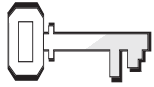


The Right Choice



References

Matthew 3;
The Desire of Ages,
pp. 97-113



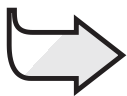
Memory Verse

"This is my Son, whom
I love; with him I am
well pleased"
(Matthew 3:17).



Objectives

The children will:
Know that baptism is
a public announcement
that we belong to the
family of God.
Feel happy to be a part
of God's family, even
though not yet baptized.
Respond by asking for
help to get ready for baptism.



The Message

I tell others I belong
to God's family when I
choose to be baptized.

Monthly Theme

We are members of God's family.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

John is preaching in the desert of Judea near the Jordan River, telling the people that they need to repent and believe on the Lord. He baptizes many people who respond to his message. One day Jesus comes from Galilee and asks John to baptize Him. John says that Jesus needs to baptize him (John). But Jesus persists and says it is necessary "to fulfill all righteousness." Then John agrees. When Jesus comes up out of the water, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descends on Him. A voice from heaven says, "This is My Son."

This is a lesson about community.

When we are baptized, we make public our choice to belong to God's family, just as Jesus did. We belong! And God is pleased.

Teacher Enrichment

"John grew up in the wilderness, where he remained until his ministry began (Luke 1:80). This wilderness was probably the 'wilderness of Judaea.' . . . The Bible offers no information concerning the early life and training of John beyond stating that 'the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel' (Luke 1:80).

"John was a cousin of Jesus, and was about 6 months older than He (Luke 1:36), hence probably began his ministry 6 months before Jesus, also about the age of 30. This was the age at which Jews regarded a man as having reached his full maturity and as being therefore eligible for the responsibilities of public life" (*The SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 604).

Room Decorations

Bulletin board ideas:

1. Make one big heart and add the caption: "We belong to Jesus." From the heart, have streamers going to paper that is cut in the shape of balloons. Put the children's names and their pictures (optional) on the balloons.
2. Trace around and cut out one footprint of each child and write his/her name on it. Put the words "I choose to follow Jesus" on the board diagonally from left to right, ending with *Jesus* at the top. Place the children's footprints under the diagonal caption.
3. Make the scene from a Bible story felt set of some of the Bible stories for this month: Jesus' baptism, the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, and the 10 bridesmaids.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>I Belong</i> B. <i>Do You Belong?</i> C. <i>Chain Family</i>	church cutouts (see page 144); pencils, crayons, or markers; scissors; safety pins documents such as driver's license, library card, marriage license, etc. people pattern—one for each child (see page 145), scissors, crayons
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	<i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> decorated shoebox (see activity) prayer chart, stars or stickers
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	large blue paper or blanket or flat bed sheet, dove (paper or stuffed toy), paper, Bible-times costumes, flashlight, recorded or hidden adult voice paper dove cutouts (see page 146), sewing thread Bibles
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Joining God's Family</i>	baptism decision card for each child (see page 147)
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	A. <i>Belonging to God's Family</i> B. <i>Invitation to Visit God's Family</i>	finger paints, paper for posters, moist wipes or soap, water, and paper towels paper, crayons, pencils, markers, etc.

*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Encourage them to share any experiences from last week's lesson study. Have them begin the Readiness Activity of your choice.



Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- church pattern (see p. 144)
- pencils, crayons, or markers
- scissors
- safety pins

A. I Belong

Say: **This month our lessons are about community—belonging to God's family.** To help the children feel that they belong, distribute church-shaped papers (see page 144) and have the children cut them out to serve as name tags. Help them write the following on their name tags: "I belong to [church name]." Pin each child's tag to his or her clothing.

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **Who are in "God's family"?** (those who love God and follow Him daily, etc.) **Where would you find such people?** (In our families, in our church, etc.) **What do you think about belonging to a church family? What ceremony tells others that people are part of God's family?** (baptism) **Would you like to be baptized someday? Today we will learn about a special person who chose to be baptized. Today's message is:**



I TELL OTHERS I BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY WHEN I CHOOSE TO BE BAPTIZED.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- documents such as driver's license, library card, marriage license, etc.

B. Do You Belong?

Show the children some documents that indicate you belong to some group or place (a membership card of some group, your driver's license, marriage license, baptism certificate, etc.). Discuss each briefly, then ask the children to name clubs or groups to which they belong (library, school class, swim team, family, Sabbath School, Adventurer's Club, etc.).

Debriefing

Ask: **What did you have to do to belong to the group you mentioned?** (pay a fee, pay dues, be adopted, be born, sign up, follow rules, attend meetings, etc.) Say: **Even though we know we belong, we do things that show others that we do. What tells others that we are part of God's family?** (church attendance, baptism) **Today we will learn about a special person who showed others about being a part of God's family by being baptized. Our message is:**



I TELL OTHERS I BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY WHEN I CHOOSE TO BE BAPTIZED.

Say that with me.

C. Chain Family

Give a paper doll pattern to each child. Make four folds like a fan (approximately 2½ inches [7 cm] each). (See page 145.) There should be enough folds to make four paper dolls. Draw a body on the front. Cut out, leaving the bodies attached at the hands, skirt, and shoes (folds). Write "We belong to God" on the people.

You Need:

- pattern for each child (see p. 145)
- scissors
- crayons

Debriefing

Ask: **Was it easy or hard for you to get the folds right and the people cut out?** (easy, hard) **Did some bodies get cut off?** (yes, no) **Does God "cut us off" if we do something wrong?** (No. God always loves us.) **How can we tell others that we choose to belong to God's family? Our message today is:**



I TELL OTHERS I BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY WHEN I CHOOSE TO BE BAPTIZED.

Say that with me.

Prayer and Praise



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Review the memory verse and allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

- "The Family of God" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 139)
- "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 140)
- "We Are the Church" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 141)
- "What a Joy It Is to Worship Here" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 142)
- "We Are the Church, Everyone" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 143)



Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. During the mission story, tell the children that the people they are learning about are in God's family too. We are all a part of God's big family.



Offering

Decorate a shoebox with a collage of faces (from magazines, etc.); add stickers and the word JESUS on the box. Make a slit for money. Use the decorated shoebox throughout Lessons 9-13.

You Need:

- decorated shoebox (see activity)



Prayer

To make a prayer chart for Lessons 9-13, list class names on a paper or poster board where all may see. Each time a child prays, put a star or sticker by their name, and indicate who is next.

You Need:

- prayer chart
- stars or stickers

Bible Lesson

You Need:

- large blue paper 8-9 feet (2-3 m) long and 3 feet (1 m) wide or blue blanket or flat bed sheet
- dove (paper or stuffed toy)
- slips of paper
- Bible-times costumes
- flashlight
- hidden or recorded adult voice

Experiencing the Story

Before Sabbath, write each speaking line for Jesus, John the Baptist, and the Holy Spirit on a separate slip of paper and number them (see story). Be prepared to prompt the readers as the story proceeds.

Characters: John the Baptist, Jesus, Holy Spirit/God, adult voice (hidden or recorded), two or three children (to be “baptized” by John), narrator (adult), listening crowd (rest of students).

Setting the Scene

Clear away the chairs and place the blue paper, blanket, or sheet on the floor to one side to represent the Jordan River. Give the slips of paper to the students playing the roles. Have “John the Baptist” stand on the “river” as he addresses the crowd and Jesus. The crowd should sit facing the river. Have Jesus stand somewhere in the back of the room.

Narrator: The hot noonday sun sparkled on the river as the people listened to John’s powerful words.

John the Baptist (1): “Repent! God’s kingdom is coming soon. Turn from your sins and be baptized. Let God know that you choose to follow Him.”

Narrator: Many people came to hear the preacher, John. When the people gave their hearts to God, John baptized them in the river. *[John “baptizes” two or three children. Adult helps as needed.]* Some came because they really did want to give their lives to God. Others were just curious. John wore simple clothes, ate simple food, and preached a simple message.

This day John was surprised and

pleased to see Jesus making His way toward the river. *[Jesus comes forward.]* John knew all about Jesus. For several months John had been telling people to get ready for the Messiah to come; and now He was here! Besides, they were cousins.

Jesus (1): “John, I wish to be baptized.”

Narrator: John was so surprised he could hardly talk!

John the Baptist (2): “What? Me? Baptize You? Oh, Jesus, YOU need to baptize ME!”

Narrator: Jesus smiled.

Jesus (2): “John, baptize Me as you baptized others. It is the right thing to do!”

Narrator: Now it was John’s turn to smile.

John the Baptist (3): “Then, of course I will!”

Narrator: Jesus walked into the water. *[Jesus steps “into the river.”]* John took hold of Jesus’ hands, laid Him under the water, and pulled Him out. *[John baptizes Jesus.]* When Jesus came up out of the water, He knelt beside the riverbank. *[Jesus steps “out off the river” and kneels.]*

Jesus knew that sin had made people’s hearts hard. Many wouldn’t understand His mission of love. So He talked to His Father about it. Suddenly Jesus was surrounded by beautiful light, straight from God’s throne! *[Flashlight shines on Jesus.]* The Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, came down on Jesus *[“Dove” “flies” (drops) in front of the kneeling Jesus],* and God’s glorious voice rang out!

Voice of Holy Spirit/God (1): “This is My Son, whom I love! With Him I am well pleased!”

Narrator: Many people at the Jordan River saw Jesus being baptized. They saw the light from heaven surrounding Him. They saw the dove too. That wonderful

day helped their faith grow!

Baptism is a special time to show everyone that we have given our lives completely to Jesus, and He has made our lives clean. God is so happy about it that He says,

Voice of Holy Spirit/God (2): “You are My child, whom I love! I’m so pleased with you!”

Narrator: When Jesus was baptized, He didn’t have any sin to wash away. He was baptized to give us an example of what we should do. Every day, you can spend time getting to know Jesus better. You can thank Him that you are part of His family. And you can choose to follow Jesus’ example some day soon by being baptized and letting everyone around you know that you choose Jesus.

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask:

What was John’s message to the people? (Repent, turn away from sin, and be baptized.) **Do you think Jesus needed to repent and turn away from sin? How do you know? Why did John agree to baptize Jesus? What did the voice from heaven say? Why do people want to be baptized?**

When we are baptized, we show others that we have chosen to belong to God’s family. How many of you want to be baptized someday? Ask those who do to raise their hands. What message will your baptism give to others? Say it with me:

 **I TELL OTHERS I BELONG TO GOD’S FAMILY WHEN I CHOOSE TO BE BAPTIZED.**

Memory Verse

Before class, make 14 paper doves (see pattern on page 146). Write one word of the memory verse on each bird (a separate dove for the Bible reference). Use sewing thread to hang them from the ceiling in the proper order (low enough to be read). Have the children look up to the ceiling and read the memory verse together. Remind the class that when Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of God in the form of a dove came down from heaven to assure Him that God was pleased with Him.

Repeat until the children know the verse.

Bible Study

See below.

You Need:

- 14 paper dove cutouts (see p. 146)
- sewing thread

Bible Study

Read together Matthew 3 as noted below. Choose one child to read the narration as indicated. Appoint other children to read John’s part, Jesus’ part, and God’s voice from heaven. Go from left to right on each line:

You Need:

- Bibles

Narration	John’s Part	Jesus’ Part	God’s Voice From Heaven
verses 1, 2a	verses 2b, 3		
verses 4-7a	verses 7b-12		
verses 13, 14a	verse 14b		
verse 15a		verse 15b	
verse 15c			
verses 16, 17a			verse 17b

Debriefing

Ask: **What verse shows that John preached from the Holy Scriptures?** (See verse 3. John quoted from Isaiah 40:3.) **How would you have felt if you had been at Jesus' baptism?** ([verses 13-17] amazed, curious, closer to God, etc.) **How did God feel when Jesus was baptized?** (verse 17) **How will God feel when you are baptized?** (happy; pleased because He loves us) **Why do people get baptized?** (to show their deci-

sion to live for Jesus) **Are you a part of God's family even though you haven't been baptized?** (Yes, we are all God's children.) **So why get baptized?** (So others will know we belong to God; we are His children.) **What do we tell others when we choose to be baptized? Let's answer with today's message:**



I TELL OTHERS I BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY WHEN I CHOOSE TO BE BAPTIZED.

3

Applying the Lesson

You Need:

- baptism decision card for each child (see p. 147)

Joining God's Family

Allow response time as you say: **Even though we know that we belong to a group, we do things that show others that we belong. What are some of the things we do to show others that we belong to God's family?** (We attend Sabbath School and church, give offerings, obey God's rules because we love Him, study the Bible, pray every day, treat others right, play fairly, tell others about His love, get baptized, etc.) List and discuss each response. **What ceremony tells others that people are part of God's family?** (baptism) **How many of you would like to show that you belong to God's family by choosing to be baptized?**

Invite the children to respond by raising their hands. Give each child who responds positively a baptism decision card (see page 147) and help them complete it.

Debriefing

Say: **Your desire to join God's family**

by baptism makes me feel very happy. How do you feel about making this important decision? Allow time. **I would like to pray with you right now.** Offer a prayer of dedication and thankfulness for the decisions made today. Then say: **Before you are baptized, you will want to talk with your parents. Show them your decision card and talk with them today. Our pastor will want to talk with you too. I will ask Pastor (name your pastor) to visit with each of you sometime soon. As you think about your decision today, remember our message. Let's say it together.**



I TELL OTHERS I BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY WHEN I CHOOSE TO BE BAPTIZED.

Be sure to share this information with your pastor and make arrangements with him or her (or someone they designate) to meet with these children individually and to start a baptismal class for those who are mature enough to prepare to take that step.

Sharing the Lesson

A. Belonging to God's Family

Have each child make a poster that says: "(Child's name) Belongs to God's Family." Have each child show their finished poster.

Encourage the children to think of someone they want to show their poster to. Affirm each one, then say: **Let's clean up now. Be sure to get all the paint off your hands. Jesus does the same thing for us—He washes us clean on the inside.**

Debriefing

As the children clean up, remind them: **Baptism is a way of telling others how Jesus has cleaned us up. If you choose to belong to God's family, how will you tell others about it?** (by the things we do and say, by the way we live, by getting baptized) **Take your poster with you and show it to someone today. Tell them about Jesus' baptism and why you want to be baptized too. When you are baptized, you will want to invite your friends to be there. Why? Because . . .**

 **I TELL OTHERS I BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY WHEN I CHOOSE TO BE BAPTIZED.**

You Need:

- finger paints
- paper for posters
- moist wipes or soap, water, and paper towels

B. Invitation to Visit God's Family

Have each child make an invitation to Sabbath School to give to a friend of their choice. It could be someone who is missing from Sabbath School this week, or a child in their neighborhood, school, or day care. Suggest that the children write on the invitation: "God's Family Is Fun! Join Us!"

Debriefing

Say: **This week you will be doing something to show others that you belong to God's family. You will invite someone else to join you in God's church. Do you enjoy Sabbath School each week?** (yes, most of the time, etc.) **Do you think your friend would?** (yes, most of the time, etc.) **What will you tell your friend about that will make him/her want to visit your Sabbath School?** (stories, activities, songs, good friends, special time with a loving God, etc.) **When you are baptized, you will want to invite your friends to be there. Why?** Say today's message together:

 **I TELL OTHERS I BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY WHEN I CHOOSE TO BE BAPTIZED.**

Closing

Sing together "The Family of God" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 139). Pray for those who have chosen to be baptized, and that everyone in the class will enjoy being part of God's family.

You Need:

- paper
- crayons, markers, pencils

The Right Choice

References

Matthew 3; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 97-113

Memory Verse

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

The Message

I tell others I belong to God’s family when I choose to be baptized.

Sara, a young missionary child, lived in Russia. Even though she was small, she begged to be baptized. So she studied the Bible with her parents every day.

The big day finally came! Sara and some friends were baptized in a cool Russian river on a sunny Sabbath afternoon. Some people who did not know Jesus watched. They listened to the singing. They heard the prayers. They were curious.

That day Sara and her friends told some strangers about God’s family. How? Sara chose to be baptized. A long time ago Someone else told others about God’s family when He chose to be baptized.

The hot noonday sun sparkled on the river as the people listened to John’s powerful words.

“Repent,” he told them. “God’s kingdom is close. Turn from your sins and be baptized. Let God know that you choose to follow Him.”

Many people came to hear the preacher by the river.

Some came because they really did want to give their lives to

God. Others were just curious. John was a no-nonsense kind of preacher. He wore simple clothes, ate sim-

ple food, and preached a simple message.

One day John was surprised and pleased to see Jesus making His way toward the river. He knew all about Jesus. For months he had been telling people to get ready for the Messiah to come. And now He was here!

“John, I have come to be baptized,” Jesus spoke softly.

John was so surprised he could hardly talk! “What? Me? Baptize You? Oh, Jesus, YOU need to baptize ME. I should not baptize You!”

Jesus smiled. “John, baptize Me as you have baptized others. It is the right thing to do!”

John smiled. “Then, of course I will!”

Jesus slowly walked into the water. John followed. He smiled at Jesus, then looked at the crowd. He took hold of Jesus’ hands, laid Him under the water, and pulled Him out.

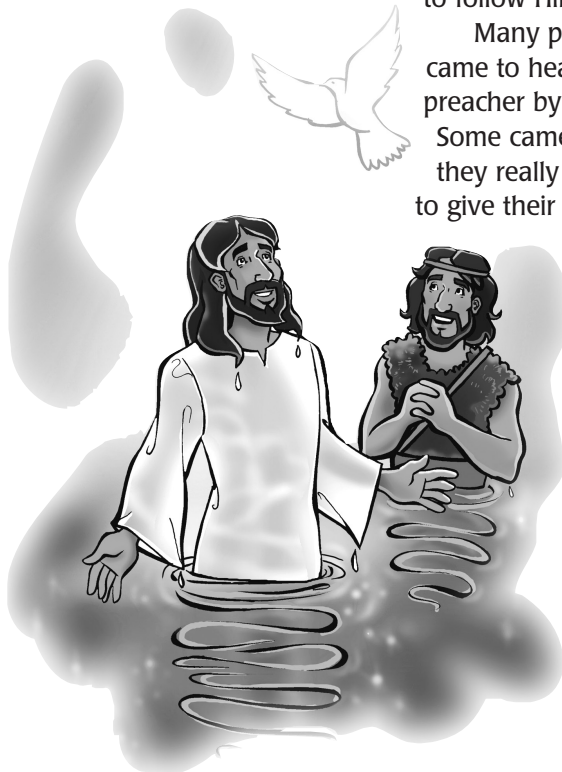
When Jesus came up out of the water, He knelt beside the riverbank. Jesus knew that sin had made people’s hearts hard. He knew that many of them wouldn’t understand His mission of love. So He talked to His Father about it.

Suddenly Jesus was surrounded by beautiful light straight from God’s throne! He looked up. The Holy Spirit, in the form of a lovely dove, came down on Jesus. Then God’s glorious voice rang out! “This is My Son, whom I love! With Him I am well pleased!”

Many people watched Jesus being baptized in the Jordan River that day. They saw the light from heaven surrounding Him. That wonderful day made their faith grow!

When Jesus was baptized, He didn’t have any sin to wash away. He was baptized as an example for us. Every day, you can spend time getting to know Jesus better. You can thank Him that you are part of His family. And you can choose to follow Jesus’ example some day soon.

Baptism is a special time when we



show everyone that we have given our lives completely to Jesus. God is so happy that we choose to be part of His family. He says, "You are My child, whom I love! I'm so pleased with you!"

Daily Activities

Sabbath

- If possible, go with your family near a body of water and read your lesson story together. Imagine Jesus getting baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. How does that make you feel? Where would you like to be baptized? Ask Jesus to help you as you think about baptism.
- Read Matthew 3:17 in your Bible.

Sunday

- During family worship, read and discuss Matthew 3:1-12. Why did Jesus ask John to baptize Him? Why should you want to be baptized?
- Unscramble the following words that are in the Bible reading: tenrpe dnraoJ vierr twrea dbpazeti*
- Make a mobile with dove cutouts. Write one word of the memory verse on each dove. Attach the doves to strings and the strings to a coat hanger. Hang your mobile in your room.

Monday

- With your family, read and discuss Matthew 3:13-17. How do you think Jesus felt about what God said? How would you feel if God said that to you? Are you His child? Why?
- Look at a Bible map to find the Jordan River. What can you learn about it?
- Teach your memory verse to your family.

Tuesday

- For worship, read and discuss Romans 6:3, 4. What does this text teach us about baptism?
- Using a pen or water-soluble markers, list mistakes that you have recently made. Put the paper under some water and watch them all disappear. Jesus will forgive us for mistakes whenever we ask Him. But when we are baptized, it lets others know that we are serious about asking Jesus for His power to trust and obey Him always. Jesus is always ready to give His power

to do right. Ask Him today.

- Say your memory verse together. Are you God's child? How do you know? Thank Him for loving you.

Wednesday

- During worship, read how Luke describes Jesus' baptism in Luke 3:21, 22.
- Christians use the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit because of Jesus' baptism. Make a picture of a dove. Cut it out and hang it where you will see it often. It will remind you that the Holy Spirit is *your* helper!
- Look at your dove mobile from Sunday as you say your memory verse. Thank God for the Holy Spirit.

Thursday

- During family worship, read and discuss Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19, 20. How can you help Jesus? Name at least three ways. Then tell Him about it in prayer.
- Think about when you would like to be baptized. If you are ready, talk with your parents and your pastor about joining a baptismal class.
- Say your memory verse to an adult.

Friday

- During family worship, act out this week's Bible story. To act out the dove part, read Matthew 3:16. Hold up your dove from Wednesday. Then say your memory verse.
- Ask your family members to tell about their baptism and what it means to them. Make plans to celebrate the baptismal dates of every family member. Ideas: Serve a favorite meal; have a "Re-birthday Cake" with one candle for every year since the baptism. Sing "Happy Re-birthday to You" and blow out the candles. If possible, look at pictures of the baptism. Thank God for each person and their dedication to Him.

* repent, Jordan, river, water, baptized