

Jesus' Baptism

Bible Passage: Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1

Story Point: John baptized Jesus.

Key Passage: John 3:30

Big Picture Question: Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to rescue sinners.

Christ Connection: Jesus never did anything wrong, but He was baptized like sinners are baptized. Baptism reminds us that Jesus died and came back to life. People who know and love Jesus are baptized to show they are following Jesus.

Leader Bible Study

Zechariah's son, John, grew up in the wilderness. His ministry began when God's word came to him, and he began preaching near the Jordan River. John worked to get people ready for the coming of Jesus, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy, "A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness" (Isa. 40:3a).

John called people to repent of their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River. John also instructed people on right living. (See Luke 3:10-14.) Some of the people suspected that John might be the Messiah, but John insisted, "One who is more powerful than I am is coming" (Luke 3:16).

Before His ministry began, Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized by John at the Jordan River. But John was calling people to a baptism of repentance. Jesus never sinned (see Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21), so why did Jesus come to be baptized? John recognized this when he said, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?" (Matt. 3:14).

Commentators' ideas vary about why exactly Jesus was baptized. Perhaps He was affirming John's work. Maybe He was identifying with sinners or showing them how they would be saved—through His death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus answered John, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). Jesus completely obeyed God, and God audibly confirmed His sonship.

As you teach, allow time for preschoolers to ask questions about repentance, salvation, and baptism. Emphasize that baptism is not what saves us; baptism is a way we show that we have been saved. Baptism reminds us that when we trust in Jesus, we die to sin and come into a new way of life—a life lived for Him. (See Rom. 6:3-4.)

The Bible Story

John the Baptist lived in the wilderness, far away from the city. His clothes were made out of camel's hair, and his belt was made of leather. When John was hungry, he ate locusts and wild honey.

John began telling people, "Repent and be baptized! God's kingdom is coming. It is almost here!"

"Who are you?" the people asked.

John said, "I am not the Messiah."

Many years before John was born, Isaiah the prophet said, "Someone is shouting in the wilderness. He says, 'Get ready for the Lord; make way for Him!'" Isaiah had been talking about John! John had a very important job. He was supposed to get people ready for Jesus—the Messiah God promised.

People listened to John, and they started to repent; they were sorry for their sins and asked God to forgive them. Then John baptized them in the Jordan River.

John said, "Someone greater than me is coming. I am not good enough to even untie His sandals. I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with God's Spirit."

Now Jesus was in the land of Galilee. He went to see John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Jesus asked John to baptize Him. John was surprised. He didn't think he should baptize Jesus.

John said, "I need You to baptize me. Why do You want me to baptize You?" John only baptized people who were sorry for their sins. Jesus never sinned!

Jesus said, "Let Me be baptized. God says this is the right thing to do." So 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!"

Part One: Introduce the Story

Welcome time

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

Ask preschoolers to circle the pictures that show the clothes they would choose and then the foods they would choose.

Say • Most of you chose clothes like you have on today. A man in today's Bible story wore clothes made of camel hair! Did you choose hon-

ey? What about the locust? The man in our Bible story ate honey and locusts. This man's name was John. We learned about his birth a few weeks ago. John was born to get people ready for Jesus. Listen to hear how John got people ready for Jesus in today's Bible story.

Draw someone strong and powerful

Give each child a piece of paper and crayons or markers. Encourage him to draw someone strong and powerful.

Say · The Jewish people knew that God had promised to send a Messiah, or Savior. They thought God would send someone strong and powerful. They had been waiting for many years for this Messiah to come. They were probably very excited when they heard John say that his job was to get people ready for the Messiah. John said Someone greater than him was coming. Listen to hear what happened as John was teaching and baptizing.

Untie shoelaces

Encourage children to untie their own shoelaces or the laces of extra shoes you provide. Retie the laces for preschoolers to untie as long as they show interest. Consider giving older preschoolers a lesson in how to tie shoes.

Say · When people offer to tie your shoelaces, they want to help you. They are being kind. Tying your shoelaces keeps you from tripping. When someone unties your shoelaces, you can take off your shoes. Tying and untying shoe laces are small jobs but very helpful. In our Bible story, John said Someone greater than him was coming. John said he was not good enough to even untie this Person's sandals. Let's listen to the Bible story to hear who was the very special Person John spoke of.

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 preschoolers to walk to the Bible story area as if they are looking for an important person who is coming.

Teach the Story

Introduce the Bible story

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

Say · We know the Bible is true and tells us God's words. Our story today is from the Book of Matthew. It is also in Mark, Luke, and John. Those four books are called the Gospels and tell about Jesus' life on earth.

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

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 · God sent John to tell people the Messiah was coming. Jesus asked John to baptize Him. John baptized Jesus. Jesus had never sinned, but He was baptized like sinners are baptized. Today, baptism reminds us that Jesus died and came back to life. When people are baptized, it shows they are following 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. Create motions for preschoolers to use as they say the key passage. Use the key passage song video for inspiration. Repeat the passage with motions several times.

Say · Our key passage is words John the Baptist said about Jesus. John wanted people to know that Jesus is the important one, not him! Sing the key passage song, "He Must Increase," and the theme song, "He Came Into the World."

Learn the big picture question

Say · Listen to our big picture question and answer. Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to rescue sinners. People are sinners. We deserve to be punished for our sin, but Jesus came to earth and obeyed God perfectly. He took the punishment we deserve for our sin. People who know and love Jesus are baptized to show they are following Jesus.

Missions moment

Say · Did you know there are missionaries who fly airplanes? A group of missionaries called Mission Aviation Fellowship, or MAF, serve God by flying airplanes to places that are too hard to get to by walking or driving. Many people have trusted in Jesus and chosen to be baptized because of MAF.

Pray thanking God for missionary pilots.

Pray and transition to experience the story

Experience the Story

Visualize repentance

Lead preschoolers to line up on one side of the room. Explain that preschoolers will walk from one side of the room to the other until they hear you say the word repent. When you say repent, they should turn around and walk the other direction.

Say · Repent means to turn away from sin and turn to Jesus. John told people to repent and be baptized. People listened to John, and they started to repent; they were sorry for their sins and asked God to forgive them. Then John baptized them in the Jordan River. Later, John baptized Jesus even though He had never sinned.

Make a paper plate dove

Before the session, print one copy of the “Paper Plate Dove” printable on heavyweight paper for every two children. Cut out a dove body for each child. Then cut paper plates into four triangles so each child will have two.

Give each preschooler a dove body and two paper plate pieces. Invite preschoolers to glue the points of their triangles to the back of their dove body to create wings. Encourage children to draw eyes and a beak on the dove’s body. Older preschoolers may wish to cut the paper plate wings “fringe-style” to give dimension to the wings. Read the text written on the doves and review the Bible story.

Say · When John baptized Jesus, 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!” Baptism reminds us that Jesus died and came back to life. People who know and love Jesus are baptized to show they follow Jesus.

Play out the Bible story with water

Spread a towel on a table and cover the floor around the table with additional towels. Place a plastic bin on the table. Fill the bin with a couple inches of water to represent the Jordan River. Set out several plastic people figures and a plastic bird. Lead preschoolers to play out the Bible story.

Say · John taught and preached. Many people came to hear him. When the people said they were sorry for their sins and asked God to forgive them, John baptized them. John was surprised when Jesus asked to be baptized, but John baptized Jesus. Then God’s Spirit came down on Jesus like a dove. God’s voice came from heaven. “This is My Son. I love Him, and I am very happy with Him!” John knew Jesus was God’s Son.

Make Bible bookmarks

Provide a “Bible Bookmarks” printable for each child. Invite children to cut out their bookmarks. Pre-cut bookmarks for younger preschoolers.

Invite preschoolers to decorate their bookmarks and trace the letters and numbers. Give each child a star sticker to add to their Isaiah 40:3 bookmark. Show a child as you place her bookmarks at Scripture references in a Bible. If a child brought a Bible from home, place the five markers in her Bible. Open a Bible to Isaiah 40:3 and read it to the children.

Say · You can ask a grown-up or big kid to help you put your bookmarks in a Bible when you get home. Today’s Bible story about when John baptized Jesus came from all four New Testament Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Gospels tell about Jesus’ life on earth. The bookmark that says Isaiah is special because it is in the Old Testament. Isaiah wrote these words long ago. Isaiah did not know it, but he was talking about John! John had a very important job. He was supposed to get people ready for Jesus—the Messiah God promised.

Look at books about airplanes

Set out a variety of books featuring airplanes. Consider checking out books from your local library if none are readily available. Invite preschoolers to browse through the books. Read a book as a child shows interest.

Say · Aviation is a big word for flying an aircraft. A group of airplanes is called a fleet. Mission Aviation Fellowship has a whole fleet of planes that fly all over the world. Did you know that there are many places that you can get to only by airplane? The missionary pilots and other MAF workers are able to share Jesus’ love with people who no one can reach! They can deliver food and medical supplies, take people to hospitals, and most importantly, they can tell the good news about Jesus. Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to rescue sinners.

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 lightly toasted bread with butter and honey. Choose a bread that can be sliced in front of the children. Allow children to spread their own butter and honey. Comment that the Bible tells us that John ate locusts and wild honey. Remind preschoolers that John baptized Jesus. Show the Bible story picture as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

Where did John the Baptist live? (in the wilderness)

What did John do when people said they were sorry for their sins? (He baptized them in the Jordan River.)

What did Jesus ask John to do? (baptize Him)

What happened when John baptized Jesus? (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!")

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.

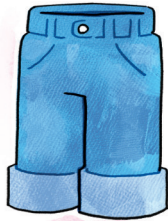
If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session.

Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

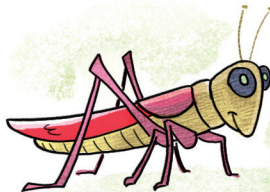
What Would You Choose?

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the pictures that show the clothes and foods that you would choose.

Which clothes would you choose?



Which foods would you choose?



Preschool Activity Pages

Unit 20 • Session 1

Jesus' Baptism

BIBLE STORY SUMMARY:

- John the Baptist told people to repent of their sins.
- When people repented, John baptized them in the Jordan River.
- John baptized Jesus even though Jesus never sinned.
- God's Spirit came down on Jesus like a dove.

KEY PASSAGE: John 3:30

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

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

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- What does the word *repent* mean?
- Why was John surprised Jesus asked John to baptize Him?
- What does baptism remind us of?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Invite a friend or family member to tell how and why he or she was baptized. Emphasize faith and repentance.
- Purchase a food-grade pack of edible bugs. Challenge family members to try the bugs with honey. Talk about John's unique diet.



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