

Preteen | W1

Today's Suggested Schedule—March 2026, Week 1

Bible Story: John the Baptist Is a Witness about Jesus • *John 3:22-36*

Bottom Line: Jesus must increase. I must decrease.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Don't do anything only to get ahead. Don't do it because you are proud. Instead, be humble. Value others more than yourselves.* • *Philippians 2:3* Nlrv

Loud sounds, bright lights, and large groups can be overwhelming or overstimulating for some children. To create a more inclusive large group experience, consider offering adaptive tools like noise-canceling headphones, sunglasses, sensory-friendly items, or access to modified spaces.

Prelude: Setting the Tone for the Experience

In the **Prelude** folder of your curriculum, you'll find a variety of other resources to help you prepare.

Small Group (15 minutes)

Social: Providing Time for Fun Interaction

- Opening Activity

Large Group (35 minutes)

Story: Communicating God's Truth in Engaging Ways

Worship: Inviting People to Respond to God

- Opener
- Worship
- Bible Story (sections from God's Big Story are listed as optional)
- Prayer

Small Group (25 minutes)

Groups: Creating a Safe Place to Connect

- Bible Story Review: Bible Story Ring Toss (K-1st grade), Jesus Is #1 (2nd-3rd grade), Bible Story Extension and Discussion Questions (Preteen)
- Application Activity: Upside Down Craft (K-1st grade), Jesus at the Top (2nd-3rd grade), Take a Snapshot (Preteen)
- Memory Verse Activity: Memory Verse Motions (K-1st grade), Memory Verse Motions (2nd-3rd grade), Verses to Take with You (Preteen)
- Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss (K-1st grade, 2nd-3rd grade), Make It Personal with Prayer (Preteen)

Home: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience

- Parent Cue Card (Print or Email)
- Devotionals for Kids
- Parent Cue App



Bible Story

John the Baptist Is a Witness about Jesus • *John 3:22-36*

Conversation Starter

How can I show others that Jesus is better?

Bottom Line

Jesus must increase. I must decrease.

Monthly Memory Verse

Don't do anything only to get ahead. Don't do it because you are proud. Instead, be humble. Value others more than yourselves. • *Philippians 2:3* Nlrv

5 min

Social

5 min

Preteen Social Activity | Made to Play

What You Need

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
|  | Offering container | 0 |
|  | "Disciple Decoder" Activity Page | 1 |
|  | Pencils | 1 |

What You Do:

- Welcome kids by name as they arrive with a high-five, fist bump, or a wave.
- Invite any kids who brought an offering to place it in the offering container.
- Give each kid a "Disciple Decoder" Activity Page and a pencil.
- Explain that they are to decode the names of some of Jesus' first followers. The word bank at the bottom is there to help if they get stuck.
- Let the kids work individually or with a partner to solve the puzzles.
- Once everyone is done, go over the answers together.

What You Say:

"Nice work, detectives! You cracked the code. In today's true story from the Bible, we're going to hear about John the Baptist. His followers had to do some decoding of their own. John the Baptist gave his followers a major clue about Jesus, and it changed everything for them. **[Transition]** Let's go and hear about the clue that John the Baptist shared with his followers that pointed them to Jesus."

5 min

Bible Story Review

5 min

Preteen – Bible Story Extension | Made to Explore

What You Need

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 👤 Flashlight | 0 |
| 👤 Small mirror | 1 |
| 👤 Room or area that can be darkened | 1 |

What You Do:

- Gather the kids together and turn down the lights in your room as much as possible.
- Turn on the flashlight and shine it on a wall. Say, "In the Bible, Jesus is called the light of the world."
- Then, hold up the mirror. Ask, "Is this mirror a light?" (*No.*)
- Shine the flashlight onto the mirror so that the light reflects onto another wall.
- Move the mirror around to make the reflection dance on the walls. Ask the group: "Is the mirror making its own light?" (*No, it's just reflecting the light from the flashlight.*)

What You Say:

"That's exactly right. The mirror isn't the source of light; it only reflects the light. In our story, John the Baptist was like this mirror. His job wasn't to BE the light. His job was to REFLECT the light—to point everyone to Jesus—Jesus, the true light. John the Baptist knew his purpose was to make Jesus shine. That's what he meant when he said, **[Bottom Line] Jesus must increase. I must decrease.**

"You and I can be like the mirror, just like John the Baptist, and reflect Jesus' light. Make a big deal of Jesus in your life. Try to point to Jesus in everything you do. People will see His love when you are kind and helpful. People will see His forgiveness when you forgive. People will see His justice when you're fair.

"You can also talk about Jesus and speak His name whenever you have the chance, so people make the connection between the goodness you're showing and the Jesus you love. You're not just being kind; you're being like Jesus. You're not just being merciful; you're being like Jesus. And this God who is your friend wants to be their friend too. When you make a big deal of Jesus, you're showing the world our loving Savior."

5 min

Application Activity

5 min

Preteen – Take a Snapshot | Made to Play

What You Need

 Paper

 Writing supplies

0

1

What You Do:

- Give each kid a piece of paper and something to write with.
- Instruct the kids to make a list of things that are important to them. (e.g., family, friends, sports, video games, school, being popular).
- After a minute or two, encourage the kids to look at their list and circle the top 3 most important things.
- Then, instruct the kids to share their top 3 with a partner or the whole group.
- Lead a discussion with these questions:
 - Is it bad to have things that are important to us? (*No!*)
 - What happens when something on our list becomes MORE important than Jesus?
 - What did John the Baptist mean when he said: “*He must become more important. I must become less important*” (*John 3:30 NIV*)?
 - What does it look like in real life to make Jesus more important than the other things on our lists?

What You Say:

“It’s good to have things that are important to us! God gives us family, friends, and fun things to enjoy. Today in our Bible Story, John the Baptist reminded us of a really important truth. He made less of himself—and he made a big deal of Jesus. John the Baptist wasn’t upset about losing followers; he was filled with joy because his purpose was being fulfilled! He was doing what he was made to do—to point people to Jesus!

“When we put Jesus at the very top of our list—above everything, because as John told us, He is ‘*above everything*’ (*John 3:31 NIV*)—all the other things find their right place. When you make a big deal of Jesus, you’re showing the world their loving Savior. Make your life a big arrow that points to Him. When we do this, people will see, love, and follow Jesus. It’s living out the truth that **[Bottom Line] Jesus must increase. I must decrease.**”

5 min

Memory Verse Activity

5 min

Preteen – Verses to Take with You | Made to Create

What You Need

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|
|  | Bibles | 1 |
|  | "Bible Bookmark" Activity Page | 1 |
|  | Coloring supplies | 1 |

What You Do:

- Give every kid a Bible.
- Invite them to look up Philippians 2:3 using the Bible Navigation Tips below.

Finding verses with 4th-5th graders: Ask kids to tell you if the book of the Bible they're looking for is in the Old Testament or New Testament. If it's in the Old, instruct kids to flip slowly, starting at the front of the Bible and heading toward the back, until they find the book they're looking for. If it's in the New, instruct kids to start flipping from the back, going forward to find the book they're looking for. Once they find the book, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. First, have them find the chapter they're looking for. Then explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Tell kids to find the verse within the chapter they've already found.

- Read the Memory Verse together out loud several times.
- Review any words that might be unfamiliar to the kids.
- Invite the kids to set their Bibles aside.
- Give each kid a bookmark from the "Bible Bookmark" Activity Page and make coloring supplies available.
- Read this month's Memory Verse together that's on the bookmark.
- Instruct the kids to decorate their bookmark. They can color the words and the designs around it.
- Suggest the kids take their bookmark home and put it in their Bible or a book they are reading as a reminder about humility.

What You Say:

"These bookmarks look awesome. It has our verse on it. Let's say it together. *Don't do anything only to get ahead. Don't do it because you are proud. Instead, be humble. Value others more than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3 NIV).* Great job. Our verse is a powerful reminder of what humility looks like. It's not about thinking less of yourself, it's about thinking of yourself less. It's about putting others first. John the Baptist lived out this verse perfectly—**[Bottom Line] Jesus must increase. I must decrease.** As you open your Bibles this week at home and see this bookmark, remember to live out this verse and point people to Jesus!"

5 min

Discussion Questions

5 min

Preteen Discussion Questions

What You Need

No supplies needed

What You Do:

Ask:

- John's followers were upset that people were leaving him to follow Jesus, but John was joyful. Why do you think John wasn't jealous or upset—and what can that teach you about humility?
- John said, "*He must become more important. I must become less important*" (John 3:30 NIV). What do you think that means in your own life? How could you live in a way that points people to Jesus instead of to yourself?
- It can be easy to want attention, popularity, or praise. How can focusing on Jesus first help you deal with those feelings when they show up?
- John's joy came from seeing Jesus' work grow, even if his own influence shrank. When have you found joy in helping someone else succeed—or letting someone else shine?
- The story says that when we focus on Jesus more than ourselves, we find peace and hope. How might your thoughts, choices, or worries look different if you really believed that Jesus is bigger than any problem you face?

5 min

Prayer

5 min

Preteen – Make It Personal with Prayer | Made to Reflect

What You Need

-  Index cards or small pieces of paper 0
-  Writing supplies 1



EveryChild Tips

- For kids who find writing challenging, allow them to draw pictures or symbols to represent their prayers for each prompt.
- Offer to write for a kid who wants to share their prayers verbally but has difficulty writing them down.

What You Do:

- Give each kid an index card or a small piece of paper and something to write with.
- Encourage kids to complete the following three sentences on their card. Assure them that no one else will see their answers.
 - "God, thank You for ... "
 - "God, I'm sorry for ... "
 - "This week, please help me ... "
- Give the kids a few minutes of quiet to write.
- When everyone is done, explain that they can keep the card with them this week as a personal prayer list.
- Close by praying for the group.

[Make It Personal] Fill out your own card as an example and participate with the group.

What You Say:

"It's good to be honest with God and to know He hears everything we write and think. God loves us no matter what, and we can trust Him. So tell Him all of your thoughts, share all of your worries and fears. Nothing is too big for God. God will never leave you or forsake you. Let's finish our time by praying together."

"God, thank You for being so great. We are sorry for the times we make ourselves or other things more important than You. This week, please help us to be humble and put others first. Help us to live in a way that shows everyone how great You are. We want to live in a way that says, **[Bottom Line] Jesus must increase. I must decrease.** We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

Getting Ready | Preteen Small Group

GETTING READY

Here's everything you need to know to get ready for this week.

Social

Providing Time for Fun Interaction 15 Minutes

Welcome the kids and spend time engaging in conversation and catching up. Use this time to create space for them to connect with you and with each other by playing age-appropriate games, asking fun questions, and encouraging friendly interactions. This is a great moment to help kids feel seen, known, and ready to experience today's story.

Opening Activity

Made to Play

What You Need:

- Offering container
- Print "Disciple Decoder" Activity Page on paper, one for every kid
- Pencils, one for every kid

Groups

Creating a Safe Place to Connect 25 minutes

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible Story applies to real-life experiences through interactive activities and discussion questions.

1. Take a Snapshot

[Live for God | Application Activity]

Made to Play

What You Need:

- Paper
- Writing supplies

2. Bible Story Extension

Talk about God | Bible Story Review

Made to Explore

What You Need:

- Flashlight, one for each Small Group
- Small mirror, one for each Small Group
- Room or area that can be darkened

3. Discussion Questions

Talk about God | Bible Story Review

Made to Connect

What You Need:

- No supplies needed

4. Verses to Take with You

Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity

Made to Create

What You Need:

- Bibles, one for every kid
- Print "Bible Bookmark" Activity Page on cardstock and cut, one for every kid
- Coloring supplies, enough for each Small Group to share

5. Make It Personal with Prayer**Pray to God | Prayer Activity***Made to Reflect***What You Need:**

- Index cards or small pieces of paper, one for every kid
- Writing supplies, enough for each Small Group to share

Home: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience

- Print on cardstock or email this week's devotionals and Parent Cue cards.
- Tell parents about our additional family resources: **Parent Cue App**

Supplies

Preteen Social Activity | Made to Play

| | Quantity |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Offering container | 0 |
| 2. "Disciple Decoder" Activity Page | 1 |
| 3. Pencils | 1 |

Preteen – Bible Story Extension | Made to Explore

| | Quantity |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Flashlight | 0 |
| 2. Small mirror | 1 |
| 3. Room or area that can be darkened | 1 |

Preteen – Take a Snapshot | Made to Play

| | Quantity |
|---------------------|----------|
| 1. Paper | 0 |
| 2. Writing supplies | 1 |

Preteen – Verses to Take with You | Made to Create

| | Quantity |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Bibles | 1 |
| 2. "Bible Bookmark" Activity Page | 1 |
| 3. Coloring supplies | 1 |

Preteen – Make It Personal with Prayer | Made to Reflect

| | Quantity |
|---|----------|
| 1. Index cards or small pieces of paper | 0 |
| 2. Writing supplies | 1 |