
“Good News! Point the Way and Spread the Word”

Sunday School Lesson on Mark 1:1-8 about the John the Baptist Pointing to Jesus



Make way! Someone special is coming! Who wouldn't want to be the bearer of good news? The task of John the Baptist was an important one. He announced the coming of the Messiah. But he was not always celebrated and appreciated. He also brought a message calling people to repentance, and he wasn't afraid to call out sin. John was eventually arrested and beheaded for his outspoken proclamations against wrongdoing. However, as we see the prophet at the beginning of Mark's gospel, we focus on the importance of who he was and how God sent him to prepare the way for Jesus.

Lesson focus: This lesson looks at John the Baptist and his role as God's messenger pointing to Jesus. John brought the good news (Gospel!) that God was fulfilling His promise to send a savior. John bore some similarities to the great Old Testament prophet Elijah, with his wild elements. He also reflected important connections to Christ's life and ministry, with his desert preaching a "staging area" of sorts for Jesus. John baptized people in the Jordan river, which was also significant to the story of Israel. This lesson emphasizes how John pointed the way to Christ, and we can do the same.

Passage: Mark 1:1-8

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade (variable for activity emphasis)

Materials Needed: Construction paper, scissors, decorations, glue, string, hole punch, paper plates, clothespins, paper towel/toilet paper tubes (empty), markers/crayons, Bible (optional, depending on crafts and activities of choice).



Games and Lesson Introduction

Lesson Opening: This lesson covers John the Baptist, looking at who he was, what message God gave him, and his role in announcing the coming Messiah. Point out key elements to children, while encouraging them to also proclaim and point the way to Christ.

Here are some activities to get kids thinking... (select the best ones for your audience and age group):

- Roll out the red carpet! Find pictures of famous movie stars or royalty figures arriving at places. Note the crowds and attention given to such people. Host a “parade” of sorts in the classroom area, calling off names of students one by one in a grand proclamation of their coming.
- Turn around! The term “repent” reflects a turning. Play a variation on “red light/green light” in which students attempt to reach a designated spot in the room by walking in a slow, straight line. At intervals, call out “repent”, at which point students must turn 180 degrees and change directions. For an added alteration, provide instruction for turning only a portion of a circle, and watch the zigzag that ensues as kids go in different directions.
- “Extra, extra!” Have students form small groups and come up with a brief “newsreel” skit of how they might announce an important piece of news.
- Tactile experience: examine the pieces of John’s “uniform”: allow children to touch and feel hairy clothes (if you don’t have camel hair handy, try wool or fur) and leather (like the belt). Show off pictures of locusts, or actual grasshoppers, if available. Tasting optional.
- Sandal relay: John declared that he was unworthy to untie the strap of Christ’s sandal. Allow students to form lines and race relay-style back and forth across a room, tying a shoelace at one end of the play area.
- Point it out! John was sent to prepare and point the way to Christ. Have students gaze upon a seek and find picture or look for certain things in a map or large drawing. Provide bells for them to ring when they find certain elements.



Explain to students that we will be talking about a special messenger that God sent to prepare for Jesus. This unique prophet had a message of great news to share, and his job was to point to Jesus. We have a similar role, and we can share the joy of Christ with those around us!

Ask: How do you get information about things around you? Do you read or watch the news? How does it make you feel?

Sunday School Lesson (Mark 1:1-8) John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus

Bible Lesson: This pericope describes former prophecies given by God in the Old Testament, as well as the message brought by John the Baptist. The passage itself is not too lengthy and could easily be split into sections of verses to be read by students and/or teachers. For younger students, it might be optimal for a leader to read the passage portion by portion, explaining what takes place as it unfolds.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²*As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,*

*“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,*

³*the voice of one crying in the wilderness:*

*‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”*

-Mark 1:1-3

The wilderness is an important place in the Bible. The Israelites got stuck in the wilderness in the Old Testament, but that served as an important place for them to develop and learn to rely on God. Jesus went into the wilderness to prepare for His ministry. In this passage, we recall that God promised to send a messenger to prepare the way for the Lord. This would be someone “crying in the wilderness.” The prophet Isaiah gave this sign, promising that one would come ahead of the Messiah to tell others about Him. Well, the name of this person was John the Baptist. As we prepare for Advent, he is an important figure to look at, because he helped prepare the way for Jesus.

Ask: How do you prepare for company? Do you clean things, or make arrangements or phone calls to people? What would you do to prepare for Jesus??



John came and baptized people in the wilderness, fulfilling that ancient prophecy. He called people to repent and ask for forgiveness. Explain that John was a well-known, if eccentric figure, and a lot of people came out to hear him and get baptized by him.

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness, and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. -Mark 1:4-5

The people of this time period were experiencing some tough things. God's people had long waited for a savior, and they were ready to listen to someone who had news from the Lord. They turned to John for help and hope, and sometimes they asked if he was the one God had sent to rescue them. But John was quick to deflect that attention, and to point to Jesus instead. John was called by God, and had an interesting lifestyle as such...

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." -Mark 1:6-8

John's manner of dress mirrors the wild elements that were displayed by the prophet Elijah, who came long before him. His food preferences also reflect that wild nature, and might also symbolize a sense of being clean and pure. John told the people that the one coming after him was who they should follow and heed. He recognized that his role was just to make way for the coming of Jesus. He knew Jesus would be far greater and do far more than he ever could. We, like John, should remember that God has sent us to tell others the good news of Jesus. The Gospel means "good news", and we have good news to share!

Ask: How can you point to Jesus? What are some things we can do to remember His importance and share that with those around us?

Close with a prayer thanking God for sending us Jesus. Ask for help as we serve as messengers and announcers proclaiming the good news of Christ's coming.



Sunday School Crafts: John Prepares the Way

Crafts: Here are a few crafts that feature elements of the story. You might also consider crafts that feature Advent.

- “Bugs on a Plate” craft
- “Point the way” map or compass
- “Announcement noisemaker”

These crafts focus on John the Baptist and his role as the one who made way for the Messiah. John had an important message to share with God’s people, and he boldly proclaimed the coming of Christ. As we discuss this with children and remind them that they, too, can tell others about Jesus, these crafts celebrate John and his job. A noisemaker honors the joy of getting attention and making announcements. A map reminds us that we can point the way to Christ, just as John did. And just for fun, “bugs on a plate” are a reminder of John the Baptist’s unique dietary habits!

Verses or Captions to Consider... (Main Text: Mark 1:1-8)

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

*“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,*

³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

*‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”*

-Mark 1:1-3

“And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.” -Mark 1:7

I may not eat bugs and honey...but I can still point to Jesus like John the Baptist!

Message Map...Point the Way to Christ!

Prepare the way for Jesus!



Craft one: “Announcement Noisemaker”

You will need:

- Paper towel or toilet paper tube
- Markers, stickers, or other decorating materials
- Glue and/or Tape
- Scissors
- Bells
- Pipe cleaners or string



Procedure:

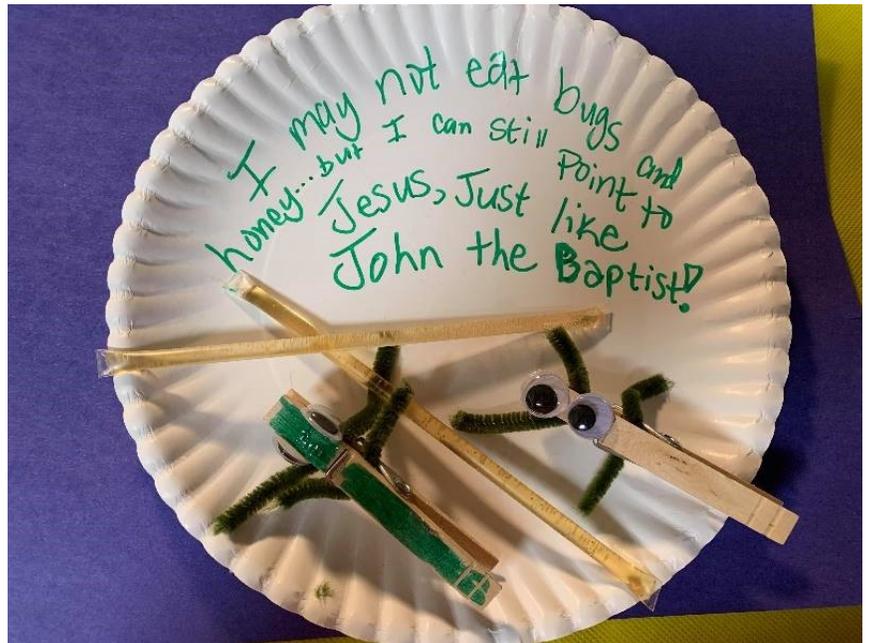
1. Decorate the tube with stickers, markers, and captions.
2. Attach streamers, ribbons, and jingle bells for flair and noise effect.
3. Secure additional decorations with tape or glue as desired. You can shake the “announcer” or use it as a megaphone by speaking into it. Have fun!



Craft Two: “Bugs on a Plate”

You will need:

- Clothespins
- Paper (construction)
- Paper Plates
- Markers or crayons
- Glue and/or tape
- Honey (optional)
- Scissors
- Pipe cleaners
- Google eyes



Procedure:

1. Decorate your clothespins as “bugs”, adding pipe cleaner legs and google eyes, if desired.
2. Decorate the paper and/or paper plate with captions, verses, and additional pictures.
3. Attach the “locusts” and honey (if using) to the plate. Secure with tape or glue if you wish to hang the plate as a decoration. Alternatively, use the plate as a holding area, and use the locusts for fun gags with friends!



Craft Three: "Point the Way Map"

You will need:

- Paper or Styrofoam cup
- Paper (construction)
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Decorative supplies (stickers, glitter, etc.)
- Crayons or markers



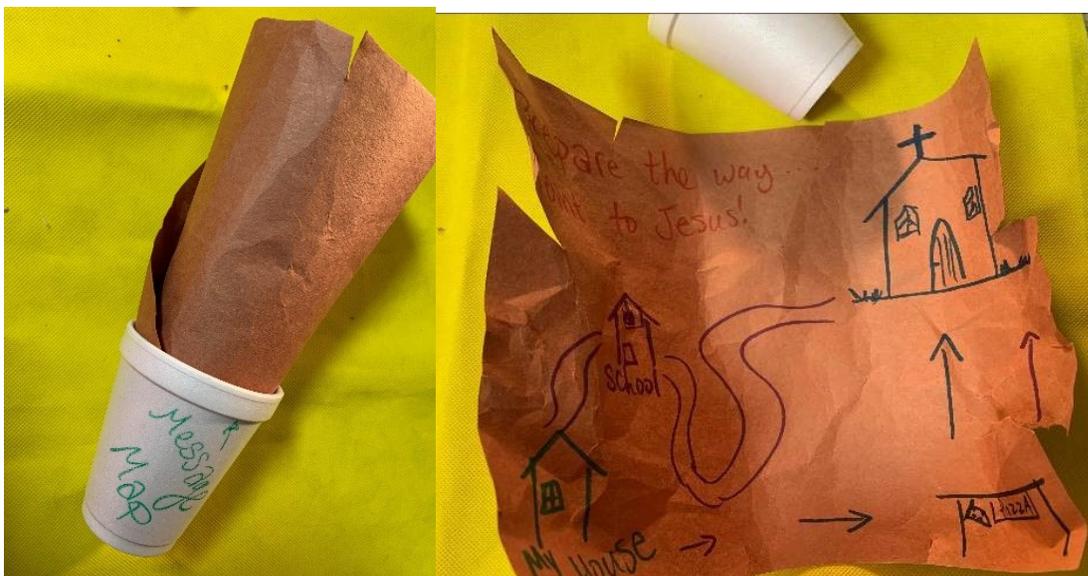
Procedure:

1. Design a place for the map to represent: it could be a treasure hunt of sorts, or a picture of a familiar place like a house or town.

2. Decorate the map with pictures and extra decorations.

3. If desired, make the map look old and authentic by tearing tiny slits and crumpling the paper.

4. Decorate the cup and use it to hold the map safely.





This lesson was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#), who serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO.

She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.

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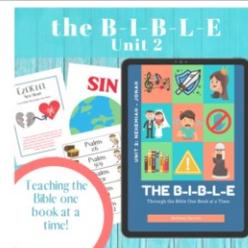
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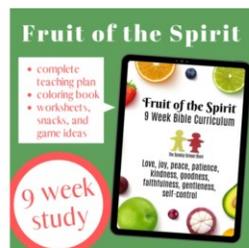
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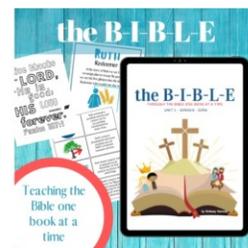
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