

Explore It

FOR LEADERS



TRAVEL TOWARDS THE RIVER JORDAN

Matthew 3:1-6,13-16 Jesus is baptised by John

In today's session we travel with Jesus to the River Jordan and find John the Baptist waiting for him. We will explore what it means to be baptised and discuss why The Salvation Army chooses not to baptise. Our final session brings together the journey of Jesus from birth through to starting his ministry as a grown man.

Each child will need:

- Resources to create a large story picture – see Action It section

You will need:

- To display the Covenant Sunday prayer or share copies of the prayer card
www.salvationist.org.uk/resources/covenantsunday2023

Start It

- **Say:** On Friday 3 February it is the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's Number Day, a day to fundraise while enjoying maths challenges. You may be taking part in this special day at your school. For today's starter you will need to use your maths and concentration skills to help you.

Decide on a number that you are going to count to. Let's say 21 for this example. Ask the children to make a circle and ask one child to start the counting. That child should say 'one', then the next child should say 'two', and so on clockwise around the circle. The child who says '21' gets to decide on a new word for one of the numbers, an item that you would take on a journey together. Eg number three = passport).

Next, the counting starts again, but this time instead of saying 'three', the children should say 'passport'. If a child forgets, and says 'three', then the counting starts again at one. If they count to 21 without making a mistake, then they choose another number to replace with a travel word. The children will need to use all their skills of concentration once there are a few travel words have replaced the numbers.

Sing It

- **Say:** Today's story is all about John the Baptist. He pointed the way to Jesus and encouraged people to follow him. Our song for today is an invitation for us to do just that.

'Follow Jesus' by Superbook (3 mins 02 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mwtGTJkGbM

Tell It

- **Say:** Last month we discovered more about the Christmas story, and we learned about two women who gave birth to baby boys.

Ask: What were their names?

🗨️ **Say:** Mary was visited by an angel and was told that she would give birth to Jesus. But a few months before that, an angel visited another person.

Ask: Can you remember who it was and what happened?

Encourage the children to retell the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah found in Luke 1.

🗨️ **Say:** When the angel visited Zechariah, he had important news to share about the child.

Read:

‘But the angel said to him, “Zechariah, don’t be afraid. Your prayer has been heard by God. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a son. You will name him John. You will be very happy. Many people will be happy because of his birth. John will be a great man for the Lord. He will never drink wine or beer. Even at the time John is born, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will help many people of Israel return to the Lord their God. He himself will go first before the Lord. John will be powerful in spirit like Elijah. He will make peace between fathers and their children. He will bring those who are not obeying God back to the right way of thinking. He will make people ready for the coming of the Lord.”’

— (Luke 1:13-17 ICB)

🗨️ **Say:** Just as with Jesus, God had a special plan for John the Baptist even before he was born.

Video

The baptism of Jesus by Saddleback Kids (1 min 50 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=_VMNO2MAMwA

🗨️ **Say:** Throughout this month, we have met many people who travelled to see Jesus. We met people who followed a star in the East and people who searched for him in the Temple. John the Baptist’s main purpose was to guide people on their journey toward Jesus.

Ask: How did John the Baptist lead the way to Jesus?

🗨️ **Say:** John the Baptist knew that Jesus was the Son of God and wanted as many people as possible to follow him. He baptised people in the Jordan River, and when Jesus came to visit, he baptised him as well.

Ask: But what is baptism?

The following section aims to teach the children about baptism in the context of the whole Christian Church and discuss why The Salvation Army chooses not to baptise.

🗨️ **Say:** You may have Christian friends at school who have been baptised or christened. Different denominations dedicate themselves to God in different ways. So, what does it mean to be baptised or christened?

Video

Baptism for Kids! What happens at a baptism? by Twinkl Teaching Resources (5 mins 16 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHTtHHdzgZs

🗨️ **Say:** The Salvation Army chooses not to baptise with water because we believe that the Holy Spirit does the job represented by the water used in baptism. If a member of The Salvation Army wants to be baptised they can do this at another church, but it is not something that we do in our meetings.

🗨️ **Say:** Instead of a child’s christening, The Salvation Army has a ceremony where babies are dedicated to God. As they grow up, there are different ways people can show that they are committed to God and believe in Jesus within The Salvation Army. But the most important thing is that we are all travelling on the same journey to be more like Jesus.

Action It

● **Say:** Over the past month, we have been on a special journey. We have watched Jesus grow from a tiny baby into a man ready to start his ministry.

Story picture

Explain to the children that they are going to create a large story picture that follows the journey of the characters we have met over the past month. Recap the sessions from this month to see which parts of the story need to be covered.

The picture could contain a large pathway for people to follow and track the different parts of the journey of Jesus from a baby to a full-grown man ready for ministry. The picture could also show the journeys of other characters within the story, eg the wise men returning home and John the Baptist going ahead of Jesus.

How you complete the story picture is up to you and depends on the resources you have available. You could use large sheets of paper and paint. Or perhaps mixed media like wool and fabrics, and make plasticine people. This is an opportunity for the children to be creative but also see that our journey with Jesus often has many twists and turns.

Once the picture is completed, discuss each part of the journey through the beginning of the life of Jesus.

● **Say:** The wise men chose to travel to see Jesus, and John the Baptist went ahead of Jesus to prepare the way. Today we are called to travel with Jesus as we journey through our lives.

● **Say:** Our memory verse reminds us that Jesus is always with us on that journey.

'If someone says, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," then God lives in him. And he lives in God.'

— (1 John 4:15 ICB)

Pray It

● **Say:** In our first session this month, we shared a prayer of commitment to following Jesus throughout our lives. Let's have another look at the prayer.

Display the prayer from Covenant Sunday or share copies of the commitment card with the children.

Ask: The prayer asks God to help us bring love to this world and everyone in it. What do you think that looks like in our everyday lives?

● **Say:** You are just starting out on your journey with Jesus. Try to remember that, as you travel, the aim is to become more like him. Let's share the commitment prayer together.

Dear God,

Your love for me never ends, no matter what I do.

The amount of love you have for me is too much for me to understand!

I hope to get to know you better and show your love to others in everything I think, say and do.

I am going to write my name on this card to show that I want to be close to you and always have you in my heart.

Help me bring your love to this world and everyone in it.

Amen.

Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

Explore It

IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

JANUARY
SESSION 04

TRAVEL TOWARDS THE RIVER JORDAN

 Matthew 3:1-6,13-16 Jesus is baptised by John

FOR ME

TOGETHER



Watch

Spend time watching the journey of Jesus.

The journey of Jesus in 3½ minutes by Bible Society

www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9GSs5B-0yQ

What new things do you learn about Jesus from this clip?



Play

In today's session you learned how to play a new numbers game. Teach it to the people at home and have fun playing it together.



Song for the week

'Follow Jesus' by Superbook

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mwtGTJkGbM



Memory verse

'If someone says, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," then God lives in him. And he lives in God.'

— (1 John 4:15 ICB)

KIDS ALIVE! ONLINE

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive>

Kids Alive! The UK's only weekly Christian comic – is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!

