



Use Week of:

Unit 20 • Session 3

John Pointed to Jesus

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Matthew 3; John 1; 3

STORY POINT:

John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE:

John 3:30

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why did Jesus become human?
Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.

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

LEADER Bible Study

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophets had spoken of a forerunner—someone who would get people ready for Jesus. (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1) At just the right time, “John came baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4). These baptisms were an outward sign of cleansing for people who had repented of their sins.

John’s followers were concerned when they saw Jesus and His disciples, who were baptizing people too. They came to John, who pointed out several things about himself and about Jesus. 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)

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 the Baptist told people to get ready for the Messiah. He 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)

John described his joy as being complete. (John 3:29) The One for whom he had prepared the people was here. The time had come for John to step aside and let Jesus take the spotlight. John’s mission was complete.

The BIBLE Story

John Pointed to Jesus

Matthew 3; John 1; 3

Jesus and His disciples went out into the countryside. People came to see them, and Jesus taught the people. Many people were baptized.

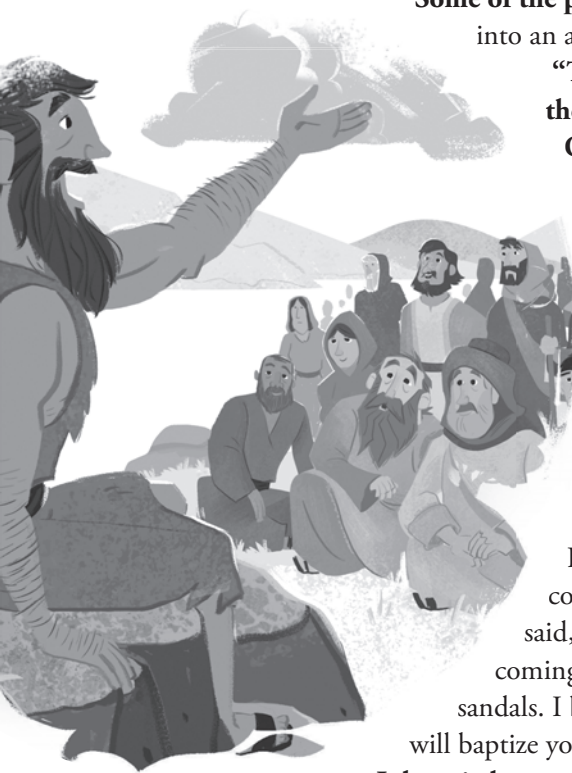
Nearby, John the Baptist was baptizing people too.

Some of the people who followed John got into an argument. They went to John.

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

John’s followers were talking about Jesus. John answered them, “You heard me say that I am not the Messiah. I am the messenger who goes before Him to announce that He is coming.” This was true. John had said, “Someone greater than me is coming. I am not worthy to remove His sandals. I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

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. John also knew



that a wedding is the groom's special day; **the groom's friend should not make it about himself. This was how John felt—like a groom's friend—because he was happy that Jesus, the Messiah, had come. John said, "Jesus must increase, but I must decrease."**

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.

Whoever believes Jesus knows that God tells the truth. God sent Jesus to earth, and Jesus speaks God's words.

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 told people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah. Now that Jesus was on earth, John's mission was complete. Jesus was greater than John, and John joyfully stepped aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use sound effects:** Play sound effects of a river as you tell the story.
- **Make a T-chart:** List words John used to describe himself and Jesus (*not the Messiah/Messiah, groom's friend/groom, and so on*).

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: John Pointed to Jesus

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KEY PASSAGE: John 3:30

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.

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. Prompt kids to share something they witnessed this week. Did anyone else witness it?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "On the Line" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "On the Line" on the activity page. Guide kids to mark each item on the scale to indicate how important it is to them. Invite volunteers to share which items they consider to be of greater importance than others.

SAY • How can you tell what is most important in someone's life? How do you show what is most important in your life? In the Bible story we will hear today, John the Baptist declared that it was time for him to step aside because someone greater had come.

LOW PREP

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Circle name game

Instruct kids to stand in a circle. Stand in the center.

Quickly go around the circle, calling for kids to say their own names so all kids are familiar with who is next to them.

Explain that you will point to someone in the circle and will either say “you,” “me,” “left,” or “right.” Then you will begin counting to five. The person you point to should respond with the name of the person indicated. (“You” is the person pointed to, “me” is the person in the center, “left” is the person to the left of the person pointed to, and “right” is the person to the right of the person pointed to.)

If the person gives the correct name within five seconds, he becomes the pointer. If not, the pointer remains in the middle for a new round. Play multiple rounds.

SAY • Today we are going to hear about John the Baptist and Jesus. People followed John the Baptist and learned from him. All along, John pointed to Jesus. He got people ready for Him. Jesus is greater than John. So when Jesus began His ministry, John essentially said, “Don’t follow me; follow Him!”

OPTION 2: Where are you from?

Display a map. Invite kids to point to their hometowns, or provide small stickers to mark where they are from.

· map
· stickers (optional)

Allow kids to share about the places they marked on the map. Who has lived the farthest away? Who has always lived in your current city? Do they know anyone from another state or another country?

As time allows, lead kids to discuss other places they have traveled or places they would like to visit someday.

SAY • Today’s Bible story is about Jesus and John. John explained to his followers who Jesus is and where He came from. Let’s find out what John said.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.

Countdown

· countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

· leader attire
· stop sign
· message board
· Bible

[Leader enters wearing khaki pants, a reflective shirt or vest, and a hard hat. Leader carries a stop sign made from poster board attached to a tall broomstick. A traffic message board reads MERGE RIGHT. Position a Bible nearby.]

LEADER • Hello! I'm [*your name*]. Please use caution; traffic is merging. Oh, wait a second. I recognize you! I am so glad to see you again! I'd love to chat, just let me make sure there's no more traffic. [*Look off into the distance and then set down the stop sign.*] All clear. Great! Whew, we had a bit of a rough day yesterday. You see, we had to close one of the lanes while construction is being completed, so all eastbound traffic needs to merge at this point. The crew painted a big arrow on the road to alert drivers, but it seems some people just don't pay attention or no one has ever taught them how to properly merge!

Anyway, did any of you bring your Bible today? I

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

know mine is around here somewhere ... [*Pick up a Bible.*] Here it is! I can't wait to share today's Bible story with you. Are you ready?

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Let's review our big picture question: *Why did Jesus become human?* Our answer focuses on two reasons: *Jesus became human to [hold up one finger] obey His Father's plan and [hold up a second finger] rescue sinners.*

I'll ask the question, and then you say the answer: *Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.*

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review. · Giant Timeline

LEADER • We've been hearing stories about Jesus when He was around 30 years old. His ministry on earth was just getting started.

John the Baptist had been telling people to get ready for Jesus. John was baptizing people at the Jordan River when Jesus came to him and was baptized. Jesus never sinned, but **Jesus obeyed God by being baptized.** Then Jesus was led into the wilderness, where He was tempted by the devil. **Jesus was tempted and never sinned.**

Today's Bible story is called "John Pointed to Jesus." The time had come for John to step aside for Jesus to take center stage.

- Bibles
- “John Pointed to Jesus” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 3; John 1; 3. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “John Pointed to Jesus.”

LEADER • As John told people that the Messiah was coming and called them to repent and turn away from their sin, people began to follow John. John’s followers were people who learned from him as he told people to get ready for Jesus. One day, they noticed that people were following this man named Jesus instead of following John. What was going on?

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 announce that the Messiah—the One who has the power to save people—was coming.

John pointed out how Jesus was different from John. What did John say? Look at Matthew 3:11. [*Allow kids to read the verse and respond.*] John said Jesus is more powerful. John baptized people with water to show that they were sorry for their sin, but he said Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit. Jesus would change people’s hearts!

What event did John talk about to explain how Jesus is greater? Look at John 3:29. [*Allow kids to read the verse and respond.*] John said that Jesus was like the groom at a wedding, and John was like the groom’s friend. Everyone knows the groom at a wedding is more important than the groom’s friend.

John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus. He

said that Jesus came from heaven, and only Jesus can save people from their sins.

Christ connection

LEADER • John the Baptist told people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah. Now that Jesus was on earth, John's mission was complete. Jesus was greater than John, and John joyfully stepped aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 141 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 20, Session 3" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about John's words to his followers. Guide them to discuss whether or not it is wrong to want to be famous. Help them consider how God's glory is more important than our own.

• "Unit 20, Session 3" questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display the Thiemann family photo and ask for a volunteer to read the caption.

LEADER • The Thiemanns live in LeSotho (leh-SOO-too), a small country in southern Africa. Jason Thiemann is a pilot and mechanic with Mission Aviation Fellowship. Life in LeSotho isn't always easy, but they are there to be obedient to Jesus and to share the gospel. John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus. That's what missionaries do, too.

• "Thiemann Family Photo" printable

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 3:30.

LEADER • John knew that it was his time to fade into the

• Key Passage Poster
• "He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease (John 3:30)" song

backdrop, but God was not done with him. Even though John was no longer leading a movement, he was paving the way for us to see what it means to follow Jesus. John was put into prison for standing up for the truth. John discovered that decreasing to increase Jesus comes through being willing to give up everything to follow Jesus. Was it hard? Yes. Was it worth it? Definitely. Through our obedience, God plans to bring life and blessing to those around us. We say with John, “I must decrease.”

Lead boys and girls in singing “He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease (John 3:30).”

Sing (4 minutes)

- “Take It to the Lord”
song
- Bible

Open your Bible and read aloud Acts 4:12.

LEADER • We follow Jesus and no one else because Jesus is the One who brings salvation. When we trust in Him, we are saved from sin and death. Praise God! Let’s sing.

Sing together “Take It to the Lord.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for sending Your Son. Help us treasure Jesus most of all. Grow our hearts for the nations and give us boldness to share the gospel with others wherever we go. We want to live for Your glory because You are worthy. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

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.

APPLY the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- masking tape
- permanent marker

Write the words of the key passage on separate pieces of masking tape. Prepare one strip per kid—words may be repeated. Tape a word to the toe of each kid's shoe. Instruct kids to stand in a circle (in any order).

Display the key passage poster. Lead them to say the key passage slowly. Each time a kid hears the word on his shoe, he should hop once. Repeat at a faster pace as kids learn the key passage.

SAY • Our key passage comes from our Bible story today.

Who said these words? (*John*) To whom was he speaking? (*his followers*)

Allow volunteers who have memorized the key passage to recite it from memory.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to John 3. Explain the Bible story today is from the Gospel of John, the fourth book in the New Testament. John was one of the 12 men whom Jesus chose to be His disciples. John wrote about the life and words of Jesus. Choose a volunteer to read aloud John 3:35-36.

SAY • *Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.* John's job was to point people to Jesus. John the Baptist told people to get ready for Jesus, the promised Messiah.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Why did John say Jesus must increase and he (John) must decrease? *Prompt kids to recall that with Jesus on earth, John's mission was complete. Jesus was the One whom people had been waiting for—the promised Messiah who would save people from their sins! Jesus was greater than John, and John joyfully stepped aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 14:11.)

2. Who deserves fame and glory in our own lives—us or God? Why? *Help kids recognize that 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. Prompt them to discuss ways they can make Jesus famous instead of trying to make a great name for themselves.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 5:16.)

3. How can we point others to Jesus? *Invite kids to discuss how we can tell people directly about Jesus, and we can also show kindness and have peace in a way that shows we trust Jesus with our lives and our future.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Pet. 3:15.)

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

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Missions travel kits

Bring an assortment of travel supplies and invite kids to assemble travel kits. Seal the supplies in plastic

- small travel items (toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash, deodorant)
- ziplock bags
- index cards or construction paper
- crayons

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

LOW PREP

- paper
- marker

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

sandwich bags. Ask kids to include a short note or draw a picture and put one in each bag.

SAY • We will make travel kits for members in our church who are going on mission trips. This is one way we can support their trip even if we can't go ourselves. Pray for people in your church or others you know who are going on mission trips. Give the bags to your church staff or missions committee to be distributed.

OPTION 2: Mission complete

List on a piece of paper 5 to 10 tasks kids can complete in the classroom. Make two copies of the task list. Sample tasks:

- *Count how many steps it takes to walk from one side of the room to the other.*
- *Tell your leader your favorite movie.*
- *Sing the alphabet song.*
- *Do 20 jumping jacks.*
- *Recite the key passage, John 3:30.*
- *Answer the big picture question: **Why did Jesus become human?***
- *High-five three other people.*

Form two teams. Provide each team with a prepared task list. Signal teams to begin. Kids should work with their teams to complete the tasks. When a team finishes, its players should sit down and shout, "Mission complete!"

SAY • Finishing something you worked hard at feels great.

John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus. Now that Jesus was there, John's mission was complete. Jesus was greater than John, and John joyfully stepped aside as Jesus began His earthly ministry.

Because we know that Jesus is good, we can find

joy in pointing others to Jesus. We don't need fame or recognition for the things we accomplish. God gives us talents and abilities to point people to Him. We give glory to Jesus because He gave His life to rescue us.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, acknowledging that Jesus tells the truth about God and His kingdom. Thank God for the gift of salvation, which we can receive when we turn away from our sin and turn to Jesus.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "John or Jesus?" on the activity page. Kids should fill in the blanks with the correct name—*John* or *Jesus*.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "John or Jesus?" 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.