

LESSON 4

The Ministry of John the Baptist

MATTHEW 3:1-12



BIBLE TRUTH

JOHN ANNOUNCED THE MINISTRY OF JESUS WITH A CALL TO REPENT

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

SUPPLIES: picture or drawing of a grasshopper; puppet (You will find that many of the object lessons in the curriculum use a puppet and that it is a wise investment for each preschool class to have a few simple puppets for the teachers and helpers to use.)

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: The Gospel Story Bible (story 82)

3. BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION 5 MIN

Where Is the Gospel?

SUPPLIES: Bible (ESV preferred); Review “Where Is the Gospel?” to prepare

4. SNACK QUESTIONS 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: snack food and beverage

5. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5–10 MIN

6. ACTIVITIES AND OBJECT LESSONS (CHOOSE ONE OR MORE) 20–30 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES: coloring page for NT Lesson 4—one copy for each child; markers or crayons

Catch a Grasshopper

SUPPLIES: grasshopper; honey; crackers

A Guest Appearance by John the Baptist

SUPPLIES: fake brown fur remnant and a rope belt for a John the Baptist costume

7. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

TOTAL 60–75 MIN

THE LESSON

OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

In today's lesson the children will learn about John the Baptist. They will also learn that God has given us a way to turn from our sin.

Prior to class draw a simple grasshopper on a sheet of paper. (You can get a more artistic person to quickly draw this for you or print out a photo of a grasshopper from the Internet.) Fold the paper in half to hide the illustration.

After the children arrive, show them the folded paper and explain that it has a special clue to the subject of today's lesson. Then ask the class if they want to see the clue.

Open the paper and see if anyone can identify the picture/drawing as a grasshopper. Ask the class if they know the other name the Bible gives for grasshoppers. (locust)

Now see if they can guess what today's lesson is about. If they don't guess right away, you can give them more clues, such as honey, clothing made of camel's hair, baptizing, and prophet. Once they guess John the Baptist, ask them a few more questions to see how much they know.

Note: If you have a simple puppet handy, you can use the puppet to give the children clues to help them answer. You can even ask the puppet the tougher questions. (If you are not comfortable using a puppet, one of your teaching assistants can help the children with the answers if they get stuck.)

- Who was John the Baptist?
(John the Baptist was a special prophet God sent to prepare the people for Jesus.)
- What do you remember about John?
(Draw out the children. See if they can remember that he wore a camel hair robe, ate locusts and wild honey, and baptized people.)
- John used the word "repent" when he told the people about Jesus. What does the word "repent" mean?
(This is a good question to ask the puppet and have it explain what the word means. Tell the children that the word "repent" means to turn away from something.)

- What are we supposed to turn away from in our lives?

(We are supposed to turn away from sin.)

Get a pencil or other object and place it on a table in front of the children. Tell them to pretend the pencil is a car and the table is a road. Tell them that there is a terrible cliff on the road (the end of the table). Ask them what would happen if the car drove off the end of this road.(It would crash.)

Tell them that repentance is realizing you are going in a bad direction and then turning around. Tell them the cliff is destruction, the road is sin, and the car is like our lives. When we realize we are living for sin, we turn around and follow Jesus.

Take time to pray and thank God for giving us a way to turn from our sin. Pray for the remainder of the class time before moving forward with the lesson.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read story 82, “The Ministry of John the Baptist,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION 5 MIN

After reading the story, use the following questions to involve the children in a discussion:

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

John the Baptist clearly portrayed men as sinful, in need of a Savior. In Luke 3:6 John the Baptist quotes the prophet Isaiah who said: “All flesh shall see the salvation of God.” John was not merely introducing a great prophet; he was introducing the Lord himself, who would bring salvation to all people. This would come throug

- What did John the Baptist tell the people of Israel?
(John told the people they should repent of [turn away from] their sin. He also told them that another, Jesus, would come who would baptize not with water but with the Holy Spirit. In this way John was preparing the way for the ministry of the Lord.)
- What else did John do?
(John baptized those who wanted to repent of their sin and dedicate their lives to serving God.)
- What did John teach them to do?
(John taught them to love one another. John said their lives should show the good works [fruit] of their repentance.)

SNACK QUESTIONS 10 MIN

While the children are eating the snack, engage them by asking the following questions:

- What did John the Baptist eat?
(locusts [grasshoppers] and wild honey)
- What would you think about eating that kind of meal?
(Accept any answer.)
- What did John wear?
(A garment of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist. His simple clothing, diet, and lifestyle were an expression of a life dedicated to the Lord.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5-10 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECT LESSONS. 20-30 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 4—one copy for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

■ **Why is the man in the water?**

(The man in the picture is John the Baptist and he is baptizing people who want to turn away from their sin. Baptizing means he is dunking them in the river.)

■ **Who did John tell the people about?**

(John told the people about Jesus, the Lamb of God, who God sent to take away our sin.)

■ **A viper is a type of poisonous snake. Who did John call vipers?**

(John called the religious leaders vipers. He knew that they wanted to appear holy and dedicated to God on the outside but they did not love God with their hearts. Later, Jesus also called the Pharisees vipers.)

■ **John baptized with water. What did he say Jesus would baptize with?**

(John said that another would come who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, tongues of fire appeared above them. This pouring out of the Holy Spirit is considered the first baptism of the Spirit in the Bible.)

Catch a Grasshopper

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ grasshopper
- ✓ honey
- ✓ crackers

If you happen to be teaching this lesson in the late summer or early fall you might be able to catch a grasshopper in a field and bring it along in a jar. (You could also use a cricket from a pet store.) Since you are teaching young children, any object of interest to help the story come alive can aid the children in remembering what they were taught.

Give the children a taste of the honey on a cracker. And then ask them what is the most important thing we should remember about John's life. (He prepared the way for the Lord.)

A Guest Appearance by John the Baptist

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ fake brown fur remnant and a rope belt for a John the Baptist costume

Have one of the teachers come prepared with a costume to be John the Baptist. He could memorize a few lines and bring his message to the class. After he leaves you could discuss what was important about his message.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Take time at the end of class to thank God for what you learned today. Include parts of your Bible lesson in your prayer as a way for the children to remember today's lesson.

LESSON 4 - THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

