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**OBJECTIVE** Each young woman will increase her understanding of her Heavenly Father.

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**PREPARATION**

1. Picture 1, The First Vision (62470), located at the back of the manual.
2. Optional: Prepare a poster of the scripture references and attributes listed in the second section of the lesson.
3. Assign someone to sing a solo or lead the others in “How Wondrous and Great” (*Hymns*, no. 267) or “O My Father” (*Hymns*, no. 292).
4. Assign young women to present any stories, scriptures, or quotations you wish.

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**SUGGESTED  
LESSON  
DEVELOPMENT**

**Introduction**

Explain that the following story illustrates a concern shared by many people in understanding the true nature of God the Father.

**Story**

There were few things constant in the everchanging life of Ev, a young man growing up in Georgia in the 1950s. One event he could count on each week, however, was the ritual of his mother gathering up the large family and taking them to church. Ev’s father was the minister.

When Ev was about fourteen years old, he began to question some of the teachings of his church. He was especially confused about the church’s description of God. He had a hard time picturing in his mind a God without body, parts, or passions who could be everywhere at the same time and yet nowhere in particular. He had a somewhat better idea of who Jesus was because he had seen pictures of him and had read accounts in the Bible of his ministry on earth.

It became increasingly difficult for Ev to go to church, even though he loved singing in the choir. But more important, it became increasingly difficult for him to pray to this mysterious God. Eventually he found that his life had departed in many ways from his spiritual upbringing.

Some years later he met two Latter-day Saint missionaries at his work. He felt a stirring in his bosom of his former religious way of life, and he asked the missionaries to his home to teach him. When the missionaries presented the story of Joseph Smith, Ev was not surprised to learn of young Joseph’s confusion about which church to join because he remembered his feelings as a young man.

**Picture**

Display the picture of the First Vision.

The missionaries recounted the story of Joseph Smith’s first vision, telling Ev of the appearance of the Father and the Son as two separate glorified beings. Ev realized the truth of the vision, and a wonderful warm feeling filled his heart.

In time he was baptized. Through understanding that God was his Heavenly Father and that he was literally a spirit child of God, Ev was able to find great purpose in his life.

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**We Can Increase Our Understanding of God the Father**

**Discussion**

- Why was it difficult for Ev to pray to his Heavenly Father?
- What did Ev learn from the story of Joseph Smith’s first vision?
- Why did this story touch him so deeply?

- How do we learn about the true nature of God?

Be sure the young women understand that we know the nature of God through prophets' testimonies, scriptures, and personal revelation.

Teacher presentation and scriptures

Explain that Joseph Smith taught that "it is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 345).

Tell the young women that Joseph Smith described his experiences with the Father and Son. Have the young women read aloud Joseph Smith—History 1:17 and Doctrine and Covenants 76:19–24.

Explain that the name of God the Father is Elohim and he is the father of the spirits of all mankind. He is also the father of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

Read the following statement by the First Presidency: "God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title 'Elohim,' is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race" ("The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve," *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1916, p. 934).

Explain that God the Father has shown himself to or spoken to earthly prophets on very few occasions. When he has, it has been principally to testify of the divine authority of his Son, Jesus Christ.

- When has the Father testified of his Son? (At Joseph Smith's first vision, when Christ was baptized, when Christ was transfigured before his Apostles, when Christ appeared to the Nephites after his resurrection.)

Chalkboard and quotation

Explain that Joseph Smith told us that we should understand the following about the character of God the Father. As you read the six points, write these words on the chalkboard: 1. *Eternal*, 2. *Merciful*, 3. *Unchangeable*, 4. *Truthful*, 5. *No Respector of Persons*, 6. *Loving*.

"First, that he was God before the world was created, and the same God that he was after it was created.

"Secondly, that he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, and that he was so from everlasting, and will be to everlasting.

"Thirdly, that he changes not, neither is there variableness with him; but that he is the same from everlasting to everlasting, being the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and his course is one eternal round, without variation.

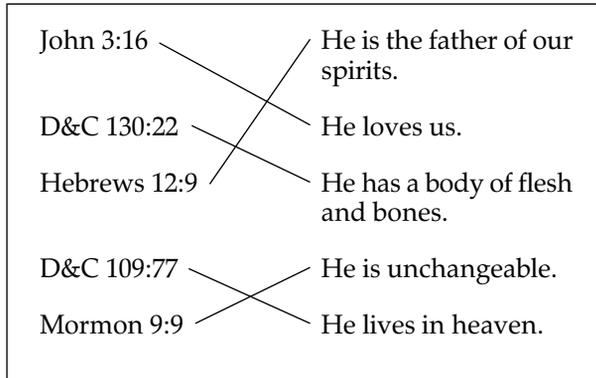
"Fourthly, that he is a God of truth and cannot lie.

"Fifthly, that he is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him.

"Sixthly, that he is love" (*Lectures on Faith*, comp. N. B. Lundwall [Salt Lake City: N. B. Lundwall, n.d.], p. 35).

Chalkboard or poster presentation

Write the following scripture references on one side of the chalkboard and some of the attributes of God on the other side. (Or display the poster you have prepared.) Have the young women find the scriptures and read them aloud. Have them draw lines connecting the correct attributes with the scripture references.



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## **We Are Children and Heirs of Our Heavenly Father**

Quotation	<p>Explain that our latter-day prophets have taught us that we are literally the spirit children of our Heavenly Father.</p> <p>Have the following quotation read:</p> <p>“We mortals are in very deed the literal offspring of God. If men understood, believed, and accepted this truth and lived by it, our sick and dying society would be reformed and redeemed, and men would have peace here and now and eternal joy in the hereafter” (Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 133; or <i>Ensign</i>, July 1973, p. 11).</p>
Discussion	<p>Encourage the young women to think of specific ways in which their lives are affected by the knowledge that they are children of God. You might want to ask questions like the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does the knowledge that you are a child of God affect your attitude toward yourself?</li><li>• How does this knowledge affect the way you treat your family members and friends?</li><li>• What would your life be like if you did not know that you had a Father in Heaven to whom you could pray?</li></ul> <p>Knowing that God is our Father brings us peace and joy and helps us understand the great value of each person on earth.</p>
Scripture discussion	<p>Have a young woman read Romans 8:16–17.</p> <p>Explain that these verses teach that we are the children of God and we are his heirs. We can inherit eternal life, which is the kind of life that God lives. God will allow us to share the same knowledge and glory that he possesses. But God has established conditions we must meet if we are to inherit eternal life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where can we find the conditions we must meet? (In the scriptures, the teachings of the modern prophets, the teachings of our parents, our Church meetings.)</li></ul> <p>Explain that these conditions are the commandments God gives to us. These commandments show us the way to be as happy as possible in this life and to inherit eternal life in the life to come.</p> <p>Help the young women understand that there is nothing greater or more wonderful than the kind of life God lives. We cannot even imagine the joy and beauty of that life. Keeping the commandments is worth all the effort it requires because only by doing so can we become like our Father and inherit eternal life.</p>

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## **We Can Learn about Heavenly Father by Learning about Jesus Christ**

Scripture discussion	<p>Have a young woman read John 14:7.</p> <p>Explain that we have very few of the words and actions of our Father in Heaven recorded in the scriptures. One of the best ways we can learn about our Father in Heaven is by learning about his Son, Jesus Christ.</p> <p>To help the young women understand why we can learn about the Father by learning about Jesus Christ, present the following ideas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are one.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In what ways are God the Father and Jesus Christ one?</li></ul></li></ol> <p>Make sure the young women understand that the Father and Son are one in their thoughts, purposes, and goals. They are separate individuals, but because they are completely unified in the things they think and do, one of them can speak for the other. We can learn about the things Christ said and did, and we can know that the Father would say and do the same things. (See John 17:20–23.)</p> <p>Sometimes young women wonder when Jesus Christ is speaking in the scriptures and when the Father is speaking. The following quotation will help to answer that question:</p>
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Quotation	<p>“Most scriptures that speak of God or of the Lord do not even bother to distinguish the Father from the Son, simply because it doesn’t make any difference which God is involved. They are one. The words or deeds of either of them would be the words and deeds of the other in the same circumstance.</p> <p>“Further, if a revelation comes from, or by the power of the Holy Ghost, ordinarily the words will be those of the Son, though what the Son says will be what the Father would say, and the words may thus be considered as the Father’s” (Bruce R. McConkie, “Our Relationship with the Lord,” in <i>Brigham Young University 1981–82 Fireside and Devotional Speeches</i> [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1982], p. 101).</p>
Teacher presentation	<p>2. Heavenly Father and Jesus love us in the same way.</p> <p>In everything he does, Jesus shows us eternal love. Heavenly Father loves us in the same way. When we read about the acts of great love that Jesus performed among the Jews and the Nephites, we can know that the Father loves us with the same perfect love. Christ taught of the great love that the Father has for us.</p> <p>Have one of the young women read Matthew 7:7–11. Explain that the Father loves us so much that he will never do anything for us that is not for our best good.</p> <p>3. Jesus Christ carried out the Father’s plan of salvation.</p> <p>The plan of salvation is the Father’s plan. He presented it to us in the premortal existence and chose his Son, Jesus Christ, to carry it out. Christ came to earth and taught us about the plan of repentance and obedience to the commandments of God. He then suffered for our sins and was resurrected so that we could return to our Father if we repent. We can understand how wise and loving our Father in Heaven is when we learn about the great plan of salvation carried out by Jesus Christ.</p> <p>4. Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He looks and acts just as his Father does. See John 1:14; Hebrews 1:1–3.</p> <p>5. We pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ. See 3 Nephi 18:19–21; 2 Nephi 32:9.</p> <p>6. By his example, Jesus Christ showed us the way to return to the Father. See John 14:6; 2 Nephi 31:16–18.</p>

### Conclusion

Explain that as a daughter of God, each young woman has a responsibility to increase her understanding of the nature of God. As she learns more about her Heavenly Father, she will want to obey his commandments and reach her potential as his daughter.

Song	Present as a solo or have the young women sing “How Wondrous and Great” or “O My Father.”
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### Lesson Applications

1. Ask the young women to remember through the coming week that they are children of God and that other people are their brothers and sisters. Have them record in their journals ways in which this knowledge changes their own behavior or their treatment of others.
2. Ask the young women to memorize John 17:3.