

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 - Wilderness Man
- 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 - Disappearing Verse
- Group Game - Doodle Prayer
- 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:

WELCOME

Wilderness Man

- Activity page
- pencils
- markers

Have you ever been camping or hiking? Where did you go and for how long? Did you like it?

Invite kids to complete the “Wilderness Man” activity page.

John the Baptist lived a different kind of life than most of us live now. We’re going to learn more about him today!

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)

Family Tree: Remind kids that John the Baptist's mother, Elizabeth, was the cousin of Mary, Jesus' mother, which made John and Jesus relatives.

Sharing the Gospel: Tell the kids that John the Baptist was sharing the message of salvation with anyone who would listen. Sharing the gospel isn't reserved just for pastors. All believers are called to share the gospel with others.

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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In small groups (or as a large group), talk through these questions.

When many people think of John the Baptist, they may remember that he lived in the wilderness, wore camel-hair clothing, and ate unique food. **What did John eat for food?** [Allow responses.] That's right, John ate locusts and wild honey. But John's message to the people was much more important than his external traits. John invited people to repent and believe.

What was John doing at the Jordan River? [Allow responses.] John was baptizing people in the water of the Jordan River as a sign that they were choosing to turn from their sin and turn to God.

During John's ministry people often thought that he was the long-awaited Messiah, but John made it clear that he wasn't the Messiah. John said he wasn't even worthy to untie the Messiah's sandal straps. John's purpose was to prepare the groundwork for the Messiah, Jesus. If we look all the way back to the beginning of John's life, we see that even before he was born, the Holy Spirit was on him. Even in his mother's womb, John knew when the Lord was near, and we see that as John grew into an adult, he still recognized that the kingdom of God was near and that people needed to prepare themselves for Jesus' coming.



Reflection and Prayer

Journal Page

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:

Disappearing Verse

- Key Passage Poster

SAY: Our key passage tells us that ‘The Word became flesh.’ This phrase is referring to Jesus as ‘The Word’ that came and lived among us. It also points out that He ‘became flesh’ showing us that He wasn’t flesh before. Jesus willingly came to earth, took on flesh, and took upon Himself the sin of all people, paying the price for our sin, and conquering death. Through Jesus, we can have life forever with God.

Write the key passage on the dry erase board and review it several times as a group.

Choose one kid to erase a word and draw a line where the word was. Have the whole class repeat the verse together. Then, have that kid choose another kid to erase another word. Repeat the verse again as a class.

Continue in this way until the whole verse is erased. Challenge the kids to say the whole verse together.



Doodle Prayer

- Doodle Page
- Pencils
- USB link to Kidz at Heart Doodle Prayer Experience

Pass out paper and pencils and ask the kids to spread out across the room.

Inform them that you are going to give them some time to sit alone, think, and pray, asking God to reveal anything in their lives that they may need to turn from. Encourage them to bring their requests, questions, struggles, joys and trials before God and to simply relax and enjoy being still in His presence as they doodle.

Pull up the link on the USB to the KidZ at Heart Doodle Prayer Experience. Hit play and follow along with the audio prompts.
**Check it out ahead of time [HERE](#)

Doodle Prayer is also a great spiritual practice to help children connect personally with God! It can be done with children of nearly all ages, and helps them stay focused during quiet times. We encourage you to introduce it as a way to help students discover God's love for them.



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 not to things that pull your heart away from God
- Quiet moments with God instead of noise.

Have the children flip over their half-sheet and look at the true or false statements. Have them cross out the statements that are false about living for Jesus. Discuss them together.

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!

