


the
Jesus 
Storybook
Bible
Curriculum

Heaven breaks through

The story of John the Baptist, from Matthew 3; Luke 1, 3; John 1

☉ Please see the curriculum Introduction .pdf for more guidance on praying with your group and on Scripture memory.

☉ The total allotted time per lesson is 45 minutes. This is the minimum amount of time it would take to complete the whole lesson. The time can easily be extended to increase the lesson to as much as 1.5 hours. If you have more than the allocated 45 minutes, please use the extra time to extend the time for activities, to learn the memory verse, and to pray.

☉ The “Notes for Teachers on the Text” section is intended as explanation of the Bible text and advance preparation for you only; it is not expressed in terms or language the children could understand.

The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum
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Recap of the Previous Story

3 min. 

- ☉ Welcome the children and ask them to sit in a circle.
- ☉ Briefly recap the main points of the previous stories: “We have been reading about the birth of Jesus. When Jesus was born, God sent shepherds and wise men to visit him. The Light of the World, the true King, was born in a stable in Bethlehem. We memorized a verse about that.”

☉ Ask them to recite together the verse they learned at home about the story. “Luke 2:11 — ‘Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.’”

☉ To lead into the theme of today’s story, say: “Raise your hand if you have ever done anything wrong. I won’t ask you to tell us what it is, but if you have ever done anything wrong, anything God says you should not do, raise your hand. Thank you, hands down.” (You should raise your own hand along with the children.)

Activity Introducing the Story

10 min. 

Aim: To expend energy and learn about sin.

Materials: None.

1. Ask: “Can anyone remember what the Bible calls it when you do wrong things, or when you run away from God, or when you treat something else as god? Correct, it is called sin. All of us sin. The Bible says that sin easily entangles us. To entangle means to catch. Sin easily catches or entangles us. We’re going to play a game called ‘The Entangler.’”
2. Ask the children to stand and line up against a wall. Ask one child to stand in the center of the room to be “The Entangler.”
3. Explain the game: The children will start to run from one side of the room to the other. They should try to get back and forth as many times as they can. The Entangler will try to tag/catch them. If they are caught, they should sit where they are caught and wave their arms around in order to catch others. You can get caught either by The Entangler or by anyone seated who touches you with their waving arms. Anyone who catches another player should call out “Entangled!”

4. Play the game, calling out reminders as they play; e.g., “Don’t forget to say ‘Entangled’ when you catch someone”; “Sit in the spot where you were caught”; “Wave your arms”; etc. Obviously the more people that are caught, the harder it is to get back and forth.

5. Play until there are two children left. Ask them to be the new Entanglers. Play again, this time until there are four children left. They become the new Entanglers for the final game when everyone should easily get caught.

6. At the end of the activity, ask everyone to sit back down in the circle and then say: “The Entanglers caught you easily. Sin easily catches us. In today’s story there are a lot of people who are entangled by sin, but there is also someone who isn’t. Let’s find out who that is.”

Story Time

7 min. 

Join the children in the circle and announce the title of the story. Read aloud pages 200–207 from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* or listen to CD2 track 11.

Notes for Teachers on the Text

A major part of Jewish worship and ceremony during Jesus' time was the various ablutions and washings that had to occur constantly. They represented the need for being cleansed from sin in order to stand before a holy God. Ordinarily, this meant washing one's hands before going into the temple, and so on. Only Gentile converts who wanted to be part of Israel's worship had to be baptized thoroughly (by effusion or immersion) as part of the ceremonial rites that made one "clean" and fit for the presence of God. Jews were never baptized because they were already considered "clean."

But John the Baptist's ministry was very startling. It called everyone to be baptized. It signified that your pedigree and moral record did not matter. Everyone was going to have to be saved by grace. It also signaled the need for complete newness – a new people of God would need to be formed, and a new covenant with God would have to be made.

John's ministry of baptism was so unique that he could be called "the Baptist" – because no one else had ever done such a thing. He was declaring (what the prophets had said) that the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament were only pointers to something else – that no one was "fit" for the kingdom except through grace; that a radical salvation was needed.

We know how that radical salvation happened. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, sang about the Christ, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them" (Luke 1:68).

Understanding the Story

15 min.



Aim: To understand that Jesus was baptized even though he never sinned.

Materials: 12 index cards – each card has the question number and one question written/printed on it (see table); a microphone (this can be made out of paper, though if you can get a real microphone children enjoy using it); a name tag with John the Baptist written on it; crayons; copies of the handout (the last page of this document).

1. At the end of the story, say: “In our story the people are entangled by sin. But, they are sorry for their sins and so they get baptized. Who in our story has never sinned? Say it together; yes, Jesus never sinned. Then why was Jesus baptized? Let’s interview John, who baptized Jesus, to find out. I have some questions here for John. Who would like to ask John a question?”
2. Hand the children the index cards in order around the circle. Explain that the person with the index card should stand, hold the microphone, and ask John the question on the card. (NOTE: If the children struggle to read the questions, one of the other teachers can ask the questions talk-show host style while holding the microphone but still involving the children as much as possible. Alternatively, you could print the questions on large cards and another teacher can hold them up one by one; then everyone can ask the questions by reading them aloud together.)
3. Put on the name tag that says John the Baptist (or ask another teacher to do so). Put a chair in the circle so everyone can see you, and sit down holding the microphone. Announce that you are John; e.g., “Hello, my name is John, but they call me John the Baptist. Thank you for having me here. I can’t stay long because I haven’t eaten my locusts dipped in honey yet today. You’re all welcome to have some with me later, but first I’m told you have some questions for me. Who has the first question?”
4. Hand the child with index card number 1 the microphone and get them to ask the first question. Take the microphone back to answer the question and then hand it to the child with index card number 2, and so on.
5. Questions for the index cards and answers for John:

NO.	QUESTION FOR INDEX CARD	JOHN'S ANSWER
1	When were you born?	Thank you for asking. I was born about the same time as Jesus.
2	Where do you live?	In the desert. It's very yellow. But there are lots of locust snacks.
3	Do you have a job?	I have a very special job. My job is to get people ready for Jesus.
4	Did the people get ready?	Some did. When they heard about Jesus, they were sorry they had sinned. So as a sign that they wanted to follow God and begin a new life, I baptized them. That's how I got my name, John the Baptist.
5	Where did you baptize people?	There is a river called the Jordan and I plunged people in and out of the river water as a sign that they now wanted to stop sinning and follow God.
6	Does baptism wash away sin?	No. Plunging people in the river or anywhere else can't actually wash sin away.
7	How did you feel when you first saw Jesus?	I'd been waiting for that moment all my life. Finally, with my own eyes, I could see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
8	Why do you call Jesus the Lamb of God?	Do you remember Passover? God's people were rescued because the lambs died instead of them, so we are rescued from sin because Jesus dies instead of us. The lambs died in the sons' place. Jesus dies in our place.
9	What did Jesus ask you to do?	Amazingly, Jesus asked me to baptize him. Me! I mean, who am I to baptize Jesus?
10	Why did Jesus want to be baptized?	I was confused at first. The reason I baptized people was because they were sorry they had sinned and they wanted to start to follow God. But Jesus never sinned, so his baptism was different.
11	How was it different?	Jesus' baptism was a way for him to say: "Let me take your place. I will be for you the Lamb who takes away your sin." It was a sign that Jesus was starting on his plan to rescue his people from sin.
12	Was it like all the other baptisms you had done?	No, Jesus' baptism was amazing because when he came up out of the water the Spirit of God descended like a dove and God spoke and said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." I will never forget it. But I must go now. Thank you for listening to my story; and if you ever want to try honeyed locusts, you know where to find me.

6. Get everyone to say thank-you and good-bye to John.

7. Put away the index cards and give each child a copy of the handout and a crayon. Say: "You can see on your paper that there are a bunch of people waiting to be baptized by John."

8. Read aloud the questions and possible answers, giving the children time to circle the correct answer. Ask them what they circled and comment appropriately.

For larger groups: You may want to divide the group into smaller circles, each with a teacher, a microphone, and a set of index cards. This will mean that everyone gets a chance to ask a question and the teacher can check understanding as they play John.

Drawing the Story to a Close

1 min. 

Say: “We all sin. But Jesus never sinned. He is the Lamb of God who is able to take away our sin.”

Say: “Jesus’ baptism was a sign that he was about to start the rescue plan to ‘take away the sin of the world.’”

Jesus in the Story

2 min. 

Ask: “What did we discover about Jesus from today’s story?”

Get a few children to share their answers aloud, commenting appropriately; then ask everyone to write an answer in the space on their handout.

Praying about the Story

5 min. 

Pray aloud, thanking God that Jesus is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Ask the children to pray, saying they are sorry for their sins. At the end, say: “Thank you, God, that because of Jesus you forgive us for all our sins. Amen.”

A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

2 min. 

☉ Introduce the verse: “Do you remember what John said when he first saw Jesus? We are going to memorize his words.”

☉ Announce the verse: “So, your verse to learn at home is John 1:29 — ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

☉ Read the verse out loud together as a group.

☉ Remind the children to give the handout to their parents and to memorize the verse for next time.

Why were the people baptized?

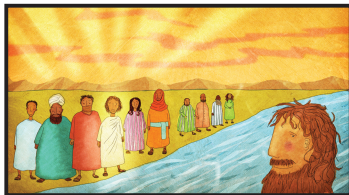
- a) As a sign that they were sorry for their sin and wanted to follow God.
- b) As a sign that they would never sin again.

Why was Jesus baptized?

- a) As a sign that he was sorry for his sin and wanted to follow God.
- b) As a sign that he was about to start on the rescue plan.



Jesus in the Story

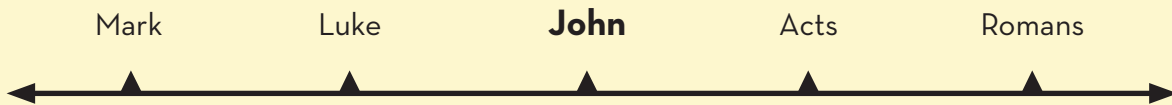


What did you discover about Jesus from this story?

Jesus

A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
(John 1:29)



Notes for parents: From the story we learned about Jesus' baptism. We learned that Jesus never sinned. He is the Lamb of God who is able to take away our sin. Please help your child to memorize the verse and the Scripture reference for next time. Please review with them the place of the book of John, using the diagram above. www.jesusstorybookbible.com