



John Baptizes Jesus

(based on Matthew 3:13-17)

John was a messenger sent from God. He worked hard to teach everyone he met about how God wanted them to live. When people were willing to follow God's way, they came to find John by the river to say they were sorry to God and to be baptized. As the people came near, John shouted, "Repent! Change! Turn back to God! Live new lives! The kingdom of heaven is near!"

One by one, people followed John into the river where he gently held them while the water washed over their heads. Then he said a prayer: "Now you are baptized, go and live in God's loving ways." When the people came out of the water, they were ready for a fresh new start. It was a wonderful feeling.

One day Jesus walked down to the river to see John. Jesus wanted to be baptized too.

John looked at Jesus. John knew that Jesus was very important to God.

"You should be baptizing me," said John. "Why have you come here?"

"This is what God wants," replied Jesus. "God wants you to baptize me."

John and Jesus waded into the water. John gently held Jesus while the water washed over his head, and then John said a prayer. As Jesus came out of the water, something amazing happened. The sky opened, and God's Spirit came to rest on him like a dove.

Then God spoke to the crowd from heaven,

"This is my beloved son, and I am pleased with him."

Jesus saw the dove and heard God's words. It was the start of something new for him. Now Jesus was ready to begin his work. He was prepared to teach people about God's grace.



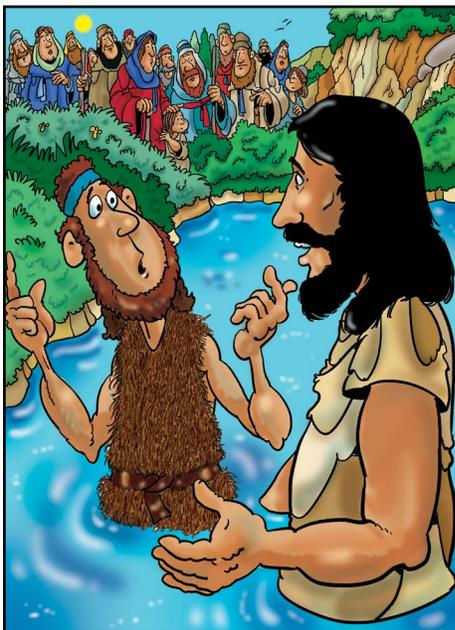
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Do an internet search for water-themed songs, such as “I’ve Got Peace like a River,” “Take Me to the Water,” “The River” by Jordan Feliz, and “Down to the River to Pray” by Alison Kraus. Listen to the music and/or watch the music videos. Wonder together how the songs made you feel.
- Set out a bowl of water. Each time you reach a reference to water in the story, have a family member dip one hand in the water and let it drip loudly through his or her fingers back into the bowl. Share any wondering questions you may have about the story, such as “I wonder why the Holy Spirit appeared like a dove”; “I wonder why Jesus wanted to be baptized.”



Responding to God's Grace

- Talk about family members’ baptisms. What stories stand out? Who attended? What words did the minister say? What words did the parents say? What about the congregation? What does each person’s baptism mean to her or him today?
- You will need blue construction paper. Divide each sheet into four sections. (Do this by folding the sheets in half one way, then folding them in half the other way.) Have everyone name one way that we use water during worship (*for baptism*). In one section of the sheet, draw pictures of a baptism as it happens at your church. Then brainstorm the many ways that we use water each day. Choose three ideas and draw them in the spaces left on the construction paper. Begin by saying, “Thank you, God, for water for . . .” and name the things you have drawn on your sheets of blue construction paper. For instance: “Thank you, God, for water for baptism, drinking, washing, and playing in.” Close by saying “Amen.”

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Dip your finger in the water and draw a cross on the forehead or wrist of each person, and say, “You, (*Name*), are God’s beloved child.”
- Have family worship:
Light a white candle and read John 8:12.

Invite each family member to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the gift of Jesus, the Messiah.

Sing together “This Little Light of Mine”:

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine. (3x)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.