

Bible background

Mark 1:1-11

Aim of lesson

To show that John the Baptist was a man that God used to do an important task, preparing the way for Jesus and teaching the need for repentance and baptism.

Preparation required

A doll and bowl of water large enough to immerse the doll.

Collect-wool cones (or make a card cone), plasticine, coarse fabrics, lollipop sticks or pipe cleaners for each child to make a model of John the Baptist. Use a cone for his body, plasticine for his head, and lollipop sticks for arms (a sharp instrument will be needed to make holes in wool cones), cut a circle in fabric to put over head. You will also need felt tips for colouring in words, bright fabric or paper, glue and sticks for making a banner.

Suggested outline of lesson

1. To introduce the lesson, choose a child and whisper a message to him/her. Ask the child to tell the rest of the class the message. Explain to the children that God chose John the Baptist to tell the people a special message.
2. Read verses 1-3. Explain simply and briefly what a prophecy is; i.e. similar to us talking about something that we expect to happen in the future. Emphasise that when God says he will do something he always does it.
3. Read verses 4-5. Tell the children that the message which John the Baptist was to tell the people was the importance of repentance and baptism. Explain what repentance means, using examples from everyday life - experiences of being sorry and forgiving. Encourage the children to discuss their own experiences and how difficult it can be sometimes. At this stage you could 'baptise' a doll in a bowl of water - let the children do this too. Explain to them that God has asked us to do this to show that we are sorry for our sins, that we want to obey God and that we want God to forgive us - wash away our sins.
4. Read verses 6-8. Explain to the children why John clothed and nourished himself in this manner, i.e. he felt it important to live frugally and to be separate from worldly interests. Discuss what implications this has in our lives. Comment on John's humility and his awareness that Jesus was far more important than himself.

The children could now make their model of John the Baptist, discussing the above points.
5. Read verses 9-11. Emphasise to the children how special these happenings were. God has only done and said these things for Jesus. God wanted everyone to see and hear that Jesus was his Son.

The children could colour in the words on the worksheets provided, to make a banner. Stick the letters on a long sheet of paper or sew them onto a strip of material.

Alternative activities

1. Make a large scale collage picture of John by drawing round one of the children on a large piece of paper, (the back of an old roll of wallpaper is ideal). Use rough textured paper or fabric scraps for his clothes and lots of wool for his hair and beard.
2. Use play dough to make figures of John and people coming to be baptised. Arrange them in and around a river made of play dough or paper. Add some play dough reeds and bushes along the riverbank.

Relevance to the children's lives

We should try our best to be sorry when we do wrong and to forgive other people when they do wrong. We should remember that God wants everyone to come to him and obey him. We should try not to be greedy.

Prayer

Ask God to help us to do what he wants: to help us forgive others and to be content with what we have, remembering how little many people have. Thank God that he has done these things for us.

Verse

'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.' Mark 1:11.