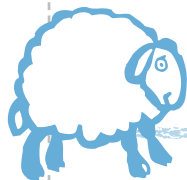




Lesson Seven

John the Baptist Prepares the Way



Nourishing Your Heart

Scripture

Luke 1:5–17

Matthew 3:1–13

John 3:22–30

Bible Truth

John the Baptist boldly, yet humbly, prepared people to meet the promised Savior.

Lesson Aim

To love Jesus best and to tell others that he is greatest of all.

John the Baptist wore coarse clothing, ate simple food, and lived quietly in the desert until he began to preach repentance. A relative of Jesus, John was sent by God to prepare the hearts of people for the coming of God's Son.

John did his job boldly. He told the Jews of their need to turn to God and turn away from their sin. With prophetic fervor, he spoke words of warning and words of hope. John preached by the Jordan River and baptized people. Jews believed that washing with water was a part of ritual cleansing (Leviticus 14:7–8). But John's baptism was more than that—it was for repentance, showing a change of heart and life.

Many people came to listen to John and be baptized, but in spite of his notoriety, John did his job with great humility. He told his listeners, "After me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry" (Matthew 3:11b). He was speaking of Jesus, always pointing his followers to the forthcoming Messiah.

And when Jesus began his public ministry and people started flocking to him in droves, John reacted in a godly and humble way, without a trace of envy. He told his followers: "I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him. ... He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:28–30).

John the Baptist understood his calling and purpose, serving God obediently and selflessly. Always faithful to his task, John was eventually thrown in prison and beheaded by the ruling elite.

It is important to understand that God's Holy Spirit—the same Spirit of God who filled John's life "even from birth" (Luke 1:15)—can give us the desire and help to put Christ and his kingdom first, as John did. This is an important truth for you to know and to teach your children.

Younger elementary children want to learn and are eager to please. This is a wonderful time in their lives to direct their pliable hearts toward Jesus, teaching them to love him best and put him first. Your task is to challenge them to follow John's example of obedience and believe the words that he spoke about Jesus.

Pray that you will always put Christ ahead of yourself so that you will ever be ready for successful activity in God's kingdom.

Teach the children
to love Jesus best
and put him first.

Memory Verse

"He must become greater; I must become less."

JOHN 3:30