

# John The Baptist

Luke 3:1-22

## MEMORY VERSE

LUKE 3:3

“And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,”

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

As many 6" wide poster board (or construction paper) circles prepared before class, poster board (or construction paper) arrows, and brads as the number of children in your class.

A large piece of butcher paper with a "fruitless" tree drawn on it, tape, and nine fruit-shaped pieces of paper with the words "love," "joy," "peace," "longsuffering," "kindness," "goodness," "faithfulness," "gentleness," and "self-control" written on them.

## ATTENTION GRABBER!

### "180 Degree Turn-around"

Using poster board, prepare as many 6" wide circles and 3" long arrows as the number of children in your class.

Draw a horizontal line through the center of the circle. Have the children mark "God's Will" at the top of the circle and "My Will" at the bottom.

Attach the arrow to the center of the circle with a brad. Have each child put their name on the back of their "dial" and set them aside for use later in the class.

## LESSON TIME!

Remember when we learned from our Bible that God gave a baby to Zacharias and Elizabeth? Do you remember the baby's name? His name was John. He had a very special purpose given to him by God. John was to be the forerunner or herald for Jesus. What does a forerunner do? John was going before Jesus to announce His coming and prepare the way ahead of time.

John grew up into a man. He was the last of the prophets and he came with a special message. His message was, "Repent!" Who knows what "repent" means? When the Bible uses the word "repent" it means that we are to see our sin the same way God sees it, have sorrow for our sin, and then turn away from our sin. Sin is rebellion against God; it is choosing my way over God's way, missing the mark, doing wrong instead of right. Romans 3:23 tells us that we are all sinners.

Let's take a look at the ministry of repentance that this final prophet spoke about just before Jesus began His public ministry.

### LUKE 3:1-2

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,

While Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

These verses tell us more than just a list of hard-to-pronounce names. God is revealing something important to us. All of these rulers thought they were masters of their world, but they were really rebellious, immoral characters that were of little use to God's

kingdom. The Bible tells us that God passes all of these "important" men by and that "the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias..." The word of God passed the emperor, the governor, the tetrarchs, and the priests and came instead to a simple man named John in the wilderness.

God's Word did not go to Rome or even Jerusalem. It came to the wilderness. What is a "wilderness"? The "wilderness" symbolized the world's spiritual and moral condition at that time. The world was spiritually dry and needed God's Word to refresh them. The people and leaders of that day needed to turn from their own ways to God's way. They needed to repent. The fact that God sent His word to John in the wilderness shows that He cared for even these rebellious people. He was bringing Jesus on the scene to save man from his sin and rebellion. What a loving and kind thing to do! Romans 2:4 tells us that **God's goodness leads us to repentance**. He's so good to me in spite of my sin that I want to repent!

### LUKE 3:3-6

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,

as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

We see that this man, John, who had probably been in the desert for about ten years, took the message of God and left the

wilderness to proclaim God's word. He knew that **God's goodness leads us to repentance.**

John was waking the people up to the fact that they were sinners. His ministry was to get the people to see their sin and then repent so they would be ready to receive the salvation of Jesus Christ.

## "Sleeping" Game

Pick one child in the class to "wake-up" the other children.

Have the rest of the class pretend to be asleep, either in their chairs or on the ground. Don't discourage those children that are harder to "wake-up"; it adds to the object lesson.

Explain to the class that this was John the Baptist's ministry. God sent him to wake the people up spiritually; some people were more willing to be awakened than others.

### LUKE 3:7-9

Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

When John looked out at the crowd, he saw some of the religious leaders, called Sadducees and Pharisees. These men felt that they didn't need to repent, so John spoke very strongly to them. He called them the children of snakes. He knew that these men would

try to stop others from repenting and preparing their hearts for Jesus.

John knew that God loved even these hard-hearted men. Until they repented they could not have true fellowship with God. It was not enough for the religious leaders to say they repented; they had to mean it in their hearts. If they truly repented, their lives would bear good fruit. We, also, need to make sure we are repenting in our heart--only then can we truly follow Jesus and bear good fruit. These men thought they were in fellowship with God because they were related to Abraham. John told them that God doesn't accept people because of who they are related to; He accepts those who have repented and turned to Jesus.

## **The Fruit of the Spirit**

Have "Fruit" in the form of paper cut in fruit shapes with the words "love," "joy," "peace," "longsuffering," "kindness," "goodness," "faithfulness," "gentleness," and "self-control" written on them.

Read Galatians 5:22-23 to the class:

### **GALATIANS 5:22-23**

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

**gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.**

Pick children to come up and glue the "fruit" on to a "fruitless" tree drawn on a large piece of butcher paper. Explain that this is the "fruit" God produces in our lives. When we abide in Him it remains and shows others that we belong to Him.

LUKE 3:10-14

So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?"

He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."

Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you."

Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."

The other people listening to John asked him, "What shall we do then?" He gave all of them the same answer. He told them that no matter what they were doing, they needed to be doing it with unselfish love. John was telling them to give to others. He was telling them Jesus' message of love.

In other words, when we truly repent and have a relationship with Jesus there will be certain things evident in our lives. We will become different people than we were before. This fruit is the evidence of our repentance. We can't say that we have repented and turned away from sin unless we have really stopped doing that sin and begin doing what the Lord would have us to do.

## The "Sharing" Game

When you say go, have the children in the class trade something that belongs to them with someone else in the class. The items can be shoes, necklaces, hair barrettes, or even Bibles. Explain that the items will all be returned at the end of the game. This activity may get kind of crazy so be prepared to use your "attention getting" signal.

Explain to the class that Jesus wants us to share with others in His body so He can meet all of our needs. Ask some of the children what they shared, and who they shared it with.

### LUKE 3:15-18

Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not,

John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

"His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

And with many other exhortations he preached to the people.

When people heard John talk, they started to think that he might be the Messiah. John very strongly set them straight. He stated very clearly that he was just the forerunner. He let them know that he had a message from God about repentance. He also let them know that he only baptized with water, which is a symbol of a



changed mind. He told them that the Christ was coming and He would baptize with fire, meaning that Jesus would not just bring a change of mind, but a change of nature.

John's baptism still left people helpless and hopeless even though their mind had changed about sin. Jesus would come and baptize with the Holy Spirit, which would produce a change in our natures. We need to have a change of mind before we are ready to have the Holy Spirit change our nature. God loves us; **God's goodness leads us to repentance.**

## The "Metamorphosis" Game

Tell the children about the life cycle of a butterfly. Explain that a butterfly starts out as a tiny egg that hatches a caterpillar. The caterpillar eventually spins a cocoon and comes out a beautiful butterfly.

Have one or two children act out the cycle of metamorphosis. They could start out curled up in a ball like a little egg and then "hatch." They should "crawl" around on the ground without the use of their arms like a caterpillar. After a little while have them lie still like a mummy and then come out of their "cocoons" like a butterfly. They can pretend to fly around the room and gently "land" on some of the other children.

Explain that Jesus transforms us completely. He makes us a new creature, just like the caterpillar turns into a butterfly. He doesn't just change our mind He changes our nature! Only God can do that!

### LUKE 3:19-20

**But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,**

also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.

Herod put John in prison because John was bold enough and loving enough to tell Herod the truth about his sins. Herod didn't want to be told to repent. He put John away so he didn't have to listen to him anymore. When God's Holy Spirit lovingly points out our sin and calls us to repentance, do we listen and choose to change our mind and ask God for His cleansing and forgiveness? Or do we want to do what Herod did and shut out the voice of the Lord from our ears? Remember God loves you enough to tell you the truth about sin and **God's goodness leads us to repentance.**

**LUKE 3:21-22**

When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened.

And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

Here Jesus comes to be baptized. It was His public commitment to His Messianic office. Luke lets us know that Jesus, after He was baptized, was praying. He was showing His dependence, His adoration, His worship, His submission to God the Father.

The Holy Spirit in all of His holiness came down from Heaven upon the Lord Jesus. In the Bible the dove is a symbol of harmlessness and sacrifice. God, who could have stayed far away from us and our sin came down upon Jesus at His baptism to show that Jesus was His provision to draw us back close to Him. He loves us; **God's goodness leads us to repentance.**

God spoke at Jesus' baptism. There was Jesus, the perfect man, praying. The heavens opened, the Spirit descended upon Him, and God's voice spoke, literally saying, "You are My Son, the Beloved. In You I have found delight." Jesus was perfect. Everything in His life, His thoughts, His speech, His deeds, His walk had filled God's heart with satisfaction.

The next three and a half years of His life would also bring God delight as Jesus went on to complete God's purpose. In Jesus Christ we can be reborn and have a new nature. We can choose today to receive His loving call to repent and to accept Him as our Savior. If you haven't done that yet, you can do it right now because **God's goodness leads us to repentance.**

## "180 Degree Turn-around"

Refer the children to their "dials."

Explain that when we repent our hearts do a 180 degree turn-around. We turn away from our sin and our way to God's way, His will and His desire for our lives.

## IDEAS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Use the theme God is good. Think of different examples of how God is good to us. For example, God gives us our families, our homes, our clothes and our food. He also gave us His Son, Jesus. Bring some examples to show the class the different ways that God is good to us. You can allow the children to make block houses, bring a couple of items of clothing to show them, or allow the children to take turns playing dress up. You could also bring a couple of food items to demonstrate how that the Lord provides food.

Play a simple game of follow the leader to show that because God is good to us, we want to follow Him.

## **PRAYER**

Lead the children in a prayer of salvation, allowing those who have never asked Him into their lives to come in. Be sure to include the steps of repentance, recognizing sin, asking the Lord to forgive, and turning from the ways of self to the ways of God.