

Use Week of:

Unit 20 • Session 3

John Pointed to Jesus

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Matthew 3; John 1; 3

STORY POINT:

John told people to follow Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE:

John 3:30

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to rescue sinners.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(15–20 MINUTES)
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TEACH THE STORY
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EXPERIENCE THE STORY
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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 were in 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. John had talked about Jesus, so they went to John.

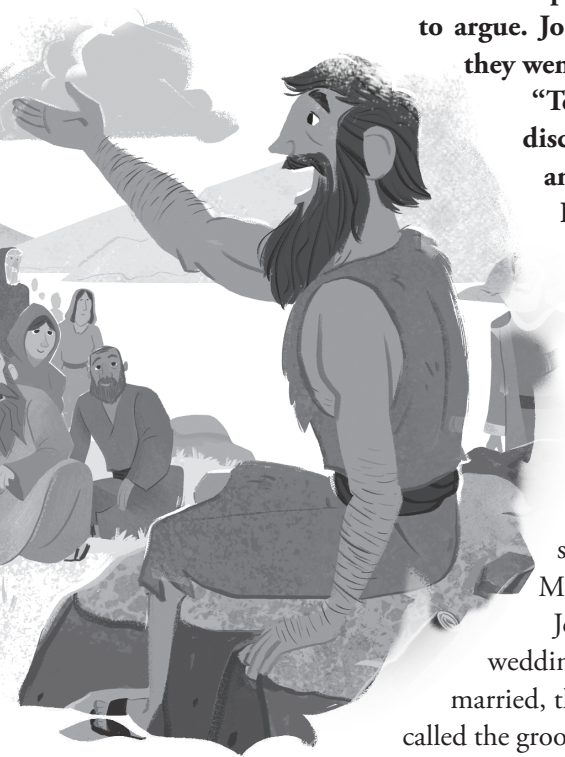
“Teacher,” they said, “Jesus’ disciples are baptizing people, and people are starting to follow Him.”

John answered, “I told you that I am not the Messiah. I am the messenger who goes before the Messiah to tell people 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 said, “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.” 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—and Jesus was the



groom. John was happy that Jesus, the Messiah, had come. John said, “**Jesus must become greater, and I must become less.**”

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, so He could talk about things in heaven because He had seen them!

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

God the Father loves His Son. 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: John the Baptist told people to get ready for Jesus. Now Jesus was here, and John’s job was finished. Jesus was greater than John, and John was happy to step aside for Jesus to begin His work.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Call and response:** Pause after each time you say the name *Jesus* in the Bible story, inviting preschoolers to say “the greatest!” in response.
- **Use people figures:** Provide one person figure to represent John and another represent Jesus. When you talk about John in the Bible story, show preschoolers that figure. Show the other figure when talking about Jesus. When you say that Jesus must become greater, lift that figure high. When you say that John must become less, lower that figure.

INTRODUCE the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to rescue sinners.

Welcome time

- "Take It to the Lord" song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play a 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

- "Connect the Dots" activity page, 1 per child
- crayons or markers

Invite preschoolers to connect the dots to complete the picture.

SAY • A few weeks ago, we heard the Bible story of how **John baptized Jesus**. When Jesus came up from the water, the sky opened and Jesus saw God's Spirit coming down on Him like a dove. Then God's voice came from heaven. "This is My Son," the voice said. "I love Him, and I am very happy with Him!" Today's Bible story is about how John told people Jesus is most important.

LOW PREP

- paper
- marker
- basket

Play a follow directions game

Write all the children's names on scraps of paper. Fold the names and put them in a basket. Draw two names from the basket and give those children a direction to follow, such as "Walk over and touch the door" or "Jump three times."

Let the child who finishes first draw two more names and give those children a direction to follow. Continue until all the children have at least one time to follow the directions given.

SAY • John knew his job was to tell people that the Messiah was coming. That is what God wanted him to do, and John followed God’s directions. God had a different job for His Son, Jesus. John saw that Jesus was following God’s directions too. Listen to the Bible story to hear what John told his followers about Jesus.

Play a card game

Print and cut apart the “Community Helper” cards. Lay out the cards in a faceup grid. Name each community helper and talk about what his or her special job is. Then turn over all the cards and play a matching game where children take turns turning over two cards at a time to find a match. Leave the cards faceup to play for younger preschoolers.

SAY • Each of these people has a special job. He or she works hard to do a job. In our Bible story today, we will hear about how both Jesus and John had different, but special, jobs to do.

• “Community Helpers”
printable
• scissors (adult use)

Transition to teach the story

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, turn the lights off and on, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Encourage the children to move to Bible study as if they are hurrying to see and hear Jesus.

• countdown video
(optional)

TEACH the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to rescue sinners.

Introduce the Bible story

- Bible
- bookmark
- Giant Timeline

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

SAY • The Bible is the most important book there is because the Bible is God’s Word. The Bible is true and tells about Jesus. The Bible story today is in John chapters 1 and 3 and also in the Book of Matthew.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline. Remind children that all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Watch or tell the Bible story

- Story Point Poster
- “Jesus’ Baptism” video (optional)
- Bible Story Picture Poster

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

SAY • John’s followers saw that some people were following Jesus instead of following John. John reminded his followers that he was a messenger who was sent to tell the people that the Messiah was coming. John knew that Jesus is God’s Son and the Messiah. Now Jesus was here, and John’s job was finished. Jesus was greater than John. **John told people to follow Jesus.**

Practice the key passage

Place the key passage marker at John 3:30. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Move around the group, touch each child lightly on the shoulder to say the next word of the verse. Increase your speed as the children become more familiar with the verse.

SAY • Our key passage is in today's Bible story. John said these words about Jesus. John's job was to tell people to get ready for Jesus. Jesus was greater than John, and John was happy to step aside for Jesus to begin His work.

Sing the key passage song, "He Must Increase," and the theme song, "Take It to the Lord."

- Bible
- Key Passage Marker
- Key Passage Poster
- "He Must Increase (John 3:30)" song
- "Take It to the Lord" song

Learn the big picture question

SAY • Our big picture question asks, *Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to rescue sinners.* Jesus came to earth from heaven. **John told people to follow Jesus.** Jesus was the one who could rescue them. Jesus was the One who could forgive their sin. Whoever believes in Jesus will live forever with God in heaven.

- Big Picture Question Poster



Missions moment

Display the Thiemann family photo and read the caption to preschoolers.

SAY • **John told people to follow Jesus.** Missionaries like this family tell people to follow Jesus too!

Close in prayer for the Thiemann family and their work through Missionary Aviation Fellowship in Africa.

- "Thiemann Family" printable

Pray and transition to experience the story

EXPERIENCE the Story



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LOW PREP

· classroom objects

Compare objects

Look around the room and choose two items of different sizes, weights, or lengths. For younger preschoolers, make sure the items are extremely different. Ask the children which is longer or taller or heavier. Be prepared to use body language to give clues. Think of objects the children would be familiar with (watermelon, loaf of bread, beach ball, basketball) and ask questions comparing them also.

SAY • Look at these two blocks. Which one is longer?

Look at the chair and the table. Which one would be heavier? Think about a watermelon and a loaf of bread. Which one would be the heaviest? [*Continue with several more examples.*] John the Baptist told people to get ready for Jesus. John knew that Jesus was greater than John, and John was happy to step aside for Jesus to begin His work. **John told people to follow Jesus.**

LOW PREP

· Bible

Play a guessing game

Describe a child. Encourage children guess who you are describing. With a bigger group, you may also guide all the children who fit a description to stand and sit down when the description no longer describes them. (For example, all the children with brown hair can stand. Then those who

are not wearing green shoes must sit down.) Continue to describe the child until only one child is standing. Open the Bible and read Isaiah 40:30. Comment that the verse is in the Old Testament and is a prophecy that described John.

SAY • You guessed whom I was describing! Do you think the people who heard John preach in the wilderness knew that the prophet Isaiah had described John many years before he was born? This verse tells us that John the Baptist had a special job to tell people to get ready for Jesus. **John told people to follow Jesus.**

Dress up for a wedding

Provide fancy dress-up clothes and artificial flowers for preschoolers to play out being in or going to a wedding. Consider contacting leaders before the session to ask them to bring wedding photos from home to show preschoolers. You may use a smart device to look up wedding pictures online. Look at the pictures together and name the people (groom, bride, parents, bridesmaids, groomsmen). Ask who is most important.

SAY • At a wedding everyone who is there wants to see the groom and the bride. It is their special day! They are the most important. John had been telling the people to get ready for Jesus. Jesus was here, and John's job was finished. Jesus was greater than John, and John was happy to step aside for Jesus to begin His work. **John told people to follow Jesus.** John knew that Jesus had come to rescue sinners.

- dress-up clothes
- artificial flowers
- wedding photos (optional)
- smart device (optional)

Work puzzles and look at books

Gather puzzles featuring Jesus and illustrated Bibles or Bible

- puzzles featuring Jesus
- illustrated children's Bibles
- Bible storybooks
- Giant Timeline (optional)
- Small Group Timeline (optional)

storybooks with pictures of Jesus. Encourage the children to talk about the pictures of Jesus in the books and on the puzzles. Ask questions to help them review the Bible stories about Jesus they have heard recently. Consider using the giant timeline or small group timeline to review Bible stories from the last several weeks as well.

SAY • Jesus was greater than John, and John was happy to step aside for Jesus to begin His work. **John told people to follow Jesus.** John knew that God had sent Jesus to rescue people from sin! John's special job was to point people to Jesus, God's Son.



Make travel kits

Explain that while we all cannot travel far away, we can all join in what God is doing around the world. Gather an assortment of travel supplies, donated or purchased. Set the items out on a table. Invite preschoolers to make travel kits by putting one of each item in a quart-sized ziplock bag. You may also set up an assembly line by assigning each preschooler an item to put in the bag. Guide preschoolers to draw pictures to put in the bags as well. Consider transcribing a message, such as *We are praying for you!* or *Thank you for serving God!* on each drawing. Give the bags to your church staff or missions team to be distributed.

SAY • These travel kits will go to members of our church going on mission trips to share the good news about Jesus. This is a way we can join in God's work on their trip even if we cannot go ourselves. Let's pray for the people who will get these bags and the people they will meet on their trips.

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

Snack and review

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Wash hands and gather preschoolers for snack time. Pray, thanking God for the snack.

Serve white snack cakes or cupcakes for snack. Compare the cakes to wedding cakes. Comment that John said at a wedding, the groom is more important than his friends. John knew that Jesus was more important than he was. Remind children that **John told people to follow Jesus.**

Show the Bible story picture as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

1. Who were the two men teaching and baptizing?
(John the Baptist and Jesus)
2. What did John say his job was? *(to be the messenger who told people the Messiah was coming)*
3. Who is the most important at a wedding, the groom or his friends? *(the groom)*
4. Who sent Jesus to earth? *(God)*
5. Where do people who believe in Jesus live forever?
(with God in heaven)
6. ***Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to rescue sinners.***

Transition

When preschoolers finish their snack, they may color the Bible story coloring page, play a simple game to practice the key passage or big picture question, or sing along to the key passage or theme song.

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
- paper cups and napkins
- snack food
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- white snack cakes or cupcakes (optional)

- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- Key Passage Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- "He Must Increase (John 3:30)" song
- "Take It to the Lord" song
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers