
Matthew 3; Luke 3:21-22

Leader Guide for Ages 3-6

Teachers Dig In

Dig In to the Bible

- Read: Matthew 3; Luke 3:21-22
- In This Passage: John the Baptist shows up to prepare the way for Jesus. He travels around baptizing people and preaching that they need to repent and prepare their hearts for Jesus. When Jesus comes, John the Baptist baptizes Jesus. At Jesus' baptism, the skies open and God the Father announces that Jesus is his Son.
- Bible Point: Jesus is God's Son.
- Summary Verse: "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy' " (Matthew 3:17).

Dig Deeper

- You'll Be Teaching: *Jesus is God's Son.* Kids may hear a lot of things about who Jesus is: that he's not real; that he was just a teacher; that he didn't come back to life after he died. They need to know the important truth of who Jesus is: God's own Son, sent in human form to show them who God is.
- Think About: What does the fact that Jesus is God's Son show you personally about God's character? How has Jesus made a difference in your life?

Dig In to Prayer

- Pray that the kids in your group will want to know Jesus and be more like him as God's children.

Quick Tip

- When kids answer questions, be sure to accept all answers in a nonjudgmental way by thanking kids for sharing. Avoid praising your favorite answers or dismissing those that you don't agree with. If an answer is really off base, consider asking the rest of the kids what they think about the topic.

This Lesson at a Glance



OPENING

Preschoolers tell ways they're like their parents.

Supplies

- Bible



CORE BIBLE DISCOVERY

Preschoolers pass on a message, baptize toy figures and act out baptism, and peek through an opening above them.

Supplies

- Bible
- shallow pans filled $\frac{1}{4}$ full of water (1 for every 4-6 children)
- small toy figures (1 per child)
- white, yellow, or blue plastic tablecloth or old bedsheet
- tape
- 4 chairs (optional)

Easy Prep

- Cut a flap in the center of the tablecloth or bedsheet to create a hole about 1 to 2 feet in width and length. Place a piece of tape on each corner and side to hold the flap closed temporarily. (You will want enough tape to keep it closed, but not so much that it takes a long time to open the flap. We suggest using 2 to 4 pieces.)
- Use 4 chairs and tape if necessary to hold the tablecloth or bedsheet to create a "sky" that children can sit under. You can also do this in the corner of a room if you don't want to use chairs.



PRESCHOOL PUPPET SKIT

Recommended for preschoolers.

Supplies

- Theophilus the FaithRetriever™ Puppet (order [here](#))
- towel

Easy Prep

- Place the towel around Theo's neck.



CRAFT

Preschoolers use water-soaked sidewalk chalk to paint.

Supplies

- "Jesus' Baptism" handout (1 per child) (download [here](#))
- crayons
- blue sidewalk chalk (1 or 2 pieces per child)
- bowls of water
- wet wipes

Easy Prep

- Submerge pieces of blue sidewalk chalk in bowls of water right before you begin the activity. It will take about five minutes before kids are able to use them like paint, so the pieces should be ready by the time kids are done coloring.



MUSIC VIDEO

Preschoolers sing songs of praise to God.

Supplies

- "This Is the Day" (watch or download [here](#))
- "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus" (watch or download [here](#))
- "No, Not One" (watch or download [here](#))



HIGH-ENERGY GAME

Preschoolers copy each other when they're tagged in a game.



LOW-ENERGY GAME

Preschoolers play a matching game.

Supplies

- "Animal Match Cards" handout (1 for every 4 children) (download [here](#))

Easy Prep

- Cut apart the cards on the "Animal Match Cards" handout. Cut apart 1 handout for every 4 children. One handout is one "set."
- Mix up the animal cards in each individual set.



LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP

Preschoolers copy prayers to be like Jesus.



TAKE-HOME

Preschoolers receive a take-home page about the lesson.

Supplies

- this week's "Dig In @ Home" handout (1 per child) (download [here](#))

Easy Prep

- Add your church announcements to the "Dig In @ Home" handout.

**Marked supplies can be reused from Core Bible Discovery*

Let's keep kids safe! You can help by using supplies as instructed for only ages 3+, purchasing child-safe items, and being aware of allergy concerns.



OPENING Welcome

[5 min]

Supplies

- Bible

Welcome

Thank kids for coming.
Just for fun, have kids shake hands with four friends using the *back* of their hands.

Make announcements.
Introduce new kids.
Celebrate birthdays by singing a birthday song off-key.
Collect the offering.

Introduce the Lesson

Say: **Did you know that God is Jesus' daddy?** Pause. **Today we'll hear how God told everyone that Jesus is his Son. And we'll learn that Jesus is just like his daddy.**

Share

Tell about a way *you're* like your parents.
Have preschoolers talk in small groups about ways *they're* like their parents, such as their eye color, hair color, or things they like that their parents like, too (such as certain foods, books and movies, or colors). Be sensitive to adopted or foster children. Kids may be like their parents in non-physical ways such as in their preferred hobbies or talents.

Summarize

Open a Bible, and say: **You're like your parents. And Jesus is like God! The Bible tells us all about how Jesus is like his daddy. The Bible is a special book because God talks to us through it. God's here right now, ready to talk to you.**

Pray, praising Jesus because he's God's Son.



CORE BIBLE DISCOVERY

John the Baptist Announces Jesus

[20 min]

Supplies

- Bible
- shallow pans filled $\frac{1}{4}$ full of water (1 for every 4-6 children)
- small toy figures (1 per child)
- white, yellow, or blue plastic tablecloth or old bedsheet
- tape
- 4 chairs (optional)

Easy Prep

- Cut a flap in the center of the tablecloth or bedsheet to create a hole about 1 to 2 feet in width and length. Place a piece of tape on each corner and side to hold the flap closed temporarily. (You will want enough tape to keep it closed, but not so much that it takes a long time to open the flap. We suggest using 2 to 4 pieces.)
- Use 4 chairs and tape if necessary to hold the tablecloth or bedsheet to create a "sky" that children can sit under. You can also do this in the corner of a room if you don't want to use chairs.

Tip

- Use a sensory table instead of the shallow pans, if you have one.

Pass a Special Message

Sit with the children in a circle.

Say: **I have a special message for you. Do you want to hear it? Pause. I'll pass the message to my friend [name the child on your right]. And then [same name] will pass the message on. We'll keep passing the message until we get all the way around the group.**

Whisper "Jesus is God's Son" into the ear of the child on your right, and then help that child pass the same message to the child on his or her right. Help the children pass the message all the way around the circle until the person on your left hears the message. Have the last child tell the message to the whole group, and then congratulate the whole group.

Show your Bible.

Say: **The Bible tells us about a man who had a special message. The man's name was John. John was Jesus' cousin. That means he was part of Jesus' family. Do you have a cousin? What are some names of people in your family?** Invite the children to share the names of some of their cousins or other family members.

Say: **Jesus and John were cousins. And John knew Jesus was really special. John had a special message about Jesus. But he didn't whisper his message like we did. He yelled his message.**

Say: **Let's pass our special message around our circle again. But this time we'll yell our message.** Start by saying "Jesus is God's Son" in an excited

voice. And then help each child pass the message around the circle in the same way.
Say: **John wanted everyone to hear his message.**

Baptize the People

Give each child a toy figure, and invite children to give their toy figures names. As they share some of the names, say: **John wanted [name] to hear his special message, and he wanted [name] to hear it, too.**

Say: **Do you want to hear John's message?** Show your Bible. Say: **His message is in the Bible.**

John said, "Repent of your sins and turn to God." That meant, "Stop doing things you know are wrong. And turn to things God says are right or good."

Hold a toy figure, and repeat the meaning of John's message. Pretend to walk the figure. **John said** (abruptly stop the toy figure): **Stop doing things you know are wrong.** Turn the figure to face the opposite direction. **And turn to things God says are right or good.** Walk the figure in that direction. Have the children practice moving their figures in the same way as you repeat the same process a couple of times.

Have the preschoolers walk their toy figures as you tell about something wrong a preschooler might do, such as tell a lie. And then have them turn the toy figures in the opposite direction as you tell how the child could do what God says is right or good instead. You can share an example from your childhood if you want to.

Say: **When the people heard John's message and they did what he said, he baptized them in a river.** Dip your toy figure into the water in a shallow pan.

Say: **People call John "John the Baptist" because he baptized many people.**

Help the children copy the process they practiced earlier with the toy figures and then dip their figures in the water. They can do this several times. Older children can say, "Stop doing things you know are wrong. And turn to things God says are right or good" as they do it.

Say: **That's how John told people to get ready for Jesus. He told the people to get ready because Jesus was very special. Jesus is God's Son.**

Act Out Jesus' Baptism

Have the children move under your makeshift "sky." Bring the shallow pans of water.

Show your Bible.

Say: **The Bible says that one day, Jesus came to John. John was baptizing people. And Jesus asked John to baptize *him*!**

Teach the children this finger play.

(hold up both pointer fingers, and face fingers toward each other)

Jesus said, "John, baptize me."

(bend one finger with each word)

John said, "You're so great. You should baptize me."

(turn opposite finger from side to side)

Jesus said, "God wants it."

(bounce first finger up and down so it's pointing upward)

So John baptized Jesus!

(use second finger to push first finger into the water in a shallow pan)

Lead the children to repeat the finger play several times.

See the Heavens Open

Say: **The Bible says that when Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened!** Have the children look up as you open the flap on the sheet (or

tablecloth).

Say: **God talked from the sky! He said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." God said Jesus is his Son. And God said that Jesus makes him happy.**

Invite the children to repeat the finger play that shows Jesus' baptism together as a group, and each time they bring Jesus out of the water, have a leader open the "sky" and say "God said, 'Jesus is my loved Son who brings me joy.' " Help children say the simplified verse with you. You can also let children take turns opening the flap during the finger play if you want to lift them up over the opening.



PRESCHOOL PUPPET SKIT

Theo Sees a Baptism

[10 min]

Supplies

- Theophilus the FaithRetriever™ Puppet (order [here](#))
- towel

Easy Prep

- Place the towel around Theo's neck.

Tip

- You may find it helpful to highlight your part and set the script on a music stand nearby during the skit.

Leader: **It's time for our puppy friend, Theo, to come for a visit. Let's call him to our class with a "woof, woof." Ready?** *(Leads kids to bark until Theo is brought into view.)*

Theo: **Hi, friends!** *(Pants.)* **My back is so itchy today. Would you scratch my back?** *(Circulates among kids so each child can pet him.)*

Leader: **Thanks for welcoming Theo!** *(Looks at Theo.)* **What's the towel for?**

Theo: **The water-dipper left it.**

Leader: *(Chuckles.)* **The what?**

Theo: **I have to pass by a lake on my way over here, and I saw someone dipping a person into the water.**

Leader: **Theo, was someone baptizing someone else?**

Theo: **Bap-whating? All I know is the water-dipper forgot his towel. I thought I'd bring it to a lost-and-found box.**

Leader: **That was nice of you. But I think you saw a baptism.**

Theo: *(Puts a paw in front of his mouth as if telling a secret and whispers loudly to the kids.)* **What's that?** *(Responds to kids' answers.)*

Leader: **We're learning about baptisms today.** *(Quickly shares own church doctrine on baptism.)*

Theo: **Who was being baptized when you read about it in the Bible?**

Leader: **A man named John baptized Jesus and told everyone Jesus is God's Son.**

Theo: ***Wow! He got to baptize God's special son?!***

Leader: **Yep! God gave John the special job. And then everyone began to learn that God sent his Son, Jesus, because God loves the world.**

Theo: ***I'm a son, too.***

Leader: **That's right. Everyone here is a son or a daughter.**

Theo: *(Looks to kids.) My dad's name is Rolf. What are your parents' names? (Responds to kids' answers and invites kids to share other relatives' names if they don't live with their parents.)*

Theo: ***If Jesus is God's Son, does Jesus know God like I know my daddy?***

Leader: **Jesus knows everything about God. He knows God even better than you know your daddy.**

Theo: ***Jesus must know God really well!***

Leader: **He does!**

Theo: ***Neat! I'm going to go tell my daddy that Jesus is God's Son.***

Leader: **That sounds like a great idea, Theo. We'll let you go do that now. *(Looks to kids.) Friends, give Theo a big "woof, woof, goodbye."* *(Leads kids to say "woof, woof, goodbye," and then places Theo out of sight.)***



CRAFT Proud Father Paintings

[20 min]

Supplies

- "Jesus' Baptism" handout (1 per child) (download [here](#))
- crayons
- blue sidewalk chalk (1 or 2 pieces per child)
- bowls of water
- wet wipes

Easy Prep

- Submerge pieces of blue sidewalk chalk in bowls of water right before you begin the activity. It will take about five minutes before kids are able to use them like paint, so the pieces should be ready by the time kids are done coloring.



Color a Baptism Scene

Say: **Jesus asked John to baptize him. Let's show what Jesus' baptism might've looked like.**

Give everyone a "Jesus' Baptism" handout, and have kids color in John and Jesus with the crayons but leave the water and sky blank.

When the sidewalk chalk is ready, have kids use it like finger paint to color in the water and sky. They can rub their fingers on the wet chalk and then transfer it to the paper.

Say: When John baptized Jesus in the water, the sky opened and the people heard God talk! God said, "Jesus is my loved Son, who brings me joy." That means Jesus is God's Son, and Jesus makes God happy and proud. God enjoys Jesus.

Talk About It

Tell kids a reason your parents are happy with you and proud of you.

Ask: • **What things make your parents happy or proud?**

Say: **God wanted Jesus to get baptized—and Jesus did! God is proud of Jesus and loves him, just like your parents love you.**



MUSIC VIDEO

God Has Given to Me

[10 min]

Supplies

- “This Is the Day” (watch or download [here](#))
- “Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” (watch or download [here](#))
- “No, Not One” (watch or download [here](#))

Tip

- Don’t have internet in your classroom? That’s okay! You can choose your own worship songs from our Best Of Dig In Music DVD [here](#).

Sing Songs to God

Sing the three songs in any order.



HIGH-ENERGY GAME

Copycat Tag

[10 min]

Learn About Copycats

Say: **Jesus is God's Son. That means he does what God does. He's kind of like a copycat because he's just like God.**

Have children practice being copycats by copying you as you do several different motions, such as jumping, moving your arms up and down, and clapping.

Play Tag

Say: **Let's play a game of Copycat Tag. To play this game, we'll become "copycats" like Jesus.**

Have the children play a game of Copycat Tag. Here's how to play: The person who is "It" tries to tag someone else. When someone is tagged, that person becomes a Copycat and starts tagging, too. As the game goes on, more and more people become Copycats and begin tagging others. The game continues until everyone is a Copycat.

Play several times, each time letting a different person be the first person to be "It."

Talk About It

Ask: • **What did you like about becoming a Copycat?**

• **Why do you think Jesus copies God?**

Say: **Jesus is God's Son, so he's just like God. When we want to know what God is like, we can look at Jesus. We can see what he says and what he does. Then we know what God's like!**



LOW-ENERGY GAME

Animal Match

[10 min]

Supplies

- "Animal Match Cards" handout (1 for every 4 children) (download [here](#))

Easy Prep

- Cut apart the cards on the "Animal Match Cards" handout. Cut apart 1 handout for every 4 children. One handout is one "set."
- Mix up the animal cards in each individual set.

Match the Pictures

Say: **Jesus is God's Son. That means Jesus and God are like each other.**

Let's play a game about how things are like each other.

Spread out the cards from the "Animal Match Cards" handout facedown on the floor, keeping each set together.

Help preschoolers form groups of four and sit around a set of cards.

Let kids take turns turning over two pictures at a time, trying to match the baby animals and the fully grown animals.

When a child makes a match, set the pictures aside and let the next child take a turn.

When all the matches have been made, turn the cards back over, mix them up, and play again.

Play until all the children have made a match at least once.

Talk About It

Hold up two of the matching animal pictures, and say: **In this game, you matched the baby animal with the mommy or daddy animal.**

Show one baby animal and its parent, and tell something that makes them alike.

Ask: • **What are some other ways they're alike?**

Let children talk about more babies and parents as time allows.

Say: **You can tell the baby animal goes with the mommy or daddy because they look alike. Like that, you probably have some ways that you look or act like your mommies and daddies. Jesus and God are alike, too. They are alike because Jesus is God's Son.**



LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP

Copy Prayers

[5 min]

Copy Prayers

Say: **Today we learned that Jesus is God's Son. That means Jesus is like God because Jesus is God. He says and does everything God does. It might look like Jesus copies what God says and does. Let's say some copying prayers now. Prayer is talking to God.**

Start by having the children copy what you do. Show different ways people might pray. They might fold their hands, bow their heads, get on their knees, or put their hands in the air.

Next have kids copy one action and a short phrase. For example, you might fold your hands and say "Thank you, Jesus!"

Let children take turns being the leader while the others copy their prayers. Older kids might want to choose their words and actions, but younger ones will need help choosing an action and a phrase.

Say: **Great job copying your friends. You looked just the same as them when you copied them! That's like Jesus. Because Jesus is God's special Son, everything Jesus says and does helps us know what God is like.**

Close the prayer: **God, thank you for Jesus. We can learn what you're like by looking at Jesus. We know you love Jesus. Help us copy Jesus and be like him, too. In Jesus' name, amen.**



TAKE-HOME Dig In @ Home

[0 min]

Supplies

- this week's "Dig In @ Home" handout (1 per child) (download [here](#))

Easy Prep

- Add your church announcements to the "Dig In @ Home" handout.

Distribute a copy of the "Dig In @ Home" handout to kids as they leave, or email it to parents during the week.