



Jesus' Baptism

Goal: To explore the story of Jesus' baptism.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Mark 1:1–15

John the Baptist was “calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins” (v. 4, CEB). Jesus came, and John baptized him. When Jesus emerged from the water, he saw the heavens opened and “the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. And there was a voice from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness’” (vv. 10–11). Then Jesus began to preach: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (v. 15).

Jesus' baptism is meaningful for us today. It shows Jesus is God's Son, the one in whom God is “well pleased” (v. 11). In Jesus, we experience God.

Jesus proclaimed God's kingdom has come—now! In Jesus, God is establishing God's reign for everyone. The result is that all should follow the message of John and Jesus: “Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news” (v. 15, CEB). The good news is that God reigns and forgives sins. We receive forgiveness, we follow Jesus, and we live as God wants. For God's grace in Jesus, we live in gratitude!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

The story of Jesus' baptism offers a great opportunity to talk with the children about their own baptism or baptisms they have seen in worship. If there is a baptism this Sunday in your church, invite the children to talk about what they will see. Help them remember that a baptism involves a person or a child, the parents and caregivers, the minister, and the congregation. Parents and caregivers, children, youth, and adults in the congregation make promises to tell the one being baptized about Jesus and God's love.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you talk with the children about their baptisms, be aware of those in your group who may have been dedicated or blessed and are not yet baptized. Some parents and caregivers prefer to wait for a child to make her or his own decision about baptism. As you tell the story of Jesus' baptism, you can connect that story with their lives. Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of his ministry, and so too with the children. The moment when they were baptized or blessed/dedicated was the beginning in their life of listening for God and following Jesus.

O God, you told Jesus that you love him. Help me hear those same words and be grateful. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 6, 21, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: *Baptism Promises* by Carol Wehrheim or other books about baptism;
SCM 6a, 6b

choice 2: water play table or tub, plastic baby dolls or toy people, **SCM 6c**

choice 3: blue construction paper, pie tin, disposable wipes or damp washcloths

Exploring

choice 1: copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**

choice 3: blue plastic tablecloth

choice 4: copies of **GN 2**



GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Obtain a copy of *Baptism Promises* by Carol Wehrheim (Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Prepare an example of the handprint dove for “Guided Play” choice 3.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 3 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

SD F A B M MS

Greet the children as they arrive and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time. Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers whom you do not know personally. Tell the parents/caregivers that today’s story is about the baptism of Jesus.

Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

- 1. Reading**—Provide storybooks about baptism, such as *Baptism Promises* by Carol Wehrheim, and pictures of people being baptized, **SCM 6a** and **6b**. Have extra helpers on hand to read to children from books of their choosing or invite children to browse the books and pictures.
- 2. Playing with Water**—Tell the children that today’s story is about Jesus being baptized. Give the children plastic baby dolls or toy people to play with in the water. Show **SCM 6c** and comment that water is used when people are baptized. Wonder if anyone has seen a baptism and what it was like.
- 3. Make a Dove**—Display the prepared dove. Provide blue construction paper. Pour white paint in a pie tin. Encourage the children to press one palm into the paint, and put their hand on the paper. Have the children wash their hands or wipe them with a hand wipe. Invite them to draw a beak, an eye, and feet.

B *Water play is a very soothing activity for young children. Supervise carefully and remind the children of a few simple rules, such as no splashing. Remind them to share the bowls and cups with one another. If available, provide smocks.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, having them march and listen to “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus”—**MM 16; SCM 21**. Repeat a few words or phrases and have the children sing along to part of the song.

God Made Me



Sing or say the words to the song “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,” and do the corresponding actions while pointing to each body part. For the line “God made me, and I’m a child of God,” raise your hands for “God made me” and hug yourself for “and I’m a child of God.”

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
knees and toes.
Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
knees and toes.
God made me, and I’m a child of God.
Head and shoulders, knees and toes.

Eyes and ears and mouth and nose,
mouth and nose.
Eyes and ears and mouth and nose,
mouth and nose.
God made me, and I’m a child of God.
Eyes and ears and mouth and nose.

All of Me



Invite the children to repeat each line after you and follow your motions.

My hands are for clapping. (*clap your hands*)
My arms can hug tight. (*hug yourself*)
My fingers can wiggle, (*wiggle your fingers*)
or I can turn out the light. (*pretend to turn off a light switch*)
My legs are for hopping. (*hop*)
My eyes help me see. (*cup your eyes with your hands*)
I love my body (*cross your arms over your chest*)
because God made me. (*raise your arms in the air*)



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Hearing the Story

L C

Open the Bible to Mark 1 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that the story is about the baptism of Jesus.

Read **SCM 6**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen." After the story, lead the children in a sensory imagination of Jesus' baptism, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ Jesus walked into the water to John.
 - I wonder, "Were there sand or rocks on the river's shore?"
 - I wonder, "Did the water tickle his feet?"
 - I wonder, "What was the color of the water?"
 - I wonder, "What did Jesus see in the water?"
- ▼ John gently dipped Jesus in the water.
 - I wonder, "Did Jesus hold his nose?"
 - I wonder, "What did Jesus hear in the water?"
 - I wonder, "How did the river smell?"
- ▼ Jesus came out of the water.
 - I wonder, "Were the clouds gray, white, or another color?"
 - I wonder, "Was the sun really bright where he had to close his eyes or gently shining so he could look around him?"
 - I wonder, "Was the voice booming loud or soft and gentle?"

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Jesus Is Baptized

FM C L

Cut paper plates in half. Give each child a copy of **GN 1** and invite them to color the figures of John the Baptist, Jesus, and a dove.

When they have finished coloring, give the children half of a paper plate and instruct them to color the back side (convex) of the plate to make the Jordan River. While they are coloring the plates, cut out their pictures. Instruct the children to glue their picture of Jesus toward the top of a large craft stick. Staple the half plate to a full-size paper plate, leaving a small space at the center bottom for the large craft stick to be inserted. The Jesus figure should keep the craft stick from falling through. Invite the children to glue John the Baptist and the dove on the plate. You may invite the children to color clouds and a sun on the paper plate.

Show the children how to move their stick with Jesus on it up and down as he is baptized by John. Remind the children what God said to Jesus when he was baptized, "You are my beloved Son. I am so pleased with you."





2. Baptism Water

L MS

Say the following poem with the children and invite them to follow your actions.

Jesus and John (*hold up one finger and then two*)
went to the river. (*pretend to walk*)
John baptized Jesus, (*pretend to pour water from your hands*)
and he didn't shiver. (*pretend to shiver*)

God's voice was heard, (*spread your hands above your head*)
and then came a dove. (*move your hands like flapping wings*)
"This is my Son, (*place your hands on your head*)
the one whom I love." (*place your hands over your heart*)

God gives us water. (*pretend to pour water from your hands*)
God calls us God's own. (*place your hands on your head*)
We, too, are God's. (*place your hands over your heart*)
With God, we are home. (*open your arms with palms up*)



3. Act It Out

MS F LG A B

Invite the children to act out the story of Jesus' baptism. Tell the children that they will all take turns playing the different roles. Choose two people to be the Jordan River. Invite them to hold a large piece of blue fabric or a blue plastic tablecloth between them and pretend to be the river. Choose a child to be John and a child to be Jesus to stand behind the river. Instead of dipping a child, suggest that the child playing John pretend to pour water over the child playing Jesus. Choose a child to be the dove and flutter their hands like a dove. Invite a child to be the voice of God and say, "You are my beloved Son. I am so pleased with you." Set the scene in place and invite the children to act it out. Repeat, letting the children take turns with the different parts.

- B** Opportunities for children to act in front of others can build children's confidence. However, it can also result in unwanted behavior, such as bullying or fidgeting. Help children respect others and be polite.



Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

4. Coloring Page

FA

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of John baptizing Jesus. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “Why did John baptize people in a river?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What did the people all around think when the dove appeared?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What did God’s voice sound like?”

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

FA

Call the children together, singing “A Child of God”—**MM 21**; **SCM 23**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Remind the children that God said to Jesus that he is God’s beloved Son and God is pleased with him. Tell the children that they, too, are God’s beloved child and God is pleased with them.

If you would like to share a snack, now would be a good time. Pray:

For food to eat, *(raise a hand to your mouth)*
and friends to share, *(hold your hands out)*
for those we love everywhere, *(place hands over your heart)*
we thank you, God. *(put your hands together in prayer)*
Amen.

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), you are God’s beloved child. Go in peace.”



Jesus' Baptism



John baptizes Jesus. In the shape of a dove,
God's Spirit comes down on Jesus.

