

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

- Welcome - Tie It Up
- Starter Activity - Paving the Path



ACTIVATE HEARTS

- 9:20 - Bible Lesson in LG2
- Review and discuss the Bible Story
- Reflection and Prayer
- Questions from Kids Video



ENGAGE HEARTS

- Key Passage Activity - Bible Berserko
- Group Game - Color Change
- Group Activity - Staying Close to God

SHEPHERD GUIDE

The early ministry of John the Baptist is recorded in all four Gospels— Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This preacher whose dress, diet, and living conditions may have seemed eccentric to some, proclaimed the good news of One greater than himself: Jesus, the promised Messiah.

Two Old Testament passages tell us about John the Baptist, the first being Isaiah 40:3—a verse cited not only by the Gospel writers but also by John himself when questioned about his identity. The second passage is Malachi 3:1, in which the Lord declares, “See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me.” The people were expecting to witness the arrival of the Messiah and wondered if John was the one they had been waiting for. Many were drawn to John, traveling from far away to confess their sins and be baptized.

John, however, embraced his role of a messenger to the Messiah. John began his ministry, humbly declaring both his unworthiness and the supremacy of Christ. He ventured throughout the area near the Jordan River calling the people to repent and receive forgiveness from sin. He spoke against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Sadducees, calling them, too, to repent and be changed through faith.


The crowds asked what God would have them do. John called them to love one another and be content with what they had. He exhorted them, yet proclaimed the good news, professing that Jesus is the Son of God and the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. These were weighty statements for one man to say about another, but John trusted God's Word and proclaimed the same gospel we hear today—the same gospel you will teach to boys and girls this week.

Pray that the Holy Spirit would go before you to prepare children's hearts to receive the good news for themselves. Ask the Lord to give you words to faithfully proclaim the truth that He alone is worthy of our repentance and trust.

REMINDER: Our VIP meeting is from 8:30–8:40 in C1. Your supply bin will be in your classroom.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS: We want our kids to:

- *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 children arrive - Welcome them by name and invite them to play with you and the other children. 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 first service (by 9:05ish), ask them to clean up the toys and find a seat at one of the tables to begin the class.
Pen Pal Kit!!



PREPARE HEARTS

OPENING QUESTIONS:

Have you been camping or hiking in the wilderness before? Where did you go?

WELCOME Tie It Up

- Activity page
- pencils
- markers

Invite kids to complete the “Tie It Up” activity page.

Great work tying and matching up the sandals! In today’s story, we’ll learn about a man named John who lived in the wilderness and prepared the way for Jesus’ ministry. Listen in our story for what John said about Jesus’ sandal straps.

Have the kids sit down on the floor or at a table.

Provide each kid with a sheet of paper and a crayon.

Instruct everyone to place his or her crayon on the paper at the end closest to his or herself and begin slowly drawing a straight line.

Explain that as they draw, you will give them instructions. Whatever you say, the kids must follow with their crayons. Some examples may include stop, straight, left, right, circle, etc. Once the kids run off the paper, he or she must put down their crayon.

SAY: Those are some really twisty and wild pathways! God’s people had sinned, but God called a man named John to point them to the coming Messiah. Today we will learn that through his ministry, John prepared the way for Jesus.



STARTER Paving the Path

- Blank Paper
- Crayons



ACTIVE MINDS

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

(Quick 1 minute review!)

9:20 – 9:35

K - 4th Grade in LG2

BIBLE STORY:

John's Ministry Began

Bibles, Powerpoint slides

Taught by the Bible Teacher:

Quick Review of where we are in the Big Story of the Bible and Big Picture Question:

Is Jesus God or a human? Jesus is fully God and fully human.

Open your Bible to Matthew 3.

STORYTELLING OPTIONS / TIPS:

Map it out: Consider displaying a map of the Jordan River to help kids visualize the area where John was ministering and baptizing people. (On Powerpoint slide for you)

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.



REVIEW AND DISCUSS

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Allow time to have the children think and process - however this works best for your class. We want our kids to feel known and heard!

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Blank paper, Bible Story coloring page, colored pencils/crayons

In small groups (or as a large group), use the coloring page (on the other side of the worksheet) and have children color while you talk through these questions.

John warned the people that they needed to repent of their sins. **What does it mean to repent?** [Allow responses.] We repent when we make a decision to turn away from our sinful desires and choose to follow God's commands. John also told the people that the kingdom of heaven had come near. **What do you think John meant when he said this?** [Allow responses.] God had brought the kingdom of heaven to the people through Jesus the Messiah, who would soon begin calling the people to repent of their sins.

What did John say to the Pharisees and Sadducees? [Allow responses.] These leaders were Jews, descendants of Abraham, who God had called His chosen people. But John reminded these leaders that they could not enter into God's family based on who their ancestors were. They must respond to God personally by turning away from their sins. John warned them that those who would not repent would experience God's anger.

Who did the people think John was? [Allow responses.] John reminded the people that he was not the Messiah, for he was not worthy to even untie Jesus' sandal. Jesus was coming, and those who would trust in Him would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. But those who turned away from Him would receive God's judgment.

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.



Reflection and Prayer

Have children use a blank sheet of paper. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions. Or, just talk about it together.

- **What does this story teach me about God?**

That God is worth preparing for and following! He wants us to repent because He knows how life works best. He wants us to follow and trust Him completely.

- **What does this story teach me about myself?**

That I am sinful - that everyone is sinful - we all have done bad things and we all need Jesus. I am also deeply loved by God. I can trust that He is good.



Questions from Kids Video

USB on TV

Show the “Unit 20, Session 1” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

- How do I know if music I want to listen to is honoring God or not?
- What does it mean to repent of your sins?



ENGAGE HEARTS

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud John 1:14.

Key Passage Activity:

Bible Berserko

- Key Passage Poster
- Big Dice

SAY: Through our new key passage, we are going to explore Jesus’ identity as the Word. Jesus is both a human and God, full of grace and truth!

Choose a kid to roll the big dice, then have the kids recite the verse together in the style that corresponds with the list below. When finished, hand the dice to another kid and repeat.

1. In a robot voice.
2. In a squeaky mouse voice.
3. While making a silly face.
4. Like you’re sitting in a bathtub filled with ice water.
5. Like you’re being chased by a dinosaur.
6. Like a big giant.



Color Change

- Two different colors of construction paper
- Yes/No Questions

Hang two different colored pieces of construction paper in two corners of the room.

Line the kids up shoulder to shoulder on the opposite end of the room.

Explain that you will ask the kids a yes or no question. Some examples could be: -

- Are chicken nuggets your favorite food?
- Do you have a dog?
- Are you wearing something red?
- Did you eat breakfast?
- Do you play a sport?
- Do you play a musical instrument?

Designate one color as yes and the other color as no. The kids must answer the questions by running to one of the two colors, spinning around in a circle, and running back to the other side of the room.

SAY: Similar to how you spun around and changed directions, to repent means to change the direction of your heart so that you want to follow Jesus instead of your sin. John prepared the way for Jesus by calling the people to repent of their sins and be baptized.



Staying Close to God

- Bible
- John the Baptist
- Half-sheet
- Markers
- Crayons
- Colored Pencils

John didn't live like everyone else. Camel-hair clothes, wild honey and locust, wilderness life - to many people he looked unusual.

Read Mark 1:6-7. Pass out the half-sheet of John and his plate. Have the children finish the drawing of John and also fill in the plate with either what John the Baptist ate OR with their own plate of strange food.

But John wasn't trying to be strange, he was choosing to stay close to God and follow the calling God gave him.

The Bible says not to copy the world around us (Romans 12:2). Sometimes following Jesus means choosing a different path, even when others don't understand.

We can choose closeness to God by:

- Choosing kindness to our family and friends
- Telling the truth when lying feels easier
- Praying instead of worrying
- Saying no to things that pull your heart away from God
- Quiet moments with God instead of noise.

John prepared the way for Jesus by standing out and doing what God called him to do. It's ok to stand out when you are standing with God. He doesn't call us to blend in. He calls us to shine!

OBSERVE

Read Mark 1:6 and finish the drawing!

