



The Story of John the Baptist – God Prepares Our Heart

Matthew 3

God Statement: God is With Us

KEY VERSE: "You will pass through deep waters. But I will be with you."
(Isaiah 43:2, NIRV)

CHECK-IN

Classroom Teacher

(until 15 minutes after the start of each service)

As kids check-in, please have them wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before entering your classroom. Then they can participate in the various activities and games in your classroom. 10 minutes after the start of your service time, ask the kids to clean up their activities and toys so you can begin the Explore Activity at 15 minutes after the start of service.

EXPLORE ACTIVITY

Classroom Teacher

(15 minutes)

The Explore Activity is a chance to get the kids thinking about the upcoming Bible story for the day. Encourage your kids to engage with the activity as they prepare for the lesson.

DISCUSS: God Prepares our Hearts

In today's lesson, we are going to learn about how God prepares our hearts!

SAY: Have you ever had to plan or prepare for something? **Let kids respond.** Sometimes we have to prepare for a big event or trip. Maybe we have to prepare ourselves for something big, like sharing a project with our class at school, or talking to someone new. Maybe we have to prepare our hearts for a big change, like moving! Have you ever been nervous about something you had to do before? **Let a few kids respond.** God can help us prepare for things we have coming up! He can help prepare our hearts for changes and things we may have to do.

Today we get to learn about John the Baptist. Have you heard of him before? **Let kids respond.** God had to help prepare John the Baptist for the tasks ahead! John focused on God and God used John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus and the amazing things Jesus did! We get to learn more about this in our story today, but first let's make a special craft!

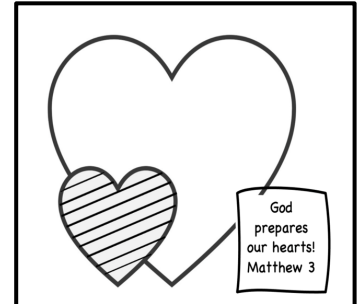
MAKE: Fingerprint Heart Craft

To get the kids thinking about the lesson, they can do this activity!

Supplies: one heart page per child, ink pads

Directions: Pass out one heart page per child. Have them use the ink pads to put their fingerprints on the heart and to decorate it. Have children wash their hands after doing the craft page.

SAY: Today we get to learn about how God prepared John the Baptist and how He prepares our hearts too! Let's make a special heart craft using our fingerprints!



LARGE GROUP

(25 minutes)

Each week, Large Group will consist of an introduction, worship, the Bible lesson, worship response, and the blessing.

WORSHIP & LARGE GROUP RULES

Worship Leader & Host

WORSHIP

While the video is playing the opening worship songs, encourage the kids to sing and dance along. Don't forget to set the example by participating alongside them!

Feel free to modify your worship time for what works best for your age group. You can find different ways to encourage the kids to participate by giving them instruments or showing them simple hand motions. You can also limit how many songs you choose to play, if it seems like the kids are not able to stay focused the entire time.

TODAY'S WORSHIP SONGS:

- God is With Me
- King of Me

LARGE GROUP RULES

Once everyone has found their seat, play Large Group Rules video in the PowerPoint provided. If needed, reinforce the rules after the video plays.

**** After Worship & Large Group Rules, transition the PowerPoint to the Mail Time & Wardrobe of Wonder slides. ****

MAIL TIME & WARDROBE OF WONDER

Host

MAIL TIME!

Find the Mail Time envelope in your curriculum supplies.

Pick one child to hide the envelope and another child to find it. Give the first child about 30 seconds to hide the envelope while the other child closes his/her eyes. After the envelope is hidden, the second child can search for the envelope while the class says "hot" or "cold" to give them clues if they're getting closer or further away.

Have the two kids stand in front of the class and hold the verse page (inside the envelope) so everyone can see it.

****Use the Key Verse Motions Video on Plex (or sent in weekly email) to learn the motions prior to Large Group.****

***“You will pass through deep waters. But I will be with you.”
(Isaiah 43:2, NIRV)***

WARDROBE OF WONDER

The Wardrobe of Wonder is an opportunity to get the younger kids engaged in the lesson by playing a guessing game to determine what the “What’s It” is inside the wardrobe each week.

Choose one child to “spy” on the What’s It by peeking inside the wardrobe. Remind the other children to look away and to not peek. Have the peeker whisper the identity of the What’s It in the host’s ear to ensure he/she saw it correctly.

What’s It: A River

Now, invite the class to raise their hand and guess the identity of the What’s It by asking yes-or-no questions about it. Allow the child who peeked to help answer the questions. Accept around three questions and then three guesses. You can allow the kids to whisper their guess to their neighbor to allow for more sharing before you reveal the item. Retrieve the What’s It from the wardrobe and allow the class to look at it/pass it around. Thank the volunteer and allow them to sit back down.

SAY: What do you guys see? It’s a river. Who here has ever seen a river before? **Let kids respond.** Do you know what a river is? **Let kids respond.** That’s right, a river is a body of water. Now hmmm how does a river connect with the story today? Does anyone have any guesses? **Let kids respond.** We see water all throughout the Bible, but today we are going to dive in and learn about who John the Baptist was, and why a river is important to his story. So, lets dive in to today’s lesson!

***** After the Mail Time & Wardrobe of Wonder, Younger Kids classes transition to the Bible Story video where the kids will hear about the lesson for the day.*****

BIBLE STORY

Lesson Video

Remind the group before starting the video to follow the expectations for Large Group.

THIS WEEK’S LESSON: *The Story of John the Baptist – God Prepares Our Heart*

Encourage kids to listen and engage with the lesson as they watch the teaching video.

*****After the video finishes, turn on soft worship music (with or without lyrics) to transition into Worship Response. This should be background music to help set the tone for a quiet reflection time with God.*****

WORSHIP RESPONSE**Host**

Worship Response is an opportunity for the kids to apply what they just learned and to respond to what God is doing in their life. *Have the kids sit in a place where they can be still and reflect independently.* Then read through the Worship Response prompts below as you lead the kids through the time.

DO: Pictures – God Prepares Our Hearts

Supplies: Half Paper, pens, crayons, markers

SAY: t's close our eyes and think about what we will have to eat after we leave church. Will it be pizza, a burger, or maybe some chicken nuggets. What if you get home and your Grown-up has prepared a plate of locusts and some honey instead of that juicy burger, for you. How would you react?

Well, you may not like to eat locusts and honey, but that is just what John the Baptist loved to eat. Also, he wore clothes from camel's hair with a leather belt. What he ate and what he wore was not what John the Baptist was about. He lived for one purpose and that was to point others to Jesus Christ. John grew up strong in spirit, and he answered the call of God. He knew exactly what he should do with his life.

John did not let anything get in his way. God was preparing his heart. He kept his heart set on Jesus. He lived with love and compassion to see other people brought to repentance toward Jesus Christ. He preached repentance (turning from our sins) pointing others to the Savior that he knew that he needed also.

Do you know that God is preparing your heart too, just like he was preparing John the Baptist's heart? John paved the way for Jesus.

Hold up paper, pens, crayons, or markers

Today, we're going to write a note or draw a picture for someone that we can tell about Jesus. Just like John the Baptist prepared people for Jesus, we can prepare people's hearts for Jesus too by sharing with people that they need a Savior. Think about someone in your life that you want to share the good news of the Savior with. Plan to give this note or drawing to someone that needs Jesus just like you need Jesus.

DIRECTIONS: Pass out paper, markers, crayons, pens to each kid. Encourage kids to write a note or draw a picture explaining that Jesus is the Savior of the world, and we need to turn (repent) from our sin.

SAY: John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. Don't forget to take your note or drawing home so you can give it to the person you wrote it to and tell them about Jesus! Let's take a moment and thank God for preparing our hearts for Jesus.

Close time in prayer.

****After Worship Response, transition the power point to the Offering slides.****

OFFERING

Host

Before closing large group, take a moment to explain that every week, we provide an opportunity for our Woodmen Kids to participate in tithing. We believe God is our provider, and it is our privilege to give back to God what He has so graciously given us. Then, remind kids that if anyone brought an offering, now is the time to come forward to donate.

Ask a child to come up and pray for the offering.

****After Offering, transition the power point to the “Announcement” slide. The host will discuss any current announcements.****

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SPECIAL MISSIONS FOCUS – M4 Europe

Host

Take this opportunity to cover any announcements and special missions focus for the kids, such as upcoming events or reminders, like bringing food donations for Feeding Families. Use the slides provided in the PowerPoint to display important announcements.

SAY: Who here likes to get your hands dirty? **Let kids respond.** Would you say you like to get your hands dirty exploring in nature? Maybe you like playing with insects? Or digging in sand or dirt? **Pause** Do you know that sometimes getting your hands dirty is a part of helping things to grow? Think of a plant. A plant needs soil to grow.

SAY: Just as God uses soil to help plants grow, He also uses His people to grow His church. God wants each of us to share the good news of His son Jesus with others. One way God is growing His church is through M4 Europe. M4 Europe is an organization that started in 2007 with the goal of training people to help plant, or start, churches all across Europe. There is a very big need for churches to be planted in Europe. In fact, less than 3% of Europeans have a relationship with Jesus! Did you know that through M4 Europe, more than 400 churches have been planted? Wow! That’s a lot! God is working through M4 to impact the people of Europe in amazing ways!

Let’s take a moment to pray:

- That young people will want to plant more churches
- For M4 leaders as they recruit and train church planters
- For more churches to be planted in Europe
- That people in Europe will hear about the hope of Jesus and start a relationship with him

****After Announcements, transition the power point to the “Blessing” slide. The host will lead the class in receiving the blessing for the day.****

BLESSING

Host

Read the verse and blessing over the kids before closing Large Group. Encourage the kids to stand and open their hands to receive the blessing as a truth that they can take with them this week and hide in their hearts.

May you know that God prepares your heart. May you know that God wants you to turn from your sin and follow Him.

SMALL GROUP

Classroom Teachers

(10 minutes)

Younger Kids:

If you feel like the kids are still listening and participating well, jump into the questions below. If kids need a break first, that's ok! Have them do some jumps or dances to get out some energy before doing the questions.

1. **What did you learn about God from our story today?** (God Prepares Our Heart.)

2. **Read/ Recap today's story: Matthew 3:11-17**
 - When John was saying someone greater than He is coming and He will be the one to baptize with the Holy spirit, who was John talking about?** (V.11)? (Jesus.)

 - Who came from Galilee and wanted to be baptized by John** (V.13)? (Jesus.)

 - What came down after Jesus was baptized** (V.16)? (The Spirit of God.)

3. **As a group reread verse 11. John was a man of God; John knew that there was someone who was greater than him. He knew that there was a savior, and His name is Jesus. When John was talking about Jesus' baptizing with the Holy Spirit he was talking about how when we accept Jesus into our hearts the Holy Spirit will be with us. What does this mean? How do you live your life knowing that God prepares our Hearts?** Spend a couple of minutes discussing as a group. This is time to be vulnerable and tell your students how you live your life with this knowledge.

Close small group in prayer. *Take a few minutes to share prayer requests as a group. This is a great time to write requests down on the prayer tags for leaders to take home!*

RESPOND ACTIVITY

Classroom Teacher

(10 minutes)

DISCUSS:

If you have extra time at the end of your lesson and small group time, the kids can participate in this activity.

PLAY: Old Testament Books of the Bible Card Race

Supplies: 2 bags of Old Testament books of the Bible cards and mat

Directions: split the class into two teams. Have an LIT or helper sit in each group. Give each helper a bag with Old Testament matching cards and a number mat. Have the helper flip over the cards face down and shuffle them around. Allow the children to flip over one card at a time and match them to the corresponding number on the chart. The LIT or helper can then read the cards in order. The first team to finish wins.

SAY: God prepares our hearts! Did you know that God gave us something wonderful that we can use to learn more about Him and to grow closer to Him? Do you know what it is? **Let kids respond.** The Bible! That's right! He can prepare our hearts and lead us through His word, The Big God Story, The Bible! Let's see if we can have a race and find all the Old Testament books of the Bible.

CHECK-OUT

Classroom Teacher

(end of service)

As parents arrive for check-out, the kids can continue participating in the Respond Activities or the classroom games and toys.