

BIBLE BACKGROUND

JOURNEY 5: "Do You Want to Get Baptized?"

Jesus Launches His Mission

KEY PASSAGE:

Luke 1; 3:1–22; Matthew 3:13–17

KEY VERSE:

"You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased."

—Luke 3:22

KEY WORD:

New Beginnings

KEY THOUGHT:

I will demonstrate my commitment to Christ publicly.

THE SILENCE IS BROKEN

There had been 400 years of silence between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New. God had sent no prophet to deliver messages of repentance and future blessing through the Messiah. Then there appeared a man preaching throughout Judea and in and around Jerusalem who was creating quite a stir. His name was John and he seemed to fit Isaiah's description of a messenger who would prepare the way for the coming of Messiah (Isaiah 40:3).

Born only a few months before Jesus, John the Baptist was to prepare people to recognize Jesus as Messiah. Here are some interesting facts about John the Baptist.

1. John the Baptist was born to Zechariah and Elizabeth, a godly couple who had served the Lord faithfully. They believed God's plan to send Messiah.
2. John's birth itself was miraculous because it was announced to Zechariah by an angel of the Lord. His parents were well along in years, and Elizabeth had been considered *barren*. God would use this situation as an occasion to demonstrate His power and sovereign purpose.
3. While Zechariah was burning incense in the temple according to his priestly duties, an angel appeared to him and announced that Elizabeth would bear a son who was to be named *John*.

4. Elizabeth did conceive just as the angel had promised.
5. Six months later, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and announced that she would give birth to Jesus.
6. As the two women met and greeted one another, Elizabeth acknowledged Mary as “blessed among women and blessed is the child you bear.” Elizabeth asked: “Why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” Elizabeth affirmed, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, that the baby Mary carried would be her LORD.
7. John grew up in and around the hills of Judea. His appearance and lifestyle reflect the desert area where he lived. Rough clothing made from camel’s hair and held in place by a heavy leather belt covered his strong frame. This is the clothing of a poor person and it is similar to that of the prophets, like Elijah. His diet was simple and sufficient but few of us would want to survive on honey and locusts.
8. John would be God’s voice crying out to the people to get ready. The goal of his preaching would be to remove obstacles that might hinder people’s recognition of the Messiah and His message. John would be “God’s bulldozer.” His biggest obstacle would be the hardness of people’s hearts. If that could be removed, then people would be prepared to receive Jesus when He began His public ministry.
9. People did come to hear John’s message from the whole region of the Jordan. John introduced the concept of baptism to both Jew and non-Jew who would yield to God’s will in confessing their sins. His baptism was not an end in itself but instead looked to the future. He was the forerunner of the Messiah. “Greater things were coming,” John said. The Messiah was coming, and He would make possible an eternal blessing for all mankind.

JOHN’S MESSAGE

John appeared on the scene to announce that God was about to act again in history. He could be considered a New Testament prophet because he announced the coming of God’s kingdom. The Messiah would soon arrive to establish that kingdom. John was the forerunner of the Messiah. His message resounded as “a

voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight’” (Luke 3:4–6). In biblical times, a servant was often sent ahead of the king to call out to everyone along the way that the king was coming. A servant was to clear obstacles from the path to make the king’s travel smooth and unobstructed. John was doing this for Jesus. God’s silence had been broken.

JOHN’S BAPTISM

The distinction of John’s ministry was the method of his baptism. It was different from the ritual washing the Jewish religious community performed.

- John’s baptism was a one-time event rather than a repeated one.
- It represented God’s call to repentance and a turning away from sin.
- By using immersion, John was able to illustrate how God demands death to one’s old ways of sin.
- The coming out of the water represented a new commitment to worship the God of Israel with a pure and repentant heart.
- It was an outward picture of an inward experience of genuine repentance.
- This type of baptism was a public declaration for others to witness.

John knew that God would bring judgment on the people without this type of repentance. His preaching called for people to change the way they lived, ran their businesses, and treated their neighbors. This type of outward change would be demonstrated if genuine repentance had taken place.

At the outset of His ministry, Jesus came to John to be baptized by him publicly. By doing this, He was identifying with sinners for whom He had come to die.

- This baptism pictured His own death and Resurrection.
- It pointed toward the public baptism of those in the future who placed their faith in Jesus.
- It was His first public identification with those He came to save. It portrayed Him as one of them, who could thus take their punishment upon Himself when the time came.
- It provided a public affirmation of His Messiahship with a voice from heaven. At that precise moment, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit affirmed Messiah’s arrival.

THE JEWISH REJECTION

It is hard to understand why the Jewish people failed to see who Jesus was.

JOURNEY 5

After all, they were the people most prepared to receive the Messiah. They had the benefit of all the Old Testament prophecies. Yet, the religious leaders did not accept Him. He was not exactly what they expected. They were looking for someone dramatic and earth-shaking. They wanted a military leader who would set up a kingdom rule and free them from the oppression of the Romans. Instead, Jesus came as a “friend of sinners” who associated publicly with people who were not Jewish and whose sins were well-known within the community. This did not fit the pattern they had established for their Messiah.

PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION OR NOT?

Jesus soon become famous in Capernaum as He healed people and performed other miracles. Crowds flocked to hear Him and to receive His miraculous healing. Now He wanted to return home to Nazareth, the place where He had grown up with Joseph and Mary. There in the synagogue, He was asked to read and explain the Scriptures. He read from Isaiah 61:1–3, which described the ministry of the Messiah. When He was finished, He sat down and all eyes were focused in His direction. Jesus told the audience that today this prophecy was fulfilled in their ears. This was an outright claim that He was the Messiah. Such a claim made the religious leaders furious. They escorted Him to the edge of the city and would have thrown Him over a cliff had He not disappeared miraculously from among them.

It is God’s desire that we publicly display our affection for Christ. It first happens through a public confession with one’s mouth that Jesus is Lord and Savior. Secondly, it takes on the form of a public baptism whereby the believer identifies with Christ’s death and Resurrection. Thirdly, it becomes apparent through a life that exemplifies Christ-like character and behavior. Fourthly, it manifests itself through verbal witnessing and testimony. Salvation is not genuine unless it becomes visible to a lost and dying world who see one’s good works and glorify the God of the heavens.

TEACHING PLAN

JOURNEY 5: “Do You Want to Get Baptized?”

Jesus Launches His Mission

KEY PASSAGE: Luke 1; 3:1–22; Matthew 3:13–17	KEY WORD: New Beginnings
KEY THOUGHT: I will demonstrate my commitment to Christ publicly.	KEY VERSE: <i>“You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.”</i> —Luke 3:22



INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

CONNECT the Big Room experience with the Bible story by asking the students questions about what they saw.

- “What new beginnings were people experiencing?”
- “What was exciting about these events? What was challenging?”
- “How did things work out at the end?”

MISSION LAUNCH

PAIR UP the students to form teams of two. Give each team a piece of paper out of which they are to make a paper airplane. Provide markers to use in decorating and naming their airships. Explain that you are sending them out on a critical “rescue mission.” They absolutely had to succeed. The planes they create must be able to get from Point A to Point B successfully. **MARK OFF** the launch and landing areas in your classroom as the students begin to create airplanes.

- Allow the teams to take turns “launching” their creations.
- One person on the team will stand at Point B while the other person launches the plane. The object is for the plane to reach

- the other person without getting off course or crashing.
- Give each team two chances to have a successful launch.
- Reward those who succeed and explain to those who failed how they may have needed better equipment, a better design or a better plan.

ASK: Since their planes failed, what happened to the people who needed rescuing? Transition to the Bible story by explaining that the main character in today’s lesson is getting ready to launch the biggest rescue mission in history. It would provide a new beginning for people who are lost and dying in their sin. Would His plan succeed or would it fail? What kind of a plan did He have? Where would He find the manpower He needed to reach the people who were dying?



EXPLORING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

A. LUKE 1: *New Babies, New Beginnings*

SAY: “Before Jesus began His public ministry, God was going to send a messenger to prepare the way for His arrival. God had chosen a very special person to do this. His name was John, and he was a distant cousin of Jesus through His mother.” Have the students open their Bibles to Luke 1.

- **Verses 5–7:** Who were John’s parents and what were they like?
- **Verses 26–34:** Who else found out that she was having a baby?
- **Verses 39–44:** What did Mary do after she found out there was a baby on the way? Did Mary argue with Gabriel about what was happening? How did she respond? She was ready to accept this new assignment no matter where it took her. For her, it would be a new beginning.
- **Verse 36:** Figure the age difference between the two babies. Who was older?

B. LUKE 3: *John Prepares the Way*

SAY: “About 30 years have gone by. The next time John appears in the biblical record, he is a grown man. He has become a sort of traveling preacher, and he is delivering a very special message.”

READ what he is saying in Luke 3.

- **Verse 3:** What was John’s message? What was he asking the people to do if they had repented? What was John’s baptism like?

- **Verse 4:** Why was he trying to get the people ready? What was about to happen?
- **Verse 15:** Who did the people think John was? Was that correct?

C. MATTHEW 3: *Jesus Is Baptized*

Have the students find Matthew 3:13–17. Read aloud the description of Jesus’ baptism and then have the students answer these questions.

- Why did John first refuse to baptize Jesus? (*He felt unworthy.*)
- Why did Jesus want to be baptized? (*See Bible Background info.*)
- How does the baptism illustrate the Trinity? (*Father’s voice, Son’s physical presence, Spirit descending like a dove*)
- How does the baptism illustrate the crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus? (*buried in death, raised to new life*)
- What did God think about Jesus’ baptism? (*He was pleased.*)
- What does God think about your baptism? Have you been baptized? Why or why not?



TABLE TALK: *What Baptism Means*

ASK the students to gather into table groups so that you can conduct an open and honest discussion with them about what baptism does and does not mean, including the symbolic picture contained within baptism.

- The importance of being baptized after having made a profession of faith
- The relationship between salvation and baptism (Baptism does not save.)
- An outward picture of an inward experience
- The imperative to be obedient to the example of Jesus
- The importance of baptism in sharing the Gospel with the world (See the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18–20)

Each TGL should select a student to assist in a simulated baptism. With the help of the student, go through the motions involved in baptism and explain what each one means.

- Leaning back toward the water – submission and obedience to Christ

- Immersion – death to a life filled with sin and without God
- Raising up out of the water – the beginning of a new life in Christ where past sins have been forgiven
- Affirmation – done in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

ALLOW students to discuss their own baptism experience and/or ask questions that will help clarify what it means to follow Christ in this manner.



THE CROSSROADS

CALL the students back to large group and **ASK:** “If Jesus wants us to be baptized as soon as we become a Christian, why do people delay doing this?” *[Listen to students’ answers and respond appropriately.]*

- Is it ever right to disobey a commandment Christ has given us? Why or why not?
- Someone once said that “Delayed obedience is really **disobedience.**” What does that mean to you?
- If you have received Christ, have you been baptized? Have you gone to your church’s New Christians Class? Have you talked with a minister regarding your commitment to follow Christ? If not, that is something you need to talk to your parents about so that you can be obedient to the command of Jesus. If the Person who paid for your salvation thought it was important to be baptized, why would you hesitate to follow His example?

SHARE: Next time you are in worship service, listen carefully to the words that are said when someone is baptized. Say a prayer thanking God for that person’s salvation and for his/her obedience. If you have never been baptized, begin now to make plans to do this. It will be a wonderful opportunity to publicly display your commitment to Christ.

SAY: “If you have never asked Jesus to be your Savior, there is no better time than now to do that.” **SHARE** the plan of salvation with the class and give them an opportunity to respond. As you pray, repeat the Sinner’s Prayer and ask any student who has questions to speak with you privately. *[Be sure to notify your Children’s Minister about any decisions that are made.]*



BIBLE LEARNING PROJECT:

Jesus, Our Lifesaver

Supplies: dowel rod 12”–18” long, die-cut foot made of construction paper or foam (pre-punch a hole in the big toe of the foot for quicker assembly), small packages of Lifesavers®, 12” red ribbon or red yarn

- Provide each student a dowel rod, a foot cutout, a package of Lifesavers® and a red ribbon.
- Instruct the students to tie one end of the red ribbon/yarn to the dowel rod then thread the other end of the ribbon/yarn through the big toe and tie in a knot to secure.
- Direct the students to glue a Lifesaver® to the toes of the foot then write “Follow Me” on the center or bottom of the foot.
- Decorate with Christian symbols as desired.

REMINDE the students that Jesus died in order to give them a new beginning as a child of the King. Being baptized as Jesus was baptized demonstrates our love, obedience and gratitude for all He had done for us. He is our “Life Savior”!



A LOOK AT THE BOOK

HAVE the students find verses in the Bible about *baptism*. Here are some suggestions. The older students could look up *baptism* in a concordance and find them that way.

- Matthew 3:6
- Matthew 3:14
- Matthew 28:18–20
- Mark 16:16
- Acts 2:38
- Acts 8:36
- Acts 22:16
- Acts 16:33



SCRIPTURE MEMORY: *Luke 3:22*

"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

SAY: "This verse is an affirmation from God that He was well pleased with His Son as Jesus demonstrated His obedience to God's command. Hearing these same words should be the desire of each and every person who has placed their faith and trust in Christ."

HAVE the students repeat the verse five times in succession and then say it from memory.

ASK: Wouldn't you love to hear God say this about you?

AFFIRM: You can whenever you make choices that honor Him.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who was the messenger God sent to prepare the way for Jesus? (*John the Baptist*)
2. How was Jesus related to John? (*perhaps a cousin by way of Mary's relationship to Elizabeth, John's mother*)
3. How much older was John than Jesus? (*6 months*)
4. What message did John preach? (*a message of repentance to the people*)
5. How many years passed after Jesus was born before He began His ministry? (*about 30*)
6. What does Jesus' baptism picture? (*His death, burial, Resurrection*)
7. Why is it important for us to be baptized as believers? (*It is an act of obedience following our profession of faith in Christ.*)
8. What does the phrase "new life in Christ" mean? (*It means we can experience a new beginning when we place our faith and trust in Jesus.*)
9. What did the voice from heaven say after Jesus had been baptized? (*"This is my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased."*)
10. What did the dove represent that descended from heaven? (*the presence of the Holy Spirit*)

JOURNEY 6:

**"Will You Repeat That Please?"
Jesus: A Teacher Come from God**

