

John Baptizes Jesus

(Mark 1:1-11)

Introduction

Teacher, invite your students to think of a famous sports figure they wish would visit their home. What might they do to prepare for his or her visit? Challenge every student in your class to give a different answer. Consider preparations such as cleaning, painting, redecorating, fixing fancy food, getting nice clothes to wear, etc. List answers on the board.

Then ask students to imagine that Jesus is coming to visit their home. What might they do to prepare? Would they do some of the same things they did for the sports figure? Would some preparations not be as important? What would be important if Jesus were coming to visit? What if He were coming to stay? Discuss how a clean, willing heart gives Jesus the best welcome of all into a person's life.

Opening Prayer

Father, help us to want to be more and more like John the Baptist, whose job it was to point the way to the coming of Jesus. I pray that we will realize this morning that you want each and every one of us to be eager to tell someone about how wonderful You are. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. (Matthew 5:16)

Lesson

Alternative Lesson Plan

Invite a guest speaker to dress up as John the Baptist (beard, sandals, rugged clothing including some sort of animal skin) or dress up as John the Baptist yourself. Have your guest read Luke 3:1-38 in preparation for the dramatic, first-person account of the events of Luke 3. Make sure that your special guest includes the following events from this chapter:

- John preached that people should be baptized to show they had turned away from their sins to God (Luke 3:1-3).
- John preached, "Prepare the way for the Lord." His ministry was to prepare people for the Messiah (Luke 3:4-6).
- John warned the crowds not to be baptized for the wrong reasons (Luke 3:7-14).
- John denied that he was the Messiah: "One more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." (Luke 3:15-20)
- John baptized Jesus. The Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove. God announced His favor for His Son. Jesus was ready to begin His ministry. (Luke 3:21-23)

Make sure that your special "John the Baptist" guest speaker explains baptism. It is a public expression of salvation and a desire to follow and obey God. Jesus did not need to repent or be forgiven of sins (He had none) but He desired to obey His Father. He wanted to publicly express His desire to follow God, so He was baptized. Tell students about your own salvation and baptism experiences. Allow children to tell of their own salvation and baptism experiences.

Teacher, ask why sin is such an important issue to God. Why does He care? Why doesn't He simply overlook some of the small things people do? Discuss the holiness and perfection of God.

Regular Lesson Plan

[Teacher, invite your students to think of a famous sports figure they wish would visit their home. What might they do to prepare for his or her visit? Consider preparations such as cleaning, painting, redecorating, fixing fancy food, getting nice clothes to wear, etc. List answers on the board.

Then ask students to imagine that Jesus is coming to visit their home. What might they do to prepare? Would they do some of the same things they did for the sports figure? Would some preparations not be as important? What would be important if Jesus were coming to visit? What if He were coming to stay? Discuss how a clean, willing heart gives Jesus the best welcome of all into a person's life.]

Opening Prayer

Father, we know that You can return to earth at any time. We don't know when You are coming back, but we are told that it could be anytime. Please help us to always live our lives in a way that is pleasing to You so that we are ready for Your return. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Lesson

[Teacher, review with the children, who John the Baptist was...]

An angel had appeared to Zechariah and told him that he and his wife, Elizabeth, were to have a special son and his name was to be John.

They knew that God had a special job for John to do. God had told them that before He sent the Messiah into the world that He wanted John to prepare people's hearts to listen to Him when He came.

God had made this plan known to the people through the Prophet Isaiah 700 years before John and Jesus were born.

Mark 1:1-3

This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began just as the prophet Isaiah had written: "Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way. He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming! Clear the road for him!'"

The Prophet Isaiah told the people that God was going to send a messenger ahead to help people get ready for the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

This messenger was John the Baptist.

Mark 1:4

This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.

John the Baptist was to tell people to be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.

Mark 1:5

All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

Everyone went out to see and hear John. He told them to confess their sins so that they could have their hearts cleansed and ready before the Messiah came. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

How many of you have been baptized? Why did you get baptized? [Teacher, discuss the significance of baptism with the children.]

We all do wrong things. We've been mean to our friends; or disrespectful to our moms, or disobedient to our dads. Some of us have told lies. When we sin, our hearts become dirty. We need to be cleansed on the inside. We do that by coming to the Lord and confessing our sins.

To confess your sins is just telling God that you know you are a sinner. You can say, "Lord, I said that bad word." Or, "I was disrespectful to my mom." Or, "I disobeyed my dad." And when you tell Him that you are truly sorry for doing something that displeases Him and ask Him to forgive you, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Baptism shows other people that you have spoken to the Lord, confessed your sins and are now cleansed on the inside.

John was helping people prepare their hearts for the coming of Jesus. They had all been expecting the Messiah to come.

Luke 3:15 [Teacher, read...]

Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah.

When they heard John preach, they wondered whether John might be the messiah. Then John told them that Someone greater than he, was coming.

Mark 1:7-8

John announced: "Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not even worthy to stoop down like a slave and untie the straps of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!"

Who was John talking about? Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior!

Then at last, Jesus traveled from his home in Nazareth out to the Jordan River where John was baptizing people. [Teacher, show on map.]

John 1:29 [Teacher, read...]

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

The people looked where John was pointing. There stood the Lord Jesus Christ! John was telling them that the Christ, the promised Savior, had come.

Why do you think John called Jesus the "Lamb of God"? [Discuss.]

Jesus came to John to get baptized, but John tried to talk him out of it.

Matthew 3:13-15 [Teacher, read...]

Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. (14) But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" (15) But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him.

John said, "I'm the one who needs to be baptized by you." He was trying to tell Jesus that he was unworthy to baptize Him. John knew that Jesus was God the Son, Who had never done anything sinful in His life.

Why do you think that Jesus allowed John to baptize Him? (Jesus said, "It should be done" in order to fulfill the scriptures.)

Have you ever seen someone get baptized? You baptize someone by carefully helping them go under the water and come up again. It is not a game. It is a way to show other people that God has cleaned you on the inside.

Baptism is a symbol of the death and resurrection of Jesus. When you go under the water it is a picture of the death to your old sinful ways. When you come up out of the water it is a picture that shows people

you have been born again. We have a new start in life. God has forgiven you of your sins and cleansed you of all your sins so that you can now live your life in a way that brings honor to God.

John baptized God the Son! Think about that! When Jesus came up out of the water, something marvelous happened!

Mark 1:10-11

As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice from heaven said, "You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy."

Because Jesus obeyed the Father and was baptized, the Holy Spirit came down upon Him and the Father told Him that He was overjoyed with Him.

John helped people get ready to meet Jesus. God wants you and I to do the same thing. Our world is full of pain and misery and evil because of sin. Many people today do not know about the Lord Jesus. God wants you to point others to Jesus. People need to believe in the Lord Jesus so they can have their sins forgiven and live for God.

How do you think you can point people to Jesus? [Discuss.]

Jesus loves each one of us and wants to make each one of us clean on the inside. You can ask God to make you clean on the inside right now if you want to. All you need to do is ask God to forgive you of all the naughty things you have ever done and to make you clean in the inside. As I pray, you pray to God...

Closing Prayer

Father, all of us do wrong things. Some of us have been mean to our friends; some of us have been disrespectful to our moms; or disobedient to our dads. Some of us have told lies. I ask you to forgive us our sins. Then help us want to do what's right. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we might live our lives in a way that brings honor and glory to You. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

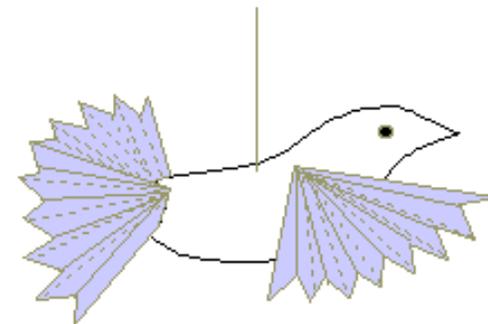
Lesson Review Activity

Make a path in your room with a long rope. Put lots of bends, twists, and curves in the path. Have the children take off their shoes and walk on the "tightrope." When the first child is several feet along the path, have the next child begin. After everyone has walked the path, straighten the rope, and have the children walk along the path again. Then, gather the children and ask:

- Was it easier to walk along the crooked path or the straight path?
- Why did John ask the people to straighten the road?
- How can we straighten the road today?

To straighten the road for Jesus means to get ready for his coming. We can get ready for Jesus by looking at our lives and by getting rid of the things that keep us from following Jesus. Then we'll be able to welcome Jesus with our whole hearts.

Craft Corner



Supplies needed:

- White construction paper or card stock
- White tissue paper, 6"x10"
- Ribbon
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Clear tape
- Optional: markers, glue, glitter, wiggly eyes

Procedures:

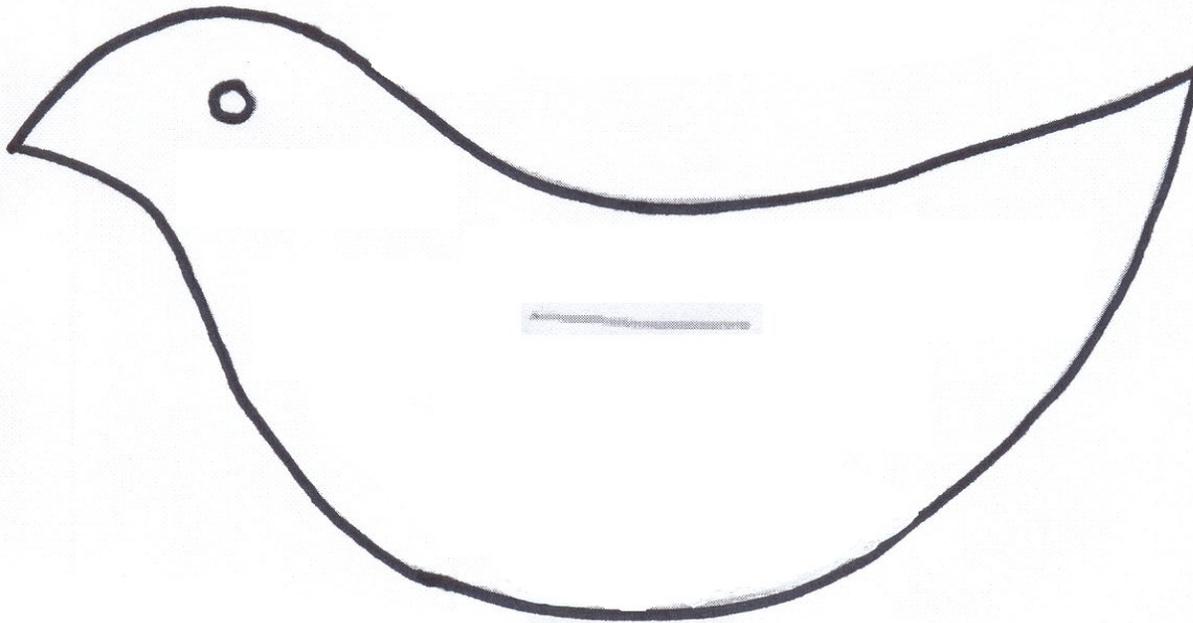
1. Cut the body out of stiff white paper.
2. Make a slit in the body for the wings.
3. Fold each piece of tissue like an accordion, ½" folds.
4. Insert the folded tissue paper (wings) into the slit in the bird's body.
5. Punch a hole and thread it with the ribbon to hang it up.
6. Optional: decorate the dove with markers or glitter or wiggly eyes.

Game Center

Use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

1. Who did God send to prepare a way for the Messiah (Christ)? (John the Baptist announced that the Jewish Messiah would soon come.)
2. What did John do to prepare the Jewish people for the Messiah? (John preached about Repentance for the forgiveness of sins and baptized people in the Jordan River when they did repent of their sins.)
3. What did John the Baptist mean when he called Jesus "The Lamb of God"? (Jesus was the one who would be sacrificed for their sins.)
4. What does "repent" mean? (Repent means to STOP a bad attitude or action, and to START a good one. It means "change directions" or "turn around.")
5. What did John the Baptist use water for? (Baptism)
6. Who was John preparing the way for? (Jesus)
7. Why did John want people to be ready for Jesus? (so they would listen to Him)
8. How can we prepare our hearts to love Jesus? (turn from our sins)
9. Why did Jesus get baptized? (Jesus was baptized to set an example for us of obedience to God. Or, He was baptized to mark the beginning of his public ministry.)
10. How did God show he was pleased with Jesus' obedience? (God spoke out of Heaven and the Spirit of God descended upon Him.)
11. Name at least one special thing that happened when John baptized Jesus. (The Holy Spirit came down as a dove and remained on Jesus. Heaven was opened; God spoke audibly.)
12. What does it mean to you that "the kingdom of heaven is near?" (Jesus is coming again!)
13. What would you like to change about your heart and life?
14. What can you do to be like John the Baptist and "prepare the way for the Lord"? (be a witness and an evangelist)
15. How can you prepare your heart for Jesus? (I can repent, confess my sins, be baptized, etc.)

16. Why is baptism important? (God commands us to be baptized; it is a sign of our death and rebirth in Christ; it shows the world that we are followers of Jesus.)



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