

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

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.

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

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.

Part One: Introduce the Story

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

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.

Session starter

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.

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

Leader · 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.

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.

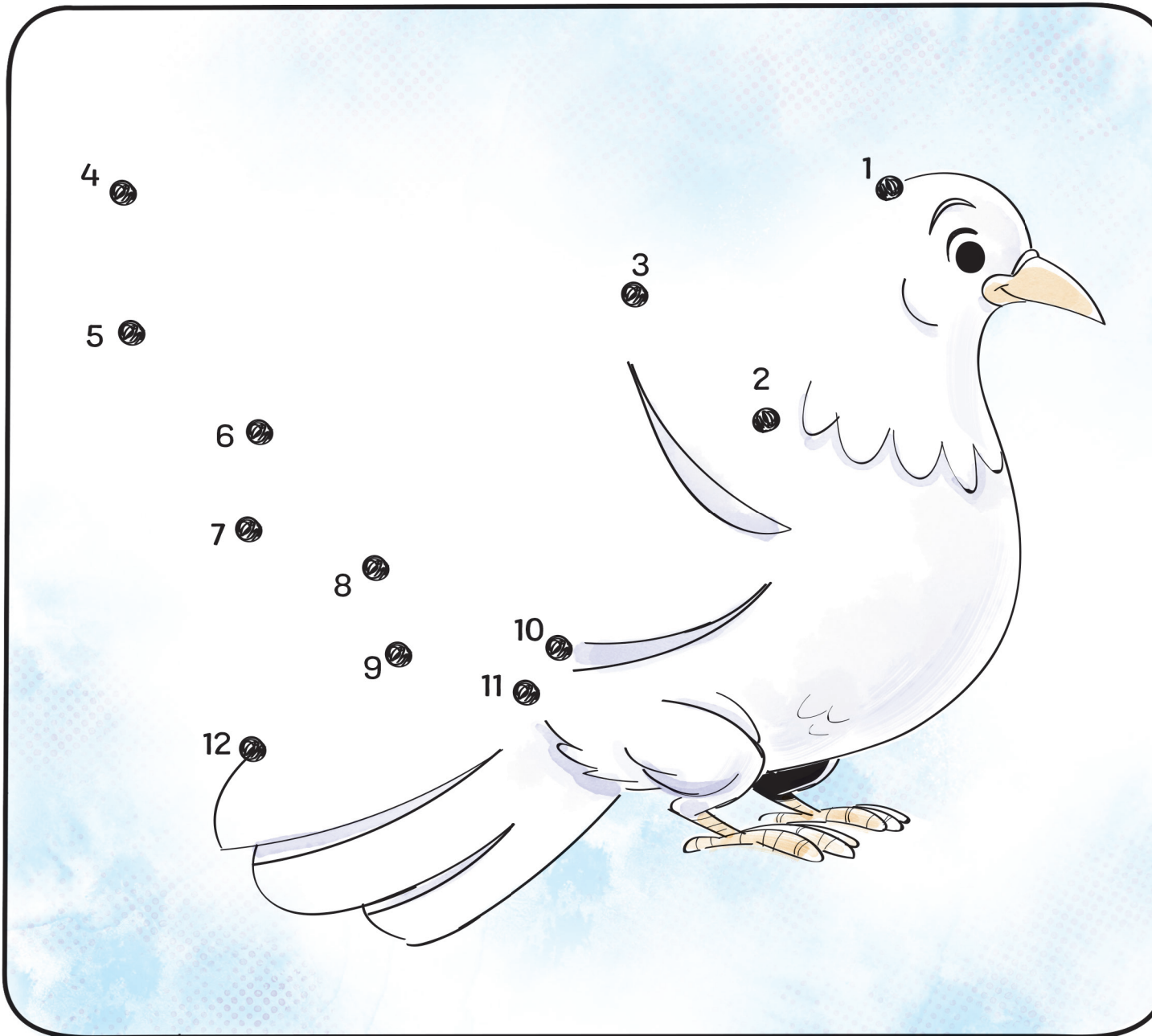
Christ connection

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.

Dismiss to apply the story

Connect the Dots

INSTRUCTIONS: Connect the dots to complete the picture.



Preschool Activity Pages

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John Pointed to Jesus

BIBLE STORY SUMMARY:

- John said Jesus was more important than him.
- John's job was to get people ready for Jesus. Now that Jesus had come, John's job was finished.
- 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.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- Why was John not angry that Jesus' disciples were baptizing too?
- How is the work God gave Jesus different than the work God gave John?
- How can we make Jesus greater and ourselves less in our own lives?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Give each family member a task to complete in preparation for a guest. When the guest arrives, say, "Now that our guest is here, your job is finished." Talk about how John's job was finished when Jesus began His ministry.



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