

Guidelines for lesson 3 God the Father

AIMS OF LESSON 3

For each learner to:

- a. Rejoice to speak to God as Father.
- b. Be able to explain at a basic level why Christ's followers call Jesus the Son of God.
- c. Memorize 1 John 3:1.
- d. Grasp God the Father's unconditional love and try to model the same kind of love towards children.

TO START THE MEETING

START WITH PRAYER

LAST WEEK'S PRACTICAL TASK

- Say, "Lesson 2's practical task was to fight against three bad habits from our old nature. How was this for us? Did we make progress or was it a struggle?"

TODAY'S TOPIC

- Say, "Muslims think that to pray to God as Father is blasphemy or *shirk*! But in a spiritual way this is possible. But as Christ's followers, it is our great privilege. We will learn about this today."

ANSWERS TO THE LESSON REVIEW


- Turn together to Lesson 3 Review and ask what the learner(s) wrote.
The correct answers are:
Question 1: a) Father; b) Father
Question 2: a) True; b) True; c) False
Question 3: great, love the Father has lavished upon us, children of God, is what we are.

Cultural Clue: *Calling God 'Father'*

For Muslims, Allah is completely transcendent and he shares his divinity with no one. For them, the Arabic word *shirk* means associating any creature with God himself. Muslims believe that fatherhood is a human concept connected to sexual activity, so to call God 'Father' would be *shirk*. But when we call God 'Father', we are emphasizing his nearness to us and the relationship he wants to have with us through Christ, not implying that he is human as we are. This is explained more in Lesson 3.

A) JESUS CHRIST CALLED GOD 'FATHER' (Questions 3-9)


Question 4

 **Read** the portion from John 5:19-27.

 **Ask:**

- “How many times did you circle the titles ‘Son’ and ‘Father’ in this passage?” *[It should be Son 4 times, Father 4 times.]*
 - “When Jesus Christ himself stresses these titles so much, should we be embarrassed about them?” *[No.]*
 - “Why do our Muslim friends object to the titles Son and Father?” *[Because they think Christians teach that God had physical relations with a woman to produce a son.]* “Is that what we actually believe?” *[No! That idea is offensive for us just as it is for non-Christians.]*
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Question 7

 **Read** the first paragraph.

 **Ask:**

- “Can you think of any examples from your culture when you call something a ‘son’ but it does not actually mean a physical son?” *[Personal answers.]*
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More from Question 4

Say:

- “We saw in question 6 how the Old Testament used ‘son’ for some special people who lived close to God, showed some of his qualities, or ruled with his authority. Let’s look again at the box in question 4 to see how Jesus Christ fulfils all of these themes, and even more.”


 **Ask:**

- “In this passage do you find any phrases which speak of Jesus Christ being close to God his Father?” *[‘The Father loves the Son and shows him all he does’.]*
- “Do you find any phrases which speak of Jesus Christ sharing the qualities of God his Father?” *[‘Whatever the Father does the Son also does’. ‘For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself’.]*
- “Do you find any phrases which speak of Jesus Christ ruling with the authority of God his Father?” *[‘Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him’. ‘And he has given him authority to judge’.]*

Say:


- “Therefore Jesus Christ fulfilled all aspects of how ‘son of God’ was used in the Old Testament. He was always close to God his Father, he shared his Father’s qualities and he ruled with his Father’s authority. Indeed, he even had ‘life in himself’ just as God does.”
 - “But more than that, Jesus Christ made an even greater claim, as we will see in question 8.”
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Question 8

 **Read** the first paragraph.

 **Ask:**

- “What claim did Jesus Christ make which shows that he shares God’s very nature?” [*‘Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father’.*]

 **Read** the rest of question 8.

Say:


- “Divide into pairs. One person should take the role of Christ’s follower. Take three minutes to explain briefly to the other person, as if to a non-Christian, why we use the title ‘Son of God’ for Jesus Christ. Use any of the points from questions 3-9, or your own points.”
- “Now swap around, so that the second person now explains the same thing to the first person.”
[This is a group activity. But if you are doing this course with one learner, then do this activity as a pair together.]

B) WE TOO MAY CALL GOD ‘FATHER’ (Questions 10-18)

Questions 10-11

Say:

- “We can call Jesus Christ the Son of God. Now we take an even bigger step. Can we call God our Father, through Christ? Let’s talk about it.”

 **Read** the whole of question 10 and the first paragraph of question 11.

 **Ask:**


- “Can we speak to God as our Father, in a spiritual way?” [*Yes*]
- “Why?” [*Because God has adopted us as his spiritual children, through Jesus our ‘older brother’.*]
- “What Bible verse in question 10 says we have this great privilege to call God our Father?”
[1 John 3:1]



Discover the memory verse 1 John 3:1 in a practical way.

- Write each word on a different piece of paper and mix them up.
- Ask the learner(s) to arrange them in the right order and recite the verse.
- Then remove 2 or 3 pieces of paper and recite the verse again.
- Continue this until the learner(s) can say the whole verse without any piece of paper.

Question 12

 **Read** the whole question.

 **Ask:**


- “What is one difference between our human father’s love and our heavenly Father’s love?”
[Our human fathers might love us according to our achievements, but our heavenly Father loves us however we are.]
 - “Does God love us always, or only when we are good?” *[Always.]*
 - “Should we love our children always, or only when they are good?” *[Always.]*
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Question 13a

Say:

- “Before we think about God as our heavenly Father, let’s think and share more about our relationship with our earthly father. We recognize that we all had different relationships with our father and none of our fathers were perfect. Some of us may have had really difficult relationships with our fathers. But our heavenly Father is very different! He loves us unconditionally.”

Note: Please be sensitive to the backgrounds of the learner(s). They may have some unpleasant memories about their fathers. Let them say as much as they are comfortable sharing.

 **Read** the first paragraph of question 13.

 **Ask:**

- “Do you want to say what your earthly father was like when you were growing up?
[Omit this question if you feel it is too personal or sensitive for your learner(s). Be ready to share about your own experience with your father.]
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Question 13b

 **Read** the second and third paragraphs of question 13.


 **Ask:**

- “Do we ever fear that God would be like that father who let his son crash to the ground?”
[Let the learner(s) describe their fears honestly. Then, assure them that God will never let us down! He has promised ‘Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you’ (Hebrews 13:5).]

Cultural Clue: Nearness to God

Muslims often view Allah as distant and unreachable. Even though they speak of him as ‘closer than the vein in our necks’ yet this does not mean a two-way communication. The notion of a close relationship to God is foreign to most Muslims, though the Sufi strand of Islam seeks after it. The Christian idea of God is radically different – God has actually sought us to save us, and he invites us to call him ‘Father’.


Questions 14-15

 **Read** Luke 15:11-24.

 **Ask:**

- “What is very surprising about the father in Jesus’ story?” [*He welcomed back his son who had brought him so much dishonour!*]
 - “What do you think Jesus Christ is teaching us about God in this story?” [*God is like the generous father in this story. He welcomes us back and forgives us even when we have brought him so much dishonour!*]
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Question 16

 **Read** Nazir’s story in the box.

 **Ask:**

- “Have any of us faced an experience like Nazir?” [*The learner(s) should describe their experiences. If we have not yet been rejected maybe it will happen later when our family find out about our faith in Christ.*]
 - “What is the difference between Nazir’s father and our heavenly Father?” [*Our heavenly Father will never reject us!*]
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Question 18

 **Read** the entire question.

Say:

- “Let’s repeat together this verse from the Zabur (Psalms).” [*Say all together, “Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me”.*]
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TO FINISH THE MEETING

ASK:

- “What difference will today’s lesson make in your life?”
[*Each person should share, including you as advisor.*]

READ the Lesson 3 Practical Task.

SAY:

- “Please do this Practical Task this week, with your own children or with other children in your extended family. And do the home study for lesson 4.”

SING a song about God the Father’s love for us (if you wish).

CLOSE IN PRAYER thanking God that we can rely on him more than any human father and that he always welcomes us even when our parents reject us.