

LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

John 1:19-34

Isaiah 40:1-5

Session Theme:

Preparedness

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Warm Up: "Make Straight the Way!"

Bring a timer and a deck of cards to class. Set the timer for three to five minutes, and toss the entire deck of cards in the middle of the floor.

Challenge kids to work as a team and use the cards to make a straight road that measures 3 feet in length before the timer goes off. Then, measure their road with a ruler and see if they succeeded! *In today's Bible story, John the Baptist cried out, "Make straight the way of the Lord." People's lives were messy, like the pile of cards that were in the middle of the floor. They were lost and needed help and direction.*

John wanted them to straighten out their messes, open their hearts, and prepare for Jesus to come into their lives. John pointed the way forward.

c. Opening Prayer

Lord God, it is easy to get so busy that we forget to pray. Help us to remember to put our relationship with you first in our lives, and to point others to you as well. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- *"Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord" (hymn)*
- *"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist Cries" (hymn)*

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the New Testament
- Scripture Section: Beginnings

God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. John was in the wilderness baptizing people in the River Jordan when Jesus himself came and was baptized. John called Jesus: "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help students think about details of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format

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Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: John 1:19-34

1. Why do you think the priests and Levites were curious about John the Baptist? Why did they feel the need to go out to the wilderness to check him out?

   John caught the leaders' attention because he was baptizing people and quoting Old Testament prophecies. People wondered if he was Elijah or a new prophet sent from God, or perhaps even the long-promised Messiah.

   The leaders wanted to know who they were dealing with and whether he would be a threat to their own religious authority. (In effect, they were tattletales who were trying to find an excuse to get John in trouble.)

2. In verses 19-23, what was John's answer to all the questions he was asked? How did John's response show his faith? In what way is it important for us to know that we are *not* the Lord and Savior of our own lives?

   John confidently denied all their questions and said, "I am not." One of the key aspects of faith is to recognize that we are not God. The Lord is God, and we are his creatures made to serve him. To affirm that we are not the Lord and Savior of our own lives is to affirm that our trust is in Jesus and not in ourselves.

3. How did John describe his mission and function?

   In these verses, John says, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." He is quoting Isaiah 40:3. John's function was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

4. Who was John talking about when he said, "Among you stands one you do not know" (v. 26)? What did John have to say about this unknown person?

   John was referring to Jesus, the Messiah. The word "messiah" means "anointed one" — referring to the promised King from the line of David who would come to save God's people.

   Realizing how important the Messiah was, John said, "I'm not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal." God himself revealed to John (by the presence of the Holy Spirit) that Jesus was the Messiah — the one he waiting for.

5. How did John contrast his own baptism with the baptism of the One who would come after him? Why is it that only God can give the Holy Spirit? What does that say about Jesus?

   John's baptism was about human repentance — people changing their ways. But Jesus would come to baptize with the Holy Spirit — meaning that God would be the one at work to change the person's heart. Jesus can promise God's Spirit because he is God. Even today, when someone is baptized in Jesus' name, the Holy Spirit enters that person's life as a comfort and a guide.

6. When we are baptized, who is the One who is really at work? How does that explain why we are able to baptize people of all ages? Who is in charge?

   Our Christian baptism is the work of God himself. He is the actor, and the One making the promise of Christ. Baptism is not dependent upon the works and decisions of the person being baptized; the authority of Baptism rests in God's Word spoken. God uses his Word to create faith. That is why we baptize people of all ages. Baptism is not a human work or promise to God (like John's baptism); it is the very promise God himself made to us!

7. Read Isaiah 40:1-5, written 500 years before John was born. What did the prophet say about John?

   Isaiah said that God would commission someone to speak comfort to his people (specifically to Jerusalem) and announce the forgiveness of sin. Isaiah says that this prophet would appear in the wilderness to prepare the way for God's coming into the world. John was this person, the prophet sent to speak the Word of God and announce that "the glory of the Lord" was about to be revealed to the people of the world. This is exactly what happened in the coming of Jesus. (For more on this, read John 1:6-18.)

8. There is a saying, "The ground is level at the foot of the cross." What do you think that means? How are we all the same before God? What do we all need?

   The theme in Isaiah 40:4 is that with the coming of the Messiah, things would be leveled. In a world of winners and losers, rich and poor, high and low, we all stand equally before God as sinners in need of God's grace.

   As Paul says in Romans 3:22-24: "There is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The cross shows us that none of us can save ourselves; we all need Jesus to be our Savior.

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Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: "Who Are You?" Guessing Game

Materials Needed:

- Bible
- Paper
- Pen or pencil
- Timer
- White board
- Marker



Instructions:

People were trying to figure out who John the Baptist was, and they asked many questions to do so. Invite kids to act like the crowd in today's story and play a classic guessing game!

In this game based on 20 Questions, you (the teacher) play against the class, which will work as a team.

Choose a familiar person from the Bible — one the kids have learned about, like Jesus, John the Baptist, Mary, Noah, David, Goliath, Adam, Eve, Peter, Paul, etc. — and write the name on a piece of paper. Don't show the paper to the class.

Give the class one (and only one) hint about the character you chose. For example, for the first round, you might say, "I'm thinking of someone from Old Testament."

The class will work as a group against you and can ask up to 20 questions before deciding to "solve" the problem by guessing the specific name on your paper.

Your only answer to any of their questions will be "yes" or "no." Typical questions might be, "Is it a male?", "Is this person young?", etc.

If the class tries to solve the problem and is wrong, you get a point. If they are correct, they get a point. For this reason, kids may want to use most or all of their 20 questions before guessing. Record points on the board.

After the first round, choose another Bible character and play another round. Continue for as many rounds as time allows, then tally points to determine a winner.

Activity 2: Filled to the Brim Relay Race

Materials Needed:

- Water
- Two plastic cups
- Four waterproof containers such as ice cream buckets
- Masking tape, rope or yarn
- Large space to play an active game



Instructions:

John baptized many people with water — including Jesus!

In this relay, kids may splash a little water as they race. This can be a reminder of their baptisms and of today's story.

To set up the game, place a piece of masking tape a few inches up from the bottom on two of the containers. Be sure the tape is in the same place on each one. (If containers are not the same size, pour one quart of water into each one and put the masking tape at the top of each water line. Then, pour out the water.)

Set the two empty, marked containers at the far end of the room. Set the other two containers across from them near the opposite end of the room. If playing outside, containers can be about 20 feet apart.

Fill the unmarked buckets with water. Make a starting line a few feet behind the water buckets.

Divide the kids into two teams and have each team stand, single file, behind the starting line.

Give the first person in each line a cup.

When you say, "Start," the first one on each team will run to the first bucket, fill the cup with water, run to the second bucket and empty the water into it. Then, he or she will race back to the next person in line, hand off the cup to that player, and the relay will continue.

The teacher will stand near the marked containers. Whichever team gets their water over the taped line first wins the relay.

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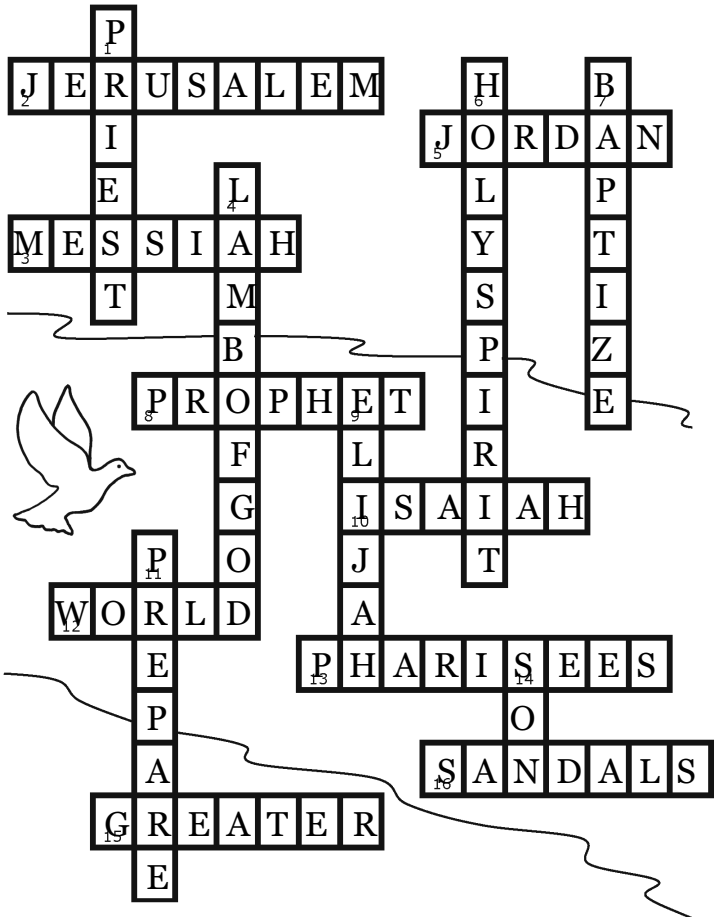
Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson.

Crossword Answers:



Puzzle Words

Across:

2. Jerusalem
3. Messiah
5. Jordan
8. Prophet
10. Isaiah
12. World
13. Pharisees
15. Greater
16. Sandals

Down:

1. Priest
4. Lamb of God
6. Holy Spirit
7. Baptize
9. Elijah
11. Prepare
14. Son

Vocabulary Word for the Week

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary.

Preparedness

to be prepared for whatever happens; readiness

John the Baptist wanted the people be ready, to wait in preparedness for the promised Messiah to come.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

John the Baptist was an unusual man. He dressed in animal furs, lived in the wilderness by himself, and ate locusts. These behaviors must have been interesting even centuries ago, considering they are mentioned in the Bible. Yet John was faithful to God and did the job he was called to do, no matter what, preparing the way for Jesus and pointing others to him.



It can be hard to feel like you don't fit in with the culture or certain groups. It can be upsetting to be judged or even rejected because of your faith in Jesus. John faced all these things and more during his life, but he did not give up or give in. He continued to share his message of repentance and hope in the coming Messiah with all who would listen.

Have you ever felt misunderstood or like you didn't fit in with the people around you? Have you ever felt judged for your faith? Take courage from John, who dared to be himself and was used by God, just as he was.

The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer thanking God for sending Jesus into our world. Pray that you would have courage like John and serve God in all you do. Ask that God would reveal to you his wisdom and truth.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.

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