



John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus Mark 1:1-8

Young children feel important when they're asked to do something special that adults do. At this time of year, they love to help with Christmas preparations such as shopping, wrapping, baking, and even cleaning the house. Use this lesson to show children that getting their hearts ready for Jesus is the most important Christmas preparation they can make.



► **Bible Point**
We prepare our hearts for Jesus.

Key Verse
"Create in me a pure heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10).

Weaving Faith Into Life
Kids will get their hearts ready for Jesus by asking for forgiveness when they sin.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started	Getting Ready <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Pretend to prepare for Christmas, and learn the Key Verse.	Bibles, My Bible Fun, CD player, pencils, crayons, copies of the lyrics page (at the end of the lesson) Teacher Pack: CD	Tear out the Lesson 1 pages from each My Bible Fun student book.
2 Bible Exploration	Let's Join John! <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Meet John the Baptist.	Bible, CD player Teacher Pack: CD, "John Preaches About Jesus" (from the Big Bible Poster Pack) 	Designate an area of your room to be the "desert."
	Locusts and Honey <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Make edible "locusts."	pretzel sticks, pretzel bites, honey, plates, antibacterial gel (optional)	
	Prepare the Way <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Hear the rest of the Bible story, and clean up.	Bible, CD player, cleaning materials Teacher Pack: CD	

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<p>3</p> <p>Weaving Faith Into Life</p>	<p>Clean for Jesus <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Commit to making their hearts ready for Jesus.</p>	<p>My Bible Fun, crayons, scissors, tape Teacher Pack: “Christmas Tree” poster</p> 	
<p>4</p> <p>Lasting Impressions</p>	<p>Daily Challenges <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God’s Word.</p>	My Bible Fun	
	<p>Weaving Faith at Home <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.</p>	My Bible Fun	Tear out the letter to parents from the back of each My Bible Fun student book.

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



Getting Ready Supplies

Bibles
My Bible Fun
CD player
pencils
crayons
copies of the lyrics
page (at the end of the
lesson)
Teacher Pack
CD: "Create in Me"
(Psalm 51:10) (track 2)

Getting Ready Easy Prep

Tear out the Lesson 1
pages from each My
Bible Fun student book.

1 GETTING STARTED

Getting Ready

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went.

Gather everyone together.

Say: **Let's pretend to get ready for Christmas. What things does your family do to get ready?** As each child shares an idea, have the group pretend to do that activity. Your children may mention things such as decorating, wrapping presents, or making cookies. Simple actions will work best. For example, for making cookies, kids would pretend to hold a bowl with one hand and stir with the other.

Say: **People do lots of different things to get ready for Christmas. Getting ready for something special can be fun! Today we'll hear in the Bible about a man named John the Baptist who told people to get ready for something really special: Jesus. John the Baptist told the people to get their hearts ready because Jesus was coming. At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus coming to earth as a baby, and like the people in the Bible, ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS.**

Help kids find Psalm 51:10 in their Bibles. Say: **Our Key Verse today, Psalm 51:10, tells us how we can get ready for Jesus. Listen while I read it: "Create in me a pure heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10).** Have the children repeat the verse with you several times.

Say: **Another word for *pure* is *clean*. So our verse means that we want God to make our hearts clean. John told the people they needed to clean their hearts for Jesus. We clean our hearts and make them pure for Jesus, too. I'll show you what I mean.**

Distribute pencils, crayons, and the My Bible Fun pages. Point out the "Clean Hearts" section.

Say: **Look at the hearts on this page. They look nice and clean, don't they? But when we sin, or do bad things, that sin makes our hearts dirty. Watch what happens when we sin.** Have children use pencils to color in the heart on the left side of their pages. Then say: **Look how dirty your heart looks now! That's what sin does to us.**

Say: **We ask God to help us clean our hearts from sin. Use a light-colored crayon to write the word "God" in the center of the other heart.** Allow time.

Say: **Look at your hearts. The sin made one heart dirty, but the heart with God in it is nice and clean. That's what our Key Verse is all about. God wants to make our hearts clean. That's why God sent Jesus—so we can be forgiven for our sins and have clean hearts. Let's sing a song about asking God to clean our hearts.**



Hand out the lyrics pages. Then play “Create in Me” (Psalm 51:10) (track 2 on the CD). If time allows, play the song a few times and invite children to sing along. Form two groups, and let them take turns singing the lines.



 **Create in me a clean heart, O God.**
Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Renew a right spirit within me, won't you?
Renew a right spirit within me.
Renew a right spirit within me, won't you?
Renew a right spirit within me, within me.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. (echo)
Create in me a clean heart, O God. (echo)
Create in me a clean heart, O God. (echo)
Create in me a clean heart, O God. (echo)

Renew a right spirit within me, won't you?
Renew a right spirit within me.
Renew a right spirit within me, won't you?
Renew a right spirit within me.
(Repeat.)

Within me, within me.

“Create in Me” (Psalm 51:10) by Ben Glover. © 2004 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What do you like about getting ready for something special?**
- **Why is Jesus special to you?**
- **Why do you want to prepare your heart for Jesus?**

Say: **At Christmastime we do all kinds of things to get ready for the holiday, but we don't want to forget the most special part of Christmas: Jesus' birth! This Christmas, let's remember that ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS, who came to forgive our sins and make our hearts clean forever.**





Let's Join John! Supplies

Bible
CD player
Teacher Pack
CD: "Desert Sounds"
(track 3)
"John Preaches About
Jesus" (from the Big
Bible Poster Pack)

Let's Join John! Easy Prep

Designate an area of
your room to be the
"desert."

2 BIBLE EXPLORATION

Let's Join John!

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Gather your children away from the area you designated to be the "desert." Open your Bible to Mark 1:1-8, and show kids the passage. Say: **The verses we're reading today are in the book of Mark in the New Testament. But there's some history to what happened—beginning way back in the Old Testament, in the book of Isaiah.**

Say: **Turn and tell a friend about a piece of history you know about your own family.** Allow time. If children struggle with ideas, encourage them to share about something they know about their parents or grandparents that happened before they were born.

Say: **In Isaiah, God gives us a clue about John the Baptist. Listen to what the Bible says.** Read aloud Mark 1:2-3.

Say: **A long time before John and Jesus were even born, Isaiah said John would be a messenger who'd come before Jesus to prepare the way for him. John would live in the desert and tell people about Jesus' coming. Let's go to the desert ourselves!**

Have children form a line behind you. Tell them that you're going to lead them to the desert. Say: **As we go, I'll call out, "Prepare the way for the Lord!" And each time I say that, you'll respond by calling out, "Make straight paths for him!"** Check for understanding.

Lead kids around the room, having them respond to your call three or four times. Then play "Desert Sounds" (track 3 on the CD), and lead children in a path toward the area of the room you've designated as the desert. As you "travel," encourage kids to try to identify the sounds on the CD. When you get to the desert, have kids sit.

Show the "John Preaches About Jesus" poster and point out John the Baptist. Say: **While John was in the desert, he told the people to get their hearts ready for Jesus by asking for forgiveness for their sins. Let's hear what the Bible says about that.** Read aloud Mark 1:4-5.

Have the children pair off. Encourage them to pretend to be John and baptize each other in a river.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Why might someone want to be baptized?** (If you'd like to talk to kids about your church's beliefs regarding baptism, this is a good opportunity to do so.)
- **What do you think was very important about John's message?**





- What can you do to respond to John’s message?

Say: **John the Baptist went before Jesus to tell all the people to get their hearts ready! The Messiah who they’d been waiting for all those years was finally coming to save them. Jesus came for all of us too, and ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS so we can hear him and know him better.**

Locusts and Honey

What You’ll Do ■■■■■■

Have kids clean their hands. Then say: **Mark 1:6 tells us more about John the Baptist. It says, “John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.” Let’s eat like John did and prepare some locusts and honey for a snack.**

Have children form four groups: the Gatherers, the Leggings, the Honeys, and the Body Builders. The Gatherers will put a pretzel bite and three pretzel sticks on a plate and hand it to the Leggings. The Leggings will break the pretzel sticks in half and put six half-pieces on each plate, passing each plate on to the Honeys. The Honeys will put a thin line of honey on each side of each pretzel bite. The Body Builders will stick the pretzel sticks on the sides of the pretzel bites to make the snacks look like bugs.

If you’ve left the desert area, let the children each take a snack back to the desert. Then let kids eat.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

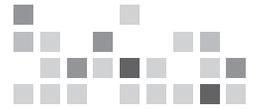
- Explain whether you think you prepared the snacks carefully.
- How was that like or unlike how carefully you prepare your heart for Jesus?
- What things can you do to prepare your heart for Jesus?

Say: **We all had important jobs in making our snacks. John the Baptist had an important job, too. Even before John was born, Isaiah said John would prepare the way for Jesus by telling people that Jesus was coming. John the Baptist told the people to prepare their hearts for Jesus. Like the people in the Bible, ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS.**

Prepare the Way

What You’ll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **The Bible even tells us some of the exact words John the Baptist said to the people in the desert. Let’s hear those now.** Read aloud Mark 1:7-8.



Locusts and Honey Supplies

- pretzel sticks
- pretzel bites
- honey
- plates
- antibacterial gel (optional)

! ALLERGY ALERT

Prepare the Way Supplies

- Bible
- CD player
- cleaning materials
- Teacher Pack**
- CD: “Create in Me” (Psalm 51:10) (track 2)





Say: First he said he wasn't "worthy" to stoop down and untie Jesus' sandals. That means that he didn't feel good enough to do even a simple thing like that. Think about a time you felt you didn't deserve something. Allow time.

Say: I bet all of us have had a time like that. But John probably didn't mean to make people feel bad. He probably wanted the people to understand how great Jesus really is. He wanted people to prepare their hearts for Jesus.

Say: One way we prepare is to clean. For example, when someone special comes over, you might clean up before that special person arrives. Let's spend some time cleaning the mess we made during our snack activity.

Ensure every child has a part to play in the cleaning process. Then say: **While we clean our mess, let's think silently about some things we might want God to clean up in our hearts. For example, we know it's not right to lie. Think of some other things you want God to help you clean up.**

Play "Create in Me" (Psalm 51:10) (track 2 on the CD), and lead kids in cleaning the room. Encourage the children to reflect on things they want to clean in their hearts.

After the song, have kids gather and sit in a circle. Say: **Jesus loves it when we take the time to prepare our hearts for him. John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize the people with the Holy Spirit. That means when we prepare our hearts by asking God to forgive us for the wrong things we do, God comes into our hearts and our lives and helps us do more right things.**

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- What was it like for you to clean up the mess?
- What's easy or hard about cleaning your heart?
- How much do you think *you* have to do to make your heart clean? What does God do?

Say: **Cleaning may take some work, and it may mean we come across some dirty things that we don't like to look at. But it's worth it. In the same way, ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS because we know it's very important. And when our hearts are ready, Jesus can live in us and help clean our hearts.**





3

**WEAVING FAITH
INTO LIFE**

Clean for Jesus

What You'll Do

Say: **John told the people to get ready for Jesus by telling God they were sorry for the bad things they had done, and he told them to stop doing those bad things. That's what repentance is—saying sorry for the bad things we've done and not doing those bad things anymore. We need Jesus to help us stop doing bad things, and that's why ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS. Right now, right where we're sitting, let's do what John said. Tell God you're sorry for something specific you know you did wrong. Pause as children pray.**

Hang the "Christmas Tree" poster at the children's eye level. Give each child his or her My Bible Fun page. Then have kids cut out the line of hearts in the "Clean for Jesus" activity on the bottom of the page. Say: **Write a message or draw a picture for God on the back of your strip of paper. Then when you're done, tape your paper, Key Verse side out, to the "Christmas Tree" poster. This tree will remind us of how God cleans our hearts.**

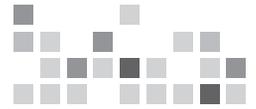
Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What are some things people do that God can clean up?**
- **Tell about a time someone forgave you when you said you were sorry.**
- **How does that remind you that God forgives you and helps you clean your heart?**
- **Why are you thankful that God helps us clean our hearts?**

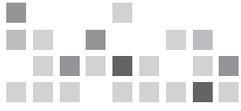
Say: **John the Baptist told the people to prepare their hearts for Jesus, kind of like we did as we put our messages to God on the Christmas tree. Let's remember that ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS.**



Clean for Jesus Supplies

-
- My Bible Fun
 - crayons
 - scissors
 - tape
 - Teacher Pack**
 - "Christmas Tree" poster





Daily Challenges Supplies

My Bible Fun

4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **Let's think about how ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS.**

Have kids find this week's Daily Challenges on their My Bible Fun pages and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- **Ask someone to join you in decorating your room for Christmas, and as you decorate, tell why you want to prepare your heart for Jesus.**
- **Before bed, think about different choices you made that day. Then pray and ask God to create a clean, pure heart in you.**
- **Sing a song of praise to Jesus for his forgiveness.**

Make sure you choose a Daily Challenge as well, and tell kids what you chose. Kids will be more inclined to follow through on their commitments when they see you doing the same.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, a place, and other ideas.**

Say: **God is always glad when ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS. When John the Baptist spoke to the people, he wanted them to understand how special Jesus is, and that's why he told the people to get ready for Jesus to come. Let's remember this week that ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS, and let's carry that out with our Daily Challenges.**





Weaving Faith at Home

Send the letter to parents home with your kids or give it to parents when they pick up their children. This is a great way to show families they're important to your church and to support their role as spiritual leaders to their children.

Encourage kids to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about how we prepare our hearts for Jesus. Kids can also do the activities in the "HomeConnect" section of their My Bible Fun pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church's families. Available at group.com/digital.

Pray with your kids, thanking God that he cleans our hearts when we ask for forgiveness.
Pray: **God, we know how special you and Jesus are and we want you in our lives. Please forgive us of our sins and clean our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.**



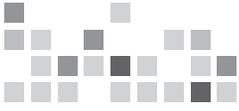
Weaving Faith at Home Supplies

.....
My Bible Fun

Weaving Faith at Home Easy Prep

.....
Tear out the letter to parents from the back of each My Bible Fun student book.





Lyrics

Create in Me (Psalm 51:10)

Create in me a clean heart, O God.
 Create in me a clean heart, O God.
 Create in me a clean heart, O God.
 Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Renew a right spirit within me, won't you?
 Renew a right spirit within me.
 Renew a right spirit within me, won't you?
 Renew a right spirit within me, within me.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. *(echo)*
 Create in me a clean heart, O God. *(echo)*
 Create in me a clean heart, O God. *(echo)*
 Create in me a clean heart, O God. *(echo)*

Renew a right spirit within me, won't you?
 Renew a right spirit within me.
 Renew a right spirit within me, won't you?
 Renew a right spirit within me.
(Repeat.)

Within me, within me.

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