





John the Baptist Prepares for Jesus

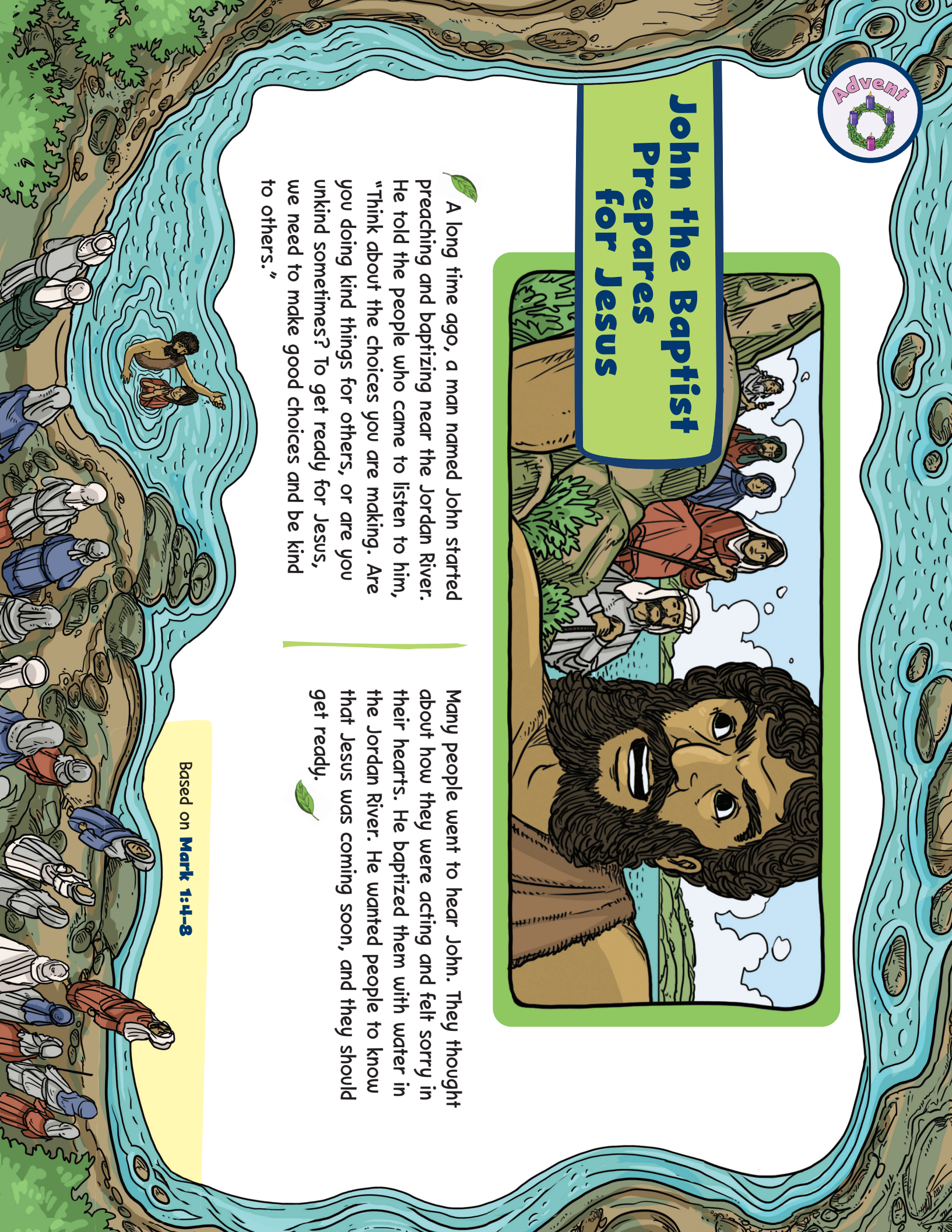


 A long time ago, a man named John started preaching and baptizing near the Jordan River. He told the people who came to listen to him, “Think about the choices you are making. Are you doing kind things for others, or are you unkind sometimes? To get ready for Jesus, we need to make good choices and be kind to others.”

Many people went to hear John. They thought about how they were acting and felt sorry in their hearts. He baptized them with water in the Jordan River. He wanted people to know that Jesus was coming soon, and they should get ready.



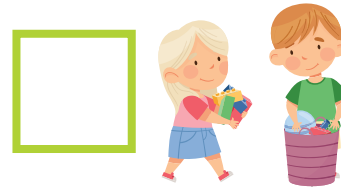
Based on **Mark 1:4-8**



Getting Ready for Jesus

How will you get ready for Jesus at Christmas? What good choices will you make? Mark an X in the box next to the best choice.

1. Your parent asks you to put all your toys away. What do you do?



2. Your teacher brought a set of cars to school. She said that everyone had to take turns. What do you do?



3. Your teacher asks your group to silently form a line before going to the playground. What do you do?



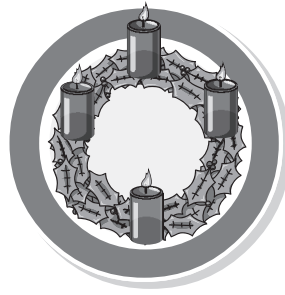
4. There are hooks near the back door for coats and hats. You come in the back door every day after school. What do you do?



5. You are called to pray evening prayers around the Advent wreath with your family. What do you do?

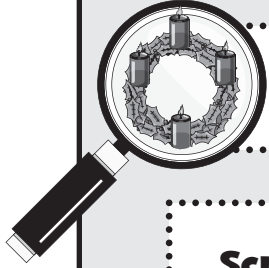


Advent



**Preparing
for
Christmas**





Lesson at a Glance

Scripture Focus

Mark 1:4–8

Lesson Goals

- to recognize the meaning of the word *advent*
- to understand Advent as a season of preparation for Christmas
- to describe what we can do to get ready for the coming of Jesus

Catechism References

522–524

Materials Needed

- the Advent child's page, removed from each Bible story booklet
- copies of the Advent family page, on page 241 of the catechist guide, one for each child
- materials for any of the activity ideas you choose from pages 238–239 of the catechist guide

Background Reflection

Amid the Christmas rush that begins the day after Thanksgiving, how can we unfold the riches of Advent for children? We can use the colors and symbols of Advent to create a joyful, expectant atmosphere. Use the color purple in classroom decor. The children may be surprised and delighted at purple streamers hanging above their heads. Of course, feature an Advent wreath on a purple cloth in a prominent place. Open a candy-free Advent calendar each week. Emphasize that Advent and Christmas are seasons of caring and sharing. Organize a collection of canned goods, perhaps one can per child. Initiate an Advent prayer pal exchange by having the children draw names from a bowl and promising to pray for that person each day until Christmas.



Get Ready! (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer

- Begin by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross.
- Continue with the following prayer:
 - Dear God, we thank you for the seasons in nature: spring, summer, fall, and winter. We also thank you for the special seasons in the Church. Open our ears as we learn about one of the Church seasons today. Amen.
- End with the Sign of the Cross.

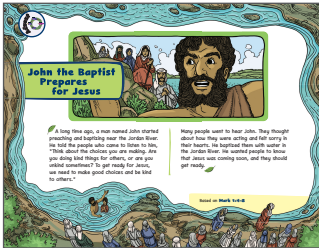
Engage

- Ask the children if they have ever waited for somebody or something for a long time. Invite them to share their stories.
- Explain that today's lesson is about a season in the Church in which we wait. Tell them they will find out more about this after reading the Bible story.



Dive In! (15 minutes)

Bible Story



- Distribute the child's page, and ask the children to look at the main picture above the Bible story. Briefly discuss the picture by asking the following questions:
 - We have read this Bible story before. Does anyone remember this Bible story?
 - Who is the man in the main picture? (*John the Baptist*)
 - Who are the people behind him? (*people watching and listening to him*)
 - At the bottom of the page, who are the people in the water? (*John the Baptist and a woman getting baptized*)
- Tell the children you will read the Bible story again to help them remember and learn some new things about it.
- Read the Bible story to the children slowly, stopping briefly after each sentence. If the children are readers, invite them to follow along. If not, invite them to look at the main picture as you read.

Today's Bible Story

John the Baptist Prepares for Jesus

A long time ago, a man named John started preaching and baptizing near the Jordan River. He told the people who came to listen to him, "Think about the choices you are making. Are you doing kind things for others, or are you unkind sometimes? To get ready for Jesus, we need to make good choices and be kind to others."

Many people went to hear John. They thought about how they were acting and felt sorry in their hearts. He baptized them with water in the Jordan River. He wanted people to know that Jesus was coming soon, and they should get ready.

(Based on Mark 1:4–8)



Discover! (25 minutes)

Core Teaching

- Begin the discussion by asking the children what John the Baptist wanted everyone to know. (*that Jesus was coming soon, and they should get ready*)
- Ask them to share how John the Baptist said we could get ready for Jesus. (*by being patient, giving to others, praying for others, being kind to others, and making good choices*)
- Explain that John the Baptist and the people in the Bible story were waiting for Jesus. Tell the children that the whole Church celebrates a season of waiting called Advent. Share that the word *advent* means "coming."
- Tell the children that Advent lasts four weeks and is a time of preparation and waiting before Christmas.
- Explain that we wait for Jesus to come into our hearts at Christmas. Comment that while we wait, we can pray, and we can do good things for others. Add that this makes Jesus happy while we get ready to celebrate his birthday at Christmas.
- Tell the children that we use the color purple in Advent because it means "waiting in hope." Share that the priest wears purple at Mass during Advent, and we use purple candles in the Advent wreath. Add that we might see an Advent wreath in our church on Sunday, and that every Sunday another candle is lit to remind us that Jesus is coming.

Closing Prayer

- Begin by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross.
- Explain that today's prayer is perfect for Advent because it asks Jesus to come to us.
- Invite the children to stand and place their hands at their sides with palms up in prayer.
- Pray the following prayer, asking the children to respond, "Come, Lord Jesus!" to the petitions:
 - Dear God our Father, we ask that you help us wait patiently for Christmas. *(Come, Lord Jesus!)*
 - Help us wait for the coming of Jesus. *(Come, Lord Jesus!)*
 - Help us to be kind and to pray for others during this season of preparation. *(Come, Lord Jesus!)*
 - Send your Son, Jesus, into our lives and into our hearts. *(Come, Lord Jesus!)*
 - Amen.
- Close with the Sign of the Cross.

Activity Ideas

Materials Needed

- copies of the handout “An Advent Wreath,” on page 240 of the catechist guide, one for each child
- purple crayons for the candles
- yellow crayons for the flames

An Advent Wreath

- Distribute the handout and crayons. Explain to the children that each of the four candles represents one Sunday of Advent. Mention that they will color the candle for the first Sunday of Advent today, and then they can color the other candles at home. Explain that they may also color in the flame with a yellow crayon.
- Explain that this is a picture of an Advent wreath, and we use the Advent wreath to mark the Sundays of Advent. Remind the children that they may see an Advent wreath in church, or they may have one at home with real candles.
- Explain that the color purple is a sign of waiting, so three of the candles are purple. The third Sunday of Advent is the Sunday of Joy, so that candle is pink.
- Suggest that the children keep this paper Advent wreath in a special place in their home—maybe on the refrigerator or in their room.
- Remind them that while they color the candle, they can say the prayer of Advent, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

Materials Needed

- empty toilet-paper rolls, one for each child
- purple construction paper, precut to fit around the toilet paper rolls, one for each child
- yellow and orange tissue paper, cut into triangles for flames, a few for each child
- clear tape
- a sample of the craft for the class to view

An Advent Prayer Candle

- Explain to the children that they will make an Advent prayer candle to remind them to pray, “Come, Lord Jesus!” often during Advent.
- Distribute the toilet-paper rolls and the precut purple construction paper to fit around the rolls.
- Have the children wrap the purple construction paper around the toilet-paper roll. Help each child tape the ends of the construction paper together around the roll.
- Distribute the precut tissue-paper flames. Have the children stuff them into the top of the candle, points up, to make a flame. The flames may need to be taped inside the candle to keep them visible.
- Remind the children to put their candle in their room at home, and to pray, “Come, Lord Jesus!” whenever they see the candle.

Materials Needed

- an empty manger (can be part of a manger scene)
- a handful of straw
- a recording of "Away in a Manger" and appropriate equipment for playing it
- a figure of the baby Jesus (*optional*)

Straw for the Manger

- Show the children the empty manger. Explain that this is the type of bed the baby Jesus slept in. Explain that our good thoughts and actions make Jesus happy, and we can make a soft bed for Jesus.
- Tell the children that we know Jesus is no longer a baby. Share that he is all grown up and is in Heaven with God our Father.
- Explain that Jesus loves and cares about us, and our good thoughts and actions make him very happy. Tell them they will make a soft "pretend bed" for the baby Jesus by thinking of their good actions during the past few days.
- Share that for every good action they think of, they can put a piece of straw into the manger.
- Allow the children to think about their good actions. Then invite them to come up to the manger and take a piece of straw, one for each good action they thought of, and place the straw in the manger.
- Sing or play the Christmas carol "Away in a Manger."
- Keep the manger in the room, and place the figure of the baby Jesus in the manger just before Christmas.

An Advent Wreath

Candle 1: Color on the first Sunday of Advent.

Candle 2: Color on the second Sunday of Advent.

Candle 3: Color on the third Sunday of Advent,
the Sunday of Joy.

Candle 4: Color on the fourth Sunday of Advent.

Candle Code

1 = purple

2 = purple

3 = pink

4 = purple



Family Page

Understanding the Scripture

John the Baptist is the prophet and saint of Advent. In the Gospels of the second and third Sundays of Advent, John the Baptist is featured as the one who cried in the desert, "Get the road ready for the Lord" (Mark 1:3). Thus, the Church, through John the Baptist, urges us to prepare for the coming of Christ in our day.

When we celebrate Advent and Christmas, we are not simply celebrating a historical event that happened a long time ago. In the liturgy, we enter into the eternal now of God. Christ still comes to us now, every day. But he comes in a special way at times like Christmas. Go out to meet him!

Your Growing Child

Toys, toys, and more toys! Throughout the year, children are gifted with toys, and the Feast of Christmas is probably the biggest such occasion. Consider these two ways to limit the accumulation of toys and focus on the gift of Jesus: (1) Have your child ask for a limited number of items for Christmas. You can always surprise your child with one more toy that did not make the final list but you know would be appreciated. (2) After Christmas, count the new toys with your child. Help them give away the same number of older toys, in good condition, to a charity so that other children can play with them.

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Family Activities

- Read together the Bible story from today's lesson, "Preparing for Jesus." Ask your child to retell the story in their own words.
- Check your parish bulletin for family activities and volunteer efforts. Mark a few of these on your calendar. Participation in activities and volunteer efforts makes the season of Advent one of mutual encouragement and support.
- Set up an Advent wreath in your home. Having an Advent wreath on the dining room or kitchen table allows for eating by candlelight, and for noticing that the light gets brighter as Christmas approaches.
- In our culture, it is difficult to let Advent be Advent. But try to put off your Christmas decorations and tree for as long as possible. The third Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Joy, might be an appropriate day to bring in the tree. You might even wait until Christmas Eve.

Prayer

Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross:

Dear God our Father, thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus. As we prepare for his birthday, may our gifts to him be kindness and love toward all our brothers and sisters. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.