



Becoming Children of God

JOHN 1:1-18

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:12-13

Gather

CHECK IN

Introduce yourself with your name, your favorite hymn, and why that hymn is your favorite.

OPENING PRAYER

God of abundant grace, open our hearts to receive your word to us anew in your begotten Son, Jesus, in whom your love for the whole world is made known. Amen.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Look at the group covenant on page 9. What would you like to add?

Complete one of the following statements:

A memory, feeling, or word I associate with the Bible is:

The main thing I hope to gain from being in this group is:

John 1:1-18

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

CONVERSATION

1. John 1:1-14, part of what is often called the prologue to John's gospel, is a gospel reading for Christmas Day in the Revised Common Lectionary. The Revised Common Lectionary is an ecumenical three-year cycle of scripture readings intended for proclamation during worship used by many Lutheran churches as well as many other denominations. In year A the gospels are drawn primarily from the Gospel of Matthew, in year B from Mark and John, and in year C from Luke.



- ♦ What do you think these verses say about the meaning of Jesus' birth?

- ♦ How do you hear these opening verses of John as a Christmas story?

2. In John 1:14, the NRSVue translation reads “The Word became flesh and lived among us.” Look up this verse in different Bible translations and read it aloud. You might use print Bibles, biblegateway.com, or a Bible app.

- ♦ How do differences in translation help make sense of the promise of God becoming human?

- ♦ How does the incarnation—God becoming a human being—matter for you in your relationship with God?



3. The concept of grace is central to Lutheran theology. We are saved by grace through faith. Look at the scripture text again, and underline *grace* every time it appears. After John 1:17, the word *grace* never again appears in the entire book. Going forward, look for how “grace upon grace” is an experience in the Gospel of John.

- ♦ How do you think John would describe God’s grace?

- ♦ What words would you use to describe God’s grace?

4. John 1:18 provides the central image of what it looks like to be a child of God according to John’s gospel. The gospel was first written in Greek. While translations of this verse typically read “close to the Father’s heart,” the word *heart* is not in the Greek text. (Another frequent translation is “at the Father’s side.”) A more accurate translation is that Jesus is at the “bosom” or

“breast” of the Father. The only other time the word *bosom* or *breast* is used in John’s gospel is for the disciple “whom Jesus loved,” who was reclining on Jesus’ breast at the last supper (John 13:23). Just as Jesus was this close to his Father, we as children of God are to imagine the same intimacy.

- ♦ How does this image affect the way you understand being a child of God?

- ♦ Find or sketch an image that represents this intimacy between God and God’s children.



The Last Supper (ca. 1325–1330) by Ugolino da Siena.

Engage

WORD AND SERVICE

Consider inviting someone to come with you to the next session.

When I think about being a child of God, this is one thing I want to remember or do in the week ahead:

WORSHIP AND PRAYER

God of light and life, empower us this week to be bold in our witness to your light. As your love came down in Jesus, help us to embody that love in our own lives. Amen.

SESSION RECAP

Being children of God is not just a nice thought but takes on deeper meaning according to the Gospel of John. Through Jesus, we are now in an intimate relationship with God, as close as can be. To be a child of God means we can trust God to sustain, nurture, protect, and love us no matter what. The rest of John's gospel will show us what that looks like. Jesus is our living water (John 4). Jesus will feed us as the bread of life (John 6). Jesus, as the good shepherd, will protect us from all harm and knows each of our names (John 10). Jesus will love us with abundance by washing our feet and willingly handing himself over to be arrested (John 13:1-11; 18:1-13). And Jesus will never abandon us, even after death. He will find us, meeting us wherever we are, to show us once again how much he loves us.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GOING DEEPER

- ✦ Sing or read "Of the Father's love begotten" (ELW 295) or listen to a recording. This fourth-century hymn text is based on John 1:1-18. Notice any thoughts, emotions, or images this hymn evokes in you.
- ✦ Compare the opening words of John's gospel with the opening words of Genesis: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth" (NRSV). Take a walk, ride a bike, or sit near a window as you reflect on the possible connections between God as creator and God now "begotten" (John 1:18, NKJV), or made flesh, in Jesus.



- ✦ Set aside a few moments each day to pray, read scripture, or think back on this session. Light a candle as a reminder of Jesus' promise: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).
- ✦ In *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson (NavPress, 2005), John 1:14 reads, "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." Tell one of your neighbors something you learned in this session.
- ✦ Read more in the Gospel of John. Pick and choose from this list or read one passage a day.
 - ♦ John 1:29-39
 - ♦ John 2:13-22
 - ♦ John 3:1-21
 - ♦ John 8:31-36
 - ♦ John 10:22-30
 - ♦ John 15:1-17
 - ♦ John 17:1-26
- ✦ Reflect on what you experienced in this session. Here are a few prompts you might use to reflect or journal.
 - ♦ Write about a moment when you experienced or sensed God's grace in your life.

- ♦ God became flesh in Jesus. What difference does this make to you and your faith?
- ♦ In baptism, we are made children of God. How does this session affect your understanding of this baptismal promise?

LOOKING AHEAD

In the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine, we are invited to a wedding feast where grace and abundance flow like the best wine—when you least expect it.

