



SESSION **3**

Baptism



MEETING AIM

To begin to understand how special Jesus is.



BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 3:1-4:13



BACKGROUND

This session continues the theme of this month: Jesus coming to Earth and starting his mission. Here, following the message of the prophets and the words of the angels, comes the baptism of Jesus, accompanied by the words of his cousin John. The abstract idea of being washed clean will be difficult for the children to understand, but introducing it now will lay the foundation for when they start to comprehend more abstract concepts.

+ CIRCLE TIME



As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and share a story from their week. Sometimes it's helpful to have a sand timer so you have time for each person to share if they want to. If a child doesn't want to say anything, that's fine. Pray and thank God for all the stories shared and the stories that weren't mentioned.

+ WATER PLAY



You will need: plastic plates; washing-up bowls; sponges; water and washing-up liquid, clean-up and cover-up equipment

Let the children have a go at washing up. Make sure the plates are actually dirty, so they can see them becoming clean.

Talk about what we use water for: cleaning, drinking, playing etc. If possible, show them pictures of water being used in different ways.

+ BIBLE STORY



You will need: pictures of different rivers; washing-up bowl; clean water; doll; toy dove

Show the children pictures of rivers. Have they ever been to a river? Let the groups share their stories of when they visited a river. What was it like? What sounds and

smells do they remember? Go on to say that today's story takes place next to a big river, called the Jordan.

This is the part of the Bible where Jesus is preparing for his special job of bringing people to God. Down by the river, a man called John was telling people about God.

"Turn back to God!" he shouted! "Get ready! Someone is coming who will save us all!"

The people listening to John were worried. "What shall we do?" they asked. "Be baptised!" he replied. "Say sorry for the wrong things you've done. You'll be forgiven!"

John baptised the people in the big river.

'Baptise' the doll in the washing-up bowl. If any of the children want to have a go, let them.

When you get baptised, it's a sign to let everyone know that you're going to stop doing what you want. You're going to do what God wants!

Talk about times when you have seen people being baptised in your church. These may be babies, children, young people or adults, depending on your church tradition. What do the children remember about those baptisms?

As John was baptising people, Jesus came up to him. And John baptised Jesus as well, even though Jesus hadn't done anything wrong.

'Baptise' the doll again.

While Jesus was being baptised, something very special happened. The clouds parted and the Holy Spirit came down on him in the shape of a dove; a beautiful white bird.

Hover the toy bird over the doll, while it's still in the water.

A voice came from heaven saying: "You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you." What an amazing moment that must have been! Now everybody knew Jesus was very special indeed.

Tell the story again (without the river or baptism discussions), so that the children can have a go at the baptism, hovering the dove over the water and saying God's words. As you do so, remind the children how the plates were cleaned when you washed them. Comment that the people were being 'washed clean' when they were baptised. The children might take this literally and struggle to get the meaning behind it, but explore that together as far as you can. Talk about how special Jesus is. Remind them of the words that came from heaven as Jesus was being baptised.

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What was your favourite part of this story?
- What is important about this story?
- If you were in this story, who would you be?
- What other stories do you know about Jesus?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: playdough

Give each child a lump of playdough and ask them to make a model of something they need to say sorry to God for. If they need encouragement, start by making something (appropriate) that you need to say sorry for. Talk about how Jesus came to save everybody from the things they do wrong. Say: "We can say sorry to him and be washed clean, like the dirty plates and the people getting baptised."

Encourage the children to squash their models flat to show that Jesus forgives us completely. All that wrong stuff is gone! (Some children may not want to flatten their work, but that's OK.) Remind everyone that even if we slip up and do bad things, God will always wash us clean again if we are sorry.

+ PRAYER



You will need: washing-up bowl; water; hand soap; towels

Set out the water, soap and towels (if you have lots of children, have more than one washing-up bowl). Show the children how to wash their hands, using the soap, and then dry them on the towel. Remind the children that when you're baptised, you are being washed clean on the inside as well as the outside. You're saying sorry for the things you do wrong.

Invite the children to wash their hands as a way of saying sorry. As you dry your hands, thank Jesus for forgiving the things you do wrong. Ask him to help you follow his way.

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