

John the Baptist

REPENT • ADVENT 2 • YEAR B

MARK 1:1-8

Grades
5-6



2

What is happening in this story?

The Gospel of Mark begins with “good news.” Kids get to find out how Jesus got started with his ministry (or work) while he was on earth. They may be more familiar with Jesus as Mary and Joseph’s son, born in a manger. There’s a memorable main character in this story, John the Baptist. He announces clearly, like the angels did in Bethlehem, that Jesus is very significant. John also preaches in firm, memorable ways about repentance—turning around from sin to live life anew.

Why does this story matter for kids?

Kids can grow into the idea that all Christian life begins with repentance. This was part of John’s message to those who would listen. They may already be familiar with faith-based terms like *sin* and *forgiveness*, or heard from others that, when we sin, we can ask for and receive forgiveness from God—and from those we’ve sinned against. Repentance doesn’t mean feeling bad for what we are doing wrong. It means turning around and changing, walking away from bad choices and starting to make good choices.

What is the lectionary connection?

On this second Sunday of Advent, we hear messages about repentance in not only the gospel reading, but the First and Second Readings as well. Repentance matters. As we wait for Christmas, and the second coming of Christ, we can examine our hearts and repent from sin, turning instead to the forgiveness and new life in Christ.

AGE LEVEL TIP

Kids are discovering that Advent means more than making a Christmas list. Preteens are curious about ways to prepare for Jesus’ coming, which often differ from preparing for the Christmas holiday.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Colored pencils
- Pens
- Pencils
- White paper
- Scissors

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Bowl of water
- Fake beard
- Index cards

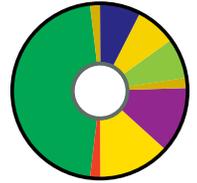
WHIRL SUPPLIES • WHIRL NRSV BIBLES • DVD • WALL CHART • LEAFLETS

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Invite kids to make an Advent checklist where they name the ways they prepare for Christmas. Encourage them to think of rituals and traditions that emphasize the sacred aspects of this season. Avoid emphasizing secular practices such as shopping, attending parties, etc.

Invite kids to look at the Wall Chart.

Point out today's date, church season, color, and icon. Invite one person to draw a picture of a U-turn sign in the white space. **Why would a person need to perform a U-turn while driving a vehicle? When is it permissible to do this? Is there a right or a wrong way to turn around?** Indicate that everyone makes wrong turns once in a while. Advent is a time to turn around from these things and ask for forgiveness. When we receive God's forgiveness, it opens us up for Jesus coming into our lives.

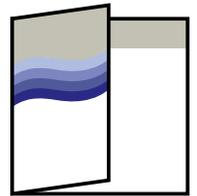


Kids partner up, dip their finger in a bowl of water, and make the sign of the cross on their partner's forehead while saying, "When you say you're sorry, God forgives you."

Pass out leaflets and colored pencils.

Advent wreaths are an ancient way of marking the weeks in Advent. It's like a countdown until Jesus'

birth. Invite kids to color all four of the Advent wreath candles blue or purple. Ask them to also color the flame of two of the colored candles. **In some Christian traditions the second candle symbolizes preparation. In the space provided, write three things you would do to prepare if you knew Jesus was coming to your house in 24 hours.** Help kids think of ways to prepare beyond cleaning their room or wearing nice clothes.



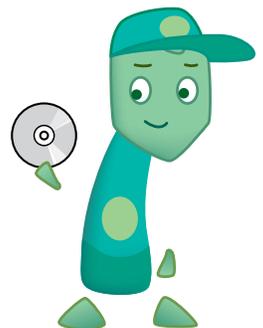
Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

Have you ever been in a situation where someone blamed you for something you didn't do? Have you ever let someone get in trouble for something you did? With that in mind, let's watch the video.

View Episode 2, "Rugged Remorse," on the Whirl Year B Winter Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

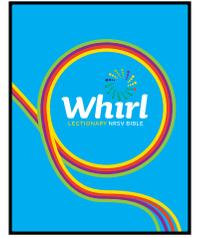
- **What does Gabe risk if he admits to vaporizing the toolshed?**
- **Mimi and Gabe talk about repenting. What does that word mean to you?**
- **If you were Gabe, how would you repent?**
- **Why do you think people focus on repentance during Advent?**



Pass out Whirl NRSV Bibles and help kids find Mark 1:1-8.

Do the Advent 2 Preview Activity together on page 1156 and compare responses.

Read Mark 1:1-8 in this creative way together: Select three kids to read the parts of John the Baptist, the prophet Isaiah, and the Mark narration. Give a fake beard (made of hair or a paper cutout) to the person portraying John. Indicate that John was a strange-looking fellow who lived in the wilderness, wore a camel's hair robe, and ate locusts. Invite the class to gather around the John character and strike various poses as if to say, "I'm listening—tell me more!" Have the other two readers stand at opposite ends of the room. Make sure the readers know which verses they're reading: John (verses 7-8), Isaiah (verses 2-3), and Mark/narrator (verses 1, 4-6).



Ask these questions after you read the story:

- John the Baptist was kind of a mysterious figure. Why do you think so many people were drawn to him?
- John ate locusts and wild honey. What's the strangest thing you've ever eaten? Has anyone ever eaten bugs?
- What does the phrase "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" mean to you? Why would water be a part of repentance and forgiveness?
- When have you struggled to repent of something you knew was wrong?

BIBLE BIT

John's physical appearance may have reminded people of another prophet. Elijah was "a hairy man, with a leather belt around his waist" (2 Kings 1:8).

WATCH IT AGAIN

Pay attention to the way Gabe wrestles with guilt before he repents. It can take awhile before someone is ready to turn back to God and repent.

OUR CHURCH

Create a Wall of Repentance in the church where people anonymously write things they repent of on sticky notes. Invite the pastor to incorporate these in the worship service.

RESPOND 10

Open the leaflets and pass out colored pencils, scissors, and clear tape.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. Invite kids to think of something they need to repent from. (Some ideas: being rude to a parent, lying to a friend, bullying a classmate, etc.) Ask them to write this under the kangaroo on the leaflet.
2. **Cut out the mini boomerang template from the Launch panel.**
3. **Trace it onto an index card.**
4. **Write “REPENT!” on the mini boomerang and cut it out.**
5. **Pinch the left arm of the boomerang between your left thumb and forefinger.**
6. **Flick the right arm of the boomerang with your right hand and let go of the boomerang.**
7. **Watch it fly back to you! (Or if it doesn’t, just watch it fly and fetch it back.)**
8. Remind kids that repentance means “turning back.” **The boomerang represents us coming back to God. It does not represent our sin coming back to us.**
9. **Tape your boomerang over the space where you wrote what you need to repent from. Remember that God promises to forgive all sins. Just like a boomerang, we can always turn around and come back to God.**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Invite kids to reflect on the activities, video, Bible story, and discussion. **Can you name some things you learned about repentance? How does repenting help you get ready for Jesus’ coming? What questions or curiosities do you have about repentance?** Take time to hear kids’ responses.

Return to the leaflet panels.

Have kids cut the leaflet into two bookmarks and write the word “REPENT” vertically in different styles and draw the U-turn symbol. Encourage kids to put these in important books as repentance reminders during the week.

Send kids out.

Kids partner up, dip their finger in a bowl of water, and make the sign of the cross on their partner’s forehead while saying, “God forgives you. Get ready for Jesus to come into the world.”

Pray together: **God, we are getting ready for Jesus to come into our lives. Forgive us when we mess up. Help us turn around and show your love to everyone. Amen.**

Thank kids for their honesty in thinking of ways to repent. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.