



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.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)

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TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

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APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

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

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.

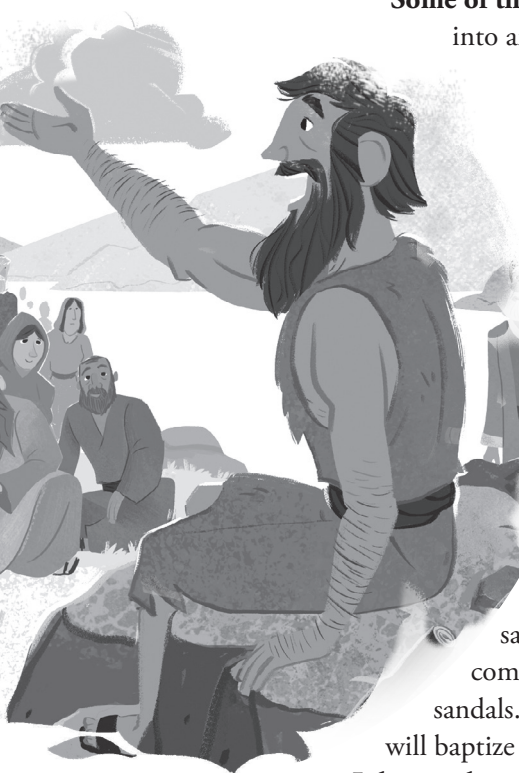
Nearby, John the Baptist was baptizing people too.

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



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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 discuss what the word *witness* means. (*to see something happen; a person who can speak with knowledge about something that he has seen happen*)

SAY • The word *witness* probably comes up most often in courtrooms, both real and fictional. A witness is a person who can explain what he saw or heard to help prove whether something is true. We also use the word *witness* to describe our ability to tell other people about what Jesus has done in our lives.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Greatest to Least” activity page. Kids will number the different pictures in order according to which items they value most.

SAY • We all have different opinions on how much we value different things, but I hope we can all agree that Jesus is the most important and valuable of all. Today we will learn about a time John assured people of that.

- “Greatest to Least” activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)**OPTION 1:** Increase or decrease?

Select a kid to think of a number between 1 and 100, including both 1 and 100. Instruct that kid to whisper the number to you, and then allow the other kids to guess the number. After each guess, the kid who's thinking of the number will tell the kids if they should increase or decrease their next guess to be closer. When the kids guess the right number, select a new kid and start again. Be prepared to help kids answer if they are unsure if a guess is above or below their number.

SAY • You had to increase or decrease the values of your guesses to get to the correct answer. Today we will learn about a time John told people that Jesus must increase while he decreased. What do you think it means for Jesus to increase?

OPTION 2: Grow and shrink

Help the kids form pairs. Provide each pair with a stretchy coiled spring toy. Give the pairs a few minutes to play with the toys, encouraging them to stretch them and allow them to retract. Show the kids how to send vibrations or waves along the length of the stretched toy. If you have access to a stairway, consider showing the kids how the toys can “walk” down the stairs by flopping and stretching and coming back together.

• stretchy coiled spring toys, 1 per 2 kids

SAY • Those toys are especially fun because of the ways they can grow and shrink. Today we will learn about John the Baptist. He wanted to “shrink” and Jesus to “grow.” We’ll learn what that means soon.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



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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
· reflective vest
· hard hat

[Leader enters wearing blue jeans, a T-shirt with a reflective vest, and a hard hat.]

LEADER • Hi there! Good to see you again. We're pretty close to finishing our road work. In fact, we've got one lane open again. As you can imagine, one lane of traffic isn't enough since cars need to go in both directions. For now, I've been directing traffic with a sign that stops people from one direction and instructs the people from the other direction to drive slowly. Every few minutes, I switch it around so the stopped cars have a chance to go too.

Sometimes I wonder what would happen if people got so used to following my sign that they did not know what to do when the road is finished and the permanent signs are up. It would cause a lot of problems. You see, my job as a traffic director is temporary. Once the road is done, people should

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

look to the real signs and markings on the pavement and follow those. In a way, it reminds me of another story about John the Baptist and Jesus. John spent some time teaching and leading people, but it was time for him to step aside so Jesus—the fully God, fully human Messiah—could lead His people.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Jesus is God the Son, and it is important to understand why God the Son came to earth as a human. That's our big picture question! *Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.* God's perfect plan to rescue sinners required Jesus to be a human to be the perfect sacrifice for sin. Jesus wanted to obey this plan because He loves God and He loves people.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

LEADER • You may remember a few weeks back. We learned that **Jesus obeyed God by being baptized.** God announced His love for Jesus, and the Holy Spirit landed on Jesus like a dove. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where Satan tried to trick Jesus and make Him sin. **Jesus was tempted and never sinned.** He remained perfect and able to be the perfect sacrifice. Today, we will learn about what John the Baptist taught about Jesus when Jesus began traveling around teaching, healing, and baptizing people.

- 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 • You probably recognized a lot of this story because of our key passage. John understood that Jesus is the most important. John wanted those who were following him to understand that too.

John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus.

John spoke about a wedding. If you go to a wedding, you celebrate the man and woman getting married. In a way, it’s also like a birthday party. When you go to a friend’s party, you know that people are celebrating the birthday girl, not you. John was ready to step aside so Jesus could get the glory He deserves. John wanted people to celebrate and obey Jesus.

How can we celebrate Jesus in our lives? [*Allow responses.*] Those are great ideas! We can sing praise songs to Jesus, talk to Him, tell others about Him, and give Him the glory in everything we do. We can obey God’s commands, such as loving our neighbors, praying for our enemies, honoring our parents, or being baptized when we believe in Jesus. All of these are different and effective ways to celebrate and worship Jesus.

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.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided 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 fame and wealth. Guide them to discuss reasons God’s glory is more important than our own fame or wealth.

· “Unit 20, Session 3”
Questions from Kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display the “Thiemann Family Photo” printable. Ask a volunteer to read the caption, or read it aloud for kids to hear.

· “Thiemann Family
Photo” printable

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 the Thiemanns 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.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 3:30. Then sing “He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease (John 3:30).”

· Key Passage Poster
· “He Must Increase,
but I Must Decrease
(John 3:30)” song

LEADER • Our key passage comes directly from the story we learned about today! John did not want people to argue whether John or Jesus was more important. John knew the answer is Jesus. John wanted everyone else to know that, too. **John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus.** He said that he must decrease and Jesus must increase.

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • John understood what we are learning. Jesus is

· “Take It to the Lord”
song

the most important. Jesus deserves all glory because He is God's Son, born as a human to rescue us. He's the best friend we could have, and we can take all our worries to Him.

Sing together "Take It to the Lord."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, help us show the same humility that John showed. Help us understand that Jesus is the only One who deserves glory. Give us opportunities to celebrate and obey Him. We ask You to decrease our pride and increase Jesus' glory through our lives. 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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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- marker
- index cards

Write each word of the key passage on a separate index card. Make enough sets of index cards so that every pair of kids will have one set. Form pairs of kids to play a matching game. Kids will take turns flipping two cards face up. If the words are next to one another, such as *must* and *increase*, the kid who flipped them over may keep the pair. If not he must flip them back. If there are any unmatchable cards left at the end of the game, allow the kids to flip them over to end the game. After the game ends, pairs will work together to arrange all the cards in order. Then allow volunteers to say the passage from memory.

SAY • John wanted everyone to glorify Jesus. That's why **John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus.** In our own lives, we can increase Jesus' glory by loving Him, obeying Him, and loving others.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970, optional)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find John 3. Select a strong reader to read verses 27-30. Explain the purpose of Bible divisions (*to help us organize and understand what God's Word teaches*) and say the division John is in. (*Gospels*)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What were Jesus and His disciples doing in the countryside? (*teaching and baptizing people, John 3:22*)
2. Why were John's disciples arguing? (*Many were starting to follow Jesus instead of John, John 3:26*)
3. What did John want to happen? (*John wanted Jesus to get the glory as Messiah; John 3:30-31,35*)
4. Why is it good to glorify Jesus? *Guide kids to understand that people were created by God to glorify God. Jesus is God the Son. When we glorify Him in our lives, we are fulfilling our purpose, and it is good for us. Everything God does is for His glory and our good, including creating us to worship Him.*
5. When is it hard to glorify Jesus? *Discuss situations kids may face that can fill them with pride or arrogance. Explain that sinful pride makes it impossible to glorify Jesus. Remind them that our gifts and talents were given by God as a way to glorify God. When we do well, we can thank God and remind other people about His goodness to bless us with talents or skills.*
6. How can we learn to show humility? *Explain that the first step toward humility is understanding who Jesus is. He is God's beloved Son. He is the Messiah. The story of our lives is ultimately about Him, not any of us. Help kids consider that all people are equally valuable to God as all people are made in His image. None of us are better. All of us are His creations.*

SAY • John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus. John wanted people to make Jesus the center of their lives. When we love and trust Jesus, we will want to obey and glorify Him above all things.

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

- assorted travel-size toiletry items (toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, shampoo, body wash, and so forth)
- quart-size ziplock bags
- index cards
- crayons and markers

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

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Travel kits for missions

Gather an assortment of donated travel-size toiletry items. Invite kids to assemble travel kits by putting one of each kind of item into a quart-sized ziplock bag. Ask kids to include a short encouraging note or draw a picture on an index card. Put one decorated index card in each bag. Arrange a time to give these bags to members of your church who are going on short-term missions trips, or donate them to a church in your area that is leading a short-term trip.

SAY • Sometimes, missionaries will go for just a short trip, maybe a week or so. One way we can support them is to make some kits to make traveling long distances a bit easier. You don't have to travel on a mission trip to live on mission!

OPTION 2: Alphabet praises

Direct the kids to sit in a circle. Select a kid to start the game by saying a trait of Jesus or a reason why He deserves all glory. This word must start with the letter *A*. The kid to her right will say another trait or reason, starting with the letter *B* this time. Play continues in this way until a trait has been named for every letter of the alphabet. Be prepared with some ideas of words for trickier letters, such as *Q* or *X*, and consider allowing some flexible rules, such as using words that start with *Ex-* instead of *X*.

SAY • Jesus is the greatest of all. We love and praise Him because He alone is the perfect Messiah who died to save us from sin. **John the Baptist told people to follow Jesus.** We can tell others to follow Jesus as well!

**LOW
PREP**

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring 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.