

Jesus and John the Baptist

BIBLE PASSAGE: John 3:22-36

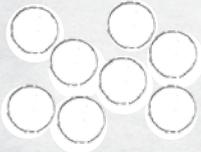
MAIN POINT: Jesus came from heaven to earth.

KEY PASSAGE: John 14:6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.

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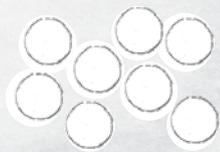
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Leader BIBLE STUDY

Jesus went with His disciples into the countryside of Judea. He oversaw them as they baptized people. At the same time, people came to John, and he was baptizing them. These baptisms were an outward sign of cleansing for people who had repented of their sins.

Some of John's disciples came to John. They had noticed that the disciples of the man John had reluctantly baptized were baptizing others. Perhaps they felt the need to defend John's ministry, but John explained God's purpose for his life. John had been chosen by God long before he was born to be a forerunner—one who prepares the way. (See Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3.)

John the Baptist understood who he was and who Jesus is. Consider these comparisons as John explained that Jesus was greater than John.

First, who were they? John was clear: “I am not the Messiah” (John 3:28). John was not the bridegroom, but the groom’s friend. Jesus is the bridegroom. (John 3:29)

Where did they come from? John was from the earth, and he belonged to the earth. Jesus comes from above and is above all. (John 3:31)

Next, what did they do? John said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” John was a witness to the Light. (John 1:7-8) He was a voice in the wilderness, and Jesus is the Word. (John 1:14,23) John baptized with water, but Jesus baptized with the Spirit. (John 1:33)

Finally, why were they here? John went before Jesus and rejoiced with Him. (John 3:28-29) Jesus came to give eternal life. (John 3:36)

In the scope of God’s plan of salvation, it was time for John to step aside for Jesus to do His work on earth. Jesus’ earthly ministry had begun, and He would obediently do God’s will to bring salvation to sinners.



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Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

Jesus and John the Baptist

John 3:22-36

• **Sketch the story:** As you explain a wedding, draw a picture of a bride and groom. Draw a groom's friend smiling and standing next to the groom.

• **Listen for key words:** Assign half of the kids the name *John* and the other half the name *Jesus*. Pause briefly after each name. When a group hears its assigned name, kids should raise their hands.

Jesus and His disciples left Jerusalem, and they went out into the countryside. Jesus spent time with His disciples, and people came to them. Jesus taught the people, and the people were baptized.

Nearby, John the Baptist was baptizing people too. Some of the people who followed John got into an argument. They went to John to ask him a question.

“Teacher,” they said, “remember the man you talked about, the One who was with you on the other side of the Jordan River? He is baptizing people, and people are starting to follow Him.”

John answered them, “A person can only receive what God gives him. You heard me say that I am not the Messiah. I am the messenger who goes before Him to announce that He is coming.”

John tried to explain by talking about a wedding. When two people get married, the man who marries the bride is the groom. His friend stands with him at the wedding, and he is happy to be there and hear the groom's voice. This was how John felt—like a groom's friend—because he was happy that Jesus, the Messiah, had come.

John also knew that a wedding is the groom's special day; the groom's friend should not make it about himself. John said, “Jesus must become greater, and I must become less.”

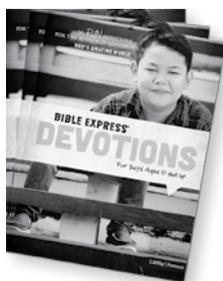
Then John explained why Jesus was more important than himself. John was from the earth, and he could only talk about things on earth. Jesus—the One who comes from heaven—talked about things in heaven because He had seen

them! Still, no one believed what Jesus said.

John said, “Whoever believes Jesus knows that God tells the truth. God sent Jesus to earth, and Jesus speaks God’s words.”

John also said, “The Father loves the Son and has given Him power over everything. Whoever believes in the Son will have eternal life, but whoever refuses to believe in the Son will not have eternal life. He will never be able to get away from God’s judgment.”

Christ Connection: John the Baptist had told people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah. Now that Jesus was on earth, John’s mission was complete. John the Baptist joyfully stepped aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD’S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that John told his disciples that Jesus is the Messiah. Anyone who believes in Jesus—not John the Baptist—will receive eternal life. (John 3:16) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Jesus and John the Baptist

BIBLE PASSAGE: John 3:22-36

MAIN POINT: Jesus came from heaven to earth.

KEY PASSAGE: John 14:6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group.

Ask kids to share where they are from—their hometown or place of birth. Note who was born the farthest away, who was born in the biggest city, who was born locally, and so forth. Were any kids born in the same town? Same hospital?

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Great, Greater, Greatest!” on the activity page. For each row, kids should number the items from 1 to 3. (1 = greatest, 2 = greater, 3 = great) Encourage kids to compare their answers with a partner.

SAY • Did you all agree on what is great, greater, and the greatest? Those sports, foods, or seasons are a matter of opinion, but did you know that the Bible tells us the answers for that last row? The Bible says that God made people greater than animals (Gen. 1:26), and John said that Jesus is greater than him (John 3:30). (Answers: 2. *John*; 1. *Jesus*; 3. *lion*)

- “Great, Greater, Greatest!” activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Names that begin with *J*

Guide kids to stand in a circle. Give one player a ball.

Instruct her to say a name that begins with the letter *J*.

Then she should toss the ball to another kid. That kid will say another name that begins with *J* and then toss the ball to another kid. Continue passing the ball and saying names until kids cannot think of any other names.

Sample names: Jack, Jacob, Jessica, James, Joshua, Jake, Jayden, Jermaine, Jade, Julia, Jasmine, Jackson, Joel, Jamal, Jason, Jennifer, Jesse, Jonah, Jonathan, José, Jared, Jeff.

SAY • Did anyone say the names *John* or *Jesus*? Today's Bible story is about Jesus and John the Baptist. Let's find out more about them.



• ball

OPTION 2: Introduce a friend

Form pairs of kids. Give each kid a pencil and a piece of paper. Instruct each kid to interview his partner and write down his answers:

- What is your name?
- Where are you from?
- What is your favorite thing to do?

After a few minutes, call on kids to take turns introducing their partners and sharing the gathered information.

SAY • Thank you for the introductions. Today we are going to hear a Bible story about a man named John who came to introduce people to Jesus. Let's find out what John said about who Jesus is, where He came from, and what Jesus had come to do.

• paper
• pencils

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- Bibles
- bottles of water
- poster board
- marker

[Large Group Leader enters and stands next to a table with Bibles and bottles of water. The table is labeled with a poster that says, Ask Anything!]

LEADER • Welcome, everyone! I am glad to see you again. I have set up my booth here for the city street festival. You might remember that I always set up a booth at the festival where people can come and ask questions they have about God or the Bible. I meet all kinds of people, and they have really good questions.

[Hold up a Bible.] I am thankful for this—the Bible! The Bible is God’s Word, and it tells us what is true about God and ourselves. A lot of the answers to our questions can be found right here.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Does anyone remember our big picture question? This is a question a lot of people ask me, and we

can find the answer in several Bible stories. Our big picture question is, *Who did Jesus say He is?* The answer is, *Jesus said He is the Messiah.*

The word *messiah* means “anointed one” or “chosen one.” The Messiah is the person God sent to save people from sin. Jesus is the Messiah! Keep that in mind when you listen to today’s Bible story.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle. Point out the previous Bible story, “Jesus Met Nicodemus.” Then point to today’s story, “Jesus and John the Baptist.”

• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

LEADER • When Jesus began His ministry on earth, He met with a lot of people. Last time, we learned about a man named Nicodemus who came to Jesus at night. Nicodemus was a religious leader, and Jesus told Nicodemus that people can’t earn salvation by following the rules. **Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again.**

Today we are going to hear about John the Baptist. John’s followers didn’t understand who Jesus is, so John told them. Let’s find out what John said.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to John 3:22-36. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus and John the Baptist.”

LEADER • God had chosen John the Baptist to do a special job. John’s job was to get people ready for Jesus.

As John preached about the Messiah and called people to turn away from their sins, many people began to follow him. John baptized people to show

• Bibles
• “Jesus and John the Baptist” video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster

that they had repented of their sins.

John's followers were confused when they saw that people were following Jesus and going to Him to be baptized. They went to John for answers.

John explained to his followers who he was and who Jesus is. John said, "I am not the Messiah." John did not want his followers to look to him for salvation; he wanted them to look to Jesus.

John could not save people from their sins. His job was to point them to the One who does have the power to save—Jesus! ***Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.***

John said that Jesus was like the groom at a wedding, and John was like the groom's friend. Everyone knows that the groom at a wedding is more important than the groom's friend.

John also talked about where he came from and where Jesus came from. John came from the earth, but **Jesus came from heaven to earth.**

John said other things about himself and Jesus. He said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." John meant that it was time for him to get out of the spotlight. Jesus had finally come!

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • John the Baptist had told people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah. Now that Jesus was on earth, John's mission was complete. John the Baptist joyfully stepped aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry. John wanted people to trust in Jesus because Jesus has the power to save people from sin.

When we trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, God

forgives our sin and gives us eternal life.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 14:6.

- Key Passage Poster
- “I Am the Way” song

LEADER • Jesus said these words when He was talking to His disciples. He explained that He is the way to the Father. Jesus said that He is “the truth.”

Not only does Jesus tell us the truth about God, He is the truth. In Jesus, we see what is true about God the Father. Let’s sing our key passage song to work on memorizing our key passage.

Lead boys and girls to sing “I Am the Way.”

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Have you ever been recognized as being the greatest at something? How do you feel when someone else is recognized as being the greatest? Watch this video.

- “Unit 21, Session 2” discussion starter video

Show the “Unit 21, Session 2” discussion starter video.

Guide kids to discuss how Frosty felt when the award went to the baker instead of to him.

LEADER • Who deserved the award for the best cupcake—the cupcake or the baker? Why? Who deserves fame and glory in our own lives—us or God? Why?

Even when you work hard to accomplish something great, you can give God glory because He made you and gives you special talents and abilities.

What are some ways you can make Jesus famous instead of trying to make a great name for yourself?

• “God Is Here” song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • John said that Jesus must become greater, and he must become less. Is that how you feel? We can sing and praise God because He is greater than us, and He deserves our worship!

Lead kids to sing together “God Is Here.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Dear God, thank You for sending Your Son from heaven to earth. We believe that Jesus tells us the truth about You and Your kingdom. Thank You for the gift of salvation, which we can receive when we turn away from our sin and turn to Jesus. We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Small Group LEADER

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards
- marker
- tape

Write words or phrases of John 14:6 on separate index cards, one card per kid. Tape a card to each child's back and challenge them to assemble the key passage.

Kids should line up single file so each kid can see the word in front of him. Invite the kids to say the key passage by reading the cards one at a time. Each kid will read the card in front of him. The first kid in line can give the reference.

Refer to the key passage poster to check their work.

SAY • Keep working on memorizing our key passage this week. John the Baptist told his followers that Jesus came from heaven and that whoever believes in Jesus will have eternal life. Jesus spoke these words in John 14:6, and this shows us that John the Baptist was telling the truth about Jesus.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- "Kaboom! Cards" printable
- gift bag

Print and cut apart the Kaboom! cards. Put the cards in a gift bag. Form two teams. Call for teams to take turns drawing one card from the bag. If they answer the question correctly, award 10 points. You may choose a volunteer to

use a chalkboard or dry erase board to keep score.

If a group answers incorrectly, allow the other team to answer. If a team draws a *Kaboom!* card, they lose all of their points. Refer to the following to check answers:

1. What did Jesus do in the countryside? (*He spent time with His disciples, and people were baptized; John 3:22*)
2. Who had a question for John the Baptist? (*John's followers, John 3:25-26*)
3. What did John's followers tell John? (*Jesus was baptizing people, and people were following Him; John 3:26*)
4. John said he was not whom? (*the Messiah, John 3:28*)
5. To which person at a wedding did John compare Jesus? (*the groom, John 3:29*)
6. To which person at a wedding did John compare himself? (*the groom's friend, John 3:29*)
7. Who did John say must become greater? (*Jesus, John 3:30*)
8. Where did Jesus come from? (**Jesus came from heaven to earth, John 3:31**)
9. Whose words does Jesus speak? (*God's words, John 3:34*)
10. What will those who believe in the Son have? (*eternal life, John 3:36*)
11. Who will not have eternal life? (*those who refuse to believe in the Son, John 3:36*)
12. **Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.**

SAY • Our Bible story today is from the Gospel of John, the fourth book in the New Testament. John was one of the 12 men that Jesus chose to be His disciples. John wrote about the life and words of Jesus.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Tip: Explain that the Gospel of John was written by the apostle John, not John the Baptist.



LOW PREP

- blindfold
- Main Point Poster

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Spoken words

Display the main point poster. Guide kids to stand in a circle. Choose a volunteer to wear a blindfold and stand in the middle of the circle. The rest of the kids will walk around the volunteer.

When the volunteer claps three times, the kids should stand still. The volunteer will point to a player in the circle. That player will say today's Bible story main point: "**Jesus came from heaven to earth.**" She may disguise her voice.

Challenge the volunteer to guess who spoke. If he is correct, he should swap places with the player who spoke. If he is incorrect, allow the speaker to choose a new volunteer. Play several rounds as time allows.

SAY • John the Baptist told his followers that Jesus was more important than himself. Jesus was the One whom people had been waiting for—the promised Messiah who would save people from their sins!

John said that Jesus came to earth to speak God's words. He also said that whoever believes in Jesus will have eternal life.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

OPTION 2: Mission complete!

Before small group, make a list of 5 to 10 tasks kids can complete in the classroom. Prepare two copies of the list.

Sample tasks:

1. Measure the height of someone on the team.
2. Do 10 push-ups.
3. Open a Bible to John 14:6 and read it aloud.
4. Say the alphabet backwards.
5. Line up 25 crayons end to end.

Form two teams and give each team a task list. Challenge

- paper
- marker
- rulers
- Bibles
- crayons

kids to work with their teams to complete the tasks. Signal the teams to begin.

When a team finishes, its players should sit down and shout, “Mission complete!” Encourage the second team to continue until it completes all the tasks.

SAY • How did you feel when you completed all the tasks?
Finishing something you worked hard at feels great.

John the Baptist’s job was to get people ready for Jesus. Imagine how John felt when Jesus arrived. Now that Jesus was there, John’s mission was complete. John was happy to step aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Encourage kids to write what they would tell someone who asked about who Jesus is. Encourage them to explain why Jesus is great.

SAY • When Jesus came to earth, He told people who He is. *Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.* John’s job was to point people to Jesus.

God wants us to tell others about Jesus too.

Lead kids in prayer, praising God for sending His Son. Pray that kids would treasure Jesus most of all.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Lights On!” on the activity page. Challenge kids to draw a line to match the first part of each phrase or sentence with the second part. Call on volunteers to share their answers.

(Answers: 1. *Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah;* 2. *Jesus came from heaven to earth;* 3. *John the Baptist told the people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah;* 4. *Now that Jesus was on earth, John’s mission was complete.*)

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “Lights On!” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.