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You Are God's Child

MARK 1:1-11



GOAL

By learning about baptism, children embrace their identity as a beloved child of God.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God, you know my name and call me your own. Help me live and lead in such a way that the children in my care know that they are yours too. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Integral to the practice of baptism is the concept of who and whose we are. When we baptize a person, we are recognizing God's claim on their life. We agree to teach them and lead them so that they can grow into their full identity as a Christian and as a child of God. In this session, we practice seeing ourselves as beloved children of God, in whom God is pleased. A firm foundation in God's love for them formed in childhood can carry them forward with a growing faith.

THE BIBLE STORY

Jesus' cousin John the Baptist understood that he was preparing the way for the messiah by calling people to repentance and baptizing them as a sign of their turning toward God. Imagine his surprise when Jesus himself shows up to be baptized! And then imagine his surprise again when a voice from heaven proclaims Jesus to be God's son!

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children of this age are beginning to understand what makes them unique—their gifts, interests, personality, values; knowing where they came from is a fundamental aspect of identity formation. They want to *fit* somewhere. The activities in this session will affirm for some and reaffirm for others that they fit here, in the family of God.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Water Play” (p. 8): Set up a water station with one or more large tubs of water, bowls, pitchers, measuring cups, and various containers. Cover the floor around the water tubs with a tarp or plastic tablecloth. Have towels on hand.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Sanctuary Field Trip” (p. 9): Check to see if the sanctuary, including the baptismal font, will be available, and invite a pastor or church leader who can talk with children about baptism to join your group to explain the baptism process and materials. If the sanctuary is not available, meet in your space and use the bowl of water from “Waters of Baptism” (p. 8).
- “When You Were Born” (p. 10): Obtain *On the Night You Were Born* by Nancy Tillmand (Feiweil & Friends, 2006) or use the YouTube video “On the Night You Were Born - Kids Books Read Aloud” (bit.ly/FMOnTheNight, 3:32).



GETTING STARTED

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- Large tub(s) of water
 - Tarp or plastic tablecloth
 - Bowls, pitchers, measuring cups, and containers of various sizes
 - Towels

WATER PLAY



As children arrive, invite them to engage with the water play station. Provide containers to pour, measure, and splash in the water. Have towels on hand for drying off.



Some children will likely get wet! Have extra towels on hand for drying exuberant children and their clothes.

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- Bowl of water (preferably a clear bowl)
 - Small table

WATERS OF BAPTISM



Place a bowl of water on a small table where the children can sit in a circle or semicircle around it. Invite each child to dip their fingers in the water. As they do, say to each one, “(Name), through the waters of baptism, God loves you and calls you God’s own beloved child.”



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

-
- Newsprint
 - Markers

BAPTISM QUESTIONS



Wonder together with the children about baptism, using the following questions, or those of your own, tailored to your specific congregation or denomination. Write down the questions and thoughts on a sheet of newsprint to display during the session and in subsequent sessions of this unit.

- ✦ What is baptism?
- ✦ When have you seen a baptism?
 - Where was it?
 - Who was a part of it?
 - What words or actions do you remember?
- ✦ Why do you think we baptize people?
- ✦ What questions about baptism do you have?



It is all right if you don’t have answers for the questions posed. Keep the list of questions and answers that have been given throughout your session (and future sessions) and note when one of the questions comes up in your activities. Invite the children to write down answers as questions may be answered throughout the sessions. Keep for sessions 2, 3, and 4.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

AN AWESOME DAY

C

Read the Bible story from Luke 3:21–22 on Resource Page 1 or from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, page 202. Engage the children in conversation using the questions at the end of the story and those below.

- What did God say when Jesus came out of the water?
- Why do you think God chose those words?
- What people make you happy? What people do you make happy? (Be sure to affirm to the children that they make you happy!)
- What made God love Jesus? What do we have to do to make God love us? (*Nothing! God loved Jesus just because Jesus was God's child. God loves us because we are God's children. We don't have to do anything to earn God's love!*)

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- Resource Page 1 or *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Flyaway Books, 2018)

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

G AM

Ask the children to tell you, in their own words, what God said when Jesus was baptized. Some ideas might be: "Jesus, you are my child," "I love you very much," "You make me happy," and so forth.

Play a modified game of Red Light, Green Light. Tell the children that in each round you will say something that might be said to a child. If they think it is something God would say, they are to move forward. If not, they are to freeze. Use phrases such as "I love being with you!" "No running in the hallway!" "Be quiet!" and "I'm glad you are my child," using some of the children's own words if possible. If you have given a cue to move, say, "Freeze!" to end that round. When the game is finished, discuss the questions below:

- Was it easy to tell when you were supposed to go and when you were supposed to freeze?
- How did it feel to hear the encouraging messages?
- What other encouraging messages does God give you?

Comment that, in God's message to Jesus at his baptism, God was affirming and loving. God gives us affirming and loving messages as well. Suggest that, at times, God also gives us corrective messages, such as "Slow down," "Be quiet," or even "Stop!" doing something harmful. In the Bible, these messages often come through the words of the prophets.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

SANCTUARY FIELD TRIP

AM D X

Travel to the sanctuary to get up close and personal with the way baptisms are performed in your congregation! Lead your group to the sanctuary, if it's available, and help the children explore the tools and mechanics of baptisms used in your context. If the sanctuary is not

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- Pastor or church leader who can talk with the children about baptism
 - Bowl of water from "Waters of Baptism" (p. 8; optional)

available, use the bowl of water from “Waters of Baptism” (p. 8). Introduce your guest, the pastor or a church leader, and invite them to show the children the font and encourage them to touch the water. Encourage your guest to show or pass around any cups, pitchers, or shells used for pouring water during the ritual as well as any items your church displays, such as a banner, or gifts to the baptized person, such as a candle, banner, book, blanket, and so forth.

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- *On the Night You Were Born* by Nancy Tillman (Feiwel & Friends, 2006) or internet-connected device

WHEN YOU WERE BORN

C T

Even though it's not about baptism, *On the Night You Were Born* by Nancy Tillman speaks of our belovedness from the moment of our birth through its lyrical words and beautiful art. Read the book to the children or show the YouTube video “On the Night You Were Born - Kids Books Read Aloud” ([bit.ly/FMOnTheNight](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMOnTheNight), 3:32). Have a conversation with the children about the story using the following questions:

- ✦ What do you know about the day (or night) you were born?
- ✦ What stories does your family tell about your birth or when you came to join them?
- ✦ How do you think your parents or caregivers felt when you were born or adopted?
- ✦ Do you think there is anybody else in the world just like you? Why or why not?
- ✦ How does it feel to think about all creation celebrating your birth?
- ✦ How do you think God felt when you were born? How do you think God feels about you now?



There are many ways a child can come to be a part of a family. When talking about their birth, make space for all of these different paths.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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- Copies of Resource Page 2
 - Pencils, colored pencils

J justice offered to all people
E eats with everyone
S son of God
U understands us
S savior

“WHO AM I?” POEM

QC

Explain to the children that an *acrostic* poem takes a specific word and uses the letters in that word as the first letter of each line of the poem. Tell the children that they can use one word or a phrase for each letter. Hand out copies of Resource Page 2, pencils, and colored pencils. On your copy of the page, write an acrostic poem to show the children how to do so. See the sidebar for an example. Write the letters of a name vertically down the left side of the paper. Then write the word or phrase that begins with each letter by that letter.

Tell the children to write their name down the left side of the page, one letter at a time, as you did. Then tell them that each line will begin with a letter in their name and describe or tell something about them. Assist with writing as necessary. Suggest children may want to work in pairs to help one another think of words or phrases for the letters in their names. Encourage the children to use the colored pencils to decorate their papers.

“YOU SAY”



Internet-connected device

Tell the children that they are going to hear a song called “You Say.” Explain that the song is addressed to God, that God is the *you* in the song. Invite the children to listen for what God is saying about the singer and to us. Show the YouTube video “Lauren Daigle—You Say (Official Music Video)” (bit.ly/FMYouSay, 4:30). After the video, allow time for children to share what they heard.

Invite the children to find a place on the floor to lie down, if they are comfortable doing so. Have them leave plenty of space around them. Tell them you will play the song again. Invite them to let the words wash over them and sink into their hearts as they close their eyes, lie still, and listen to the song again. Pause for a few moments of quiet before re-forming your circle.



FOLLOWING JESUS

WATER BLESSING

Return to the bowl of water. Form a circle. One by one, invite each child to dip their fingers in the water and then turn to the person next to them in the circle and draw a cross on their hand, saying, “(Name), you are God’s child. God loves you!”

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

Thank you, God, /
for loving us /
all the way /
and every day. /
Amen.

Bowl of water from “Waters of Baptism” (p. 8)



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON LUKE 3:21–22

Some people are baptized when they are tiny babies. Others are baptized when they are children, and some are baptized when they are adults. You may or may not have been baptized, and that's okay too! Would you be surprised to learn Jesus was baptized when he was thirty years old?

John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, grew up to be a prophet of God. When he was born, his father had said that he would be a prophet. Now people gathered around John, who was called John the Baptizer. He helped people get ready for Jesus. Besides baptizing people, John taught them about sharing and being honest.

John talked about God as if he knew what he was saying. Some people asked him, "Are you the One sent by God?"

"No, no," John said. "I'm here to help you get ready for Jesus, the One God will send."

One day, along with other people, Jesus came to the Jordan River. John was standing in the river baptizing people. When Jesus came to him, he baptized Jesus.

After Jesus was baptized, he prayed to God. Then the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit came down to Jesus in the shape of a dove.

A voice came from heaven and said, "Jesus, you are my child. I love you very much. You make me happy."

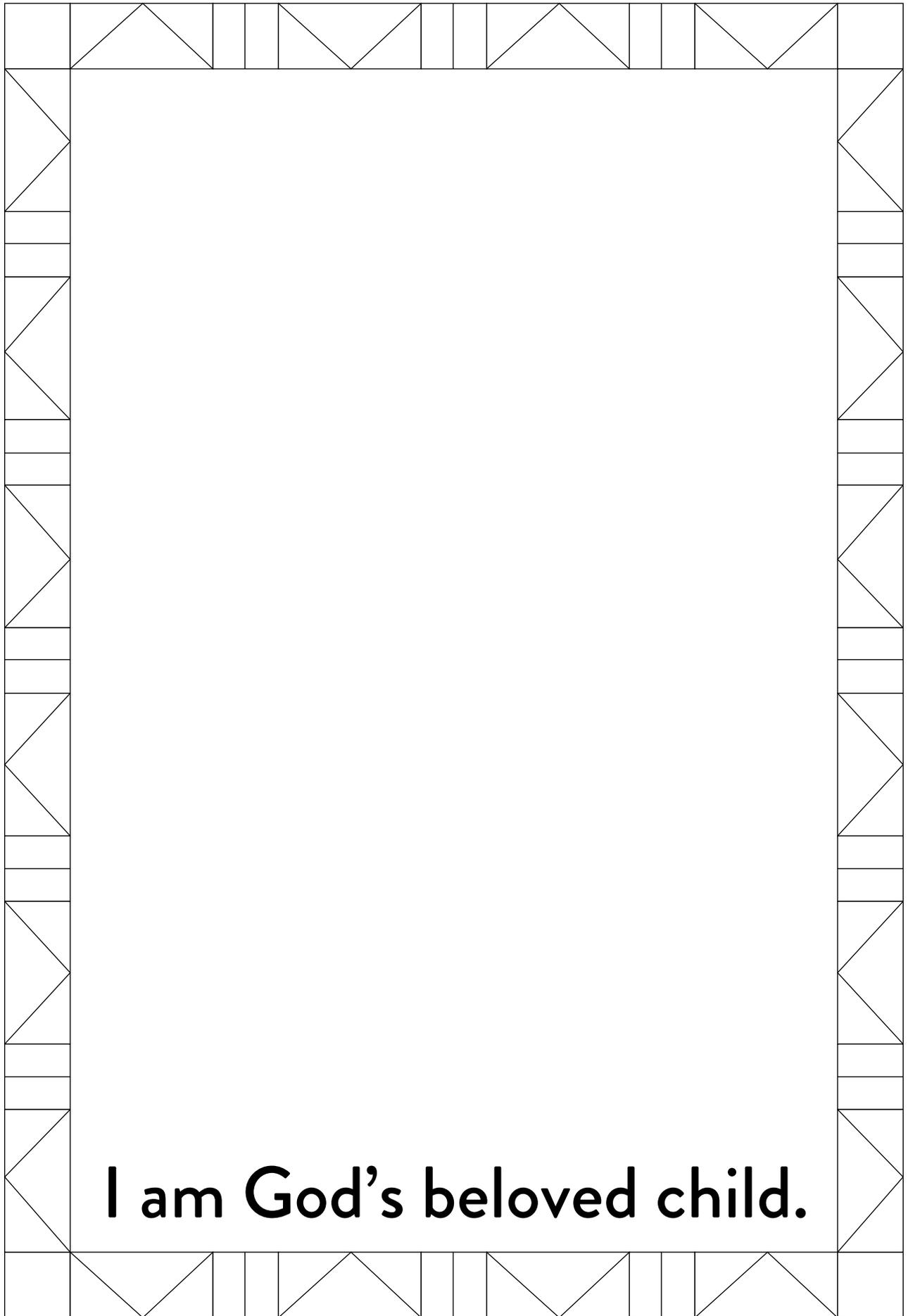
Then Jesus left the river, and John continued to baptize people.

Hear: What do you think God's voice sounds like?

See: Which part of this story do you like most? What colors would you use to draw it?

Act: Baptism is a special gift from God. How can you remember this special gift?

"An Awesome Day," excerpted from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth Caldwell and Carol Wehrheim. © 2018 Flyaway Books. Used by permission.



I am God's beloved child.

