

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 3: The Gospel Come To Life Lesson 28: John the Baptist and Jesus' Baptism



Session Snapshot

Narrative Passage: Matthew 3

Gospel Focus: 2 Corinthians 5:21

Student Takeaways:

- Students will understand John's role in the big-picture story of Scripture, and why Jesus had to be baptized.
- Students will understand that Jesus was sinless and yet, He identified with our sin, ultimately taking on the penalty of our sin on the cross.
- Students will, in their own words, 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 key role in the grand narrative of Scripture, especially what we've been talking about throughout The Thread. He made a critical connection between Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah and Jesus. He literally made the connection of how the Gospel connects to the big picture of the Bible. Jesus, then, affirmed John's message by being baptized by John. In doing so, Jesus also let us know that He was coming to identify with and save sinful people.



Teacher Prep Video

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

To access your *Thread* lesson 28 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 28, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.



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 stories he relates in his gospel.

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Time frame: Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

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.

2 Corinthians

Author: The Apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to the Church in Corinth.

Time frame: Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia around 55 or 56 AD, a year or so after writing 1 Corinthians and a year before he wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth.

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 apostolic life, ministry, and message."



Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- An introductory activity called Getting Started designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- A section entitled The Story featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- A special emphasis entitled The Thread where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- An application-focused segment called Wrapping Up 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 YouTube video called "WWE Baptism Super Dunk." Here's the video link:
<https://youtu.be/avmqNtVaJMw>

FIRST, ask your students:

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

THEN, show the WWE Baptism Super Dunk video. After the video ends, ask for students' reactions using some questions like these:

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- **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.**
- **What do you believe to be the significance of being baptized?**
 - This is a moment to affirm any denominational distinctives you have regarding baptism.

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

- **In this week's portion of our year-long study of how the Gospel is evident throughout the entire Bible, we are going to dig deeper into the role of John the Baptist in the big-picture story of the Bible. 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.**

Transition to The Story.

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 a dry-erase board is helpful, but not a must.

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 we're going to look at the important role John played in the big-picture of the Bible.

If you'd like, use the "Connecting The Dots" section below to do a little review and/or fill in the gaps from 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 as a way to review and/or to 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 has 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 other believers at the Jordan River.**

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THEN, ask students to look up 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?**
 - o 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.**
 - o 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”?**
 - o Don’t provide an answer just yet. Give the students some time to 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.**
 - o Answer: Yes, it makes it clear that John is preparing for someone that is 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?**
 - o Answers will vary. Use the next two questions to flesh out the answer.

THEN, ask something like:

- **This is our 28th lesson in The Thread. Think back to all the lessons we’ve done so far. What’s been the purpose of The Thread? What connection have we been making in each lesson?**
 - o Answer: The goal of The Thread has been to show how the Gospel is a thread that is woven throughout the entire Bible. We’ve seen how all of Scripture is connected and points to Jesus.
- **So, after reading Matthew 3:1-3, how does John help make that connection?**
 - o 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 to Jesus’ divinity. He’s connecting the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah to Jesus. That was a bold claim!

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?**
 - o 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?**

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- o 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?**
 - o God's plan of salvation had been prophesied throughout the whole Old Testament. All of the Old Testament lessons we've studied throughout The Thread have pointed to the Gospel because that's the whole point of 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 the 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 and see the connection of the Gospel to the big-picture narrative of Scripture.

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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, if baptism were the only way He identified with us, it would have been lacking. Let's look a little more at the idea of Him identifying with sinners.**

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?**
 - o Answer: Jesus wasn't sinful; sin wasn't a part of His nature. 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 jump from the way He identified with sinners in His baptism?**
 - o Answer: In His baptism, Jesus was alluding to what He was coming to do. When He went to the cross, He actually did it. He took our very worst on Himself so we could have His righteousness.
- **Why did He do it?**
 - o 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 and that would crush us and send us to an eternity apart from Him.

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.

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Wrapping Up

- **Goal:** For students to be able to, in their own words, 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.
- **Setup:** 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?**
 - o 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?**
 - o 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?**
 - o 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?**
 - o 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. 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?**
 - o 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 rather your being His beloved creation—a creation worth sacrificing His Son for! Get ready for this: Knowing you are righteous in God's eyes is the remedy for self-worth issues and a false view of God's love based on your actions!**

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 ministry to look more like John's ministry!

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

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- If you've purchased the *Tracing The Thread* devotional journal, remind students that 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'll be utilizing the digital devotions included in the *Thread* curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.
- Use the Social Media guide to stay in touch with students via text or Twitter, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

We Want To Hear From You . . .

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