

A Good Shepherd Story of Jesus

John Baptizes Jesus

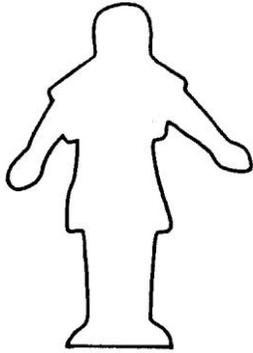
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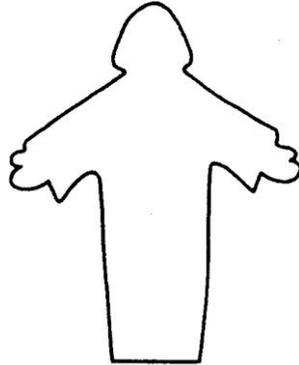
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JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS ... MATERIALS

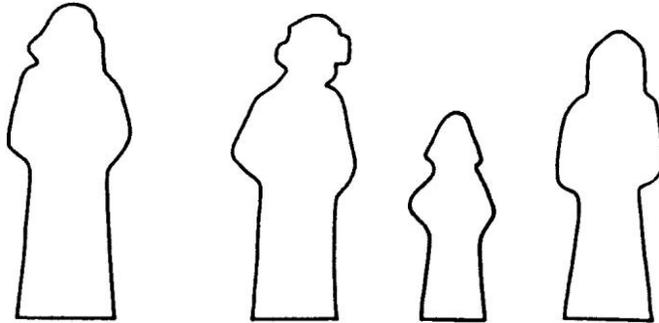
- medium wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden figure of John
 - wooden figure of Jesus
 - 4 wooden people of God figures
 - blue felt river



John



Jesus



People of God

JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS MATTHEW 3:1-17

ACTIONS

After speaking, go to the shelf and carry the story back to the circle.

Allow 10-15 seconds of silence as you reverently stroke one or more of the wooden figures.

Place John in front of you.

Touch the jagged edges of John's clothes.

Lay the river in front of John, horizontally. Place the onlookers to the left of John, on the other side of the river.

Take onlookers one at a time, place them in the river, pour imaginary water over each and put them back on the side of river you got them from.

Touch the river.

Place the Jesus figure slightly to the right of John.

Point to the Jesus figure.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will be able to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside me. Will you make silence with me so I can find all the words to my story?

John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, grew up to be a man who lived in the wilderness.

He ate locusts, wild honey and wore clothes made of animal skins.

He preached. He told the people to repent, to change how they lived.

Then he baptized them in the Jordan River.

People thought John was the one they had been waiting for.

But John told them, "I baptize with water, but the one who comes after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

One day John saw Jesus coming to be baptized.

John said to Jesus, "You should baptize me."

Shake your head and smile.

Move the Jesus figure into the river, and pour imaginary water over him.

Hold both your arms up and open wide.
Then move one down and rest a gentle hand on Jesus' head.

Say these words very reverently and slowly.

Move the Jesus figure away from the others as far right as you can reach.

Place all wooden figures and the felt river in the basket.

Without speaking return the basket to its shelf. Go back to the circle and sit down.

Dismiss the children to their work only after each of them has had a chance to choose their work.

But Jesus said, "No, this is the way it is to be."

So John baptized Jesus in the river Jordan.

And when Jesus came up through the water, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God, in the shape of a dove, came and rested on Jesus.

Then God's voice came from the heavens, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased."

Jesus left John then to journey into the wilderness.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder what locusts taste like?

I wonder if the water was cold in the river?

I wonder what the people thought when they saw the dove?

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

I wonder what you will make your work today? There is a craft or you may paint. Maybe you will work with a story and make it your own. Let's begin.

JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS TEACHER HELPS

John the Baptizer preached hard words. He told people to change the way they lived. They were no longer to believe that they could be considered righteous just because they were descendants of the covenant given to Abraham. John's words were to prepare the hearts of the people of God to be ready for Jesus' coming and the new commandments that he would bring. We don't know that John really understood how Jesus was to become the Messiah and save God's people. Most likely he, too, believed that it was going to be a military kingdom established with Jesus as the king.

But whether John understood or not, he fulfilled his ministry. What a strange sight this man must have been in his animal skins with uncombed hair and beard. And what a powerful speaker he must have been to move the Jews from their complacent understanding that they were responsible only to the law of their religion. John said, "You can't go on acting like this and be acceptable in God's kingdom. Change what you are doing. Repent and be baptized ... be washed clean."

Often people wonder why Jesus had to be baptized. Did the Christ need to repent and be washed clean? I believe that Jesus' acceptance of baptism was much more his desire, or need, to be understood as human and responsible for sin. Jesus is the one who instructs a hesitant John to baptize him. John recognized the authority of his second cousin, much like his mother, Elizabeth, recognized the special state of Mary when she ran to meet her during their pregnancies.

The words of blessing from God help us understand that Jesus was fulfilling God's hope for creation. I believe Jesus could have chosen not to be baptized, or he could have baptized John. But Jesus made a choice that pleased God and he, and all others who were nearby, heard the words of blessing.

The wondering questions begin with that which is on the minds of all children when they hear this story. It's okay to wonder about the locusts and what they tasted like. This is a culture very foreign to ours and must seem very strange to the children. Let them wonder.

The second question may be troublesome. We need to remember that our children are not used to baptism by immersion. You may need to reiterate that Jesus stepped into the river because that's how people were baptized then. And in some places, now. No doubt memories of swimming pools and beaches with cold water will come to their minds.

As we wonder about what people thought when they saw the dove, we also wonder what Jesus thought. Did everyone realize how special Jesus was at this time? Did Jesus understand? Were the people frightened? Were they excited? How would we have felt?

This lesson is almost always followed by the temptation in the wilderness. This is the reason we move the Jesus figure off by himself after the baptism in the river.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

Jesus and John were second cousins. They very likely played together when they were children. Imagine you are John. Tell us when you first realized there was something different about your cousin.

Jesus' baptism told everyone that he was special. Many people expected Jesus to do wonderful and powerful things. What do people expect you to do and why? Do you like their expectation or are they hard for you? What do you expect of other people, especially your parents, teachers and peers? Have you made it hard for them to be what they like to be? How can you change that?

John believed in Jesus long before other people did. John must have felt very alone in his thinking. Think about a time when you felt like you thought or believed differently from everyone else. What was it like?