

# JOHN'S MINISTRY BEGAN

Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1



The word of God came to a man named John who lived in the wilderness. John wore a camel-hair garment and ate locusts and wild honey. He preached a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins in the area around the Jordan River.

John proclaimed, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!” People came from all over Judea to hear what John had to say and to be baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

The prophet Isaiah had spoken about John many years before. Isaiah said:

“A voice cries out in the wilderness:

Prepare the way for the Lord;  
make his paths straight!”

Some of the leaders of the Jewish people called Pharisees and Sadducees came to see what John was saying and doing. When John saw them, he said, “Who warned you to escape God’s anger? Your lives don’t show you’ve turned away from your sin. You can’t just say ‘Abraham is our father.’ I tell you that God can even make stones into children of Abraham.”

Some people thought John might be the promised Messiah who had come to save God’s people. But John knew that he was

God’s messenger who was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah.

John said, “I baptize you with water as a sign that you want to turn away from your sin. But the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I am. I’m not even worthy to untie his sandal straps. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

*Christ Connection:* John prepared the way for Jesus by calling people to repent of their sins. If we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus, we will be saved.



## 1 WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

- **Have you ever been camping? Where did you camp and for how long? Did you like it?**
- **What's your favorite thing to do outside?**

## 2 SESSION STARTER

### OPTION 1: BUG ALERT



Give each kid a napkin and a plate with two pretzel sticks, a little bit of honey, and a small handful of chocolate chips. Instruct them to roll the pretzels in the honey and then place their chocolate chips on top of the pretzel sticks.

**SAY** “ Our snack looks a little like ants climbing on a stick, but these are yummy to eat. In our lesson today we will read about a man who ate locusts and honey. ”

### OPTION 2: PREPARE THE WAY



Lead kids to stand in a line on one side of the room. Give each kid a piece of construction paper and instruct them to put it on the ground and stand on it. Give the last kid in line a second piece of construction paper. Explain that the kids need to make it to the other side of the room, but each step they take must be onto another piece of construction paper. Show the kids how they can pass the extra piece of paper down the line and have the first kid in line place it on the ground ahead of them and then take a step, causing a chain reaction and allowing each kid to then step ahead to the next piece of construction paper. Continue until the last kid has made it across the room.

**SAY** “ In this game, you had to prepare the way for the kids behind you to move across the room. Today we are learning about John the Baptist. **JOHN PREPARED THE WAY FOR JESUS.** John brought the same message as Jesus: repent and believe. ”



## 1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about when John's ministry began. Today we will learn that **JOHN PREPARED THE WAY FOR JESUS**. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

### Read from Matthew 3.

#### •What does this story teach us about God?

This story shows us that God wants a loving relationship with us. **JOHN PREPARED THE WAY FOR JESUS** by inviting people to repent of their sins and believe. God is holy and cannot be around sin, but He loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and rise again so that we can be in right relationship with God.

#### •What was John's role?

During John's ministry people often thought that he was the long-awaited Messiah, but John made it clear that he wasn't the Messiah. John said he wasn't even worthy to untie the Messiah's sandal straps. John's purpose was to prepare the groundwork for the Messiah, Jesus. If we look all the way back to the beginning of John's life, we see that even before he was born, the Holy Spirit was on him. Even in his mother's womb, John knew when the Lord was near, and we see that as John grew into an adult, he still recognized that the kingdom of God was near and that people needed to prepare themselves for Jesus' coming.

Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

## 2 MISSIONS MOMENT

Explain that Kansas City, Missouri, is the biggest city closest to the geographic center of the contiguous United States. It's an area famous for football, baseball, barbecue, and big businesses. But it's also a place where many people need to know about Jesus.

Kansas City, Missouri, is famously known as the City of Fountains, with more than 200 fountains scattered in parks and courtyards and on boulevards throughout the city. The city's first fountains date back to the late 1800s and provided drinking troughs for animals and safe drinking water for the people living there. Kansas City has also been called the Heart of America and the Paris of the Plains. In Kansas City, only 20 percent of the residents claim to be Christians. Because there is a great range of people in the metro area, new churches must provide different options. The needs range from helping to reenergize older churches to starting new churches in the urban downtown areas. They also need assistance from new church starters, pastors, and existing churches who can help partner with the work in Kansas City.

Pray for more churches to join the people and churches already on mission in Kansas City. Pray for people who live in Kansas City to have many opportunities to hear about Jesus.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

The command to repent and believe has remained the same for all people since Adam and Eve first introduced sin into the world. Before we are saved, our sin separates us from God, but God wants to have a right relationship with us. If we confess that we are sinners, repent of our sins, and believe in His death and resurrection in our place, we will be saved. Have you done these things?





4 PRAY

Lord, we are humbled by Your kindness, that You would come and live among us and die in our place so we could have salvation and life eternal. Thank You for loving us that much! Amen.

THE GOSPEL

GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news—the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

				
<b>GOD RULES</b>	<b>WE SINNED</b>	<b>GOD PROVIDED</b>	<b>JESUS GIVES</b>	<b>WE RESPOND</b>
Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.	Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.	Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.	Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.	Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



## THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

### 1 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

- How do I know if music I want to listen to is honoring God or not?
- What does it mean to repent of your sins?

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to the book of Mark. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Mark 1:5.

Remind preteens that people were coming from all over Judea to the Jordan River to hear John's message. The Jordan River is a significant place in the history of God's people. When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, they came to the edge of the Jordan River, which they needed to cross to enter the Promised Land. God made a way for His people to cross into the Promised Land by parting the waters of the river. This same river is where John was calling people to repent and be baptized in today's story. There wasn't anything special about this water, and the act of baptism doesn't save people, but it is a sign that a person has repented and trusted in Jesus for salvation.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Mark 1:5 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

#### 1. What is repentance? What does the Bible say about repentance?

Biblical repentance is recognizing that our sin is against God, and we need to turn away completely in the opposite direction of our sin and instead, turn to God. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Chronicles 7:14.)

#### 2. Can you repent of a sin but continue sinning?

If we truly repent, then we are turning away from that sin and asking the Lord to keep us from it. We cannot live a holy life with God and a sinful life at the same time. There may be times we struggle with that sin again, and God continues to offer us forgiveness. But the act of repentance calls us to live differently. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 15:7.)

#### 3. What does the Bible say about being in God's family?

When we turn from our sin and call upon the name of Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we become a child of God, a part of His family. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 1:12.)

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### BIG PICTURE QUESTION

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Is Jesus God or a human?  
Jesus is fully God and fully human.

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## THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

### 1 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to John 1:14. Lead them in reading the key passage aloud together. Before class write the key passage on the board. Invite the kids to recite the verse with you a couple of times. Before reading the verse again, erase a few words. Now recite the verse, including the missing words. Continue to erase words until there are no words. Keep reciting the verse each time you erase words.

Explain that our key passage tells us that ‘The Word became flesh.’ This phrase is referring to Jesus as ‘The Word’ that came and lived among us. It also points out that He ‘became flesh,’ showing us that He wasn’t flesh before. Jesus willingly came to earth, took on flesh, and took upon Himself the sin of all people, paying the price for our sin, and conquering death. Through Jesus, we can have life forever with God.

### 2 PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God for His forgiveness and love.

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#### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

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### PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

Pass out paper and pencils and ask the kids to spread out across the room. Inform them that you are going to give them some time to sit alone, think, and pray, asking God to reveal anything in their lives that they may need to repent of. Instruct them to write a prayer of confession to God, seeking His forgiveness. If a child is confessing sin for the first time and seeking a right relationship with the Lord, be present and available for them to talk with you.

Remind kids that repenting of our sins is the first step in responding to what Jesus did for us on the cross. When we repent and turn from our sin, we are turning toward forgiveness and a right relationship with God.