Christ candle and light it. Say that this is the third Sunday of the Easter season. Invite learners to tell why Easter is important to children of God. Sing "Alleluia! Allelu!" (track 1 on *Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*).

Review the "All" response, and then lead the following litany:

Leader: Jesus Christ was dead, but he now lives forever and ever!

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Leader: Because Jesus lives, we also will live abundantly and eternally!

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus, and guide your children.

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Extinguish the candle.

Initiate a discussion about belonging by asking tweens to think about groups to which they belong, such as sports team, scouting group, musical group, school club, or church youth group. Invite each learner to name one group, then ask:

- ❖ Who is the leader of this group?
- ❖ What responsibilities do you have as a member of this group?
- ❖ How do other people know you are a member of this group?

Say that today's Bible reading is about belonging.

EXPLORING

Distribute Bibles and ask learners to turn to 1 John. Remind them to look in the table of contents if they need help. Have learners turn in their Bibles to locate 2 John and 3 John. Read aloud the following background information:

These three books were originally letters sent to members of some of the first churches. They were written to help new Christians learn more about living as Jesus' followers. All three letters were probably written by the same person. It sometimes was difficult to be a Christian in those days. In many communities, Christians were not liked. They were treated badly. Letters like 1, 2, and 3 John were sent to encourage people and give them hope. Christians today read these letters to learn more about being Jesus' followers.

Explain they will read today's Scripture from a resource sheet so they can mark it. Have learners set their Bibles aside and distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Children of God). Ask two volunteers to read aloud the passage, alternating verses.

Set out colored pencils or fine-tipped markers and have each learner choose three colors. Explain the marking exercise at the bottom of the resource sheet and then allow time for learners to complete it. After all finish, have learners compare the things they marked. Take time to clarify vocabulary and answer their questions. Use the passage notes and glossary in a study Bible to help with this.

Encourage learners to refer to their resource sheets as you discuss the passage:

- ❖ What does this Scripture tell you about being a follower of Jesus Christ?
- ❖ Why doesn't "the world" know that we are the children of God?

Show Color Pack 14. Invite tweens to consider what this picture might be saying about being the children of God and what they would title it. Ask:

- ❖ What can we say or do to let others know we are children of God?

Invite learners to use a fine-tipped permanent marker to write their responses on the hands in the picture.

**EASY
PREP**

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Children of God Skits** Tweens will act out their ideas of what it means to live as God's children in the world. Set out photos cut from Color Pack 15. Wonder together about what difference being a child of God might make to these people as they do their jobs each day. Ask: In what ways would knowing they are children of God affect what they say? What they do? Their attitude? Form pairs or groups of three. Give each small group a photo. Tell them to think about what the people in the picture might say or do as they live as God's child in that situation and plan how to act this out. Allow few moments for preparation, then have each small group present its skit. After the skits, discuss what difference being a child of God can make in learners' lives each day.
2. **Child of God ID** Learners will make reminders of their identity as God's child. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Child of God ID). Set out the materials. Read the information and directions on the sheet and help learners as needed as they work. After all have finished, discuss times when it might be especially important or helpful for a person to remember that he or she is one of God's children.
3. **Media Portrait** Learners will create a media portrait of the children of God in your church. Discuss with tweens how a portrait is artwork depicting groups or individuals. They will use photos and recordings to create a portrait of God's children in your church. Ask: How do children of God act in the world? What do they say and do? Work together to list the ways people in your church model this kind of living. Plan for learners to take digital photos or videos of individuals or groups in your church. Ask these individuals what it means to them to be a child of God. (Write these responses down if you are not making video recordings.) Seek to record members of all ages. Work with learners to make a media presentation of these interviews to post on your church Web site or to show during worship or at fellowship time. Make sure to get permission to do this from each person photographed or recorded. Invite learners to reflect on what they have learned about being children of God while doing this activity.

Recruit older youth or adults who have expertise in preparing media presentations. This activity can take several sessions, or it may be the beginning of an ongoing church project.

Let Us Love One Another

Let us love one another.
 God is love and loves us all.
 One that knows not love
 knows not God above.
 So, beloved, let us love one
 another.

Let us love our neighbors.
 God is love and loves us all.
 One that knows not love
 knows not God above.
 So, beloved, let us love one
 another.

CLOSING

Gather with learners around the Christ candle and light it. Sing "Let Us Love One Another" (Color Pack 31; track 16 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021).

Offer a call-and-response blessing. Begin by saying to the person on your right: "(Name), you have been blessed by God's love." The group responds: "(Name), remember you are a child of God." Repeat until each person has received the blessing.

Invite learners to exchange gestures and words of peace with one another. Say good-bye to learner by name, saying you hope to see them again next week.

Children of God

¹Think how much the Father loves us. He loves us so much that he lets us be called his children, as we truly are. But since the people of this world did not know who Christ is, they don't know who we are. ²My dear friends, we are already God's children, though what we will be hasn't yet been seen. But we do know that when Christ returns, we will be like him, because we will see him as he truly is. ³This hope makes us keep ourselves holy, just as Christ is holy.

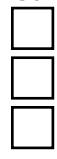
⁴Everyone who sins breaks God's law, because sin is the same as breaking God's law. ⁵You know that Christ came to take away sins. He isn't sinful, ⁶and people who stay one in their hearts with him won't keep on sinning. If they do keep on sinning, they don't know Christ, and they have never seen him.

⁷Children, don't be fooled. Anyone who does right is good, just like Christ himself.

—1 John 3:1–7, CEV

Directions: Choose three different colors. Fill in each box below with one of the colors. Use that color to underline the parts of the Scripture indicated.

Color



Underline what makes you one of the children of God.

Draw a circle around what gives you hope as a child of God.

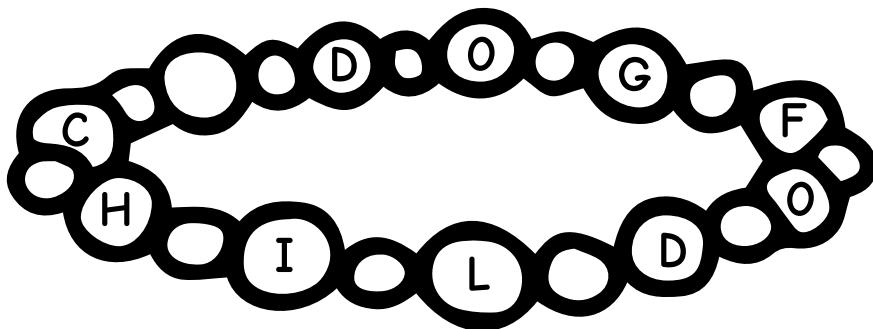
Put dots under any words or phrases you don't understand.

Child of God ID

An identity (ID) wristband gives information about the person who is wearing it. Make an ID wristband that identifies you as a child of God.

YOU WILL NEED

- alphabet beads (7mm size is good)
- colorful beads (7mm size is good)
- beading cord, stretchy or not stretchy
- scissors



Directions:

1. Decide what you want to say on your wristband, such as: Child of God; God loves me; Jesus follower; Loved by God. Lay out the alphabet beads you will need to spell this.
2. Without stretching it, wrap the cord around your wrist to measure how much you need. Add 2" to the length to allow for knots and then cut it.
3. Make an overhand knot in one end. You may need to make a double knot to keep the beads from slipping off.
4. String the beads in the correct order for the words you have chosen. You can add color beads at the ends or between the words.
5. When you have finished stringing your beads, tie a knot after the last bead. To make a wristband, tie the ends together. If you prefer, don't tie the ends together and tie the string of beads to a backpack or carabineer or tack it to a bulletin board at home.
6. When you see your ID, remember that you belong to the children of God and you are called to love and serve.