



God Prepares Our Heart

Matthew 3

God Statement: God is With Us

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

CHECK-IN

(until 15 minutes after the start of each service)

Purpose: To build relationships with families and help parents feel comfortable leaving their child.

As parents check-in their child at your classroom, try to welcome them by name to help them feel secure in leaving their child in your care. Once you’ve completed each of the check-in procedures, welcome the child into your classroom and encourage him/her to play with the classroom toys and activities. If you have LITs in your classroom, this is a great time for them to help engage with the kids while you continue checking in the kids.

If a child brings money for offering, allow them to put the money in the class offering bank. Thank them for sharing with others.

If a child is upset or reluctant to enter the room, encourage him or her by offering toys, books or other fun items. If a child is still upset, let the parents know that we will text them if their child continues to be upset. Then, offer to carry the child into the classroom and try to calm the child with toys or other activities.

Use the “Connect” reminder (listed below) to help kids feel comfortable and safe in your class!

CONNECT WITH KIDS

Purpose: Building relationships & prioritizing safety for our youngest children.

Our goal, first and foremost, when serving babies and young toddlers is to prioritize building trusting relationships and the feeling of safety. We build trust with our littlest kids by meeting needs and helping them learn that church is a secure place where they are loved, known and safe.

The 4 Ss are a simple way to keep our hearts and minds focused on this:

When a child feels...*(most of the time)*

SAFE: physically and emotionally

SEEN: known and understood

SOOTHED: calmed and supported

They can become **SECURE.**

EXPLORE ACTIVITY

(10 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:

In today's lesson, we are going to learn about how God Prepares our Heart then we can listen to Him and follow Him.

SAY: God sent John to prepare the people for Jesus coming. John baptized people to get rid of their sin to prepare them to hear from Jesus. God washed their sins away. Let's wash some toys, like God washed the people's sins away!

PLAY: Water Play

Supplies: 1 bowl of soapy water, some small toys from the classroom, scrub brush or small cloth, towel

Directions:

- Fill the bowl with water and put some soap in it.
- Set the bowl of soapy water on a towel.
- Encourage the kids to keep the water in the bowl and not splash. If they continue to splash or spill, say "OK, we're done with the water for now."
- Let a few kids at a time wash the toys.

SAY: "We're going to hear a story today about Jesus' cousin. Do you have a cousin? Jesus' cousin's name was John. John helped the people get ready for Jesus to talk to them."

CLEAN UP

(5 minutes)

Have the children begin cleaning up as you transition into Large Group time. All the toys should be put away by the end of clean up time.

Try singing: “Clean up, clean up, everybody do your share. Clean up, clean up, everybody everywhere.”

LARGE GROUP

(15 minutes)

After clean up, have your class gather around the story time rug/blanket/squares and Hamilton’s house for Large Group time.

WELCOME & PRAYER

Tell the kids you are so excited to have them joining you this morning and give them a brief explanation of Large Group and the expectations of them during this time. After going over the expectations, pray to open large group time.

Offering – ask: Did anyone bring money for an offering today? This money is used to help other people. You may put your money in the class offering bank.

WORSHIP

Purpose: Engage our youngest children through the power of music!

Use the Little Kids music videos on Plex to sing some simple songs with your class. To access these videos, go to **Plex > Videos > EC > 2s/3s folder**. Choose some songs to sing.

- Thank you Lord
- Jesus Loves Me

READ THE BIBLE STORY

Purpose: Engage our youngest children in a meaningful way by teaching God’s word!

This week, read about a Bible story from Matthew 3.

Read the Bible story below. Try to engage the child(ren) as you share the story by showing pictures and repeating key words and phrases. It’s ok if you don’t read every word of the story! Kids have very short attention spans (1 minute for each year of age) so try to keep your interactions short and don’t get discouraged if a child loses focus!

THIS WEEK'S LESSON: The Story of John the Baptist

(Summarized from Matthew 3)

BIBLE STORY:

Bring Hamilton (the hedgehog puppet) out and allow the kids to interact with him before you begin the story (they can feel his soft fur, give him high fives, give him a hug, etc.). Use Hamilton to help keep the kids engaged while you share the story (he can do the hand motions, ask the kids questions, etc.).

Invite Hamilton to come out and see the class. Hamilton is holding soap (put a small squirt of soap on a paper towel).

SAY: Hi Hamilton, what do you have there? **Hamilton shows us.** Oh, soap! What does soap do Hamilton? **Hamilton whispers in your ear.** Yes, soap keeps us nice and clean, just like when we made the toys nice and clean with soap and water! Today, we'll hear a story about Jesus and how He keeps us clean...without soap! Let's listen to this true Bible story. **Hamilton nods.**

Share the story of John the Baptist using the story cards in your folder.

SAY:

- John the Baptist's job was to talk about Jesus.
- John told the people they should be baptized.
- The people went into a river and John dipped them into the water.
- Getting dipped into the water was a way to show everyone that the people wanted to stop sinning and do the right things.
- When we sin, we're doing the wrong thing.
- It's like we're going the wrong way.
- When you do the wrong thing, stop, walk away, then do the right thing.
 - Can you say that with me? Stop (**hold up your hands**), walk away (**demonstrate walking away with your fingers**), and do the right thing (**point to your mouth and smile big**).
 - Let's do that again! (**repeat the saying and the motions**)
- Getting baptized in the water was a way to show that the people's sins were washed away by Jesus!
 - Hamilton, remember the soap you brought today? **Hamilton nods.** Jesus died on the cross to wash away our sins, just like soap washes away dirt. But did Jesus stay dead, Hamilton? **Hamilton shakes his head no.** No! He rose from the dead and washed away our sins!
- God got the people ready for Jesus to come by showing the people how their sins would be washed away.
- God prepared the people for Jesus using John the Baptist.
- God prepares our hearts, too.
- He gets us ready for the things that will happen to us in our lives.

- He helps us stop sinning (**hold up hands**), walk away (**demonstrate walking away with your fingers**), and do the right thing (**point to your mouth and smile big**).
- God is good at taking care of us.
- God Prepares Our Hearts!

SAY IT OUT LOUD! (30 seconds)

This is the opportunity to remind the children of the God Statement for the day. Even if they struggle to pay attention during the lesson, this part is important to do every week.

SAY: Today our God statement is God Prepares Our Hearts. We are going to say our God statement in fun ways to help us remember it.

- Have the kids say it in a fun voice.
- Have them say it in a whisper.
- Have them say it in a loud voice.

WORSHIP RESPONSE (2 minutes)

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.

SAY: In our Bible story today, we learned that John the Baptist got the people ready for Jesus.

The people were sinning.

What are some sins that kids do? (**wait for responses**)

Yes, maybe kids don't listen to mommy and daddy, or take things that don't belong to them.

But guess what?

Jesus washes our sins away, without any soap!

We can tell God we're sorry.

Let's say that. "I am sorry, God."

God forgives us because Jesus washes our sins away.

BLESSING (1 minute)

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.

SAY: Friends, may you always remember that God takes good care of you and prepares your heart for the rest of your life.

RESPOND ACTIVITY

(10 minutes)

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

PLAY: Walking in the Right Direction

Supplies: none

Directions:

- Let's make a line. Would you follow me?
- *Start walking, encouraging everyone to follow. Very good.*
- OK, we're walking the wrong way.
- Stop! Let's turn the other way.
- *Start walking the opposite way, encouraging everyone to follow.*

SAY: When we sin, we're doing the wrong thing. It's like we're going in the wrong direction. When you do the wrong thing, stop, walk away, then do the right thing.

Repeat as desired.

PLAY!

Purpose: Engage our youngest children by playing games and having fun!

While your class can participate in free play for most of the remaining classroom time, please try to lead at least one structured activity with your class. This is a great opportunity to introduce kids to classroom games and encourage interaction and participation with others.

Suggestions of activities:

- Hide an object and let kids find it
- Name and count parts of the body
- Discuss colors & numbers
- Turn on music and play freeze dance
- Have kids follow simple instructions (hop, sit down, clap, etc.)
- Read a board book
- Build a tower and let kids knock it down
- Play with a ball

CHECK-OUT

(end of service)

As parents arrive for check-out, the kids can continue participating in free play. Follow the check-out procedures for your classroom, making sure to send all of the child's belongings (diaper bag, bottle/sippy cup, pacifier, blanket, etc.) with the parent.

Give the parent encouragement about how the child did in your class and say "Bye (child's name)!"