

TEXT Matthew 3:1-17

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that John the Baptist trusted God and was used of God to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry.

MEMORY VERSE Thou shalt be his witness unto all men. — Acts 22:15

John the Baptist

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

THOU — Point to others.

SHALT BE HIS WITNESS — Place index fingers on lips. Move right hand in semi-circle to right and left hand in a semi-circle to left.

UNTO ALL — With right hand open, palm down, make large circle horizontal and clockwise.

MEN — Point to others.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

A person witnessing to a group of people will visualize our memory verse for this week. (See pattern at the end of this lesson.) Cut apart the sections of the display as indicated by the heavy black lines. Display the visualization in front of your group, putting up one piece at a time as the students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Take a box to class with a description of the contents printed on the box. Ask your class why the information is printed on the outside. Tell them that your Bible story today is about a man whose mission in life was a little like that of the box you brought. The box pictured or described what was inside so that people would know about it and want it. John the Baptist told people about Jesus so that others would want to know Him.

1. John the Baptist preached repentance, fulfilling the Scripture that said one would come to prepare the way of the Lord.
2. Many came from Jerusalem, Judea, and the region around about to be baptized of John.
3. John taught that One was coming who was greater than he.

Climax: Jesus came to be baptized of John, and the Holy Spirit and God both revealed that Jesus was the Son of God.

Conclusion: Because he was faithful to the call of God, John was chosen to be the one who baptized the Son of God.

Response: The students should be able to explain how John faithfully did the job God had called him to do.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jesus said of John "There hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). John truly was a unique man in a unique time in history, that of the transition between the Old Testament Law and the New Testament grace. The specific task to which he was called was to "prepare the way of the Lord" (Matthew 3:3), that is, to call the people to repentance so that when Christ did appear they would be able to receive Him. Although he did no miracles (John 10:41) and his ascetic life style, with his lonely home in the desert and plain food and clothes (Matthew 3:4), stood in stark contrast to the self-indulgent lives of many, yet the multitudes were drawn to hear John's simple but powerful message.

John had been foreordained by God to fulfill this mission. Both Isaiah and Malachi (Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 4:5,6) had prophesied of his ministry and John was "Filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). However, when one studies this man's character, it becomes obvious that God's choice was not arbitrary. John's task was to point the way to Jesus, and that he did with great humility. Of Jesus, John said "[His] shoes I am not worthy to bear . . ." (Matthew 3:11) and "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Also, when some of John's disciples began following Jesus (John 1:37) he willingly relinquished his claim in them and could say, "the friend of the bridegroom . . . rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice" (John 3:29). Because of his humble spirit and holy life God could greatly use John.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Tell the class you are preparing a dessert for them. Tell them you have to follow instructions to come out right. John had to follow instructions also. As you tell the lesson, put the ingredients together and give to the children at the end of the class period.

PEANUT BUTTER-RAISIN ROLL

Mix ½ cup peanut butter

½ cup honey

Add 1 cup dry milk (more if necessary)

½ cup raisins

Shape into rolls and wrap in waxed paper. Slice before serving. Store extra in refrigerator.

Make a dove to be used when telling of Jesus' baptism (see Patterns). Transfer pattern onto white paper, cut out, and fold in center. With a hole punch, make a hole about an inch from the fold as indicated. Place your thumb and finger on the holes and move them to make the dove "fly."

From tagboard or other heavy paper cut a switch plate cover and an outlet cover for each of your students (see Patterns). Let the children color them. Talk about each slogan in connection with John the Baptist and themselves. Tell them to use them at home so each time they plug something in or switch on a light they can be reminded to trust God and work for Him.

Most people today have an address book where they keep a list of the people they know. Make an address page for each of your students to fill in. Also give them the page that might have been in John the Baptist's address book (see Patterns). Read the names of the people on John's list and where they lived. Tell your students that John went to many places to tell people about God's Son, Jesus. And he even baptized Jesus! Have the children write in the names of people they would like to tell about Jesus. Be sure and write in where they live and if they are related.

Make a miniature sandbox and stick puppets (see Patterns). Use these to tell the story of John the Baptist. Make sure you put something in the sandbox to represent water. Tape a popsicle stick to the back of each of the puppets so they will stand up easily in the sand.

QUESTIONS

What was the main message John the Baptist preached?

Picture in your mind how John the Baptist might have looked. How do you think you would have liked meeting him or hearing him preach?

What does repentance mean?

Why did God speak from Heaven when John baptized Jesus?

Why did God choose John to tell people about Jesus?

Does Jesus have a message for you to tell people? What is that message?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Make a miniature flannel board for each child (see Pat-

terns). Let them help you tell the story of John the Baptist as he baptized Jesus. Cut a piece of cardboard and a piece of sky-blue flannel the same size. Use a spray adhesive and apply the flannel to the cardboard. Let the children add the green flannel for grass and two pieces of blue for water — make sure the smaller strip of blue is on top so Jesus can go between the two blues into the water. Let them add John, Jesus, and the dove at the appropriate times.

Explain to your little ones that to "witness" means to tell other people about Jesus. That is what John the Baptist did. Give each child a button with a picture of Jesus on it. (These can be purchased at Christian Supply stores, or made by using small pictures of Jesus and a button maker.) Let each one take a turn pretending to explain to someone the picture that is on their button.

Let each child draw pictures of people he could tell about Jesus. Give them Jesus stickers to paste on each figure they have drawn.

REVIEW IDEAS

Blow up several balloons and draw faces on them. Under the face write a name — Noah, Abraham, Brave Spies, Joshua, John. Have several of each character. Have a question pertaining to the person represented, inside each balloon. Have volunteers pick a balloon and answer the question it contains. Correct answers are rewarded with a prize.

Bring the following objects: the letter "W" written on construction paper, a hat, a large can, a picture of an eye, the word "DO" written on a piece of paper, a display of the number "4", a picture of Jesus. Pass these out to different ones in the room. Tell the department that you have a puzzle that they need to help you solve. Have the ones holding the objects come up one at a time and stay there, but not in order. Have the department help you line them up and put them in the right order so that they make the phrase "What can I do for Jesus?" God trusted John to help prepare the way for Jesus' ministry. He trusts us the same way to tell others about Jesus, to invite others to Sunday school, tell others about His coming again.

Show your group a number of items, one at a time, which use words or pictures to tell about something. Some possibilities: a book jacket tells about the contents of the book, a cereal box describes what the cereal inside is like, an advertisement tells about a specific product. Ask your students how we can be like these items. Develop the thought that we, as Christian witnesses, are to describe the person of Jesus Christ. Just as the items you displayed described through words and pictures, we are witnesses through the way we look and act (pictures) as well as through our words.

To make a spinner game for your review, cut a large circle (approximately 22 inches in diameter) from poster-board. Add a spinner to the center with a brad. Leave it a little loose so it will spin more freely. Divide the board into as many sections as you have words and/or symbols to put in. Some you might choose to use are: dove, Jordan River, Jesus, John, baptize, people, Lamb of God, preaching, into water, repent. After you spin the spinner ask for a volunteer to help you explain the meaning of the word or symbol on which the spinner stopped.

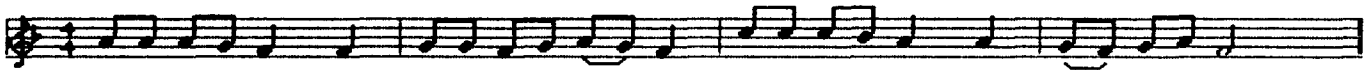
A tape recorder review may be given in a couple of different ways. Record the sound effects of a crowd, a river flowing, God's speaking, etc. Use this as back-

ground for a dramatized version of the story of John the Baptist at the river baptizing Jesus. Or, you can tell the story on tape leaving out certain parts. Whenever you reach one of these parts stop the recorder and let the students complete that section of the story.

SUPPORT MATERIAL

- A Baby Named John — Book, Augsburg
- Messengers of Jesus — Augsburg
- John the Baptist — Arch Book, Concordia
- The Purple Puzzle Tree, Set 5 — Concordia (Record with 6 different stories/books)
- Jesus and John - My Bible Story Card — Concordia (Picture on the front/story on the back)

MEMORY VERSE SONG



Thou shalt be his wit - ness, thou shalt be his wit - ness, thou shalt be his wit - ness un - to all men.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

