



I HAVE A FATHER IN HEAVEN, WHO LOVES ME.

“ALL OF YOU ARE CHILDREN OF THE MOST HIGH”
(Psalm 82:6).

Note: This activity may be copied or printed from the Internet at www.friend.lds.org.

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BY CHERYL ESPLIN



How can you really know that you are a child of God? Many children do not know that they have a Father in Heaven, who loves them and who can help them. Many children do not know they lived with Heavenly Father before they came to earth. They do not know they can pray to Him. Like you, they have forgotten what it was like to live in heaven.

You have scriptures, prophets, the Holy Ghost, and a family to teach and remind you what it was like to live with Heavenly Father as His child. The scriptures teach that in heaven you received your first lessons and were prepared to come to earth (see D&C 138:56). They also teach that the Holy Ghost “beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). The songs “I Am a Child of God” and “I Lived in



Heaven” (*Children’s Songbook*, 2–3, 4) can remind you of who you are and where you came from.

Heavenly Father wants you to remember that He is the Father of your spirit; He created you. When you say your prayers, ask Heavenly Father to help you remember that you are His child. The Holy Ghost can help you think and act as a child of God. ●

Activity

Cut out the bookmark on page 14, and mount it on heavier paper. Fold it in half. Glue the backs together, and punch a hole at the top. Tie ribbon or yarn through the hole. Use this bookmark in your scriptures to remind you that you have a Heavenly Father, who knows you, loves you, and will always hear and answer your prayers.

The *Friend* will no longer be publishing a Primary poster in January.

SHARING TIME IDEAS

(Note: All songs are from *Children's Songbook* unless otherwise noted; GAK = Gospel Art Picture Kit.)

January Theme: *I am a spirit child of Heavenly Father.*

1. *Heavenly Father loves me and has a plan for me.* Using *Primary 6*, page 2, as a guide, prepare drawings and wordstrips of the plan of salvation figures and display them in order on the board (or write and draw them on the board before sharing time). Begin sharing time by telling the children that Heavenly Father loves us and has given us a perfect plan. Jesus Christ is the central figure in the plan, and if we follow Him, we can return to live with our Father in Heaven. Divide the *Primary* into four groups, and assign each a different phase of existence. Hand out paper, pencils or crayons, scripture references, and a song or action (listed below). Have each group read their scriptures with the help of their teachers, then draw one thing that happens in that phase of the plan. When the groups are ready, teach the plan of salvation in order, using the groups to help you teach each part. (For example, the groups could point out the figures that represent their phases, show their illustrations and explain what they show about life in that phase of existence, or help lead the other children if there is a song or action.) As you teach each phase, emphasize what we did or are expected to do.

Premortal life: D&C 138:56; Moses 4:2; Abraham 3:22–23 (action: raising hands and whispering “Hurrah!”).

Earth life: Abraham 3:24–25; Articles of Faith 1:3 (song: “Keep the Commandments” [pp. 146–47]).

Spirit world: Alma 40:11–14; D&C 138:30–32.

Kingdoms of glory: celestial—D&C 76:81; terrestrial—D&C 76:71; celestial—D&C 76:92–96 (song: “Families Can Be Together Forever” [p. 188]).

Recite together the first sentence of 2 Nephi 9:13. Bear testimony that following Heavenly Father's plan will bring us peace and happiness.

2. *I lived with Heavenly Father before I came to earth.* Ask for a volunteer to tell one thing he or she has learned about the premortal life. Recite together Doctrine and Covenants 138:56, substituting the words *they* and *their* with *we* and *our*: We lived with Heavenly Father and were given responsibilities. Display pictures of people in the scriptures who were given responsibilities in the premortal life to help accomplish Heavenly Father's work (examples: Jesus; Mary, mother of Jesus; Adam and Eve; John the Baptist; Joseph Smith). Make wordstrips that tell the work each person did on earth. Pass around the wordstrips in a sack while the pianist plays “I Will Follow God's Plan” (pp. 164–65). When the music stops, have the child holding the sack read a wordstrip and match it with the correct picture.

Ask each class to discuss a responsibility that they might have in the future (examples: missionary, father or mother, Primary teacher, bishop). Have the classes discuss with their teachers what they can do now to prepare for that responsibility and whatever other responsibilities may come to them. Make wordstrips of different colors with phrases from “I Will Follow God's Plan” that tell what we can do now to prepare for our responsibilities (examples: “seek for God's light,” “I will follow,” “I will work,” “I will pray”). Have the children wearing the same color as the wordstrip stand up when that phrase is sung. Testify of the importance of preparing now for responsibilities we have been given.

3. *I am created in the image of God. My body is a temple.* Show a picture of a temple. Ask: “Have you ever seen a temple? What do you think about when you see a temple or a picture of a temple? Why do you think people work so hard to keep the temple beautiful and clean?” Explain that a temple is a sacred, holy place.

Help the children memorize 1 Corinthians 3:16. Explain that, just like the temple, our bodies are sacred and holy. We need to take good care of them. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said: “Did you

ever think that your body is holy? You are a child of God. Your body is His creation” (“A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 11). Show GAK 114 (Daniel Refusing the King's Meat and Wine). Tell what happened to Daniel and his friends when they treated their bodies like temples by refusing to eat or drink unhealthy things (see Daniel 1:5–20). Display objects that represent sleep, good food, exercise, cleanliness, and modesty (examples: pillow, fruit, ball, comb, necktie). Have the children pass around the objects while they sing “The Lord Gave Me a Temple” (p. 153). Stop the music frequently, and invite the children holding an object to tell one thing they can do to treat their bodies like temples. Repeat as time allows. Testify that, just like the temple, our bodies are sacred and holy.

4. *The family is ordained of God and is central to His plan.* Write on the board “The family is ordained of God.” Have the children say it together. Erase all but the first letter of each word, and have the children recite it again. Continue to erase letters and have the children recite until all the letters are gone. Ask: “Why do you think Heavenly Father planned for us to live in families?” Have one of the older classes stand and sing the first line of the chorus to “The Family Is of God” (*Friend*, Oct. 2008, 28–29). (Let the class and teacher know beforehand that you would like them to sing.) Ask: “In what ways can a family help us become who God wants us to be?” Show a picture of Joseph Smith's family (3-7 from the *Primary 3* picture packet).

Read together Joseph Smith—History 1:22, 50. Point out that Joseph's father supported Joseph Smith and helped him accomplish his mission, while others didn't believe him. Beforehand, and with the bishop's or branch president's approval, invite several adults or children to share a positive experience when the love and support of a family member helped them. Hand out paper and pencils, and invite all the children to write or draw a picture of one thing they will do this week to build love in their family. On the same paper have them write “The family is ordained of God.” Ask the children to discuss what family members can do to show love for one another.

5. *Song presentation:* “The Family Is of God” (*Friend*, Oct. 2008, 28–29). While the pianist plays the song, ask the children to close their eyes and think about something they like to do with their families. Teach the song's chorus first by having the children hum with the music. Ask them to listen for why God gives us families as you sing the first phrase of the chorus. Take responses, then sing the phrase together. Have them listen for the message while you sing the second phrase of the chorus. Sing the second phrase together and then the entire chorus several times.

Have the children listen and watch while you sing the first verse using actions. For example, when singing “It's me!” point to yourself; point to them when singing “It's you”; and make a hand motion to include everyone when singing “all others too.” Teach the second verse by explaining that Heavenly Father designed the roles of a father and mother. In advance, make wordstrips of the words in the song that describe some duties of a father (preside, provide, protect, love, teach, lead). Display them out of order. Ask the children to listen while you sing so they can help put them in order. After doing this, have the children sing the verse a few times while you remove one word each time. Do the same in verse three for mother (care, prepare, nurture, strengthen, teach). Bear testimony that Heavenly Father gives us families to help us become who He wants us to be.

6. *Friend* references: “The Plan of Salvation Offers Me Peace,” Mar. 1994, 14; “The Plan of Happiness,” Jan. 2005, 14–15; “Special Witness,” June 2008, 31; “My Body—a Temple,” May 2002, 18; “Ye Are the Temple of God,” May 2002, 44; “My Family,” Feb. 2004, 20. Additional reference: Robert England Lee, “Teaching Our Children the Plan of Salvation,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2001, 32–39.