

# Adventures with GOD!

## JOHN THE PRECURSOR TO JESUS (C.1.Spring.1)

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Biblical Reference     | John 1:19-37   |
| Key Verse              | John 1:29-30, John 3:30  |
| Key Concept            | Just as it was in the life of John the Baptist, Jesus can continue to become more important in my life as I put him before myself.   |
| Educational Objectives | At the end of the class today, the children will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Show on a map the area where John the Baptist ministered</li> <li>2. Describe John the Baptist (as a person, his ministry)</li> <li>3. Evaluate John in relationship to Jesus, the Jews, his disciples</li> </ol> |

### Life Application

In the Bible we find many different people from whom we can learn what it means to follow God with all our heart, soul, and mind. John the Baptist is one of these people. His life was given in service to God and when people wanted to give him credit or put him on a pedestal, he always pointed to the one person they should worship – Jesus. He said that Christ had grown in importance and he, John, had decreased in importance. We can learn a lot from John’s life as we seek to know and serve God.

### Possible Activities and Class Plan

| Activity          | Materials                          | Time       |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Introduction      |                                    | 5 minutes  |
| My GROW Adventure | GROW Adventure w/God materials     | 5 minutes  |
| Opening Prayer    | Candle                             | 1 minute   |
| Introduction      | Map, Bible, study helps, questions | 20 minutes |
| Bible Story       | Bible, illustrations               | 20 minutes |
| Craft             | Paper, sandpaper, glue, scissors   | 10 minutes |
| My GROW Adventure |                                    |            |
| Closing Prayer    | Candle                             | 1 minute   |

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## INSTRUCTIONS

**Introduction:** At the beginning of this new trimester, the children will see a precursor to Jesus, John the Baptist. They can investigate about John, his life, where he ministered, what he did, what his message was, etc. Divide the class into four groups. You will find some questions that each of the groups can work on in the following pages. After they've finished their investigations they can share their findings with the rest of the group. If it's possible have some study helps like a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia, where they can look up some facts about John the Baptist. You can find some study helps in a library, or from some of the people in your congregation, even the pastor. You can also use the information that is included in the following pages to help with the investigation.

**My GROW Adventure with God Weekly Review:** As children enter take time to have them reflect on their adventure with God booklets and either discuss or use art materials to express their journey during the past week. You may wish to add any art work, written poems, prayers or songs to a GROW wall in the room. You can find my GROW Adventure with God materials on the Covchurch.org website in the same place as the Adventures with God sessions.

**Opening Prayer:** Gather children around a candle. Light the candle and explain that we are entering into a special time with God. Encourage the children to hold their hands out in front of them palms up as a sign they are ready to receive what God has for them today.

**Prayer Example:** Lord God, thank you for making us, for loving us, for forgiving us, and guiding us. We know you are here with us right now. As we enter into your word, the Bible, help us draw close to you, to understand and to listen to what you have to say to us. Amen (For safety sake, you may wish to extinguish the candle after the prayer)

**Bible Reading:** Explain that as we read the Bible we do that first to spend time with God. Children can remain with hands out stretched palms up to receive the word as it's being read. Alternatively they can be invited to draw what they hear. Read the key verse Bible passage for the day two times and ask children to respond.

**Question examples:** What did you notice in this passage? How does it make you feel? Was there anything you would ask God about that you didn't understand or was confusing? Is God saying anything to you though the story?

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**Bible Story:** When each group has presented the information from their investigations, begin to tell the story for the day. It is helpful if each student has their own Bible so they can open it, find the passage and read along. Help them to get a feel for how to find things in their Bible.

John the Baptist's ministry impacted many lives. He called people to repentances even before the Messiah had arrived. Many people accepted his message and their lives were transformed. Many were baptized to show the world the new vision they had of life and God. A few years after John initiated his ministry, Jesus came to him to be baptized. Jesus, who was sinless, wasn't baptized to show repentance, but to identify himself with the people (don't emphasize too much this part of the story as they will study Jesus' baptism next week). Then, John told his disciples that Jesus was the Messiah they were waiting for.

What type of a person was John? When the Jews asked if he was the Messiah he could have used that moment and taken all of the glory for himself, but instead of being selfish, he helped them understand that he wasn't the Messiah. John was a prophet of God in the desert calling the people to repentance. He was a humble man, filled with the Holy Spirit, content with God's will for his life, content to be a part of God's plan.

It's interesting that he never tried to control his disciples either. When John saw Jesus, he made a declaration of who he was and why they should follow Jesus. What he says in John 3:30 is interesting: "He must become greater; I must become less." (TNIV) We need to be aware that we too need to make sure we are pointing to Jesus and not to ourselves, as the one to follow. Jesus is the one to follow.

**Craft:** You will find a few worksheets that you can work on before finishing today's class. These activities focus on how we can let Christ become greater, so that we become less. What does it mean that Christ wants to take control of our lives; that he wants to be our Lord.

Finish the class with prayer and singing. Pray that God would help each child through God's Spirit to let Christ become the center of their lives. Pray that they may follow the example of John the Baptist. Allow the children to pray out loud if they want, or allow them to pray with one other person.

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## Today's GROW Adventure with God Review:

G: God's Word: What is the story? (give children an opportunity to express their understanding of the story)

R: Relationships: Is there anything in today's bible story that shows us how we should or shouldn't share God's love with others? (Remind children that sometimes God uses the stories of the bible to show us how we shouldn't act toward God or others and give them a chance to consider how we might show God's love instead)

O: Outward Action: Is there anything in the bible story that shows us how we should help or serve God or others? (Explore concrete ways the children could live this out in the coming week)

W: Worship: Is there anything in the bible story that shows us how we should accept God's love for us and others? Ask: How do you feel about God? How would you like to respond to God? What would you like to say to God?

**Closing Prayer:** Gather children around the candle again. As you light the candle explain that the flame is something that is present in the light and the darkness. In the same way, it reminds us that God is always with us. Is there anything anyone wishes to say to God? After children have responded, close the prayer time.

**Prayer Example:** Lord God, we thank you that you are always with us, and always love us. It's good to be with you. Thank you for what we have learned today. Thank you for being with us and for teaching us through the Bible. Help us to remember what you have taught us today and to live it out when we leave. Amen

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## INFORMATION SHEET

### John the Baptist

1. Both parents were from a priestly line; they were obedient followers of God.
2. We don't know much about his parents and if they were still alive when he was an adult, as they were very old when he was born.
3. John was filled with the Holy Spirit since before he was born, when he was in his mother's womb (Luke 1:13-17).
4. His public ministry began more or less in the year 26 or 27 A.D. (though it's very possible he was prophesying earlier)
5. His ministry was concentrated in the desert and in the valley near the Jordan River.
6. He was a man who sacrificed much in his own personal life (he wore strange clothes, ate simple things, Matt. 3:4)

### His Message

1. His message was prophetic: the Messiah was coming.
2. It was different from the message of the religious leaders: he talked about a Messiah who would come to free them from bondage.
3. He called people to repent before the Messiah came. He asked for a complete change of heart (he didn't talk about rituals but about actions and transformed lives).
4. He baptized as an act of rejecting the old ways of life, and as a symbol of being forgiven from sins and identifying with the Kingdom of God.
5. He had disciples.

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## What happened in the story?

1. John had baptized Jesus and said that he recognized him as the Messiah when the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove above Jesus.
2. We don't know if John had met his cousin before, but it's possible that he did.
3. We know that John saw some of the glory of God in Jesus before he was baptized (Matt. 3:13-15) but God confirmed that Jesus was the sent Messiah when he sent the dove (John 1:33)
4. Instead of trying to make himself famous and important when people asked if he was the Messiah, with humility John said that Jesus was the Son of God.
5. He also declared that Jesus was the "Lamb of God." Why did he use this term?
  - a. Jeremiah 11:19, Isaiah 53:7
  - b. The Jews made two daily sacrifices to be forgiven of their sins, in the morning and in the afternoon. They sacrificed lambs.
  - c. Saturdays and holy days they sacrificed more than two lambs
  - d. When John declared that Jesus was the "Lamb of God," it was nearing the Passover when the Jews would sacrifice lambs.
  - e. In the book of Revelation, the Lamb of God is mentioned 27 times.
  - f. John wasn't just talking about Jesus' humility when he referred to him as the lamb of God. He was indicating that Jesus would be sacrificed for the sins of the world. It was a revelation that John had received from God.

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## WORKSHEET

### Group 1

1. Read Luke 1:5-25 and Mark 1:1-8
2. Use the information that is found in these two passages and answer the following questions:

#### **John's family**

Name of his father:

Name of his mother:

Father's job:

Mother's job:

Family line:

Qualities of his father and mother:

#### **John's birth**

What was miraculous?

#### **John's younger years**

What details do we know from these passages?

#### **His way of dressing and his food**

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## WORKSHEET

### Group 2

Read Luke 1:5-25, 39-40, 57-80.

Read the information sheet that your teacher will give you.

Look in your Bibles at the map of Israel during the time of Jesus.

With all this information try to identify:

Where was John born?

Where did John live?

Where did John have his ministry?

Where did John baptize?

Make a map using poster board or big sheets of paper, indicating the 4 places.



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## WORKSHEET

### Group 3

Read Matthew 3:1-2, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-20, John 1:19-28

Read the information sheet your teacher will give you.

Answer the following questions:

1. Where did John preach?
2. What was his message?
3. How did people respond?
4. What symbol did John use?
5. Why did he use baptism as a symbol?
6. How did John baptize?

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## WORKSHEET

### Group 4

Read John 1:19-28, 2 Kings 1:8, Matt. 3:4, 2 Kings 2:1-11, Matt. 17:3

Answer the following questions:

Why did the Jews think that John could be Elias?

Why did the Jews think that John could be the Messiah?

What did Jews expect from John?

What type of Messiah were the Jews expecting?

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## WORKSHEET

### My commitment

Use this sheet to express through a drawing, a poem, or a paragraph what you've learned from John the Baptist and his life. What is it that you want to commit to God today?

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## ILLUSTRATION FOR THE STORY

### John the Baptist preaching

For the background use a thick piece of paper or poster board that is a light blue color. Fold the paper 5 inches down. Put the smaller part that's folded on the table. Cut a piece of sand paper and glue it to the part that is on the table. This will become the ground. You can also put glue on the two longer edges and have the sand paper bend up a bit to create a hill.

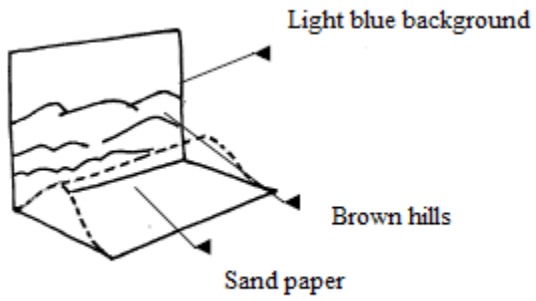
Make two hills out of brown paper and glue them to the light blue background (see the illustration below).

Make the people (however many you want), using either one color, or different colors for the clothes. Glue them to the background in front of the hills. Make the figure of John the Baptist out of a different color (black, brown, grey). Glue him to the background as well.



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## PATTERNS FOR THE ILLUSTRATION



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## ILLUSTRATION

John the Baptist

