



Dear Parents:

This page lets you know what your child learned today at church. Included are suggested discussion questions and possible activities that you may use to reinforce the Bible story at home. Please ask your child to share today's story with you. You may be surprised at how much he or she remembers!

TODAY'S STORY: JESUS' BAPTISM

Jesus begins His ministry, and it becomes apparent that it will be different than anything expected. In fact, the concept of "God's people" immediately becomes broader – it's those whose hearts are right with God. God commissions His beloved Son for the task ahead of Him.

Today your child learned that even before Jesus comes on the scene, John shows that he understands something of God's Kingdom by telling people that it's time to prepare for it. It is time for people to turn away from the wrong things they had been doing, because God's Kingdom isn't about being a part of King David's physical kingdom. It's about the condition of peoples' hearts. Then John gives an exciting promise to the people – this Promised King will do more than forgive their sins; He will give them God's Spirit! John recognises Jesus for who He is when He comes to be baptised, and God makes it known that Jesus is His beloved Son.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Matthew 3:1-17; Luke 3:1-18, 21-22

FOCUS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"God wants me to do the right thing."

NEXT WEEK'S STORY: THE CENTURION

(Matthew 8:5-13)

PRAYER:

God, You have told us that Jesus is your beloved Son. Please help us to live as your children, too!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What did God want His prophet John to tell people?
- What did God want John to do for people?
- What did John tell the religious leaders?
- How did John tell the crowd to act?
- What were the tax collectors told?
- What were the soldiers told?
- How did John say the Promised King would baptise people?
- Why did John baptise Jesus?
- What happened after Jesus was baptised?
- Who should be baptised? Why?

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

Baptism expresses the forgiveness of our sins and the freedom to live a new life in Christ.

Use the below activity to help explain the purpose of baptism to your children. Be sure to emphasise that it is not the act of baptism or the water itself that brings this new life in Christ. Baptism is an expression – a symbol – of what Jesus has already done in a person's heart.

What you'll need:

~ Toilet paper

~ Large bowl of water

Object Lesson:

Explain that the toilet paper will represent sin in our lives. Then ask your child to hold out his/her hand. Wrap the roll of toilet paper at least ten times around the fingers of one hand. Make sure it is snug so your child cannot spread his/her fingers apart. (Have him/her try it.) Discuss how we are all bound by the sin in our lives. Because of our sin, we are separated from God. However, Jesus will forgive us and make us clean again – giving us new lives. Now have your child submerge the hand wrapped in paper in the water. Count to 20. Then have your child spread his/her fingers, removing his/her hand and leaving the "sin" behind!



WASHING AWAY

This is fun activity to help demonstrate that nothing can wash away our sins except Jesus, but it is your responsibility to choose Him!

What you'll need:

- ~ Oreo cookies
- ~ Various liquids (such as milk, water, orange juice, mouthwash, etc)
- ~ Toothpaste & toothbrush



Activity:

1. Provide each of your children (and their friends) with several Oreo cookies.
2. Give them 30 seconds to eat as many Oreos as they can. Whichever child eats the most Oreos gets to choose first in the next step.
3. Place the gathered items (various liquids, toothbrush, toothpaste, etc) in front of the children. *The toothbrush & toothpaste should be considered one item.* Each child is allowed to choose one item. *But don't tell them what it will be used for!*
4. Each person needs to eat one more Oreo and then try to clean their teeth with their chosen item. Give them one minute for eating and cleaning.
5. Award the one with the cleanest teeth a surprise.
6. Use this activity to begin a discussion about what it takes (*only Jesus!*) to wash away our sins.

JESUS & JOHN RHYME

Practice the following rhyme to help remember today's story.



To the river went Jesus
and John,

(Place hands together palm
to palm and wiggle them
as if floating down a river)

God was proud of His only
Son.

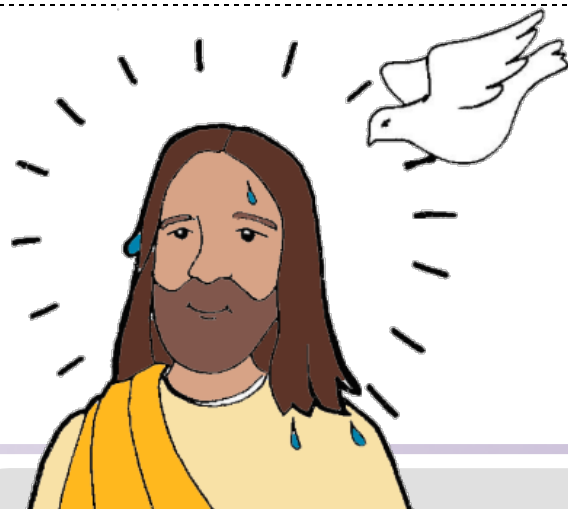
(Hold up a thumb)

On His head it looked like
a dove,

(Place both hands on head
and wiggle fingers like a
dove has landed)

The Holy Spirit came from
above.

(Point to heaven)



THREE IN ONE

"As soon as Jesus was baptised, He came up out of the water. Then heaven opened, and He saw God's Spirit coming down on Him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love, and I am very pleased with Him.'" ~ Matthew 3:16-17, NCV

This story refers to the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Spirit. Your children may be confused about the issue of how these three beings can actually be just one God (the Trinity). This activity tries to simply explain the concept to children in a creative way.

What you'll need:

- ~ ½ cup of salt
- ~ ½ cup of water
- ~ 1 cup of flour
- ~ bowl & mixer

Object Lesson:

1. Hold up the cup of flour. Pretend this is God the Father. White is a symbol of purity, and we know that God is purest of the pure. Turn the flour over into your bowl.
2. Hold up the container of salt. Pretend this is Jesus. Jesus told us in Matthew 5:13 that we are the salt of the earth, meaning we "flavour" the earth by sharing God's Word. Jesus was the original salt. Turn the salt over into your bowl.
3. Hold up the container of water. Pretend this is the Holy Spirit. In John 3:5, Jesus says that no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Add the water to the other ingredients.
4. Mix well. While mixing, ask these questions: "Is the salt still in here?" "Is the flour still in here?" "Is the water still in here?" Now they're all one substance. Definitely three; definitely one!
5. You now have homemade playdough. Hold up the dough, and create something!