

# THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

## PART 3: THE GOSPEL COME TO LIFE

### LESSON 2 || JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS' BAPTISM

#### SESSION SNAPSHOT

**NARRATIVE PASSAGE:** Matthew 3

**GOSPEL FOCUS:** 2 Corinthians 5:21

#### STUDENT TAKEAWAYS:

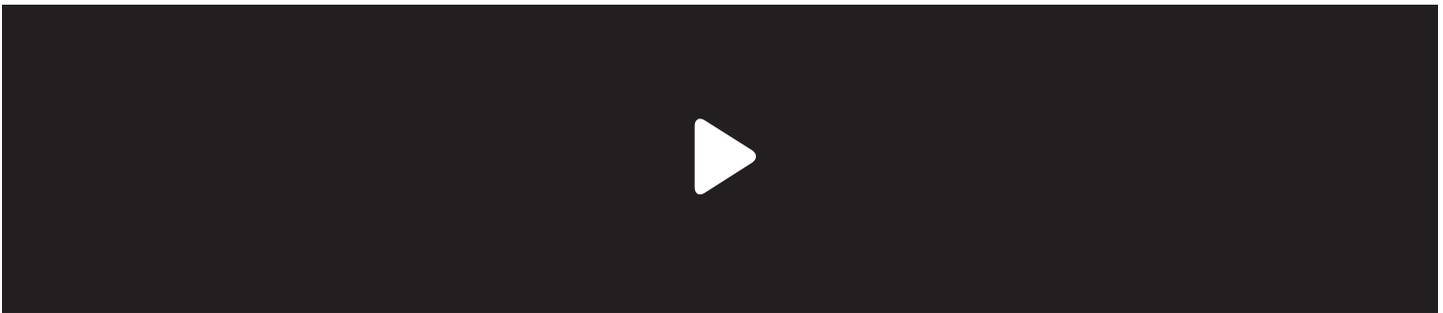
- Understand John's role in the big-picture story of Scripture and why Jesus had to be baptized.
- Grasp that Jesus was sinless, yet He identified with our sin, ultimately taking on the penalty of our sin on the cross.
- Explain what it means that if they have a saving relationship with Christ, God sees them as righteous because of what Jesus did on the cross.

#### OVERVIEW:

John the Baptist was a pretty unique guy who probably seemed pretty weird to the people around him. But he played a vital role in the grand narrative of Scripture, especially what we've been talking about throughout *The Thread*. He made a critical connection between the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah and Jesus. Jesus then affirmed John's message by being baptized by John. In doing so, Jesus also let us know He was coming to identify with and save sinful people.

#### TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



#### BIBLE BACKGROUND

*The Bible Background* is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, we encourage teachers to help students know *who* wrote a particular book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHY TEACH CONTEXT?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

#### MATTHEW

- *Author:* Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the events he details in his gospel.

- *Time frame:* Most people hold that Matthew's Gospel was written in the late 50s or 60s AD, though some think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- *Purpose:* Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to persuade them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. He was also probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel declares that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

## 2 CORINTHIANS

- *Author:* The apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to the church in Corinth.
- *Time frame:* Paul wrote 2 Corinthians around 55 or 56 AD, a year or so after writing 1 Corinthians and a year before he wrote his letter to the Romans.
- *Purpose:* According to the ESV Study Bible, the main theme of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was "the relationship between suffering and the power of the Spirit in Paul's life, ministry, and message."

# LESSON PLAN

*The Lesson Plan contains four elements:*

- **GETTING STARTED**– An introductory activity designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- **THE STORY**– A section featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- **THE THREAD**– A special emphasis where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- **WRAPPING UP**– An application-focused segment helping teenagers ask the question, “How am I impacted by what I learned today”?

## GETTING STARTED

- *Goal:* To get students thinking about baptism and why John the Baptist baptized Jesus.
- *Set-Up:* Be prepared to show this short YouTube video.
  - Here’s the link: <https://youtube.com/shorts/pQaOKau5eaY?feature=share>

FIRST, ask your students:

- **What do you know about baptism?**
  - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, show the video. After the video ends, ask for students’ reactions using some questions like these:

- **Have you ever witnessed a baptism that didn’t go as planned? If so, explain.**
  - If you have a funny baptism story from your ministry experience, this is the perfect time to share!
- **Have you been baptized? If so, share about the experience.**
  - *Answers will vary.*
- **What do you believe to be the significance of being baptized?**
  - This is a moment to affirm any denominational beliefs you have regarding baptism.

FINALLY, realizing that some students may not even know Jesus was baptized while on earth and others who may not understand why He did it, transition to The Story by saying something like:

- **As we continue to trace the Gospel throughout the Bible, we will dig deeper into the role of John the Baptist in the big-picture story of Scripture. We’re also going to look at why a sinless Jesus had to be baptized and how Jesus’ radical obedience connects to you being able to be seen as righteous.**

## THE STORY

- *Goal:* For students to understand John’s role in the big-picture story of Scripture and why Jesus had to be baptized.
- *Set-Up:* Students will need a Bible or a Bible app. You may find that a dry-erase board is helpful, but it is not necessary. .

FIRST, ask the students if they’ve ever heard of John the Baptist. Ask them what they know about him. After you give them some time to answer, explain to them that you’re going to look at the important role John played.

If you’d like, use the Connecting The Dots section below to review or fill in the gaps between your last lesson and this one.

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

As you teach *The Thread*, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it to review or connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- John was the earthly cousin of Jesus.
- John was a few weeks older than Jesus. When Jesus' mother, Mary, went to stay with John's parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah, Elizabeth's unborn baby, John, jumped for joy inside his mother's womb at the sound of Mary's introduction (Luke 1:39-41).
- John's ministry was foretold centuries before his birth in the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3).
- Jesus' childhood and early adulthood have taken place between the last lesson and this one.
- John was preaching and baptizing when Jesus surprised him with not only His presence but also His desire to be baptized along with others at the Jordan River.

THEN, ask students to turn to Matthew 3 in their Bibles. While students are looking for this passage, use the Bible Background to offer them some insight into the Gospel of Matthew. Read or have a student read Matthew 3:1-2. Ask something like:

- **What do you think John means in verse 2? What is he telling people to do? Why is he telling them to do it?**
  - *Answers will vary.* Explain to the students that the word "repent" literally means to change your mind or direction. He's calling people to change what they're doing and thinking so they're ready to receive Jesus and His kingdom.
- **Do you think what he was doing was important? Explain why or why not.**
  - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, read or have a student read Matthew 3:3. After that verse is read, read or have a student read Malachi 3:1. Ask something like:

- **What do you think it means that John was preparing the way of the Lord? What needed "preparing?"**
  - Don't provide an answer just yet. Give the students some time to think and answer the question.

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 3:11-12. Ask something like:

- **Do these verses give a little more clarity to what John is preparing the way for? Explain.**
  - *Answer:* Yes, it makes it clear that John is preparing the people for someone mightier than himself that will bring a more important baptism.
- **Why do you think the Lord chose to have someone prepare the way for Jesus' coming? Does He need someone to prepare His way? Why didn't He just show up without preparation?**
  - *Answers will vary* God doesn't need someone to prepare the way for Him, but He still chooses people to do things such as this. The people were the ones who really needed preparation. Use the next two questions to flesh out the answer.

THEN, ask something like:

- **What's been the purpose of The Thread? What connection are we trying to make in each lesson?**
  - *Answer:* The goal of The Thread has been to show how the Gospel is a thread that is woven throughout the entire Bible. We're seeing how all of Scripture is connected and points to Jesus.
- **So, after reading Matthew 3:1-3, how does John help make that connection?**
  - *Answer:* John is making a connection between the Old Testament and Jesus. Matthew identified him as the one spoken of in the Old Testament that was preparing a way for the coming Messiah. Then John points specifically to Jesus. Thus, he's making a claim about Jesus' divinity. He's connecting the Old Testament

prophecies of the coming Messiah to Jesus. That was bold!

NEXT, read or have a student read Matthew 3:13-17. **Ask something like:**

- **Jesus obviously didn't need to repent of anything. So, what do you think Jesus was doing by going to John for baptism?**
  - *Answer:* First, He was affirming John's message. We said that John was making a connection between the Old Testament prophecies of a Messiah and Jesus. By coming to John for baptism, Jesus was affirming that John was right to make that connection. Second, Jesus was identifying with the people He was coming to serve and save.
- **What is significant about Jesus beginning His ministry by identifying with sinful people? What's unique about that?**
  - *Answer:* Other religions give you a pathway to earning your salvation – you have to do something. Here Jesus is making it known that He's different. He's coming to us, not the other way around. That's huge!
- **What does it mean that Jesus' baptism fulfilled all righteousness?**
  - *Answer:* God's plan of salvation had been prophesied throughout the Old Testament. So, Jesus is saying that His baptism was a part of demonstrating that He had come to fulfill what the Old Testament had been pointing to, a Messiah that would come and save His people.

**THEN, LET YOUR STUDENTS KNOW THAT IN THE NEXT SECTION, YOU'RE GOING TO DIG A LITTLE DEEPER INTO THIS CONCEPT OF JESUS COMING AND IDENTIFYING WITH SINFUL PEOPLE. IF STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE THREAD TO SEE THE CONNECTION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE BIG-PICTURE NARRATIVE OF SCRIPTURE.**

## THE THREAD

BEGIN this section by saying something like:

- **It was important for Jesus to identify with those He was coming to save by being baptized at the onset of His public ministry. But how else does He identify with sinners? Let's look a little more at this idea.**

Read or have a student read 2 Corinthians 5:21. **Ask something like:**

- **It's easy for all of us to identify with sinners because we are sinners. What's significant about Jesus identifying with sinners? Was it natural for Him?**
  - *Answer:* Jesus wasn't sinful. Because He was fully God, He knew no sin. So He had to willingly submit to take on our sin. It was a choice He made.
- **How is this verse a crucial connection to how He identified with sinners in His baptism?**
  - *Answer:* In His baptism, Jesus alluded to what He was coming to do. When He went to the cross, He actually did it. He took our sin on Himself so we could have His righteousness.
- **Why did He do it?**
  - *Answer:* He did it "for us." Some translations say "for our sake." He did it because of His great love for us. He did it because if He didn't, we would have to bear the weight of our sin, which would crush us and send us to an eternity apart from Him. We are unable to have a relationship with God without freedom from sin, so Jesus came to make a way for us.

THEN summarize The Thread by saying something like:

- **Jesus never sinned, yet He carried your sins to the cross. He didn't do it because He had to. He did it because of how much He loves you. He took your punishment so that you could be made right before God. There is simply no greater gift!**

IF YOUR STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY MORE QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE WRAPPING UP SECTION.

## WRAPPING UP

- *Goal:* To discuss how people look for salvation in many other sources besides Jesus.
- *Set-Up:* A dry-erase board to jot some answers down if you have access to one.

FIRST, ask something like:

- **What do we know is the consequence of our sinfulness?**
  - *Answer:* The result of our sin is death; we are separated from God (Romans 3:23, 6:23a).
- **If you could describe the way your sin makes you feel, what word would you use?**
  - *Answers will vary.* Write some of their answers on a dry-erase board if you have one. Some possible answers may include guilty, ashamed, or dirty. Write the word “Problem” at the top of the list.
- **How does it make you feel to know that Jesus came to take on your sin?**
  - *Answers will vary.*
- **What does it mean that Jesus took on our sin so that we could have His righteousness? How does this impact how God sees us?**
  - *Answer:* Jesus took on our sin and the penalty of death that came with it. By doing this, He gave those that trust in Him His righteousness. This means that when God looks at those that trust in Jesus, He sees them as righteous, not sinful. He sees them as if they had never sinned. This should motivate us to live a life that follows Him out of love.
- **How is Jesus taking our sin and giving us His righteousness, the solution for the problems we listed on the board?**
  - *Answers will vary.* Write some of their answers next to the “Problem” list. Above this list, write “Solution.” For example, if the problem is that we feel dirty, we are now free to know we’re clean in Christ. If we feel guilty, we can know that we’re seen as innocent in Christ.

THEN, say something like:

- **God’s love for you is so deep that He sent Jesus to do everything discussed in this lesson. He doesn’t look at you the way the world looks at you. If you trust in Him, He sees past all of your mistakes. His love is not based on your actions but on your being His beloved creation — a creation worth sacrificing His Son for!**

FINALLY, as you close, encourage students to talk to you before leaving if they have questions about salvation, baptism, or a deeper level of commitment to serve God. There may be an unsaved kid, a kid who just “got” what baptism is all about, or a kid who wants his or her life to look more like John’s ministry!

Close your Bible study in prayer, perhaps including gratefulness for what God has promised followers of Jesus about eternity.

- If you’ve purchased the corresponding devotional journal, remind students they’ll be working through Week 28 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions and to give memorizing this week’s verse their best shot.
- If you’re utilizing the digital devotions included in the Thread curriculum, remind students how you’ll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well that you want to share?
- Something that didn't work that you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns at [feedback@youthministry360.com](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).