



8

Children of God

Key Theme

- God works in believers to accomplish His purpose.

Key Passages

- John 1:12; Romans 8:14–17; 1 Peter 1:3–4

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 working on the Memory Verse Review Sheet and reciting the verse to a friend.



Activity 1: Children of God Class Notes

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



Studying God's Word

When people receive Jesus as their Savior they become children of God. God is their Father, Jesus is their Brother, and other believers are their brothers and sisters. This special relationship with God also comes with a promised inheritance in heaven. Being adopted into God's family is an amazing gift!



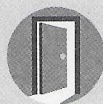
Activity 2: Four in a Row

Students will review the lesson by playing a game of Four in a Row.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

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

- ☐ Memory Verse Poster
- ☐ Memory Verse Review Sheet 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.

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



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

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

- ☐ Student Take Home Sheets
- ☐ Seven Lesson Scripture Strips
- ☐ Poster putty or tape



FOUR IN A ROW

- ☐ Print one Four in a Row Teacher Guide from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- ☐ Prepare a 16-section square grid on the floor with masking tape.
- ☐ Cut 8 red circles and 8 black circles from red and black construction paper.
- ☐ Bring in one beanbag, rolled sock, or other appropriate item to toss for each team.

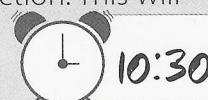
- ☐ Four in a Row Teacher Guide
- ☐ Masking tape
- ☐ 8 red and 8 black construction paper circles to mark four in a row
- ☐ Beanbag, rolled sock, or other appropriate item



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 fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. We will complete them together as we study the lesson.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will learn that believers become children of God and what that means.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

- ? Refer to Lesson 7 Lesson Theme Poster. **How is someone saved?** Allow discussion.

Salvation comes by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

- ? How do we get God's grace and faith? Allow discussion.

God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ is a free gift from God. We can't work for it. We can't earn it. It is free and comes from God!

- ? Can doing lots of good things get someone to heaven? Allow discussion.

John 1:12

Many people think that if they do a lot of good things they will go to heaven. But the Bible doesn't teach that. Good works are important! But those good works are done through God! God works in believers' hearts to do His will! When a sinner is saved by God's grace, he will begin to do good works because God will be working in his heart. God has promised that those good works will be done. Sinners saved by God's grace are forgiven, redeemed, and granted eternal life. And all of that is wonderful! But today we are going to talk about something else amazing that happens when a sinner is saved!

Let's read John 1:12 first. Please turn there in your Bible. *John 1:12. Choose a reader.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What does this say about people who receive Jesus? What do they get?
John 1:12. The right to become children of God.

All who receive Jesus, who believe in His name, become children of God!
Refer to Quarter 3, Lesson 8 Lesson Theme Poster. How does this happen? Let's take a look.

- ? Several weeks ago we talked about Jesus's followers at Pentecost. This was after Jesus had died. What happened at that Pentecost? *Allow discussion.*

The Holy Spirit came down on the apostles.

- ? Who had promised that the Holy Spirit would come? *Jesus.*

- ? And who does the Holy Spirit come to? *All believers.*

Yes! The Holy Spirit comes to all believers. When the Holy Spirit comes to believers, we say they are led by Him. They are led by the Spirit of God.

Turn to Romans 8:14–17 in your Bibles. These verses tell us more about the Holy Spirit and what happens when Christians are led by Him.

Romans 8:14–17

- ? Will someone read those verses for us? *Romans 8:14–17. Assign a reader.*

- ? What does Romans 8:14 say about believers who are led by the Spirit of God? *Romans 8:14. They are sons of God.*

Believers are sons of God. These sons of God receive something special.

- ? What do the sons of God receive? Look in Romans 8:15. *Romans 8:15. The Spirit of adoption.*

Sons of God receive a Spirit of adoption. Sons of God are adopted into God's family.

As believers who receive the Spirit of adoption, we have the privilege of a different relationship with God. We can now call God something special.

► While discussing Romans 8:14 and the "sons" of God, you may want to address that this means all believers—men, women, boys, girls.

? What can we cry out to God as sons or children of God? *Romans 8:15. Abba, Father.*

Yes! All believers who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God! And as sons of God we can cry out “Abba, Father.”

? What does that mean? Why is that special? *Allow discussion.*

It is special because we can consider God our Father. The word “Abba” is an Aramaic word—that’s the language that Jesus and His disciples spoke. And “Father” is a Greek word. Abba means something like “dear Father.” It refers to someone who really cares about us, someone we would not ever need to be afraid of, someone who loves us—our own Father. It refers to God. And God welcomes all believers into His family!

? Let’s move on. What does the Spirit of God tell our spirit? What are we as believers? Look in Romans 8:16. *Romans 8:16. Children of God.*

Again, the Bible is telling us that we are children of God if we believe and trust in Jesus.

? Will someone read Romans 8:17 again? *Choose a reader. Re-read Romans 8:17.*

? As children of God, believers become something else. What is that? *Heirs.*

? What is an heir? *Allow discussion.*

An heir is someone who receives something valuable from a father. What he receives is called an inheritance.

Discover the Truth

If we are believers, then we are heirs to wonderful gifts that God wants to give us. Believers are adopted as sons and daughters into His family. We have the privilege as believers to call God our Father! He cares for us and wants what is best for His children. He is still the omnipotent, powerful, Creator, God. But, He promises that whoever receives His Son, Jesus, and believes in His name, will become His child!

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

Can you imagine? Jesus becomes the Brother of everyone who believes in Him! God becomes their Father. 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!

? Before we move on, turn to your class notes. Will someone read #1 for us? What is the answer to that? *Assign a reader. Child. Have students complete #1.*

? Yes! Believers become children of God. How about #2? Will someone read that? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Believers. Have students complete #2.*

Yes! Believers are adopted into God’s family. God is their Father. It is a new family for all believers.

? Will someone read #3 on the class notes? *Assign a reader. Father. Have students complete #3.*

? And what about #4? If God is our Father, who becomes our Brother? *Assign a reader. Jesus. Have students complete #4.*



READ THE WORD

We are adopted into God's family when we believe! God is our Father! And Jesus is our Brother! But that is not all that happens. The Bible tells us that we get an inheritance, that is, a special gift from God that others who are not in His family do not get. That is what I'd like to read about now.

? There are two verses on your class notes. What are they? *1 Peter 1:3-4.*

Pay attention to those verses as I read. Listen carefully! *Read the passage with enthusiasm, emphasizing the answers to the questions below. 1 Peter 1:3-4.*

1 Peter 1:3-4

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Pass out the 7 Scripture Strips. We are going to study these verses in a different way! I have 7 strips here to pass out. They are numbered 1-7! As we study the verses, you will bring your strip and put it up on the board in order. Let's get started.

? Who has strip #1? Will you read that? *Have student read and place strip #1 on the board.*
These verses start with praise to God because of His abundant or great mercy.

? Who has strip #2? Will you read that and bring it up to the board? *Have student read and place strip #2 on the board.*

? Hmm. God has begotten something. This strip tells us what the word begotten means. What does "begotten us again" mean? *Given us a new birth.*

Very good. So what we have so far is that God is being praised because in His great mercy He has begotten us, or given us a new birth, for something.

? So, what has God given to believers because of our new birth? Who has Scripture Strip #3? Will you read it and bring it up here? *Have student read and place strip #3 on the board.*

? What has God, in His abundant mercy, given us in our new birth? It is here on strip #3. *A living hope!*

? Where does that living hope come from? *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

➤ Refer to the Scripture Strips after they are placed on the board as you discuss these verses.

That's right. Believers have a living hope through Jesus Christ. He rose from the dead. He conquered death. But there is more. God is going to give us something very special!

? Who has Scripture Strip #4? Please read it and bring it up to the board.
Have student read and place strip #4 on the board.

? We are going to get an inheritance from God! This inheritance is going to be incorruptible. What does that mean? The definition is on strip #4. *It will not get old or wear out.*

This is starting to sound like really good news. And it is starting to sound like nothing we know of on earth! Believers will get an inheritance from God the Father because we are His children! This inheritance will never get old or wear out. (Everything on earth gets old and wears out, right?) It is so special that it gives a living hope—something we can hope in no matter what happens on earth! This inheritance and living hope comes from God through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And there is more about this inheritance to know.

? Who has Scripture Strip #5? Will you read it and place it on the board?
Have student read and place strip #5 on the board.

? This tells us that our inheritance is undefiled. What does undefiled mean? Look at strip #5 for the answer. *Perfect. There is no evil or sin in it at all.*

This inheritance is sounding better all the time! Can you imagine living in a place where there is no evil or sin?

? Who has Scripture Strip #6? It tells more about the inheritance and has another definition. Will you read it and place it on the board? *Have student read and place strip #6 on the board.*

The inheritance promised by God that gives believers hope will not fade away! It will always be beautiful; it will never wear out; it will always seem brand new!

This all sounds too good to be true! But it is true. It is what God has promised to all of His children—those who have repented of their sins and turned to Jesus Christ for forgiveness. And this inheritance is NOT on earth!

? Who has Scripture Strip #7? Where is the inheritance God has promised to give His children? Read the strip and bring it up to the board. *Have student read and place strip #7 on the board.*

The inheritance is in heaven!

Discover the Truth

Becoming a child of God is an amazing gift! All sinners who receive Him and who believe in His name are children of God. As children we are

actually adopted into God's family, and God has promised that we will have an inheritance. This inheritance will never wear out or get old; there will be no sin or evil at all; and it will always be beautiful and will never fade away. This very special inheritance is being kept in heaven for all believers. God has promised this to all of His children.

OK! Now let's go back to our class notes and finish those up.

➤ If time allows, assign students to re-read the points on the class notes as a review and briefly discuss them.

? Will someone read #5 for us? What is the answer there? *Assign a reader. Inheritance. Have students complete #5.*

? And what about #6? What do we know about this inheritance? Will someone read that? *Assign a reader. Perfect. Have students complete #6.*

? And #7? Where is the inheritance promised to all believers? *Assign a reader. Heaven. Have students complete #7.*



Four In A Row

MATERIALS

- ☐ Four in a Row Teacher Guide
- ☐ Masking tape
- ☐ Beanbag, rolled up sock, or other appropriate item
- ☐ Red construction paper—8 sheets
- ☐ Black construction paper—8 sheets

INSTRUCTIONS

Use masking tape to make a 16-section square on the floor. The square should be four sections wide by four sections high. Each section should be equal in size. Cut 8 red circles and 8 black circles from the red and black construction paper. Or use some other appropriate markers for the two teams.

Divide the students into two teams—red team and black team. Give each team eight paper circles—either red or black. Students will toss the beanbag to a square. They will answer a question. If correct, they can put a marker in that square. To win the game, teams must get four circles in a row on the grid—by answering the questions correctly and throwing the beanbags accurately.

We are going to review now by playing Four in a Row. I'll put you into two teams: Red Team and Black Team. I want each team to throw the beanbag onto an empty square on the grid. I will then ask a question about what we have been learning. If your team answers correctly, mark the grid where the beanbag landed. If you don't get it correct, the other team will have an opportunity to answer and earn a space on the grid. We will alternate teams until one team gets four circles in a row. Play the game using the Four in a Row Teacher Guide from the Resource DVD-ROM.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

So many miracles happen at salvation. We are born again, God adopts us as His children, and we receive a special promise of an eternal inheritance in heaven. The gospel is great news!





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 8 Lesson Theme Poster. Those who become Christians through faith in Jesus Christ are changed forever. One important change is their relationship with God. At the time of salvation, God adopts each new believer as His child. God becomes their loving father. Abba, Father is a special name that we can call our heavenly Father.

The Bible says believers are adopted into God's family as His children with full benefits! God is our Father, and other Christians are our brothers and sisters in Christ. And Jesus is our Brother!

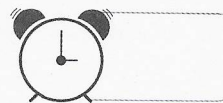
And there is more. When we become Christians, we are given a special inheritance in heaven that no one can take away. This inheritance is better than we could ever imagine! It is eternal life with God. Such an inheritance will never fade and will last forever. We don't know all the details about what our inheritance will be like, but we know that living forever as a child of God is the best inheritance anyone could ever receive!

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Let's talk about how special it is that God adopts believers and becomes their Father. You probably know something about human adoption. In some ways, our adoption by God is similar.

When a family adopts a child, they choose him, they love him, they welcome him in and give him ALL the benefits that go with being in their family. The adopted child is very much one of the children. The parents are now his mom and dad. And he is a brother to the other children. It is very special.

In the same way, God adopts His children—all those who turn from their sin and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. They become part of God's family. All Christians become brothers and sisters—they are all members of God's family. Jesus is now their Brother. And they all share in the perfect inheritance in heaven that God offers to all of His children.



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



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

- Praise God for being a loving Father to all believers.
- Thank God for the privileges He gives to believers to be chosen, adopted, loved, and partakers of an eternal inheritance.
- Ask God to help each person to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and to honor our heavenly Father by living in obedience to His Word.