



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

Most third- and fourth-graders have helped their parents get ready for company. Usually this involves a lot of action. They might help move small furniture. They clean their rooms. Getting ready for Jesus involves similar preparation. It's easy for kids to see that getting ready for Jesus means taking action. Use this lesson to help kids also see that getting ready for Jesus doesn't necessarily involve doing good things, but involves a change of attitude.



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

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started	Banana Anna <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Try to draw a surprise based on simple clues.	bananas (1 per person), paper, markers, antibacterial gel (optional)	Hide a banana where kids won't see it.
2 Bible Exploration	Reading the Clues <i>(about 25 min.)</i> Create pictures from clues given in the Bible about Jesus; then act in unusual ways—just like John did.	Bibles, CD player, paper, colored pencils or markers, construction paper, scissors, tape Teacher Pack: CD, "Clue" cards, Bible Timeline 	

Key Verse
"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

Weaving Faith Into Life
Children will discover ways to get ready for Jesus.

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.

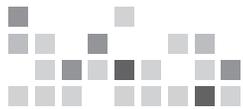




LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	Guess Who's Coming <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Analyze clues to figure out who is being depicted.	Bible Truth Sleuth, paper, pens	Tear out the Lesson 1 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.
	A Pure Heart <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Sing a song to learn the Key Verse.	Bible Truth Sleuth, copies of the lyrics page (at the end of this lesson), CD player, pens Teacher Pack: CD	
4 Lasting Impressions	Daily Challenges <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Bible Truth Sleuth	
	Weaving Faith at Home <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.	Bible Truth Sleuth	Tear out the letter to parents from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.

***Bold text** within the lesson is spoken text.*





Banana Anna Supplies

bananas (1 per person)
paper
markers
antibacterial gel
(optional)

! ALLERGY ■ ALERT

Banana Anna Easy Prep

Hide a banana where
kids won't see it.

1 GETTING STARTED

Banana Anna

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

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

Say: **I'm expecting a special surprise...but so far it hasn't arrived.** Give kids paper and markers.

A special surprise will arrive soon. In order to get ready for the arrival of this surprise, let's learn a little bit about it first. I'll describe the surprise, and I want you to draw a picture of it. There are a few rules, though. You must listen to the entire description before you draw. You'll have only the information I'll give you. You can't ask any questions, so listen closely. I'll tell you when you can start drawing, and you'll have only two minutes to draw. Is everyone ready? Pause. **Let's get started!**

The surprise comes from very far away. Pause. **It's thin and very rich.** Pause. **It's been on television and in at least one movie.** Pause. **It can disappear very quickly.**

Okay, you only have two minutes to draw your pictures, so you'll have to draw fast. Are you ready? Pause. **Go!** After two minutes, retrieve the banana from its hiding place but don't let kids see it yet.

I'm happy to say our special surprise has arrived! I'm pleased to introduce you to (pause and pull out the banana) **Banana Anna!**

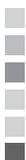
Now let's take a look at how your pictures compare with Banana Anna. Our first description was that bananas come from very far away. Bananas come from tropical countries, so they have to be shipped here. The second clue was that bananas are thin. Well, if you look at Banana Anna, you will see that it is quite thin. Our third clue was that bananas are very rich. Bananas are rich in nutrients. The next clue was that the banana has been on television and in at least one movie. You can see bananas in TV commercials, and there have been funny movies made in which people slip on banana peels. Our last clue was that a banana could disappear very quickly. If you watch closely, you'll see that happen. Have kids clean their hands, and then give a banana to each child. Allow kids to peel and eat the bananas.

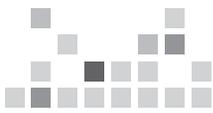
Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- How accurate were your sketches of the surprise? Explain.
- What would have helped you draw a more accurate sketch?





- Why do you or don't you think the description you were given helped you prepare for the surprise?

Say: Today we're going to learn about John the Baptist and what he did to try to help people get ready for the arrival of the Messiah—the person God promised to send to save humanity. Jesus is the Messiah, but because of John's description of Jesus people didn't recognize him when he finally came. As a result, they weren't ready for him. Today we'll explore the ways ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS and why that's important.



2 BIBLE EXPLORATION

Reading the Clues

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Have kids sit in a circle. Show them the Bible Timeline, and invite kids to find and point to the "John Baptizes Jesus" picture.

Say: Today we're looking at the event at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. To get started, let's look in the Bible at the book of Mark.

Invite a willing child to read aloud Mark 1:1-4.

Say: John the Baptist was the messenger sent ahead of Jesus to tell people to get ready for Jesus' arrival.

Ask:

- John said that asking for forgiveness and turning away from sin—doing wrong—is part of preparing for Jesus. Why do you think those things are important?

Invite another willing child to read aloud Mark 1:5-8.

Say: Baptism is a way to show you're ready for Jesus. During a baptism people are dipped under water to show that they're being cleansed of their sins. Even though Jesus never sinned, Jesus wanted to be baptized, too.

Now let's look at a passage from the book of Isaiah that gives clues about Jesus.

Invite a willing child to read aloud Isaiah 40:1-5.

Ask:

- What about the passage from Isaiah gives hints about Jesus?
- From the descriptions of Jesus we've read, why do or don't you think you'd be able to recognize Jesus if you saw him?

Reading the Clues Supplies

- Bibles
- CD player
- paper
- colored pencils or markers
- construction paper
- scissors
- tape
- Teacher Pack**
- CD: "Circus Music" (track 2)
- "Clue" cards
- Bible Timeline





Say: **When people heard John talking about Jesus, they were very excited. They thought that a mighty warrior or powerful king was coming to save them. Imagine their surprise when Jesus, their Messiah, was born in a stable! Jesus didn't come as the people expected him to.**

Maybe if they'd gathered clues before Jesus arrived they'd have recognized him more easily. Let's look at some Bible verses and create pictures with the clues about Jesus.

Have kids form three groups. Set out construction paper, colored pencils or markers, scissors, and tape. Give each group a Bible and a "Clue" card (title side up), and tell kids not to look at the cards yet.

Say: **Each group will read the Bible passage or verse on your card and discuss what the clue about Jesus was. After you've identified the clue, create a picture that shows what the clue is. You can draw a picture, cut out shapes from construction paper to tape to your picture, or come up with any creative way you can think of to make your picture. Any questions?** Answer any questions about the directions, and then allow kids five minutes to work.

Say: **John the Baptist really wanted people to be ready for Jesus.**

Ask:

- **Why do you think it was important for John to help people be ready to meet Jesus?**
- **After reading the clues about Jesus, why do you think people were excited to hear he was coming?**

Say: **Believing in Jesus is the most important thing we can do. And we can prepare our hearts for him. This was something very important to John. In fact, he devoted his whole life to telling people about Jesus. But here's the thing: John was a little different than most people. Read aloud Mark 1:6.**

Say: **I'm going to play some funny music. As it plays, act like someone who's a little different than most people. You might talk with your teeth clenched, walk backward, or flip your hair in front of your face.** Play "Circus Music" (track 2 on the CD), and let kids act strangely. When the music stops, have kids sit down.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

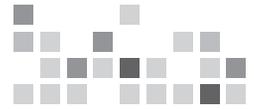
Ask:

- **What do you think John's unusual behavior showed about his message?**
- **After hearing John talk and seeing how he lived, what do you think was most important to him? Explain.**
- **What do you think it means to get ready for Jesus?**

Say: ► **WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS** by having the right attitude and being willing to let Jesus clean up our lives. When our hearts are ready, we can



have a relationship with Jesus and grow closer to God, just as John said. Jesus wants to have a relationship with us because he loves us. Let's play a game to explore what it might mean to us to prepare our hearts for a relationship with Jesus.



3

**WEAVING FAITH
INTO LIFE**

Guess Who's Coming

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Have kids return to their three groups from the previous activity. Have each group select a leader who will report back to the entire group.

Say: **We've learned from the Bible that John gave clues to help people prepare for Jesus' coming. Pretend we have a very special guest coming for dinner. You don't know who the guest is, but you're going to figure that out with some clues.**

I'll give you three clues, one at a time. After each clue, your group will have 30 seconds to come up with ideas about who you think the guest might be. Then I'll ask each group's leader to report what the group has decided. After we figure out who the special guest is, your group will decide what special preparations you'd need to make for this person. The person could be real or fictional.

Have kids sit together in their groups, and give each group a piece of paper and a pen.

Play three rounds of the game, giving the following clues in each round. Pause for 30 seconds after each clue to give groups a chance to figure out who it is. After 30 seconds, ask each leader to report quietly in your ear who his or her group thought was coming, and then continue with the next clue. When a group guesses the correct answer based on the clues you give about the guest, congratulate that group.

Then have groups make a list of things they'd need to do to prepare for this person to arrive. For example, for President Abraham Lincoln they might set the table for a nice banquet; for Eve they might make a fruit salad; and for Batman they could bring fast food from a restaurant that's open late. It's okay if groups come up with the same preparations. Repeat the process for the second and third guests in the following list.

Round One clues: The person 1) is tall; 2) is bearded; 3) was an American president.

Answer: Abraham Lincoln

Round Two clues: The person 1) is a woman; 2) disobeyed; 3) talked with a serpent.

Answer: Eve

Round Three clues: The person 1) wears a mask and costume; 2) is a man; 3) fights criminals at night from the shadows. Answer: Batman

Guess Who's Coming Supplies

Bible Truth Sleuth
paper
pens

Guess Who's Coming Easy Prep

Tear out the Lesson 1 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.





When groups have come up with a list of preparations for the third guest, have them discuss these questions in their groups:

Ask:

- **Why do we prepare differently for different guests?**
- **What clues would help you to know that your guest was going to be Jesus?**

Distribute pens and this week's Bible Truth Sleuth pages, and have kids find the "Jesus Preparations" section. Say: **Work with your group now to list things you would do if you knew Jesus was coming to visit you. You can either write your list or draw a picture of what you would do.**

Give groups a few minutes to finish their lists or pictures, and then have the leader from each group share the group's ideas with everyone.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **When Jesus comes into our lives, what can we do to prepare for him?**
- **Why do you think Jesus is worthy of such special preparation?**

Say: **When ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS, we can examine the sin in our lives and decide we want to leave it behind and follow Jesus. In Psalm 51:10 David writes, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." We can ask God to do that in our lives. In fact, I have a song we can sing about it as a prayer to God.**

A Pure Heart

What You'll Do ■■■■

Have kids repeat the Key Verse, Psalm 51:10, with you a couple of times, **"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).**

Say: **Let's sing a song to help us remember this verse and make it a prayer to God.**

Pass out copies of the lyrics, and play "Create in Me a Pure Heart" (Psalm 51:10) (track 3 on the CD). Lead children in singing.

 **Create in me a pure heart, O God, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Create in me a pure heart, O God, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
So I can be holy,
So I can be clean before you, Lord.**

(Repeat from the beginning.)

A Pure Heart Supplies

Bible Truth Sleuth
copies of the lyrics page
(at the end of this
lesson)

CD player
pens

Teacher Pack

CD: "Create in Me a
Pure Heart" (Psalm
51:10) (track 3)





So I can be holy,
So I can be clean before you, Lord.
Before you, Lord.
Clean before you, Lord.

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

“Create in Me a Pure Heart” (Psalm 51:10) by Jay Stocker. © 2005 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

Ask:

- **What do you think it means to have a pure heart?**

Have children find the “Pure Heart” section on their Bible Truth Sleuth pages.

Say: **Draw a picture of a heart, and then write one thing that helps make our hearts ready for Jesus.**

Again play “Create in Me a Pure Heart” (Psalm 51:10) (track 3 on the CD) while the kids work.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Tell about the things you drew or wrote in the hearts on your Bible Truth Sleuth pages that’ll help you get ready for Jesus.**
- **What can you do with your heart drawing to help you remember the ways you can get ready for Jesus?**

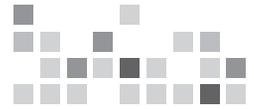
Say: **John the Baptist told the truth when he said Jesus was coming to be with the people. And if you ask Jesus to be your Savior, he’s with you, too. He’s in your life when you’re at home, at school, with your family and friends—everywhere. And by doing what we’ve learned today about preparing our hearts, ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS.**

4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You’ll Do ■■■■

Say: **Let’s think about ways that ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS. These challenges will be helpful reminders to us this week.**



Daily Challenges
Supplies

.....
Bible Truth Sleuth





Weaving Faith at Home Supplies

.....
Bible Truth Sleuth

Weaving Faith at Home Easy Prep

.....
Tear out the letter to
parents from each Bible
Truth Sleuth student
book.

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

- **Examine the sin in your life, and ask God to help you overcome the temptations to sin.**
- **Invite someone to church so he or she can experience a relationship with Jesus.**
- **Talk to your family about what it means to prepare your heart for Jesus as you begin preparing for Christmas.**

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: **John the Baptist showed us that we get to have a relationship with Jesus when ► WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS. Following through on our Daily Challenges this week is a great way to start.**

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 getting ready for Jesus. Kids can also do the activities in the "HomeConnect" section of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages with their families.

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

Say: **We're going to close our time with a prayer. I'll start the prayer, and then you'll find a partner and ask Jesus to help you turn away from sins this week. You can say a specific sin you'd like to turn from or just ask Jesus to help you change your heart. Then I'll end the prayer when partners have finished praying.**

Pray: **Dear Jesus, thank you for coming into our lives. We want to make our hearts ready for you and help others prepare for you.** Allow about a minute for kids to find partners and pray. Close with: **We bring these prayers to you in your name, amen.**





Lyrics ■■■■

Create in Me a Pure Heart (Psalm 51:10)

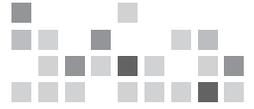
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So I can be holy,
So I can be clean before you, Lord.

(Repeat from the beginning.)

So I can be holy,
So I can be clean before you, Lord.
Before you, Lord.
Clean before you, Lord.

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

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