

## John's Ministry Began

**Matt. 3; Mark 1;  
Luke 3; John 1**

## Is Jesus God or a human?

Jesus is fully God and fully human.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

-John 1:14

### Story Point:

John prepared the way for Jesus.



### PREPARE HEARTS

- Starter Activity and Question of the Day
- 11:00 - Kids Worship**



### ACTIVATE HEARTS

- Lesson Review - John's Ministry Began
- Discussion Questions
- Share and Care Prayer Time



### ENGAGE HEARTS

- Group Activity: Preparing Our Hearts
- Group Game: Musical Readiness
- Group Demonstration: Turn Back to God

## SHEPHERD GUIDE

When we plan for something big, we don't show up unprepared. Think about how much planning goes into a wedding, a big presentation, or even a party. Similarly, preparing our hearts for Jesus isn't just about showing up—it's about making space for Him. We ready our hearts for Jesus by seeing ourselves for what we are: sinners in need of a Savior.

This week we will study the story of John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus. Consider the following teaching points as you prepare your heart to lead kids.

**We can prepare our hearts for Jesus.** Preparing our hearts begins with honesty—recognizing the places where we've let sin, pride, fear, or comfort take the lead. Repentance means naming those things, surrendering them to God, and asking Him to help us change. It's not about trying harder on our own, but about opening ourselves to the Spirit's work in us.

**We can point others to Jesus.** John didn't just attract people's curiosity; he pointed them to Jesus, the one who could change their lives. That's our job too. We aren't here to build our own little kingdoms, but to build God's—helping others find Jesus through our words, actions, and relationships. We have the greatest news ever, and it's not meant to be kept to ourselves. Every time we live out our faith or speak about Jesus, we're clearing the way for someone else to meet Him.

**God is more powerful than anyone.** John recognized Jesus as the King of kings, the one who holds all power. John said, "I'm not even worthy to untie His sandals!" That's the kind of reverence we're called to have when we understand just how powerful Jesus is. There's nothing in this world or in our lives more powerful than God. No situation, no struggle, no challenge can outmatch His might. And that's where our confidence should lie: in the fact that our God is bigger than anything we face.

This week, remind kids that when they repent, they're making space for Jesus to move more freely in their lives. They're saying, "I want You more than I want anything else." And that kind of heart posture doesn't just happen once—it's something they'll return to daily as they grow deeper in faith and love for Christ.

REMINDER: Our VIP meeting is from 10:20 - 10:30 in C1. Your supply bin will be in your classroom.



# GRADES 3-4

## KNOW + LOVE + FOLLOW

April 26, 2026  
2<sup>nd</sup> Service

### MAIN TAKEAWAYS:

- \*KNOW that Jesus is worth preparing for and worth following.
- \*TRUST that Jesus loves them unconditionally, even when they sin.
- \*REPENT - Stop sinning, turn the other way, and follow Jesus.



*As you arrive and children come and go - Welcome them by name and invite them to play with you and the others. Use this time to get to know your kids - ask them about their week, about their likes and dislikes and about their school, family and friends.*

*Ways to connect - Play a game from the closet, color or draw together, build with legos/blocks, etc.*

*When most kids have arrived for 2nd service (by 10:50ish), ask them to clean up the toys and find a seat at one of the tables to begin the class.*

*\*Option - Pen Pal Kit!!*



### PREPARE HEARTS

#### Question of the Day:

***Have you ever been on a road trip? Where did you go?***

#### Starter Activity

Welcome and Question of the Day

When we travel long distances we usually go on the highway, right? We might take it for granted that the road will be paved nice and smooth for us as we drive. But let's imagine for a moment that we live in a time long ago before there were nicely paved highways. If we were to begin a journey we might see mountains and valleys ahead of us but no safe, smooth road to travel on. We might encounter large rocks and big holes. Traveling like that would be dangerous and would take a long time. Back then kings and royalty were the lucky ones. When they would travel they would send men ahead of them to prepare a road. They would clear a path and smooth out the road to make traveling more comfortable for the king.

Today we are going to learn about a man named John the Baptist. He was a bit like those men who went before a king to clear the path. In fact, he helped clear the path for the most important king ever. John prepared the way for Jesus. John didn't clear a physical road for Jesus. Instead he taught that we must prepare our hearts for Jesus.



KIDS  
WORSHIP

11:00

Kids Worship for Pre-K - 4<sup>th</sup> Grade in LG2.



## ACTIVE MINDS

You can use the REVIEW VIDEO on your TV and / or use this lesson as a review of what was taught 1st service.

### John's Ministry Began

Bibles,  
Review Video –  
Bible story on TV

Open your Bible to Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1. You can use the Kids Sermon Outline as you go through the story.

KIDS SERMON OUTLINE:

**We can prepare our hearts for Jesus (Matt. 3:1-6):** John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus.

**We can point others to Jesus (Matt. 3:11- 12):** John the Baptist baptized people with water and made it known that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

**God is more powerful than anyone (Matt. 3:7-10):** The Pharisees and Sadducees thought they were saved because of their family line, but God is more powerful than anyone.

The word of God came to a man named John who lived in the wilderness. John wore a camel-hair garment and ate locusts and wild honey. He preached a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins in the area around the Jordan River.

John proclaimed, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!” People came from all over Judea to hear what John had to say and to be baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

The prophet Isaiah had spoken about John many years before. Isaiah said:

“A voice cries out in the wilderness:

Prepare the way for the Lord;

make his paths straight!”

Some of the leaders of the Jewish people called Pharisees and Sadducees came to see what John was saying and doing. When John saw them, he said, “Who warned you to escape God’s anger? Your lives don’t show you’ve turned away from your sin. You can’t just say ‘Abraham is our father.’ I tell you that God can even make stones into children of Abraham.”

Some people thought John might be the promised Messiah who had come to save God’s people. But John knew that he was God’s messenger who was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah.

John said, “I baptize you with water as a sign that you want to turn away from your sin. But the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I am. I’m not even worthy to untie his sandal straps. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

## CHRIST CONNECTION

John prepared the way for Jesus by calling people to repent of their sins. If we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus, we will be saved.

**What did you hear in the story? Did anything surprise you about John?** [Allow responses.] We heard that John lived out in the desert wearing clothing made of camel hair and eating locusts and honey. He may sound strange, but John prepared the way for Jesus by calling people to repent of their sins. Listen to this: (Read Matthew 3:2.) John told the people to turn from their old way of living and turn toward Jesus to find out how to live like people who belong to the one true God.

If we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus, we will be saved. We don't have to feel guilty or ashamed of all the bad things we've done, said, or thought. Jesus knows all our sin, and His death on the cross paid the price for it. When Jesus died He said, 'It is finished.' Jesus came to earth with a job to do: to bring about God's kingdom and offer us an invitation to belong to Him.



### Discussion

Discussion questions listed here

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

**What is repentance?** What does the Bible say about repentance? Biblical repentance is recognizing that our sin is against God, and we need to turn away completely in the opposite direction of our sin and instead, turn to God. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Chronicles 7:14.)

**Can you repent of a sin but continue sinning?** If we truly repent, then we are turning away from that sin and asking the Lord to keep us from it. We cannot live a holy life with God and a sinful life at the same time. There may be times we struggle with that sin again, and God continues to offer us forgiveness. But the act of repentance calls us to live differently. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 15:7.)

**What does the Bible say about being in God's family?** When we turn from our sin and call upon the name of Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we become a child of God, a part of His family. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 1:12.)



### Share and Care Prayer

Spend some time as a class sharing about:

- Our Global Partner Family of the Month (**The Hallead Family**)
- Specific prayer requests from any of the kids about something going on in their own lives.

Have the class sit in a circle as you share and care for one another's needs. Ask for and share requests with one another. Review and follow up with any prayer requests from the chain made the week before. Use the Global Partner of the Month spotlight sheet (In the Pen Pal Kit) to talk about prayer requests from the Hallead Family.



## Preparing Our Hearts

- Heart cut-outs
- Markers
- Colored Pencils

**Have you ever had someone come to visit and stay overnight at your house? Did your mom or dad ask you to help get your home ready? What kinds of things would you want to do to prepare for a guest?** [Allow responses.] You might want to wash the sheets and put them on a guest bed. You may lay out fresh towels in the bathroom. You may even stock up on some of your guest's favorite snacks. It's important to be ready for someone when they come to stay the night.

It's also important for our hearts to be ready for Jesus. John prepared the way for Jesus. But he didn't tell people to put clean sheets on a bed or tidy up their houses. Instead, John said that we need to prepare our hearts. How do we do that? [Allow responses.] John said, 'the kingdom of heaven has come near.' What an interesting thing to say. In the Bible, the kingdom of heaven is also called God's kingdom, but it's not a physical place. God's kingdom is the story of how God is taking back the world that humans have broken because of our sin. God's kingdom includes all the people who turn to Jesus in faith and ask Him to wipe away their sin.

God loves us so much, and He wants us to be close to Him. That's why Jesus came! He has made the way for us to be reconnected to our Creator by turning away from doing things our own way and asking God to show us the way to live. But it's not just about our behavior. Jesus wants us to truly love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind. We make our hearts ready to follow Jesus by recognizing that we can't do anything to save ourselves. We need Jesus! Jesus truly is the way to freedom!

Give each child a heart cut-out. Have them draw a picture or write a way that they can prepare their heart and choose closeness with God:

- Choosing kindness
- Telling the truth
- Praying instead of worrying
- Quiet moments with God instead of noise



## Musical Readiness

- Velcro Spots
- Music on your phone or the USB

Place the velcro spots randomly on the floor around the room, leaving one less than the number of kids playing.

You can use a worship song or instrumental music that ties into the lesson. As the music plays, the kids walk or dance around the room. When the music stops, they must quickly find a spot to stand on. Whoever is left without a spot must do a simple physical challenge and then can return to play. Examples include: jumping jacks, spinning around five times, hopping on one foot, and so forth. Remove one spot each round so that more and more children continue to get out each round. Continue as long as time allows.

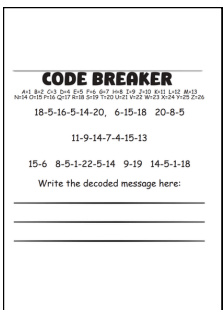
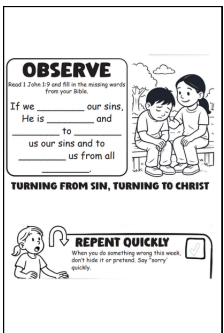
**SAY:** Great job, everyone! Just like in the game, we need to be ready to respond when Jesus calls us. When the music stopped, you had to quickly find a chair, right? In life, we need to be just as quick and ready to listen for Jesus and follow Him when He calls. That means we have to prepare our hearts, turn away from the things that distract us—like sin—and choose to turn toward Jesus. Repentance is all about doing that: stopping what we're doing, recognizing what's wrong, and choosing to follow Jesus. So, just like you had to be fast and ready in the game, we need to be fast and ready to follow Jesus in our lives!

Jesus came to bring us close to God and to have a true friendship with us. The first step in that friendship is realizing that we need Him. That's why repentance is so important—it's about turning away from the world's way of living and choosing to follow Jesus' way!



## Turn Back to God

- White t-shirt
- 7 Hangers with costume accessories and labels
- "Observe half-sheet
- Bibles
- Markers
- Colored Pencils
- Crayons



**SAY:** John didn't just tell people to try harder. He called them to turn back to God and begin again. Repentance is an invitation to start new. John prepared people because Jesus was coming then, and we know that Jesus is coming again. So we don't hide our sins or pretend we're fine. We turn to Him – again and again – trusting His grace to wash us clean.

\*\*Use the following object lesson to teach about repentance:

- Put on the t-shirt that says "I told a LIE" in large block letters.
- Hang the 7 other hangers with each costume accessory on coat rack hooks. (This will be done and ready for you!)
- Labels on the hangers:
  - Pretend it never happened.
  - Make up an excuse.
  - Do something good to make up for it.
  - Tell more lies to cover it up.
  - Blame it on someone else.
  - Get rid of the evidence.
  - Empty hanger that says "REPENT - Admit your sin, give it to Jesus, and turn from it. Jesus took our sins on himself."
- Explain that you did something wrong. Have a volunteer read the words on your shirt. Show the children with your body language that you feel bad about what you have done and explain that you would really like to get rid of the bad feeling.
- Then say that you have some ideas for how you could get rid of the bad feeling. Take one of the hangers off a hook and read the idea for getting rid of the sin. Take the associated costume item and put it on. Ask the children if it made your sin go away. Your shirt is still visible, so the children will say no. Take each item in turn, trying in vain to cover up the words on your shirt. Some of the items cover your sin a little bit, and you can try to stretch them over your shirt as best you can. But, even to the extent that it is covered, we know the sin is still there!
- Finally, give up and take off all the costume accessories that didn't work. As one final attempt, take the hanger labeled "REPENT - Admit your sin, give it to Jesus, and turn from it. Jesus took our sins on himself." Express hope about this option, but also some confusion - there's nothing on the hanger? How does this work? Take off the t-shirt and place it on the hanger, and hang it back on the coat hook and turn away.
- Explain that repentance through Jesus Christ is the only way we can actually get rid of our sins. Instead of just trying to cover them up, when we repent, we turn from our sin and give them to Jesus. And because of his great love for us, Jesus takes those sins and puts them on himself through His suffering and death on the cross. We can say thank you Jesus and love Him by listening and obeying His Word.

Pass out the "Observe" half-sheet. Have everyone open their Bibles to 1 John 1:9 and fill in the missing words. Talk about how we want to be turning from sin and turning to Jesus! Flip the paper over and have the children use the code to write the hidden message. Talk about how John came to prepare the way for Jesus, encouraging everyone to repent and follow Jesus.