SU Scotland



# 35. Baptism

## BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

**Luke 3:1-22, John 1:29-34, Romans 6:4**

Jesus is baptised by John

## AIMS

To help the children understand that following Jesus means turning away from sin and receiving new life from him.

To think about the sins in their lives that they want to ask Jesus to deal with.

**People were baptised as a response to God – to say that they were putting their old, sinful way of life to death and being raised to new life following God. Jesus was also baptised and he was marked out as the Lamb of God and the Son of God. Jesus is the one who can deal with our sin and give us new life.**

## PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passages for this session and reflect:

- How did Jesus' baptism mark him out as someone special?
- What is the significance of him being the Lamb of God and the Son of God?
- How have you known Jesus giving you new life?

Take some time to pray for your group.

## GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

**Relay Race**

*You will need: printouts of God's words from Matthew 3:17 (from additional document: Bible verse) Cut out each word individually and mix them up. You will need one complete set for each team.*

Divide the children into teams. Position the teams along one end of the hall and have a pile of the words from the Bible verse for each team opposite them at the other end of the hall.

When you tell them to go, the first child in each team runs to their pile of words, picks one up and brings it back to their team. Then the next child has a turn, and they continue like this until they have collected all of the words of the verse.

The second part of the challenge is to organise the words into the right order to find out what God said about Jesus as he was baptised: "This is my beloved Son who brings me great joy."

**Water Game** (this game was also included in Session 27 of One Big Story)

*You will need: spray bottle filled with water*

Get the group to stand in a

*(continued overleaf)*

circle and have a leader in the middle of the circle holding the water spray.

The leader chooses a category, e.g. fruits, sports, chocolate bars... and tells the children. The leader should also choose one item from that category to be the taboo word, but they should not tell anyone what the taboo word is.

Go round the circle with each person in turn saying an item that fits with the category. If they say something that doesn't fit with the category, if they say the taboo word, if they repeat something that has already been said, or if they hesitate for more than a few seconds, the leader sprays some water in their face.

Choose a new leader to go into the middle of the circle (this can be one of the children) and get them to pick a new category to start the game again.

## EXPLORING THE BIBLE

### Recap/ Intro

**Last week we heard about how after the people had been waiting for years for the Messiah God had promised, Jesus was born, and Christians believe that he was the one the people had been waiting for.**

**After we read about Jesus being born, the Bible doesn't say much about his life as he was growing up. Joseph was a carpenter so Jesus probably helped him in his work but there's only one story in the Bible about Jesus as a child. It takes place when he is 12 years old and he goes to the Temple in Jerusalem and amazes the people there with his questions and with how much he knows about God.**

**After that, the Bible jumps ahead to when Jesus is about 30 years old and that was when people began to notice that he was someone special.**

### Jesus' Baptism

*You will need: blue cloth or towel, dove (from additional document: Dove)*

**There was a man called John who was a follower of God. He was Jesus' cousin and he was just a few months older than Jesus. We heard last time about how John jumped for joy as a baby in his mother's womb when Jesus' mother Mary came to visit.**

**John was about 30 years old at this time, and God spoke to him and told him that he had to go round the different towns and villages along the banks of the Jordan River and tell the people that they had to get ready because the Messiah was coming. John told them to turn away from their sin - from the things they were doing wrong - and to turn to God to ask him to forgive them. As a sign that they were going to do that and that they were making the decision to follow God, they would be baptised in the river.**

Get two children to hold up a blue cloth or towel to represent the river, choose someone to be John and let a few other children pretend to be baptised by John - they can just duck down behind the cloth and come up again. Choose a child to be Jesus later on in the story.

**For the people, baptism was a sign of them saying they were leaving behind their old lives and the things they had done wrong in the past, and that they were making a fresh start following God. John told them only to be baptised if they really meant it and they really planned to change the way they lived. Lots and lots of people came and were baptised by John.**

**One day as people were being baptised down by the river, someone familiar approached John. It was Jesus! As John saw Jesus he recognised him as the Messiah. He said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." He realised that Jesus had been sent from God and that he was the one who was going to sort out the problem of people's sin.**

**Jesus came to John and asked to be baptised. At first John didn't think Jesus needed to be baptised. People were baptised to say that they wanted to stop sinning and start following God, but the Bible tells us that Jesus had never done anything wrong, so why would he need to be baptised?**

**But Jesus managed to persuade John that it had to be done because it was what God wanted, so John agreed to baptise Jesus.**

Let the children act this out.

**As Jesus came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit, came down on him and rested on him in the form of a dove.** (Use the cut-out dove to act this out - have it flying down and resting on Jesus.)

**God's voice spoke from heaven and he said, "This is my beloved Son who brings me great joy."**

**So Jesus was pointed out as God's Son to all the people who were there and the Holy Spirit came to give him power and to help him live as God wanted. Jesus would really need the Holy Spirit's help for what would happen next, but we'll hear about that next time.**

## REFLECT & RESPOND

### Discussion

See if the children can identify the two special things that this story tells us about who Jesus was. If they need some clues, you can get them to think of what John said about Jesus as he came down to the river, and about what God said about Jesus after he was baptised.

**John said he was "the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".**

*(If you have several children who were in the group last year, you could refer back to Session 19 of One Big Story and make the link with Passover - the lamb was killed and its blood was put around the doorframe of the Israelites' houses, and that was what protected them and saved them. Christians believe that when Jesus died on the cross he was a sacrifice just like the lamb, and he did that to deal with the sin of the world so that it is possible for us to know God.)*

**God's voice said, "This is my beloved Son."**

All the people there would have heard that and would have known that Jesus was someone special. They had the choice about whether they would believe in that and follow him. Baptism was a sign that they wanted to do that, and it's something people still do today.

### Baptism today

*(It may be helpful to briefly explain to the children how baptism is done today. Bear in mind that churches have a variety of beliefs and practices in this area and try to explain this in a neutral way.)*

**In some churches, parents have their children baptised when they are babies as they want them to be brought up learning about Jesus in the family of the church. On the basis of what they learn about God's promised love, they have to make the decision at some point in their lives about whether they are going to follow Jesus for themselves. In other churches people are baptised when they are older and they have made the decision to follow Jesus for themselves.**

**Christians believe that whenever we make that choice the Holy Spirit comes and lives inside us too and helps us to know God more and to follow him.**

### New Life Prayer Activity

*You will need: cress seeds, pots and soil*

Read Romans 6:4 to the children.

**In the story, when people were baptised they went down under the water for a second or two and then came back up. It was like a sign that they were putting an end to their old life of doing wrong and living for themselves, and that they were being raised to a new life trusting in Jesus and following God. Jesus died on the cross and rose to life again so he can give us new life too if we trust in him.**

Give the children some pots to fill with soil and then plant cress seeds in. As they bury the seeds in the soil, give them a moment to think about any places where they see their sinfulness and any things they want to put an end to in their life e.g. unkindness, selfishness, greed, disobedience...

Remind them that if we trust in Jesus, he promises to give us new life. The difference might not be obvious right away, but he works inside us to help us change and grow, just like the seed grows under the soil at first, and then gradually we see the new life sprouting.

Pray, thanking God that he offers new life, and asking God to help them with the things they want to change. Encourage them to take the plants home as a reminder to keep praying about these things.