

THIS IS JESUS

UNIT ONE: THE MESSIAH NAMED JESUS PART 3: THE MESSIAH IS CALLING

Lesson 1: A Call To Baptism

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That Jesus' baptism occurred in obedience to God's plan, symbolizing the beginning of His public ministry.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To apply their understanding of baptism by determining ways to identify with Jesus.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Matthew 3:1-17, 28:16-20; Leviticus 16:3-5; John 1:29-39

KEY TAKEAWAY: Followers of Jesus respond to His call to be baptized as He was.

OVERVIEW:

God's response after Jesus' baptism clearly shows the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Jesus' baptism was a righteous act of obedience to His Father. The baptism that believers take part in is, at its core, involved in following Jesus' example. It is also a response to the call for disciples to be baptized in Matthew 28.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *This Is Jesus* 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 some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. *The Details* give you background info for each book. *The Setting* informs you of what's happening in and around the passage. *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible Study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context," we mean, at the very least, helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the *Bible Background* to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Matthew

- *Author:* Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- *Time frame:* Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's A.D., though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.
- *Purpose:* Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

John

- *Author:* The Gospel of John was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee. A fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus, John also penned the Book of Revelation, as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- *Time frame:* The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 A.D. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- *Purpose:* John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

THE SETTING

At the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus came to John to be baptized. John initially hesitated because he felt unworthy, but he eventually baptized Jesus. When Jesus came out of the water, the Holy Spirit came down on Him in the form of a dove. God's voice proclaimed that He was well pleased with His Son. As a result John testified that Jesus is the Son of God who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

THE MAIN POINT

Baptism does not bring salvation but is a righteous act of obedience according to the command of Jesus. It is also an important way of identifying oneself with Jesus. Because Jesus was baptized, we can be identified with Him through the act of baptism. One of Jesus' final words to His disciples was the command for them to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20).

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible Study section called *The Main Event*; and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal:* To introduce students to the narrative of Jesus' baptism.
- *Set-Up:* Prior to the lesson, display the following items: a jar of honey, sandals, a piece of fabric that is made of fur resembling animal hair, a toy bird (or a picture of a bird), and a clear pitcher of water. Plus, have a model car (Matchbox or Hot Wheels) that you keep hidden to reveal at the end.

FIRST, welcome students. Point out the items that are on display. Ask students to spend a moment examining each of the items. **Ask:**

- **By observing these items, can you guess the significant event in Jesus' life that all of these items relate to?**
 - *Answers will vary.* (The correct answer is Jesus' Baptism. However, give students the freedom to guess incorrectly. If a student guesses Jesus' Baptism, invite them to share which of the items was most helpful.)

THEN, read or have a student read Matthew 3:1-17.

AFTER THAT, ask students to explain the significance of each of the items displayed. (Jar of honey: John the Baptist's food. Sandals and Fabric: John the Baptist's garb. The bird: The dove that descended. Clear pitcher of water: The water used for baptism.)

FINALLY, reveal the model car (See Set-Up). **Ask:**

- **But what about this? What might this have to do with the story?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

Say something like:

- **This is a little bit of a trick question. However, this might be the most important object lesson. A model is a physical representation or example of something. We often use models to show us what an object or concept would look like in the real world. This model car, for instance, provides us with a physical, although miniature, representation of what this actual car looks like in real life. In today's passage, we will be discussing how Jesus' baptism is a model for all of us to follow! Let's dig in.**

Make sure there are no questions, and then transition to The Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal:* To examine Jesus' baptism as a model for our own.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, take a moment to share your church's definition of baptism with students. (This is often found on a church website, so you might even make a scavenger hunt of it!) Many churches do baptism differently, and for a variety of reasons. Helping your students understand why your church believes what it does about baptism will be a helpful introduction to today's lesson.

NEXT, explain to students that baptism is a practice much older than the narrative we read in Matthew 3. Read or have a student read Leviticus 16:3-5.

THEN, explain that baptism may have originated from the priestly cleansing from impurity prior to offering sacrifices. Share that one of the first types of baptism in Scripture was when Naaman dipped seven times in the Jordan River to be cleansed from his leprosy (2 Kings 5:14). **Say something like:**

- **Even before John the Baptist, the practice of baptizing proselytes, or Gentiles who embraced Judaism, was a common occurrence. This would have been a natural step in the discipleship that took place during that time. Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3 was an important moment in His life and ministry, and one that He invites us to join Him in. Let's take a closer look at this special moment in Scripture.**

NEXT, read Matthew 3:13-15. **Say something like:**

- **John recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Remember, Messiah means the Anointed One who would be the Savior of the World. Because of that, he tried to prevent Jesus from carrying out His intended course of action. John claimed he was the one who needed to be baptized by Jesus.**

Ask students:

- **How do you think you might have reacted if Jesus had walked up and asked you to baptize Him?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, explain that John's confusion was completely warranted. He was baptizing followers who had repented of their sins. What sin did Jesus have to repent from? None! So why would He need baptizing? **Say something like:**

- **Jesus never sinned; therefore, from John's perspective, Jesus did not need to be baptized. Even though He was sinless, Jesus came to be the substitute for sinful humanity and to open the way for them to be right with God. Jesus' baptism wasn't about His repentance. Instead, it symbolized what He came to earth to do- die, be buried, and be raised back to life. This is what Jesus does for those who accept Him: He puts to death and buries the old way of life and brings about a new life.**

Explain that the baptism of Jesus was necessary "to fulfill all righteousness," that is, to complete what God wanted done. Jesus' baptism also symbolizes the start of His public ministry. From this moment on, Jesus began to publicly do His heavenly Father's work. His faithfulness had some very incredible results as well!

NEXT, read Matthew 3:16-17. **Ask students:**

- **What a display! What stood out to you? How was this different from the baptisms that you have seen before?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

Explain that the moment Jesus came up from the water, the heavens opened. God's Spirit descended on Jesus, "like a dove," rested on Him. This anointing by God's Spirit signified the beginning of His ministry and identified Him as the Messiah (which means, "anointed one"). God the Father spoke from heaven when the Spirit descended upon His Son. (Note the presence of the Trinity at this time, but keep in mind that we don't want to confuse students or spend too long with explanations during this lesson.)

THEN, **say something like:**

- **God was not just pleased with Jesus at this moment but is always "well pleased" with Him. This action was God's confirmation of His Son's identity as the Messiah, as well as the initiation of Jesus' mission on earth. Let's read another account of this incredible moment.**

Read or have a student read John 1:29-34. **Say something like:**

- **John recorded Jesus' baptism in this way because He was actually there.**

NEXT, read or have a student read John 1:35-39. **Say something like:**

- **This is the second time these two future disciples heard John call Jesus "The Lamb of God." Andrew and John had seen many lambs sacrificed to God upon the altar of the Temple. It was almost a daily occurrence. The lamb was a symbol of purity and sacrifice, a way of saying to God, "I want to be pure and to sacrifice myself to you." Lambs were sacrificed in place of the person himself as a sacrifice for sin.**

Explain that after that, Andrew went almost immediately and told his brother Peter. Certainly, John told his brother James what he had witnessed. This was no ordinary person. They had certainly seen the Lamb of God. **Ask students:**

- **If you had witnessed what these two did, would you have followed Jesus?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, explain that John the Baptist emphasized that God had called him to baptize with water, but God would send another to "baptize with the Holy Spirit." Water baptism relates to an external action; Spirit baptism relates to an internal action. To be baptized with the Spirit refers to a transforming encounter with God's Spirit. In that encounter, God does away with the old nature and gives birth to the new. **Say something like:**

- **You may be wondering what this has to do with our own call to baptism. In fact, if you've seen a baptism recently, you might even be a little disappointed there wasn't a heavenly dove descending from the sky! But you may have noticed that during the baptism, and every other baptism done in the Church, there is a certain phrase repeated each time.**

Ask students:

- **If baptism doesn't save us from our sins, why is it still important?**
 - *Answers will vary.* (If students are stuck, feel free to move to the next passage. It will help them answer this question!)

Read or have a student read Matthew 28:16-20. **Say something like:**

- **One of Jesus' final words to His disciples was the command for them to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. You've likely heard that last portion being spoken by the person who performs the baptism. This is not a coincidence. The baptisms that we perform today follow the same instructions that were given to the original disciples in Matthew 28! Jesus' baptism was a model for ours, and He calls us to join in with Him in a really beautiful way.**

FINALLY, take a moment to invite students to ask questions about baptism in your context. Refer back to the beginning of the lesson. (Be sure to prepare answers about why your church does baptism the way that it does, what the process looks like, etc.) The point is to help students draw the connection between Jesus' model of baptism and the ways that your tradition follows His call to join.

Allow for questions, and then transition into The Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* To further discuss the importance of following Jesus' example for our baptism and our lives.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, lead students to discuss their understanding of Jesus' baptism and what it means for their own lives.

THEN, read or have a student read 1 John 2:6. Explain the simplicity of the fact that we must do what Jesus did if we claim to be His followers. This does not just mean just in the act of baptism, either. Get them thinking about their entire lifestyle. **Ask:**

- **In your own words, what does it mean to be identified with Jesus?**
 - o *Answers will vary.*
- **Why is your baptism an important stage in your spiritual journey?**
 - o *Answers will vary.*
- **What differences have you noticed in your life since you became a follower of Jesus?**
 - o *Answers will vary.*

Allow Time For Any Closing Thoughts Or Questions From Your Students. Before Leaving, Close With A Prayer.

- Don't forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you're posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.