

# MY BELOVED SON

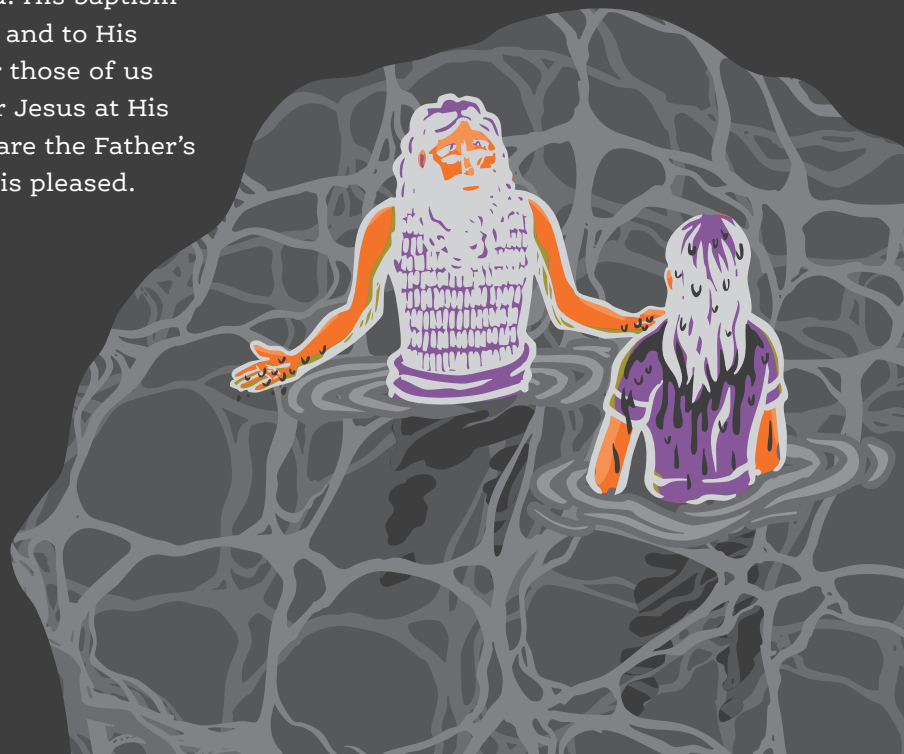
## MAIN POINT.

When we're devoted to following Jesus, we will live in obedience to God's Word.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus completely obeyed God and identified with sinful humans by being baptized. His baptism points to His death on the cross and to His resurrection from the grave. For those of us in Christ, the words spoken over Jesus at His baptism are also true of us: We are the Father's beloved children with whom He is pleased.



# **O**BEDIENCE **AND IDENTITY**

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Matthew 3:13-17; John 1:29-34

## **JESUS'S OBEDIENCE REVEALED HIS IDENTITY**

### **MATTHEW 3:13-17**

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to stop him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?" 15 Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John allowed him to be baptized. 16 When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

## **OUR OBEDIENCE REVEALS OUR IDENTITY**

### **JOHN 1:29-34**

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I told you about: 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.' 31 I didn't know him, but I came baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. 33 I didn't know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

When we're devoted to following Jesus, we will live in obedience to God's Word.

Leaders: Your life reveals who or what you're devoted to; may the sum of it point to Jesus only.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### JESUS'S OBEDIENCE REVEALED HIS IDENTITY

#### MATTHEW 3:14-15

"Jesus's baptism was unique. It was not a 'baptism of repentance' (as John's was) nor was it a 'Christian baptism' (as ours is today). But it was an identifying step of obedience at the beginning of Jesus's public ministry. Jesus would not have been fully obedient if he had bypassed this step that seemed to John to be unnecessary for the Holy One (3:14)."<sup>6</sup>

#### MATTHEW 3:13-17

"Jesus's baptism is an identification with sinners. Jesus came, according to Isaiah 53:12, to be 'counted among the rebels,' and ultimately this has to do with their sin, though Jesus Himself had no sin (Heb. 4:15). We identify with Jesus when we are baptized, being united to Him in His life, death, and resurrection, so it makes sense that baptism is in a very real sense His identification with us. He who had no sin took His place among those who had no righteousness. This is the essence of what Jesus came to do (2 Cor. 5:21). . . . Jesus also sets an example for us. His baptism is an example for saints. Jesus models obedience for His followers by being baptized, which is an obedience that He will eventually command His followers to submit to (Matt. 28:20). . . . It is also a picture of salvation. Baptism pictures death and resurrection to new life, such that here at the beginning of Jesus's ministry, we get a picture of the climax of this ministry. That is, His immersion portrays His future death and resurrection. And now, every person who trusts in Christ for salvation is baptized, immersed in water, as a picture of our dying to sin and to ourselves and rising to new life in Christ."<sup>7</sup>

### OUR OBEDIENCE REVEALS OUR IDENTITY

#### JOHN 1:29

"In Revelation 5 we briefly glimpse the worship of Jesus in heaven, and we hear that the 'Lion from the tribe of Judah . . . has conquered' (v. 5). But then our eyes look up and we see not a Lion but a Lamb, standing yet looking as if he had been slaughtered. Bowing all around him are people singing, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered' (v. 12). Jesus conquered sin, death, and hell by sacrificing himself as our substitute. He was a Lamb offered by God for our sin."<sup>8</sup>

## CONTEXT

Baptism existed before the New Testament. Jewish people had taken part in ceremonial water cleansing for a long time to honor God’s commands concerning purity. Sometime during the second century BC (Second Temple period), Jews developed a stepped bath, called a “mikveh.” Archaeologists discovered mikvehs in private homes and in public spaces, like the pools of Siloam and Bethesda, to accommodate large crowds. These pools often attracted the sick, the “unclean” or “blemished,” providing a backdrop for some of Jesus’s healings. Before entering the temple, praying, or other sacred acts, Jews washed themselves in mikvehs, symbolically representing repentance and purification. When John the Baptist called everyone to repent and be baptized, he did so within this context. But Jesus’s baptism sent a different message: The Son of God would cleanse us of sin once and for all and baptize us in a new way, through the Holy Spirit. His sacrifice altered water cleansing forever; rather than continually taking part in it to be ritually clean, we are baptized once, as a symbol of Jesus’s blood continually purifying us, making us clean for good, and as a declaration of obedience to the Father.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### Baptism

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony of faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Baptism is a church ordinance and comes before the privileges of church membership and taking part in the Lord’s Supper.

### LEADERS’ PRAYER

**GOD, THANK YOU FOR SENDING YOUR SON, WHO OBEDIENTLY IDENTIFIED WITH US IN EVERY WAY TO REDEEM US FROM SIN. WE CHOOSE TO LIVE IN OBEDIENCE TO YOUR WORD, AS AN OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF OUR COMMITMENT AND DEVOTION TO YOU.**



## KICK STARTER

### ♥ HEART CHECK

Let's check in on how you're doing spiritually. Last week, we learned that worldly living shouldn't be "normal" for believers, who are called to live as citizens of heaven. How have you made efforts to look at things with this perspective? What area of your life is a struggle when it comes to this mindset?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## PLAYING BY THE RULES

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE A CERTAIN RULE DIDN'T APPLY TO YOU?**
- **HOW DO YOU RESPOND IN THOSE TIMES? DO YOU OBEY OR REBEL?**
- **CAN YOU THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOUR WHOLE CLASS, GROUP, OR TEAM WAS PUNISHED BECAUSE OF ONLY ONE PERSON'S ACTIONS? WAS THAT FAIR? EXPLAIN.**

Sometimes we get in a situation where a rule may not apply to us, but we're expected to follow it anyway. Though Jesus is fully God, He was fully man. He lived in perfect obedience, and today, we'll learn that He was baptized, not because He had sinned and needed to repent but because He was our model for obeying the Father and identified Himself with us to save us.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

What's the big deal with baptism? Can we skip that step? First, baptism doesn't save us from sin or make us clean. When we confess Jesus as Lord (confessing and turning from sin) and believe He was raised from death, we are saved (Rom. 10:9). But Jesus commanded us to follow His example in baptism (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus, who had not sinned, was baptized to show us the way of obedience. Baptism is a declaration of our salvation: Our old self is buried and we're new creations, able to walk in a totally new way because of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:3-5). Many times, people resist baptism because they're fearful of being in front of others or because they don't feel it's necessary. But Jesus commanded it, so we're called to obey. We must ask ourselves how we can inwardly commit our heart yet outwardly refuse to obey Him in this matter—in any matter. Jesus didn't command us to do anything that He didn't do too. He showed us how. We can obediently follow Him and trust His example.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

When we're devoted to following Jesus, we will live in obedience to God's Word.

### JESUS'S OBEDIENCE REVEALED HIS IDENTITY

READ MATTHEW 3:13-17

#### HOW IMPORTANT IS FAIRNESS TO YOU? HOW HAVE YOU SEEN LIFE BE UNFAIR?

Most of us value fairness. Even small children recognize unfair situations. But some of us see unfairness only when it applies to ourselves. We cry out for justice only when we're treated unjustly. The difficult truth is that what's actually "fair" for all of us is punishment. Why? Because the punishment for sin is death, and we've all sinned. What's fair is for all of us to pay the debt we owe. But Jesus stepped in our place to suffer and die—unfairly. So, is life fair? Not at all, and praise God! **Because of Jesus, we don't get what's fair or what we deserve; we get forgiveness and life.**



#### JESUS WAS SINLESS, SO WHY DID HE INSIST ON BEING BAPTIZED?

Leaders: Share context on mikveh to help students understand John's confusion and the context of these baptisms. John was understandably confused about Jesus asking for baptism. The purpose of mikveh was repentance and symbolic cleansing, but Jesus was sinless. **By taking part in baptism, Jesus transformed its meaning! Baptism was His outward declaration of obedience to the Father—of already being clean and already belonging to God.** To redeem us, Jesus identified with us. He began His ministry with this act of obedience—an act He later commanded for all believers, displaying the same outward declaration of being clean and belonging to God.



#### WHEN HAVE YOU NEEDED SOMEONE TO BACK YOU UP OR SUPPORT YOU? WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT THAT GOD CONFIRMED JESUS'S IDENTITY AT HIS BAPTISM?

Confirmation provides proof and assurance. For example, if you want people to believe you're telling the truth, having others confirm your story makes it more believable. Jesus's baptism was monumental for several reasons. Jesus, a seemingly unimportant man from the small town of Galilee, was beginning His public ministry. But we know now what many people didn't know then: Jesus was so much more than a good teacher from Galilee. Jesus is the eternal Son of God. At the start of Jesus's ministry, God opened the heavens and verbally affirmed Jesus's obedience, expressing pride for His Son and echoing prophecy (Isa. 42:1). Every Person of the Trinity was present: God the Father observed God the Son's obedience, while God the Holy Spirit rested on the Son like a dove! **We get a beautiful glimpse of the Father's loving relationship with His Son as He applauded Jesus's obedience—and not just obedience in this moment but for Jesus's entire life leading up to this moment. At Jesus's baptism, God confirmed His Son's identity as if saying, "This is my Son, the chosen One; He is who He claims to be! And He makes me proud."**

## OUR OBEDIENCE REVEALS OUR IDENTITY

READ JOHN 1:29-34

### WHAT CAUSES US TO ACT PRIDEFULLY OR ARROGANTLY? HOW DO YOU KEEP THIS IN CHECK?

John was Jesus's cousin. People were drawn to him out of curiosity about his bold message and his lifestyle. John could've hoarded the praise and attention and leaned into arrogance. The reality is that sometimes we do really great things. We have really great ideas, talents, and achievements. Keeping our pride in check isn't easy. We need the Holy Spirit to convict us of pride and remind us of who we are without Jesus. Without His help, we drift into glorifying ourselves and believing we're self-sufficient, but anything good in us comes from the Lord (James 1:17). **If God gives you a platform or any type of success, point all praise and curiosity and attention back to Jesus. He is the greater One, worthy of all praise.**



### HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT JOHN BELIEVED ABOUT JESUS? HOW WILL PEOPLE KNOW WHAT WE BELIEVE?

John boldly stated who he knew Jesus to be—the Son of God, not simply a good teacher or role model. He didn't soften his words or speak vaguely so that everyone would agree with him. John knew Jesus was the Lamb, who would do what thousands on thousands of sacrificial lambs never did: heal our sin and offer permanent forgiveness. John's words testified about Jesus, but his actions confirmed his beliefs. He pointed to Jesus as the greater One. **Our words and actions reveal if we belong to Jesus. If we claim to follow Him, then we can't be neutral concerning His identity; we can't speak vaguely; we can't believe from a safe distance.**



### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE DEVOTED? WHAT ARE THINGS PEOPLE CAN TELL YOU'RE DEVOTED TO RIGHT NOW?

We're all devoted to something or to someone, and people can tell what it is. How? The object of our devotion becomes clear in the way we talk, how we act, the places we go or don't go, and how we spend our time. Can people tell that your heart is devoted to Jesus above all else? Would people say that you're more devoted to school, sports, music, money, clothes, popularity, friends, a boyfriend or girlfriend? Here's the truth: So many of these things aren't bad or sinful, but they become idols if we're devoted to them instead of God. **When we're wholly devoted to God, He uses the things we love and our talents as instruments to reach others! Our devotion to God opens the door for everything else to have greater purpose.**

## WRAP-UP



### HOW COULD YOUR LIFESTYLE CONFUSE PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR BELIEF IN JESUS? WHY DOES YOUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD MATTER?

If our lifestyle causes confusion about Jesus, then we must examine why.

**People won't believe our message if our lifestyle contradicts it; they won't believe Jesus can change them if we don't live changed.** Like John,

we must clearly vocalize who Jesus is but without being unloving or rude; we don't reflect Jesus when we berate people while sharing our beliefs. But God calls us to bold faith, and this includes speaking out when He leads us to do so. We can make our belief in Jesus clear by loving people, in how we talk to and about others, by making godly choices instead of sinful ones.

Jesus walked in perfect obedience and showed us how to live. While we won't be perfect, we can follow Jesus's lead and obey God's Word, even when others disagree. Our lifestyle must point people to Jesus, not away from Him. If the way we live confuses people, then we must determine where we're disobeying God's Word. **Our obedience displays the power of the gospel to a lost world and gives people hope that God can save and change them too.**