

WEEK 1
LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

I believe God gives me purpose.

BIBLE

John Prepares the Way:
Mark 1:1–8; Ephesians 1:3–14

ABOUT THIS WEEK

When you first go camping in the wilderness, you'll need someone to help prepare your supplies, guide you, and keep you on the right path. This week, we'll look at how John the Baptist's purpose was to get people ready for Jesus. God sent John the Baptist with a special purpose, and John's story helps us to say, "**I believe God gives me purpose.**"

LARGE GROUP TIME

Wow, you made it! What a hike it took to get here. Welcome to *Camp Believe It*. I'll bet you're all excited and ready to unpack and set up camp. I know I am. When we go camping, we need to know how to live out in the wild, and in this series, we'll be learning how to follow Jesus in the "wild." Are you ready? Let's jump right in!

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Sleeping Bag Race

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this version of a sack relay race, prepare two to three sleeping bags or large pillowcases for sacks, and use cones or tape to mark off the start and finish lines. Create two to three teams and give each one a sack. Team members take turns getting into the sack and racing from start to finish and back. Then, they pass the sack to the next member of the team. The first team to complete the relay wins.*
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Make this more challenging by having preteens get into their team's sleeping bag head first and move like an [inch worm](#) to get to the other side. If they start crawling more than a few steps or if their sleeping bag gets up over their waist, they have to start over!*
- If you're planning to sleep out in nature, you better bring along a sleeping bag. We imagined a better purpose for this sleeping bag by racing together, but its best purpose is to keep us warm while we sleep.
- Today we will be talking about purpose, which is what something—or someone—was made to do.

ACTIVITY | Colors Of The Wild

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you will need six different colors of construction paper (such as red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple). Spread them out around the room on the walls or on the floor. Then, have one kid at a time come to the front of the room and yell out something that can be found in nature—encourage them to be specific (say "pine tree" instead of "tree"). As soon as the word is called out, everyone has to rush to the area that matches that word. If they think the word has none of the colors shown, have them come to the*

middle of the room. If something can be multiple colors, they can just pick one. Play until everyone has had a chance to suggest a word or until your activity time is up.

✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** If you are able to head outside for this activity, bring kids on a nature walk. Play I Spy by calling out a color of something you see and having kids guess what it is, or have kids have fun pointing out various things in nature as they walk. Invite them to collect a few items to bring back and make a sensory bin with them.

- Wow, we named a lot of things that we can find in the wild. Isn't it cool that each of these things come in all different shapes and colors, and yet God gives every single one of them purpose? There's nothing God makes that wasn't planned.

QUESTION | Where would you choose to stay—tent or cabin?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask the following questions. You can have every kid shout their answer but then ask a few kids to share their answers with everyone. Comment briefly on their answers—and have fun with this!
- **If you got to spend a week in the wilderness, where would you choose to stay—a tent or cabin? Or somewhere else? Why?**
- In today's Bible story, we'll learn about someone who pretty much "roughed it" out in the wilderness. Whether it was because he really loved nature or wasn't too concerned about where he lived, we don't know, but we do know he was pretty sure of God's purpose for him.

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Mark 1:1–8 (John Prepares The Way)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have kids sit in a circle around you as you tell today's Bible story. Dress up as a camp counselor, complete with cargo shorts, polo or church t-shirt, [fishing hat](#), whistle, and a clipboard (to hold a copy of your script). To add to the theme, prepare a faux [campfire pit](#) in the middle of your space using pool noodles cut in different sizes and wrapped in brown paper, tissue paper (red, orange, and yellow), and medium-sized rocks (or just about anything wrapped in gray or black bulletin board paper). Add fairy lights or a flashlight underneath the tissue paper, and dim the lights if possible.
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Be mindful about where to seat your kids. Depending on their preference, some kids require intentional placement in the front or back. Additionally, kids who require their own space should be seated in rows instead of circles. Kids who are easily distracted should be in a seat closest to the leader facing forward, away from windows, doors, and activity centers.
- Alright, campers, gather around the fire for story time. Don't worry—there will be no scary stories today, but instead, a true story from my favorite book, the Bible.
- I want to introduce you to someone—a real wilderness man—who knows a thing or two about the great outdoors. But even more importantly than that, he knows about Jesus.
- **Ready to meet him? Let's read Mark 1:1–3.**
 - It was the beginning of something unbelievably special. Jesus, the son of God, was on his way.
 - **Imagine if you heard that a special guest was coming to camp with us. What would you do?** We'd probably prepare for them to arrive by cleaning up any trash, clearing out some space for their tent, and setting things up as nicely as we could.
 - In this story, the prophet Isaiah said that someone would come before Jesus in the wilderness, kind of like this campsite, and tell everyone to prepare a way for Jesus.
- **What was this person's name? Let's read Mark 1:4–6.**
 - It was John the Baptist. He wasn't polished and working in the temple like a priest. Instead, he was

kind of a dirt-on-his-boots type. But that didn't make his work any less important.

- God gave John a special purpose. John knew that people needed to be ready for Jesus. John showed everyone what needed to happen next. John told people to come to the river and get baptized, which means they went into the water to show they wanted to change their hearts and be ready for Jesus. It showed that following Jesus was more than looking clean on the outside—it was about making a decision to turn their lives around.
- **Now, let's read Mark 1:7–8.**
 - John was like a camp counselor who told everyone to get ready for the special camp speaker who was on the way. Except this special guest was none other than Jesus, the promised savior—the Son of God.
 - *Camp Believe It?* Believe it—it's all true!

BIG IDEA | I believe God gives me purpose.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *On a large sheet of black poster board, write the word "purpose" in pencil and trace it with glow-in-the-dark star stickers like [this](#). Afterward, mix in an assortment of non-glowing star stickers like [this](#) so that the word is not too obvious when the lights are on. To reveal the Big Idea, turn out the lights and have kids read out the glowing word. Then have them say the full Big Idea with you. You will utilize a similar setup every week. Alternatively, write the word "believe" and use the same poster every week for the Big Idea reveal. Another option could be to write each week's word in [blacklight paint](#) and use a [blacklight flashlight](#) to reveal it.*
- Here at *Camp Believe It*, we learn so many things from God that are true. This week's Big Idea is no exception. So, what did we learn today that we can believe? Let's take a look at the stars in our pretend night sky to give us a clue.
- **I believe God gives me purpose.**

ACTIVITY | Trail Guide

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *In this variation of "Follow the Leader," have kids take turns being the "trail guide," leading the group around the room along a "trail" you marked off with masking tape. Place signs from the [printable](#) at various points along the trail. Have the trail guide show what they would do to overcome the obstacle in the first sign. Have the group do that action until they reach the next sign. Choose a new trail guide and have the group copy the new action. Continue until the trail is complete.*
- Part of the camping experience is to go on a nature hike and explore the wilderness. You need a guide, though, or else you might get lost. Trail guides also help us know what to do when we encounter obstacles. A trail guide's purpose is to help us navigate and keep us on the right path.
- John the Baptist from our Bible story was like a trail guide, too. He helped clear the way and point people to Jesus. God gave John purpose, and God does this for us, too.
- For example, like John, we can also be a trail guide for others to know and follow Jesus. Let's say it together:
I believe God gives me purpose.

OBJECT LESSON | Camping Tool

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show the image of the multipurpose camping tool from the [printable](#) provided, or bring one in to show if you have one available or can borrow one. Be mindful about where you keep it so it doesn't end up accidentally in kids' hands.*
- When you go camping, there's a lot to set up, like a tent and a campfire. It would be handy to have a bunch of tools with you, and this can be one of the most useful things you bring on a camping trip. But bringing an entire toolbox with you on a trip can take up a lot of room.
- **Do you know what this is?** It's a multipurpose camping tool. It might not look like much when it's closed, but it's practically a whole toolbox.

- **On a camping trip, what might you use each of these tools for?**
 - **Saw?** The serrated edges would make it good to cut through bark or rope.
 - **Screwdriver?** Maybe you need to open a compartment on your flashlight to replace the batteries.
 - **Scissors?** Maybe you need to open the packaging on the food.
 - **Knife?** You can cut up meat, fruit, and vegetables.
 - **Pliers?** You might need these to pull out tent poles from the ground.
- Every part of this camping tool has a special purpose, but you might not be able to tell from the outside. John the Baptist was kind of like that. He did not look like any of the priests or prophets before him, but God handpicked him for a special purpose—to prepare the way for Jesus to come.
- You might not notice it just yet, but God has a special purpose for each and every one of us. We might not all be the same, like the different parts in a camping tool, but we all have purpose.
- Say it with me—I **believe God gives me purpose.**

SCRIPTURE | Ephesians 1:3–14

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the passage out loud or invite a volunteer to read.*
- We might all live out our purposes differently in life, but what can be the same for all of us is that we can know and love God. Through Jesus, we can be in relationship with God. God made that possible.
- **Let's read Ephesians 1:3–6.**
 - How amazing is that! Because of Jesus, we have one incredible purpose—we are a part of God's family.
 - God sees us differently than we see ourselves. Where we might see our failures, God's sees us in light of Jesus and what he did for us. We get to live out our purpose in light of God's love.
- **Let's read Ephesians 1:7–10.**
 - Jesus offers us forgiveness when we sin. We will make mistakes, and we don't always do what God asks of us, but God still loves us. We are God's kids through Jesus.
 - But there's *more*.
- **Let's read Ephesians 1:11–14.**
 - God chose us and gave us the Holy Spirit. We might not always feel like we have been chosen by God and given God's Spirit, but we are—just like John the Baptist.
 - And like John, we have a special purpose from God, too. God has a plan that includes you and me.
I believe God gives me purpose. I Camp Believe It!

VIDEO | *Camp Believe It*, Episode 1

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).*

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

REFLECTION | Campfire Chat

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Use the campfire setup from the Bible story or display a video of a campfire ([like this](#)) on a screen. Have kids take turns responding to each question in pairs or groups of three. Have time between each question to allow kids who want to share with the whole group. Afterward, invite kids to stand up and say the Big Idea together, earning their Week 1 "Big Idea Badge." You can prepare these badges by printing them on [one-and-a-half-inch labels](#) or on regular paper to insert into a [button badge kit](#). You could instead use a [button maker](#) if available.*
- At the end of a long camping day, some campers like to sit around and chat by the campfire. Let's gather around and talk about everything we experienced today.

- In what ways might you be similar to John the Baptist?
 - How are you different from John the Baptist?
 - Does knowing that God gives you purpose make you more or less scared? Worried? Why?
 - What do you think your purpose might be?
- Now it's time to collect our Big Idea badge of the day. **What's our Big Idea? I believe God gives me purpose.**

RESPONSE | Camp Mail

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Prepare an assortment of nature postcards or [stationery](#) and colorful writing utensils. Check your records or with families to make sure you have each kid's correct mailing address if you'd like to send these for real.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** As preteens think about God's purpose for their lives, encourage them to explore purposeful little ways throughout the week to spend time with God and love others. You can print out a blank weekly or monthly camp journal and have them jot down their ideas. Then discuss how they can put those ideas into action!
- I know we are settling in for our wonderful adventure here at Camp Believe It, but we might also be missing our family at home. Let's take a few moments to write or draw a letter to someone from home letting them know what we've learned, including today's Big Idea: **I believe God gives me purpose.**
- As you are writing your letter, think about these questions:
 - **How do you feel knowing that God gives you purpose?**
 - **What are some things you can do to discover your purpose?**
 - **Who might be waiting on you to find your purpose?**
- God created each of us with a purpose — something we were made to do. Ultimately, we were made to know God, and how we live can tell others of God's love. I can trust God's plan for me because **I believe God gives me purpose**—and you can, too.

MEMORY VERSE | John 6:69 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Learn the memory verse together using any combination of the resources provided: [memory verse coloring page](#), [sign language motions](#), or choose from [this list](#) of our favorite memorization techniques!
- **"We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."**

PRAYER

- God, your love for us is amazing. You chose us to be yours, and you gave us purpose. Show us how to discover our special purpose and help others with it. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- **SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS**
 - **What did John the Baptist preach about?** *Baptism of repentance and the forgiveness of sins.*
 - **How is John the Baptist described? Why do you think the Bible tells us what he looked like?** *John wore camel hair and a leather belt and ate locusts and wild honey. His unusual choice of clothes and food shows us that God gives purpose to everyone, no matter what the rest of the world might think of them.*
 - **John baptized with water, but what will Jesus baptize with?** *The Holy Spirit.*
 - **Read Ephesians 1:11–12. How do you think this relates to God's purpose for you?**
- **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**
 - **What might be included in God's purpose for you?**

- Do you think God gives everyone the same purpose?
- What is something you can do for the purpose of leading others to Jesus?

ACTIVITY | Light The Way Lanterns

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Follow [these instructions](#) to help each kid make their own [lanterns](#) using battery-operated tea lights, transparency film, colored paper, permanent markers, and string. Have kids write the Big Idea along the piece of paper that will wrap around the tea light base.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Level this up for preteens by making a water bottle lantern, like [this](#), instead. You can prep some of the materials, like cardboard rings, ahead of time.
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Simplify this craft by using less of the materials. Have the kids decorate the transparency film with markers or glue on tissue paper. Then, finish by taping the film to the candle and making the handle. You can also choose to have them decorate clear plastic cups and place the candle in it like [this](#).
- Moving through a campsite without a light source like lanterns would be difficult. They light the way for us to navigate in the darkness.
- John's purpose was to help people see the error of their ways and turn back to God. In doing so, he was lighting the way for Jesus. Just like God gave John purpose, each of us can confidently say, **I believe God gives me purpose.**