



8

Children of God

Key Theme

- God works in believers to accomplish His purpose.

Key Passages

- John 1:12; 1 John 3:1; Romans 8:16–17

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the new relationship between believers and God.
- Describe some benefits of being adopted as a child of God.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will practice the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet and reciting the verse to a friend.



Activity 1: Children of God Class Notes

Students will fill out the Children of God Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

God's Word says that all who believe in Jesus Christ are adopted into God's family. God becomes their Father, and Jesus becomes their Brother. All Christians are adopted into God's family and are brothers and sisters. As children of God, believers are heirs of God and can look forward to the promise of eternal life in heaven with the Father.



Activity 2: Bible Baseball

Students will take turns answering review questions and running the bases to score points for their teams.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO



COME ON IN

- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



CHILDREN OF GOD CLASS NOTES

- Print one Children of God Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print and cut out the Lesson Illustration from the Resource DVD-ROM.



BIBLE BASEBALL

- Print one set of the Bible Baseball Components from the Resource DVD-ROM. Keep the Bible Baseball Questions for your use.
- Cut out the Bible Baseball Hits and place them in a cup labeled "Hits."



MEMORY VERSE REVIEW GAME (OPTIONAL)

- This is an optional activity to use in some or all of the lessons to review the memory verse if time allows.
- Print onto cardstock and cut out one or two sets (depending on class size) of the Memory Verse Flashcards from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Keep the flashcards for use in Lessons 7–12.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheets
- Pencils or crayons

- Children of God Class Notes for each student
- Children of God Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Lesson Illustration
- Tape or poster putty

- Bible Baseball Questions
- Bible Baseball Hits
- Cup labeled "Hits"
- Masking tape

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Flashcards (two sets if you have a large class)
- Masking tape
- Optional: Timer



Memory Verse

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages listed above with this background.

Sinners are not saved by works of righteousness (Titus 3:5). They are not justified by works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16). The Bible tells us that it is by grace that we have been saved through faith. This grace is a free gift from God. It was God's plan that none would be saved by any works of righteousness, so no man could boast of his accomplishments (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Sinners who are saved by God's grace are not only forgiven, redeemed, and granted eternal life, but they are also adopted into God's family! The Bible tells us that all who receive Him—those who believe in His name—are given the right to become children of God (John 1:12). All true believers are led by the Spirit of God and are sons of God. They have received the Spirit of adoption and can now call God, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:14–15). Just like salvation, this adoption is completely of God. No one deserves it, nor could anyone achieve it. It is God, through His mercy and love, who allows this privilege to sinners. It is unlikely that anyone in this life will thoroughly grasp the significance of this truth—that God has granted such love to sinners that we should be called His children (1 John 3:1)!

But what does all of this mean to those who are saved? It means we can know and trust God—the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe—as a good and loving Father. The Bible tells us that even as a father pities his own children the Lord will pity those who fear Him (Psalm 103:13). We can know that He will give good gifts to those who ask Him, even more than an earthly father who gives good gifts to his children (Matthew 7:11).

Because God receives ALL believers into His family as adopted children, we know that our relationship with other Christians will change—they are brothers and sisters in Christ. Other believers—whether they are next door or across the globe—are now part of our family.

We are all children of God and no longer slaves but sons and heirs of God (Galatians 4:7). We are heirs and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). But what are we heirs of? In Christ, we have all been born again into an inheritance through His Resurrection. This inheritance promised to the children of God is incorruptible and will not decay like everything else on earth. It is an inheritance that is undefiled and perfect. It is unstained and free from all evil, unlike the things of the world. And this is an inheritance that will not fade away but will maintain all of its beauty and grandeur and promise—so unlike the

things of the world that fade, weaken, decline, and depreciate. This promised eternal inheritance is being reserved and kept in heaven for all believers (1 Peter 1:4).

This is the hope into which we are saved. As believers, we are eagerly waiting for the culmination of our inheritance, which includes the completion of our adoption and the redemption of our body. Through faith we wait, hoping for what we cannot see but believing and eagerly waiting for it with perseverance (Romans 8:23–25).

What a blessed thought to meditate on. We who are in Christ can come to God and cry, "Abba, Father!" The love that God has for us is everlasting and unquenchable. It led the Apostle Paul to proclaim,

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38–39).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

In his epistles, the Apostle Paul uses the picture of adoption as a metaphor for God's redemptive work in His chosen ones. Paul makes reference to the Roman law and culture of his day in which slaves had an inferior standing, sons had an honored standing, and adoption had a redemptive purpose. The better we understand the Roman adoption practices of the first century, the better we'll understand the ramifications of this wonderful doctrine for those of us who believe.

Roman adoption was a very serious matter because of what is called the *patria potestas* ("the possession of the father"). The *patria potestas* was the father's power over his family; and this power included absolute disposal and control over his children. Paul alludes to this absolute power of the father in Galatians chapter 4 where he says, "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave" (Galatians 4:1). In the early days of Rome the father's power actually included power over life and death. If a deformed child were born, for example, it was to be killed immediately. The *patria potestas* meant that in the case of divorce, custody of the children would always go to the father. Because of this absolute right of possession, adoption into another family was a very difficult and serious process.

To be legally adopted, a person had to pass from one *patria potestas* to another. For this transfer to happen in the Roman culture, two things had to be accomplished.

Both of these were done in the presence of seven witnesses so that the validity of the adoption could be defended beyond reasonable doubt.

1. The first step was a symbolic sale. According to Roman law, a father forfeited his potestas if he sold his son three times. For this reason, a legal ceremony took place in which the father went through the process of selling his son three times and then the son would pass completely to the possession of the adopter.
2. The “sale” of the son was followed by a legal ceremony. The adopting father went to a Roman magistrate in order to legally transfer the adopted son into his possession. When this process was completed, the adoption was complete.

It was common to adopt a freeman or a relative into a family. The adoption of a slave, however, was much less common. In the case of a master with no heir, a favored slave might be adopted for the purpose of having a legal heir to inherit the estate. In ancient times, a slave was never permitted to use the term Abba (father) or Imma (mother) when addressing the master or mistress of the house. But after the adoption, the slave-turned-son was considered a full son and was entitled to use these familial terms. The adopted son was now a co-heir with any natural-born sons. In fact, the adopted son became a member of the family just as if he had been born of the father.

The effect of adoption was fourfold for the adoptee: a change of family, a change of name, a change of home, and new responsibilities and privileges. In the same way, all who are adopted by God are made part of His family, bear His name, have heaven now as home, and have a new set of obligations and privileges as God's children.

Bearing all these facts in mind, we can better understand the magnitude of Paul's words as he wrote to the Roman Christians:

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs (Romans 8:15–17a).

As the seven witnesses could witness to the fact of an adoption, so the joint witness of the Holy Spirit and the spirit of believers witness to the same glorious fact—we are sons of God through faith in Christ.

What, then, should our response be as we realize we have been adopted as sons of God? First of all, God's amazing grace toward us should produce overflowing praise. We are no longer slaves to sin and under the power of the evil one. Rather, we are sons of God, and

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13). Our adoption gives us security as God's child—no one can snatch us out of the Father's hand (John 10:29). Through the Spirit we have intimate communication with God, characteristic of a father-son relationship (see Romans 8:26–27).

While God loves us, sustains us, and cares for us as our Father, we also have responsibilities to Him and to our new family. As God's children, we are to walk in obedience and holiness.

As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:14–19).

Furthermore, as believers who have been adopted into God's family, we are called to now show love, respect, and honor—brotherly love—to our brothers and sisters in Christ (Romans 12:10).

Just as an adoptee under Roman law was now a permanent member of that family, so we who are believers will always be sons and daughters of the King. We can be confident of the full, immutable claim God has placed on us as His children. For believers, this becomes our status and our identity. Surely now, how we live should honor the one who paid so great a cost to adopt us into His family.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Abba Father, praise your almighty name! It is a very precious gift that sinners can be called children of God. Those who believe and trust in Jesus are chosen and adopted and loved by you—the Creator of the universe. We become co-heirs with Christ and are blessed with an eternal inheritance. Oh, how I long for all my students to receive this great gift. Father, grant them wisdom and understanding as we study these truths. I pray the veil will be lifted from even the hardest heart so they would realize their own sinfulness and desire forgiveness, salvation, and adoption into the family of God.



COME ON IN

As students arrive ...

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Children of God Class Notes

MATERIALS

- Children of God Class Notes for each student
- Children of God Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students complete them as you study the lesson.

- The class notes are designed and written simply. Please encourage and help your students to read them as the class progresses. They are an excellent means to review important lesson principles.

We will complete these class notes as we study the lesson. Do not work ahead. We'll fill them in together.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we study our lesson today, we're going to talk about some special things that God does for believers.



Studying God's Word

- ❓ Refer to the Lesson 7 Lesson Theme Poster. **How can sinners be saved? Why is this gift on this Lesson Theme Poster?** Allow discussion. God gives a gift of grace to sinners. Sinners are saved by grace.
- ❓ Where does this grace come from? Can we buy it or work to earn it? Allow discussion.

Of course not! We don't pay for a free gift—especially one from God. What could we possibly give to God? No! The Bible says that we are saved and forgiven of sins by grace through faith in Jesus.

? So, can doing a lot of really good things get someone to heaven? *Allow discussion.*

Well, the answer to that is, “No!” But a lot of people think they can get to heaven by the good things they do. We learned last week that the Bible doesn’t teach that, right?

God offers sinners the free gift of grace, and that free gift will bring the sinner to salvation! Sinners saved by God’s grace are forgiven, redeemed, and granted eternal life. That is great news! But there is more good news for sinners who receive God’s free gift of grace!

READ THE WORD

John 1:12

Listen as I read what the Bible says happens when people receive and believe the truth about Jesus! I am going to read John 1:12. *Read John 1:12 enthusiastically.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

- Re-read the verses or the portion of the verse(s) that answer the questions you are asking of the text.

1 John 3:1

? What does this verse say about those who have received Jesus Christ? *John 1:12. They can become children of God.*

Wow! Did you hear that? Everyone who receives Jesus and believes in Him becomes a child of God! That means they are adopted into God’s family.

But wait! Listen to this verse. I think you will hear something you have heard before! It is 1 John 3:1. *Read 1 John 3:1.*

? What does God call those He loves—people who believe in Jesus? What do they become? *Re-read 1 John 3:1 if necessary. Children of God!*

God really wants to be sure we understand this. Listen to one more verse. Tell me what Christians are called! *Read Romans 8:16 emphasizing “children of God.”*

? So what are Christians called, according to the verse I just read? *Children of God.*

Yes! I think we all understand that now. All people who believe and trust in Jesus are in God’s family. They are adopted by God! They can be called children of God!

? If Jesus is God’s Son, and we are part of God’s family, then who would our Brother be? Who is God’s only begotten Son? *Allow discussion. Jesus!*

Yes! The privilege of being adopted into God’s family means that we can call Jesus our Brother! Can you imagine? When we become Christians, Jesus becomes our Brother, and God becomes our Father.

Discover the Truth

Refer to Lesson 8 Lesson Theme Poster. This is exciting! The Bible tells us that if we receive Jesus and believe what the Bible says about Him, we become children of God! God is still the omnipotent, powerful, Creator God—but He is also our Father. We can trust that He cares for us and wants what is best for us because we are His children.

Refer to Lesson 7 Lesson Theme Poster. Remember, this all starts with God's free gift of grace! There is nothing any sinner could ever do to earn this wonderful title—to be called a child of God! God adopts believers because He loves them. And God makes them part of His family!

- ? OK. Let's review what we just talked about. Will someone read #1 on the class notes? The pictures there will help you finish the sentence. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Gift.* Have students complete #1 on the class notes.
- ? And how about #2? Someone read that. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Children.* Have students complete #2 on the class notes.
- ? Look at #3 on your class notes. Who becomes the Brother of all Christians? *Assign a reader. Jesus.* Have students complete #3.
- ? And what about #4? Will someone read that? How will you answer it? *Assign a reader. Family.* Have students complete #4.



READ THE WORD

That isn't all Christians get. There is more! The Bible tells us that as children of God, we will receive something very special. Let's find out about what that is. Listen as I read from Romans again. *Read Romans 8:17a.*

Romans 8:17a

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? The Bible says we will be heirs. Who will we be heirs of? *Re-read the verse if necessary. Heirs of God!*
- Yes! As children of God we become heirs of God with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Refer to the Lesson Illustration. This might help to explain what it means to be an heir. Here is a picture of a king. A king is a powerful man. He rules an entire nation! This king's son is with him. One day, the king will grow old and die. When he dies, his son, this little boy, will be king in his place. The king's son is the HEIR to the throne. He will one day get everything the king has—the whole kingdom!

- Re-read the verses or the portion of the verse(s) that answer the questions you are asking of the text.

Discover the Truth

Well, if we believe in Jesus, we are children and heirs of God! God is a GREAT King! He has a wonderful kingdom in heaven! And He has promised that His children will one day inherit His wonderful kingdom!

Heaven is waiting for all sinners who are sorry for their sins, turn away from their sins, and trust Jesus for forgiveness. ALL believers become children of God and will receive God's inheritance—eternal life in heaven!

- If time allows, do a quick review of each point on the class notes.

?

Let's finish our class notes. Who will read #5 for us? What is the answer?

Assign a reader. God. Have students complete #5 on the class notes.

?

Good! And now #6. Someone read that. What is God's promise to believers? What is the inheritance they will receive?

Assign a reader. Heaven. Have students complete #6 on the class notes.



Bible Baseball

MATERIALS

- Bible Baseball Questions
- Bible Baseball Hits
- Cup labeled "Hits"
- Masking tape

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide the students into two teams. Mark three "bases" and "home plate" with masking tape. Mark the "pitcher's mound" with a chair or masking tape. Have the first team line up at home plate. Students on the other team can wait in their seats or along the sideline.

Ask the questions from the pitcher's mound, using the Bible Baseball Questions sheet. If a player answers correctly, he can pick a "hit" from the cup and advance around the bases. The team will advance for each correct answer. After all team members have answered once, allow the next team to play.

Each wrong answer is a strike for the team! Give the correct answer and use the question again for the other team. Three strikes, and you are out—next team's turn. Repeat the questions if time allows. Keep score of runs and strikes.

Let's get into teams! We're going to play Bible Baseball! Here's how we'll play. I'm going to ask questions about our lesson. You can look at the posters or your class notes for hints. Each person on a team will take a turn answering the questions I ask. I want Team 1 to line up at "home plate" and I will "pitch" questions to you. If you answer the question correctly, you may pick a "hit" out of this cup and move to the right base. If you don't know the answer, or give an incorrect answer, that's a "strike." Once everyone on your team has had a chance to bat, even if you haven't struck out, we'll switch teams. But remember, if your team gets three strikes, you're out, and the other team is up. Ready? Let's play!

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God is so good! He adopts believers as His children and gives them the promise of eternal life with Him in heaven!





Memory Verse Review Game (Optional)

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

If you find you have extra time, please consider reviewing the memory verse with your class by playing this game.

MATERIALS

- Memory Verse Poster
- One set of Memory Verse Flashcards
- Masking tape
- Optional: Timer

INSTRUCTIONS

Allow students to look at the Memory Verse Poster and say the verse together as a class a couple of times. Remove or cover the poster before the game begins. Tape the Memory Verse Flashcards onto students' backs. Students will work together to put themselves in order according to the memory verse. If you have a large class, make two sets of flashcards and have teams race to put themselves in order. Once they think they are standing in order, check the verse by reading the words out loud according to how they are standing. If you have fewer students, tape more than one flashcard, in the proper order, on some students.

We're going to practice our memory verse. Let's say the verse together a couple times. Cover the poster before starting the game.

Tape the flashcards onto the students' backs. Now I am going to tape these Memory Verse Flashcards onto your backs! Once I have done that, I want you to work together to get into the right order. We'll check the verse when you are finished. Most groups may need a time limit to encourage them to move at a quick pace. If so, let them know the limit and use a timer to count down the time. Once the students think they are in the right order, check them by reading the words out loud.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

? The memory verse says to rejoice always. Then what does it say we should do? *Pray without ceasing.*

Right! God wants us to pray to Him about everything. Sometimes God may answer our prayers in a way that we didn't expect. But, because we know that God is a loving Father, we can trust that He will give us what is best for us.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God has shown His love for sinners, including each of us, by giving the gift of grace so we can believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. When we repent—turn from our sins then turn to Jesus—something wonderful happens! God adopts us and makes us His children! We become part of God's family. God becomes our Father, and Jesus becomes our Brother who loves us, too!

Because we are adopted into God's family, we become heirs of God with our Brother, Jesus Christ! God promises that His children will receive the eternal inheritance of heaven!

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.

It is very special to be adopted! When a family adopts a child, they pick him out. They specially choose him to be a part of their family. They love him and bring him home. Now their home is his home. And everything they have is his! The parents in that family are now the parents of the new son! And if there are other children in the family, they are all brothers and sisters.

Do you see? Adoption into a family is very special! And it is very, very special to be adopted into God's family! God chooses us to be His special children! And we become part of His family! Then we get to be heirs of God's kingdom! And He promises we will receive eternal life in heaven.



MEMORY VERSE

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Pray that God will help us understand what it means to become one of His children.
- Praise God because He adopts those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior.
- Ask God to help us want to know Him better and trust Him more.