I AM A CHILD OF GOD

Have we not all one father? [Malachi 2: 10]

PURPOSE

Help family members realize what it means to be children of God.

FOR THE PARENT

From our earthly parents we have inherited our physical characteristics. We have also inherited qualities of nobility, goodness, and eternal worth from our Heavenly Father. Think of the potential of your children. Think of what it could mean to them to really sense their potential. Do you really believe that you are a child of God? Does that knowledge make a difference in your daily life?

PREPARATION

1. Have two items that have obvious similarities and differences, such as a combination of two of the following: a small rock, a small ball, an orange, or an apple.

2. Bring a family picture with the parents and all the children, including grandparents if possible, or several pictures of family members, so that everyone is represented.

3. On a sheet of paper, write "Our Heavenly Father."

4. Have a chalkboard or poster to write on and some chalk or a marker.

5. Have a card or poster for each family member.

6. For younger children, bring a picture of each family member as a baby.

SUGGESTED HYMN AND SONG

"O My Father" [*Hymns*, no. 292). And "I Am a Child of God" [*The Children's Songbook*, p. 2].

SUGGESTED LESSON

Who Are You?

Hold a small rock in your hand, and ask your children:

- What is this?

Hold an orange in your other hand.

- What is this?

Ask your family to name as many ways as they can in which these two objects are different. Then ask them to identify how they are similar.

Hold up the family portrait or the separate pictures of family members, and ask:

- Who are these people? Who is this?

- In what ways are the members of our family different from each other? (Facial characteristics, size, age, talents, and any other ways family members might mention.)

- In what ways are members of our family alike? (Color of hair, eyes, freckles, interests, hopes, desires to learn, or whatever your family members identify.) Point out that we inherited some of these characteristics from our parents.

- In what way is our family different from other families? (Looks, house we live in, goals, number of family members.)

- In what ways are we like the people in other families? (We enjoy playing, smiling, crying, praying.)

Hold up the paper on which you have written "Our Heavenly Father."

- How are we related to our Heavenly Father? (We are his actual children in the spirit.)

We Belong to Two Families

Place the family portrait(s) beside the piece of paper just discussed. Explain to the family that just as they are members of an earthly family, they are also members of a heavenly family.

Point out that one way we are like each other and like the members of all other families on the earth is that we are all children of God.

Recite the words to the song "I Am a Child of God" [*The Children's Songbook*, p. 2]. After each verse ask a child in the family to tell you what words or ideas in the verse they liked best. (See the chart below as an example.) Reviewing the song this way can help your children understand and respond to the words. Listen to their thoughts, and use them later in the lesson.

Verse	Child's Favorite Part
am a child of God, nd he has sent me here, as given me an earthly home 'ith parents kind and dear. am a child of God,And so my needs are great;Help me to understand his wordsBefore it 'ows too late. am a child of God,Rich blessings are in store;If I but learn to do his willI'll live with him ıce more. ead me, guide me, walk beside me,Help me find the way.Teach me all that I must doTo live ith him someday.	Kind parents My needs Blessings Live with him Teach me, walk beside me Live with him

You might comment, for example, on your own desire to be a kind parent or how one of our needs is to know the truth about God and about blessings that have come by doing his will. Explain to your children that they will always be members of your family and that you will always be their father and mother. Nothing can change that. The same is true of God's family. He will always be our Father. We will always be his children. But to return to him we must live his commandments. That's what the chorus in "I Am a Child of God" means when it states,

"Teach me all that I must doTo live with him someday."

What We Inherit from God

Remind your family that just as we are similar to our earthly parents, we are, as children of God, similar to him. As we can grow up to be like our earthly parents, so we can also grow spiritually to be like our Heavenly Father. (See chapter 2, "Our Heavenly Family," *Gospel Principles* [PBIC0245], pp. 9-12.

Draw the following chart on a chalkboard or poster, and ask your children for words that describe what our Heavenly Father is like. Some examples are below:

Heavenly Father is—	His children can be—
oving. orgiving. elpful. 'ise. terested in the future.	

Your family list may not be exactly like the one illustrated.

Under the heading "His children can be," write the same qualities you list in the left column. Ask for examples of these very qualities that have been observed in family members during the past week.

Our Worth and Our Potential

Explain to your children that because they are God's children, they are worth very much.

- What is it about us which Heavenly Father would love so much? (First of all, he loves us because we are his spirit children; we are his family. Secondly, he loves us because of what we are capable of doing and becoming.)

Remind your children that their worth, like their family membership, is unquestionable.

- What if someone were to tell you that you are not a child of God?

After listening to their answers, reinforce the fact that regardless of what others may say, they are still children of Heavenly Father. Point to the list that you made as you ask the following question:

- What if someone were to tell you that you could not develop these qualities?

After they have answered, read and discuss this statement by Lorenzo Snow: "We are the offspring of God, born with the same faculties and powers as He possesses, capable of enlargement through the experience that we are now passing through in our second estate" (*Millennial Star*, 3 Dec. 1894, p. 772). Be sure each person knows what the phrase "second estate" means.

Give some practical examples to apply these ideas. For example, when they feel discouraged, encourage your children to look in a mirror and say such things as, "I am a child of God. I can learn and grow. I can be kind to others. I can succeed."

Have each family member make a small card or poster with the following on it to place by his bed:

I am a child of God, and I can become more _____.

Explain that each morning before prayer the family member looks at the card and identifies a godly quality he could develop to fill in the missing word, such as loving, forgiving, educated, or accomplished. He should use whatever quality he may feel he needs to develop at the time. Encourage family members to seek the Lord's help in being true to their capacity to become like him. In the evening, they should ponder the chances they had during the day to work on their potential. Challenge each person to examine the experiences he has had each day and share with his Heavenly Father what he, as one of God's children, has learned from them.

ADAPTING FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

If possible, display a picture of each family member as a baby. Let the children try to find their own pictures and identify the others. Tell them about the circumstances surrounding their birth. You may wish to describe your feelings as a parent as your prepared for their coming to your home. Describe how you felt when you saw, held, and loved them for the first time. Then ask them to imagine how Heavenly Father must feel to see them growing and learning.

Share how a knowledge that you are a child of God has helped you to choose the right. A specific example of a righteous choice they would understand would be helpful. You could recall how you were tempted to be unkind and then remembered that you were a child of God and so did a

kind thing instead. Use some example from your recent experience so that the child will see the point clearly.

Sing "I Am a Child of God" with your children. Then tell them what the words mean to you.

At bedtime, during different nights of the week, spend some time with each child to share with him your knowledge of his worth to you and to God. Give examples of how Heavenly Father and you have confidence in his ability to succeed in life.

ADAPTING FOR TEENAGERS AND ADULTS

Use the family picture, discussing similarities between family members and their earthly parents. Proceed from there to discuss the concept that all persons are children of God.

- Do people sometimes teach or imply that we are something less than children of God?

Give examples and the implications of such beliefs on how one feels about oneself.

- What difference would it make in how a person acted if he really believed he were a child of God?

Analyze the words of "I Am a Child of God," and let your children tell what it means to them as young adults. Then make the chart on the chalkboard or poster about what Heavenly Father is and how we can become like him as suggested in the section "What We Inherit from God."

As you discuss the idea of worth and potential, have your family members analyze Doctrine and Covenants 18:10 and Moses 1:39 together so that they will get a feeling of how important we are to our Heavenly Father as his children.

Making the personal poster for each family member to take to his room for consideration in daily prayer could be the most important part of this lesson for teenagers and adults. Explore in depth the development that could come from such an activity.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE HOME EVENINGS

Heavenly Father Loves Us without Reservations

Explain that God is the perfect parent. He loves each of us unconditionally. No matter what we do, he loves us. He can bless us when we obey his commandments, and he must deny us blessings when we do not. But he always loves us and wants us to grow to our full potential (see Moses 1:39).

Discuss with your family what that unconditional love means to them. Have the family read the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).

Discuss the joy our Heavenly Father feels when we repent and try to return to him. Assure them that as they repent and go to their Heavenly Father in prayer, he will put his love into their hearts (see Moroni 7:48) and they will know that he loves them.

Each Person Is Heavenly Father's Child

Seat the family in a circle. Place a bottle on its side in the center, and spin the bottle. When it stops, have all the others in the circle tell one thing that describes the person at whom the bottle points. (For example: "He is a boy." "His name is Terry." "He is ten years old." "He laughs a lot. ") If no one else mentions it, add, "He is a child of Heavenly Father." Repeat this until everyone in the circle has been described.

Point out that even though each person's description may be different, he is a true child of God.

Then discuss whether Heavenly Father likes one person better than another for any reason, such as his disposition, age, or hair color. Read and discuss Acts 10:34-35. Explain that every person is important to Heavenly Father because every person is his child.

Children Love and Respect Their Parents

Explain that we are always God's spirit children and that he loves us. Explain that we can also become his children in a special way. Read Moses 6:65-7:1. Then tell them that God will not stop being our Father, but we can turn away from being his children.

- How? (By not respecting him and obeying his commandments.)

Discuss with your family how obedience makes us children of our Father in Heaven in a special sense.

Read Abraham 3:25, and discuss what it means.