

Jesus and John the Baptist

BIBLE PASSAGE: John 3:22-36

MAIN POINT: Jesus came from heaven to earth.

KEY PASSAGE: John 14:6

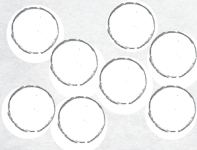
BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is God's Son.

2

SMALL GROUP OPENING

(15–20 MINUTES)

PAGE 122



LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY

(10–15 MINUTES)

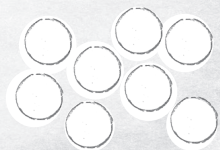
PAGE 124



SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

(20–25 MINUTES)

PAGE 126



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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The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

Jesus and John the Baptist

John 3:22-36

• Invite your pastor:

Invite a pastor to talk to the class about baptism and tell the Bible story. Mention that John and Jesus' friends baptized people after the people chose to follow God.

• Visit your baptistry:

If accommodations are suitable, take the class to visit your church's baptistry. Sit on the steps and remind preschoolers that both John and Jesus' friends would baptize people after they decided to follow God. Tell the Bible story while in the baptistry.

Jesus and His friends left the city of Jerusalem and went into the countryside. People came to see them, and **Jesus taught the people about God. Many people were baptized.**

John the Baptist was nearby. He was baptizing people too! Some of the people who followed John began to argue. They **had a question for John.**

“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's followers were talking **about Jesus. John answered, “I told you that I am not the Messiah. I am the messenger who goes before the Messiah** to announce that He is coming.”

It was good that people were being baptized and following Jesus. That's what they were supposed to do! **Jesus is the Messiah God promised.**

John told his followers to think about a wedding. When two people get married, the man who married the bride is called the groom. His friend stands with him at the wedding, and the friend is happy to be there and to hear the groom's voice. This was how John felt—like a groom's friend—and Jesus was the groom. John 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.”**

But why was Jesus more important than John? Well, **John was from the earth, and he could only tell people about things on earth. Jesus came to earth from heaven, and He could talk about things in heaven** because He had seen them!

John said, “God sent Jesus to earth, and Jesus speaks God’s words.” **Everything Jesus says is true** because God always tells the truth.

Then **John said, “God the Father loves His Son, Jesus.** He has given Jesus power over everything. **Whoever believes in Jesus will live forever with God in heaven,** but whoever does not believe in Jesus will not live forever.”

Christ Connection: God gave John the Baptist a special job. John told people, “Get ready for Jesus! Jesus is coming!” God sent Jesus to earth from heaven. When Jesus was older, He went out to teach people about God. Jesus was here, and John’s job was finished.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD’S WORD?
GET
MORE!**

Invite preschoolers 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 God's Son.

Welcome time

- "That's What Jesus Did" song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church's security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

- "Who Did It?" activity page, 1 per child
- pencils or crayons

Read the statements below each picture. Invite preschoolers to draw a line connecting the picture to the person the picture is about, John or Jesus.

SAY • In our story today, we will hear about two men, John and Jesus. Both John and Jesus taught people about God. They both baptized people. But one of these men was more important than the other. Can you guess which One?

Introduce a friend

Suggest preschoolers form groups of two or three and learn some things about their partner(s). Encourage boys and girls to ask their partner(s) questions such as: "What is your name? Do you have any pets? What is your favorite kind of



ice cream?” Gather the group together and ask a volunteer to introduce a new friend to the group. Continue as time and volunteers permit.

SAY • Thank you for helping everyone learn about your friends! Today in our Bible story, we will hear how John helped people learn about his friend Jesus. John helped people know that he was the messenger who was sent to get the people ready to meet Jesus.

Play out participating in a wedding

Invite preschoolers to play out being a flower girl or a ring bearer in a wedding. Fold tulle around child-sized headbands to create veils for girls to wear. Cut construction paper into tie shapes. Use safety pins to attach the ties to boy's clothing. Play wedding music and invite preschoolers to practice walking down an aisle.

SAY • Have you ever been in a wedding before? In today's Bible story, John told his followers to think about a wedding to help them understand the job God had given him. Listen to our story to discover what John wanted his followers to know about his special job.

- new child-sized headbands
- tulle
- construction paper
- scissors
- safety pins
- wedding music
- small cushion
- small basket
- toy ring
- artificial flower petals

Transition to Bible study

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite boys and girls take large or small steps to large group time, walk on tiptoes, or pretend they are walking down the aisle in a wedding.

- countdown video (optional)

Large Group LEADER

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Introduce the Bible story

• wedding photo album

Point to a picture of the bride and groom in a wedding album with their attendants. Call attention to the best man.

SAY • When a woman and a man get married, they are called the *bride* and *groom*. Look at this man standing next to the groom. John said Jesus was like a groom and John was like the groom's friend. Listen to today's Bible story to find out how.

Watch or tell the Bible story

• bookmark

• Bible

• "Jesus and John the Baptist" video

• Bible Story Picture Poster

Place a bookmark at John 3 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY • Did you know that every word of the Bible is true? The Bible tells us everything God wants us to know. Today's Bible story is in the Book of John.

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling helps. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

Talk about the Bible story

• Main Point Poster

• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

SAY • John had an important job. God wanted him to tell people to get ready for Jesus! John told people about

God and baptized them in water. He helped the people understand that **Jesus came from heaven to earth**. Jesus was more important than John. Jesus was the One the people had been waiting for.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline or big story circle as you ask the following review questions:

1. Who taught the people about God so they could be baptized? (*both John and Jesus*)
2. Who did John say that he was? (*a messenger sent to get people ready for Jesus*)
3. Who did John say should become greater, John or Jesus? (*Jesus*)
4. Who did John say should become less, John or Jesus? (*John*)

Learn the big picture question

SAY • *Who did Jesus say that He is? Jesus said He is God's Son.* John told the people that Jesus was more important than him because Jesus is God's Son. Jesus is the Messiah God promised to send. Now that Jesus had come, John's job was finished.

• Big Picture Question Poster

Practice the key passage

Open your Bible to John 14:6. Read the key passage aloud several times. Sing together the key passage song, "John 14:6" song.

• Key Passage Poster
• "John 14:6" song

SAY • Jesus said He is the truth. Jesus made God's true words happen. God kept His promise to send a Savior when He sent His very own Son, Jesus.

Transition to small groups

Small Group ACTIVITIES

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- masking tape
- obstacles (boxes, hula hoops, blocks, etc.)
- Bible with a marker at John 3

Follow an obstacle course

Affix a strip of tape to the floor to create a winding path. Add obstacles, such as blocks to step around, boxes to crawl through, and hula hoops to jump over. Demonstrate how to maneuver through the course. Position a leader with the Bible at the end of the course. As a child nears the course's completion, open the Bible to John 3 and point to the name *Jesus*. Ask the big picture question. Guide a child to answer the question to complete the course.

SAY • You did a good job of traveling down a path. Jesus and His friends traveled from the city of Jerusalem and went into the countryside. People came to see them, and Jesus taught the people about God. Many people were baptized. **Jesus came from heaven to earth.** Now that Jesus was here, John's job was finished.

Spell *John* and *Jesus*

- metal baking sheet
- magnetic letter tiles
- index cards
- marker (teacher use)
- tape

Prop a magnetic baking sheet against a wall. Print *Jesus* and *John* onto index cards and tape them to the baking sheet. Provide magnetic letter tiles and assist boys and girls as they select letter tiles to spell words. Retell segments of the Bible

story as children work.

SAY • John was from the earth, and he could only tell people about things on earth. **Jesus came from heaven to earth**, and He could talk about things in heaven because He had seen them! Once Jesus began to teach people about God, John knew that his job was finished.

Paint heaven pictures

Arrange paper and painting materials on a table. Moisten the paints and demonstrate how a child should wash a brush in the water before touching it to the paints. Encourage boys and girls to think about what heaven might look like as they paint.

- art paper
- watercolor trays
- cups of water
- newspaper (to protect painting surface)

SAY • The water that you are using with the paint reminds me that people are baptized to show that they have chosen to follow Jesus. The Bible tells us that **Jesus came from heaven to earth**. John was from earth; he was the messenger God sent to help the people understand who Jesus is. After John gave the people this message, his job was finished.

Roll cubes and stack blocks

Provide a pair of numbered cubes and blocks. Demonstrate how to roll the cubes and count the dots that appear faceup. Select that number of blocks and stack them to build a tower. Invite boys and girls to take a turn with the cubes, selecting blocks, and building a tower. Discuss the height of each block tower, and ask boys and girls to decide which tower is the tallest.

- pair of numbered cubes
- blocks

SAY • If these towers were buildings in a city, the tallest building might be considered the most noticeable.

John wanted the people to understand that Jesus was like our tallest tower. John was only the messenger, but Jesus is the Messiah that God promised. Jesus is most important of all. John was happy that **Jesus came from heaven to earth.**

Conduct a baptism interview

• guest

Option: Consider showing preschoolers a video of a baptism that took place at your church.

Invite a guest to join your class to talk about the act and meaning of baptism with boys and girls. You may invite a pastor or church leader who performs baptisms or someone in your congregation who has been baptized. Ask the guest to talk about why people are baptized and how baptism is a sign on the outside of how God forgives a person's sin on the inside when the person turns from his or her sin and follows Jesus. Emphasize that baptism does not save a person but shows that the person has been saved.

SAY • Being baptized is a way we show people we have turned from our sin and are following Jesus. John's followers told John that Jesus' disciples were baptizing people, and people were starting to follow Jesus. John was happy people were being baptized and following Jesus. That's what they were supposed to do! **Jesus came from heaven to earth.** Jesus is the Messiah God promised to send.

Snack

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Provide shortbread cookies that might be served at a wedding. Remind boys and girls that John said he was like the groom's friend at a wedding. The friend is happy to be there and hear the groom's voice. John was happy that **Jesus came from heaven to earth**. Jesus was here, and John's job was finished.

Transition

When a child finishes her snack, guide her to throw away any trash. She may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw a picture of John and Jesus. Then show preschoolers how to draw a check mark above John and a circle around Jesus. John did His job to get people ready for Jesus. Jesus came to do His job—rescue the world from sin by dying on the cross and being raised from the dead.

SAY • God, how good You are to us to send Your Son from heaven to earth! Thank You that Jesus came. Thank You that because He died on the cross we can be saved from sin. Amen.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- snack food
- paper cups and napkins

- books
- puzzles
- play dough
- Journal Page printable, 1 per child
- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- *Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers*