Preschool–Grade 6

John the Baptist

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: John's whole job was to get people ready for Jesus and point them to Him. He told people to repent, and he said, "Behold the Lamb of God." We can point others to Jesus too.
Bible passage: Matthew 3:1–11, Luke 3:2–16 and John 1:19–37. Read them before class.
Memory verse: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." *John 1:29 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Getting Ready (5–10 minutes)

Say: "A very important visitor is coming to our town tomorrow. How would we get ready?" Write the kids' answers on the board: clean up, fix what is broken, make the road smooth, tell everyone. Then say: "Now a visitor is coming to your house. What would you get ready?" Ask: *Why do we get ready for someone important?* Say: "Today we will meet a man God sent to get people ready for the most important visitor of all."

2. Bible story: The Voice in the Wilderness (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

God sends John. Look up John 1:6–7. (**Bare witness** means told what he knew to be true; the **Light** is Jesus.) The word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness (Luke 3:2), and he came into all the country around the Jordan, preaching (3:3).

A strange preacher. Look up Matthew 3:4. (**Raiment** means clothes; a **leathern girdle about his loins** is a leather belt around his waist; **meat** means food.) Locusts are a kind of grasshopper, and God's law allowed eating them (Leviticus 11:22).

Get ready! Look up Matthew 3:2–3. (**Repent** means turn away from sin; **at hand** means very near; **Esaias** is the prophet Isaiah; **prepare** means get ready.) Luke tells what Isaiah wrote next: "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight" (Luke 3:5). Getting ready for the Lord meant making the crooked things in their lives straight. People came from Jerusalem and all Judaea, and John baptized them in Jordan, **confessing their sins**, telling God the wrong things they had done (Matthew 3:5–6).

Free to print & copy for church, classroom & home · Please don't resell or re-post

"What shall we do?" Look up Luke 3:10–11. (**Impart** means give.) Publicans, the tax collectors, asked too, and John said, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you": don't take more money than you are supposed to. Soldiers asked, and John said, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages" (3:12–14).

"I am not the Christ." Some people wondered if John was the Christ (Luke 3:15). **Look up John 1:20, then John 1:23.** John said he was only a voice getting people ready. **Look up Matthew 3:11.** (**Mightier** means stronger and greater; **not worthy to bear** means not good enough even to carry.) John said the One coming after him would baptize with the Holy Ghost.

"Behold the Lamb of God!" Look up John 1:29. (**Seeth** means sees; **saith** means says; **behold** means look; **taketh away** means takes away.) God's people brought a lamb as an offering when they sinned (Leviticus 4:32). Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. **Look up John 1:35–37.** John pointed his own disciples to Jesus, and they followed Jesus! One was Andrew, who then brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus (1:40–42). Later John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. John said, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Matthew 3:3). What does it look like to get your heart ready for Jesus?
2. John told people to share coats and food and to be honest (Luke 3:11–14). Why do you think he gave such everyday answers?
3. People thought John might be the Christ (Luke 3:15). He could have taken the credit. Why didn't he?
4. John's own disciples left him to follow Jesus (John 1:37). How do you think John felt? Read John 3:30.
5. Andrew heard about Jesus and went and got his brother (John 1:41–42). Who could you point to Jesus this week?

Recall questions

1. Whose son was John? *(Zacharias, Luke 3:2)*
2. Where did John baptize? *(In Jordan, Matthew 3:6)*
3. What did John call Jesus? *(The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, John 1:29)*

Free to print & copy for church, classroom & home · Please don't resell or re-post

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **seeth** means sees, **saith** means says, **behold** means look, and **taketh away** means takes away. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "John called Jesus the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). John said Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11), and on the day of Pentecost He did. The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: be like John and Andrew. Point one person to Jesus: tell them something true about Him, or invite them to church.

6. Activity: Crooked or Straight? (10–15 minutes)

Draw a wiggly road on one side of the board and a straight road on the other. Read each one. Kids hold their arms in a zigzag for "crooked" or straight out in front for "straight," then say what John would say (Luke 3:10–14).

1. You have two coats, and a new kid at school is cold. You keep both. *(Crooked: share, 3:11)*
2. You have extra snacks at lunch and share them with a friend who has none. *(Straight, 3:11)*
3. A store clerk gives you too much change, and you give it back. *(Straight: take no more than is yours, 3:13)*
4. You blame your little brother for something you did. *(Crooked: don't accuse anyone falsely, 3:14)*
5. You complain all week about your allowance. *(Crooked: be content, 3:14)*
6. You tell God you're sorry for a wrong thing and stop doing it. *(Straight: repent, Matthew 3:2)*

Free to print & copy for church, classroom & home · Please don't resell or re-post

Or choose the **John the Baptist word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/john-the-baptist-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/john-the-baptist-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/john-the-baptist-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/john-the-baptist-worksheet).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Help us make the crooked things in our lives straight. Help us point our friends to Jesus, like John did. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks if John's baptism is the same as ours: say only what the Bible says. John preached "the baptism of repentance," telling people to believe on the One coming after him, Jesus (Luke 3:3; Acts 19:4). After Jesus rose again, Peter preached, "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). When Paul met people who had only John's baptism, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5).
If a child asks why John called Jesus a lamb: in the Old Testament, a person who sinned brought a lamb to God for a sin offering (Leviticus 4:32). Peter later wrote that we are saved "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19).
If a child asks what happened to John: for this age, say simply that John kept preaching God's truth, even to a king (Luke 3:19). Keep the focus on John pointing people to Jesus.

Free to print & copy for church, classroom & home · Please don't resell or re-post