Teaching the full story

Saint John the Baptist: The Voice Who Prepared the Way

Purpose and readiness

Ages approximately 7-11, adapted by readiness. Video: 25:21. Help children trace John's mission, explain repentance and humility, recognize Jesus as the Savior, and choose one concrete response.

Choose the lesson length

One full lesson, 50-60 minutes: gather and introduce (4); watch (26); discuss two questions (7); choose one worksheet page (10-15); pray (3). A shorter class can watch first and finish the response next time. Do not require every written question in one sitting.

Or teach across several meetings

Three lessons, about 25-35 minutes each: units 1-2 (about 8:25 of film); units 3-4 (about 4:50); units 5-7 (about 12:05). Add discussion, a selected response, and prayer. Alternatively, use one unit per meeting. These are chapter points within the full film; separate chapter videos have not been released.

Prepare

Preview the film, especially unit 5. Gather a Bible, pencils or crayons, and your chosen student pages. Read the questions before viewing. Tell children to notice who John points toward and how people respond.

Materials and differentiation

The complete packet contains this four-page guide, a two-page Draw & Tell activity, and a three-page Read & Write worksheet (9 pages total). Younger children may draw, dictate, or answer orally. Older children can compare one scene with its Scripture source. Use only the pages that serve your lesson.

Watch the story and find the free resources

Seven narrative units

Use these times to find each unit in the full film.

1. The Promised Child | 0:00-4:24 | Scenes 1-3

God keeps his promise and prepares John to point to Jesus.

Ask: What did Gabriel announce? How did Elizabeth and Mary respond?
Listen for: John would prepare people for the Lord. The families praise God and receive his promise with joy.

2. The Voice in the Wilderness | 4:24-8:24 | Scenes 4-6

Repentance changes our actions: share, be honest, and treat people fairly.

Ask: What actions did John ask people to change?
Listen for: Sharing food and clothing, collecting only what is owed, and refusing threats or false accusations show repentance.

3. Revealing the Savior | 8:24-11:09 | Scenes 7-9

John identifies Jesus and gladly helps others follow him.

Ask: Why did John point his own followers toward Jesus?
Listen for: Jesus is the Savior. John's task was to help people find him, rather than collect praise for himself.

4. Humility and Prayer | 11:09-13:14 | Scenes 10-11

Humility makes room for Jesus; prayer turns our hearts toward the Father.

Ask: How can we let Jesus become more important in daily life?
Listen for: Give thanks for others' gifts, pray, share attention, and serve without seeking applause.

Seven narrative units

Use these times to find each unit in the full film.

5. Faithfulness Through Suffering | 13:14-18:20 | Scenes 12-15

John remains faithful when telling the truth brings suffering.

Ask: How did Herod respond when truth became difficult?
Listen for: He imprisoned John and later chose his guests' approval over protecting an innocent man. A wrong promise should be refused.

6. His Witness Lives On | 18:20-21:58 | Scenes 16-19

John is a witness who helps people recognize and believe in Jesus.

Ask: What does it mean for a person to be a witness?
Listen for: A witness tells what is true and helps others recognize it. John's words continued leading people to Jesus after his death.

7. Fulfillment and Our Response | 21:58-25:21 | Scenes 20-22

John prepared the way; Jesus gives new life through water and the Holy Spirit.

Ask: Why was John's baptism a preparation for something greater?
Listen for: John called people to repentance. Christian Baptism gives new life in Christ through water and the Holy Spirit.

A concrete response

Make a small Prepare the Way card. Choose one specific act of generosity, honesty, prayer, or welcome. Name when and where you will do it. Invite children to report back voluntarily; do not turn giving or prayer into a competition.

Closing prayer

Jesus, help us prepare a place for you in our hearts. Teach us to share, speak truth with love, and point others toward you. Give us courage and humble joy. Amen.

Answer notes and teaching care

Read & Write answer notes

1. Gabriel; Zechariah and Elizabeth; John. 2. Order: Gabriel's promise, John's birth, preaching at the Jordan, Jesus' Baptism, imprisonment, later witness in Acts. 3. Accept sharing, fair collecting, honesty, or refusing threats. 4. Father speaks, Son is baptized, Spirit descends like a dove. 5. John points to Jesus, who saves us from sin; the title connects with the Mass. 6. Humility rejoices in another's good and makes room for Jesus. 7. Jesus' works of healing and good news answer the messengers. 8. Herod should refuse an evil request, even after a promise. 9. John prepared people; Christian Baptism gives new life in Christ through water and the Spirit. 10. Accept a specific, safe, practical action.

Teach with care

The story includes imprisonment, an unjust execution, and grief. Explain John's death briefly without graphic description or reenactment. Courage never requires a child to remain in danger, confront an unsafe person, or keep harmful secrets; seek a trusted adult. Humility does not mean worthlessness. Do not generalize the actions of particular leaders to all Jewish people; Jesus, Mary, John, and the apostles were Jewish.

Keep the distinctions clear

Jesus had no sins to repent of. John is not Jesus, the Messiah, or Elijah reincarnated. John came in Elijah's spirit and power. The Spirit is depicted descending like a dove. Scripture does not state John's precise reason for sending his question from prison. The film dramatizes and paraphrases Scripture; use a Bible for exact wording. Children should not imitate adult fasting without appropriate parental guidance.

Scripture for preparation and follow-up

Luke 1 - promise, Visitation, and birth

Luke 3 - repentance and the Jordan

John 1 - witness and Lamb of God

John 3:22-30 - humility

Luke 7:18-35 - John and Jesus

Mark 6:14-29 - imprisonment and death

Matthew 17:9-13; 21:23-32 - Elijah and authority

John 10:40-42 - enduring witness

Acts 1; 11:15-18; 18:24-28; 19:1-7 - fulfillment