

JOHN'S MINISTRY BEGAN

MATTHEW 3; MARK 1; LUKE 3; JOHN 1



CHRIST CONNECTION: John's message for the people is a message for us too. We can turn from our sins and follow Jesus.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Is Jesus God or a human? Jesus is fully God and fully human.

KEY PASSAGE: The Word became flesh and lived among us. John 1:14

STORY POINT: John got people ready for Jesus.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The early ministry of John the Baptist is recorded in all four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This preacher whose dress, diet, and living conditions may have seemed eccentric to some, proclaimed the good news of One greater than himself: Jesus, the promised Messiah.

Two Old Testament passages tell us about John the Baptist, the first being Isaiah 40:3—a verse cited not only by the Gospel writers but also by John himself when questioned about his identity. The second passage is Malachi 3:1, in which the Lord declares, “See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me.” The people were expecting to witness the arrival of the Messiah and wondered if John was the one they were waiting for. Many were drawn to John, traveling from far away to confess their sins and be baptized.

John, however, embraced his role of a messenger to the Messiah. John began his ministry, humbly declaring both his unworthiness and the supremacy of Christ. He ventured throughout the area near the Jordan River calling the people to repent and receive forgiveness from sin. He spoke against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Sadducees, calling them, too, to repent and be changed through faith.

The crowds asked what God would have them do. John called them to love one another and be content with what they had. He exhorted them, yet proclaimed the good news, professing that Jesus is the Son of God and the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. These were weighty statements for one man to say about another, but John trusted God’s Word and proclaimed the same gospel we hear today—the same gospel you will teach to boys and girls this week.

Pray that the Holy Spirit would go before you to prepare children’s hearts to receive the good news for themselves. Ask the Lord to give you words to faithfully proclaim the truth that He alone is worthy of our repentance and trust.



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet preschoolers and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach preschoolers the story of the gospel



LOVE

Lead preschoolers to love the God of the gospel

30–40 MINUTES



LIVE

Lead preschoolers to live the mission of the gospel



BONUS

60–65 MINUTES

Teach preschoolers for an additional hour



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a supply of the following items available during all teaching sessions: Allergy Alert, Bibles, washable markers, crayons, scissors (adult use), blunt-tip scissors, construction paper, copy paper, glue sticks, glue, tape, baby dolls, blocks, play dough, and a beanbag.

WELCOME

Create a mural

- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- large paper



LEARN

Feel "animal skin"

- faux fur

Tell the Bible story

- "John's Ministry Began" video (optional)

Review the Bible story

- Bible Story Picture Poster

Learn and practice the key passage phrase

- Key Passage Phrase Marker



LOVE

Taste honey

- crackers
- honey
- napkins
- plastic knife

Lace cards

- "Lacing Cards" printable, 1 copy for every 2 children
- single hole punch
- yarn



LIVE

Create a collage

- "Key Passage Phrase Label" printable
- brown construction paper
- neutral colored yarn

Missions activity

- "Send Kansas City" missions video

Snack and transition

- hand sanitizer (optional)
- "Match the Picture to Its Shadow" activity page, 1 per child
- Big Picture Cards for Families



BONUS

Say the key passage phrase

- Key Passage Phrase Marker

Make a megaphone

- assorted stickers

Dress up

- dress-up clothing
- mirror (optional)



WELCOME Preschoolers

Provide as many learning activities as possible from the Love and Live sections to give preschoolers opportunities to learn. Incorporate the Bible story, the Christ Connection, the story point, and key passage phrase in your conversations as the preschoolers engage in learning activities throughout the session.

Use the following activity to greet children as they enter the room. Talk about the big picture question and answer. After each child completes the welcome activity, encourage him to participate in the activities provided from the Love and Live sections of the leader guide.

CREATE A MURAL

Before the session, write a large, block-letter J on the left side of a large piece of paper to create the beginning of a mural. (Leave room on the right to add additional letters in future sessions to spell out the name JESUS over the course of the unit.) Tape the mural on the wall at the children's eye level. Place crayons near the mural. Post the Bible Story Picture Poster near the mural, and post the Big Picture Question Poster near the entrance to the classroom. Greet kids as they come to the classroom and point out the Big Picture Question Poster. Encourage kids to use the crayons to decorate the letter J. (Note: Leave this mural on the wall or keep it available to use in future sessions of the unit.)

SAY 🗨️ Welcome to church today! I am so glad you are here. Our big picture questions asks, **Is Jesus God or a human? Jesus is fully God and fully human.** We are creating a mural with a special message. The first letter is J. Use the crayons to decorate the letter J. J is the first letter in the name John and the first letter in the name Jesus. In our story today, we will learn that **JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.** John told people, "Turn away from your sins and be baptized. God's kingdom is coming soon!" 🗨️

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





LEARN the Bible Story

1 FEEL “ANIMAL SKIN”

Invite kids to join you in the group time area. Pass the faux fur to each child. Encourage kids to touch and feel it.

SAY “ Did you feel the fur? Would you want to wear clothes made of this material? John was a man who lived in the wilderness. His clothes were made of camel’s hair, which might feel similar to the fur you felt today. John had an important job. **JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.** ”

2 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Open your Bible to Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1. Tell the Bible story using the following summary. You may choose to review the Bible story by showing the video.

JOHN’S MINISTRY BEGAN

SAY “ John was a man who lived in the wilderness. His clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey.

John had an important job. God wanted John to get people ready for Jesus, the One who would save people from their sins.

John told people, “Turn away from your sins and be baptized. God’s kingdom is coming soon!”

“Who are you?” the people asked John.

John said, “I am not the one who will save people.”

“Who are you, then?” the people asked.

The prophet Isaiah had answered this question many years earlier. Isaiah said, “Someone is shouting in the wilderness. He says, ‘Get ready for the Lord!’” John was the man Isaiah was talking about.

People came from all around to hear John teach. They listened to John and started turning away from their sins. They asked God to forgive them. Then John baptized them in the Jordan River to show their sins were washed away.

John said, “Someone more powerful than me is coming. I baptize with water, but He will baptize with the Holy Spirit.” ”

Christ Connection: John’s message for the people is a message for us too. We can turn from our sins and follow Jesus.



3 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

Show the Bible Story Picture Poster. Ask kids a series of questions where the answer is always Jesus. Questions can include: Who was John getting the people ready for? (Jesus) John said someone more powerful was coming. Who was it? (Jesus) Who saves people from their sins? (Jesus) Who can we follow today? (Jesus)

SAY “**JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.** This was an important job! The people listened to John and turned away from their sins. They asked God to forgive them. John’s message for the people is a message for us too. We can turn from our sins and follow Jesus.”

4 SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It”:

The Word became flesh and lived among us.
The Word became flesh and lived among us.
The Word became flesh,
And lived among us.
The Word became flesh and lived among us.

5 LEARN AND PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at John 1:14. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage phrase. Encourage kids to do the following motions when saying the key passage phrase: The Word (point upward) became flesh (point and touch your arm) and lived among us (spread arms out wide). John 1:14. Say the key passage phrase together several times.

SAY “God became a human and lived on the earth. Jesus is fully God and fully human. John had a very important job: **JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.**”

6 PRAY

Pray, thanking God that we can turn from our sins, choices that go against what God wants for us, and follow Jesus too.





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God because of what we learned

1 WHO ARE YOU?

Invite children to play a guessing game with you. Tell the kids that you are going to pretend to be someone or something else, such as a familiar animal or another friend in the classroom. They must listen to the clues you will give and try to guess who you are. Older children may want to take a turn giving clues while their friends guess.

SAY 🗨️ Let's play a guessing game. Can you guess who I am with these clues? I have four legs, I have a tail, and I bark. Yes, I am a dog. What if I told you, I am a girl, I wear glasses, and I have red shoes? Yes, I am a friend in our class. People asked John 'Who are you?' when he would teach. John told the people, 'I am not Jesus. He is more powerful than I am.' A messenger named Isaiah even knew long before John was born that he would be telling people to 'Get ready for the Lord!' God gave John an important job. **JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.** 🗨️

2 TASTE HONEY

Post an Allergy Alert at the entrance to the classroom. Place napkins, crackers, honey, and a plastic knife on the table. Invite children to spread honey on a cracker. As kids taste the honey, talk about John and what he ate.

SAY 🗨️ Do you like the honey? Does it taste sweet or sour? In our Bible story today, John ate honey. He told the people to turn away from their sins and to be baptized. John lived in the wilderness. His clothes were made of camel's hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. He had an important job. **JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.** John's message for the people is a message for us too. We can turn from our sins and follow Jesus. 🗨️

3 LACE CARDS

Before the session, print the "Lacing Cards" printable on heavyweight paper. Then cut out and punch holes in the designated spots to prepare the lacing cards. Cut yarn into 9- to 12-inch pieces and wrap the ends with masking tape. Demonstrate how to thread the yarn through the holes to lace around the picture of the locust.

SAY 🗨️ You are lacing around a picture of a locust. A locust is a type of bug. John lived in the wilderness and ate locusts and wild honey. Would you want to eat a locust? John had an important job. God wanted John to get people ready for Jesus. John told people to turn away from their sins and be baptized. The people listened to John and started turning away from their sins. They asked God to forgive them. John's message for the people is a message for us too. We can turn from our sins and follow Jesus. 🗨️

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE for God out of love

1 CREATE A COLLAGE

Print the “Key Passage Phrase Label” printable. Cut yarn into ½- to 1-inch lengths. Place the yarn, construction paper, and glue on the table. Invite children to create a collage by gluing the yarn to the paper. Older children may want to cut additional pieces of yarn with blunt-tip scissors. As the glue dries, encourage children to feel the texture of the yarn. Place a Key Passage Phrase Label on the collage.

SAY “ John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair. Does your picture feel like animal hair? John had an important job telling people that Jesus was coming. Our key passage phrase tells us, ‘The Word became flesh and lived among us.’ God became a human and lived on earth. This was John’s message to the people. ”

2 MISSIONS ACTIVITY

Point to the state of Missouri on a map of the United States. Show the “Send Kansas City” missions video. Pray for more churches to join the people and churches already working in Kansas City. Pray for people who live in Kansas City to have many opportunities to hear about Jesus.

SAY “ Kansas City, Missouri is in the United States. It’s an area famous for football, baseball, barbecue, and big businesses. But it’s also a place where many people need to know about Jesus. ”

3 SNACK AND TRANSITION



Post an Allergy Alert. Serve the snack. As children eat, review and talk about the Bible story. When children finish their snack, lead them to complete the activity page. As they work, continue talking about the Bible story and emphasize the Christ Connection.

SAY “ John’s message for the people is a message for us too. We can turn from our sins and follow Jesus. ”

Remember to communicate helpful information to the bonus teaching hour leaders. If parents are picking up children at this time, tell them something their child did well during the session. Distribute Big Picture Cards for Families. Encourage parents to engage with the family discussion starters and family activities during the week.



TEACHING HOUR

BONUS Teaching Hour Group Time

1 LIST JOBS

Invite kids to help you think of important jobs people do. Make a list on a piece of paper. Tell kids that John had a very important job. God told him to get people ready for Jesus.

2 TALK ABOUT THE BIBLE STORY

Open the Bible to Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1. Use the summarized points below to talk about the Bible story:

JOHN'S MINISTRY BEGAN

- God gave John an important job. God told John to get people ready for Jesus, the one who would save people from their sins.
- John told people to turn away from their sins and be baptized. John said, "God's kingdom is coming soon!"
- People listened to John. They turned from their sins, and John baptized them in the Jordan River.
- John said, "Someone more powerful than me is coming. I baptize with water, but He will baptize with the Holy Spirit."

3 SING A SONG

Sing the song below to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It":

The Word became flesh and lived among us.
The Word became flesh and lived among us.
The Word became flesh,
And lived among us.
The Word became flesh and lived among us.

4 SAY THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at John 1:15. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Encourage children to clap out the syllables of the key passage phrase as they say it with you several times. Remind children that God became a human and lived on the earth. John had the important job. **JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.**

5 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus, the one John told everyone about, so that we can be saved.



TEACHING HOUR

BONUS Teaching Hour Activities

6 PASS THE BEANBAG

Invite children to sit in a circle. Demonstrate how to pass a beanbag from one friend to another while you sing the Key Passage Phrase song or another familiar song such as “Jesus Loves Me.” When the song stops, say the story point together: **JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.** Make the game more challenging by singing at varying speeds, stopping the song in the middle of a phrase, or by encouraging the child holding the beanbag when the music stops to say the story point independently.

SAY “ **JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.** This was the important job God had for John to do. John told people to turn away from their sins and be baptized. People listened to John and started turning away from their sins. They asked God to forgive them. John’s message for the people is a message for us too. We can turn from our sins and follow Jesus. ”

7 MAKE A MEGAPHONE

Place construction paper, markers, stickers, and tape on the table. Invite children to decorate the paper with the markers and stickers. Demonstrate how to roll the construction paper into a megaphone shape and secure with tape. Encourage children to use their megaphones to shout out a special message.

SAY “ We use megaphones to share important messages that people need to hear. John had a special message for the people. He told the people, “Turn away from your sins and be baptized. God’s kingdom is coming soon!” **JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.** The people came from all around to hear John teach. They listened and started turning away from their sins. They asked God to forgive them. John’s message for the people is a message for us too. We can turn from our sins and follow Jesus. ”

8 DRESS UP

Place a selection of dress-up clothing out for kids to explore. Encourage children to try on the different outfits and accessories. Talk about the colors, patterns, textures, and materials that the clothing is made from. If available, invite children to look at themselves in a mirror.

SAY “ like the different outfits you have tried on. The dress-up clothes have so many different colors and textures. John was a man who lived in the wilderness. He wore clothing that we might consider strange today. His clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. God had an important job for him though. **JOHN GOT PEOPLE READY FOR JESUS.** He told the people to turn away from their sins and be baptized. The people listened to John and his message about Jesus. ”

Release preschoolers to parents according to your church’s security procedure. Tell them something their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session.