

John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus

Mark 1:1-8

Bible Point: We prepare our hearts for Jesus

What things does your family do to get ready? People do lots of different things to get ready for Christmas. Getting ready for something special can be fun! Today we'll learn about a man in the bible named John the Baptist who told people to get ready for something really special: Jesus. John the Baptist told the people to get their hearts ready because Jesus was coming. At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus coming to earth as a baby, and just like the people in the bible we prepare our hearts for Jesus. "Create in me a pure heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10).

The verses we're learning about today are in the book of Mark in the New Testament. But there's some history to what happened—beginning way back in the Old Testament, in the book of Isaiah. God gives us a clue about John the Baptist:

Mark 1:2-3

...as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'

A long time before John and Jesus were even born, Isaiah said John would be a messenger who'd come before Jesus to prepare the way for him. John would live in the desert and tell people about Jesus' coming. While John was in the desert, he told the people to get their hearts ready for Jesus by asking for forgiveness for their sins. Let's read what the Bible says about that:

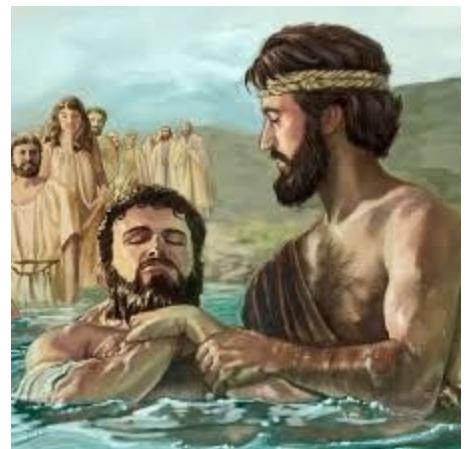
Mark 1:4-5

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

John the Baptist went before Jesus to tell all the people to get their hearts ready! The Messiah who they'd been waiting for all those years was finally coming to save them. The Bible even tells us some of the exact words John the Baptist said to the people in the desert. Let's read those now:

Mark 1:7-8

And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."



First John the Baptist said he wasn't "worthy" to stoop down and untie Jesus' sandals. That means that he didn't feel good enough to do even a simple thing like that. But John the Baptist probably didn't mean to make people feel bad. He probably wanted the people to understand how great Jesus really is. He wanted people to prepare their hearts for Jesus. One way we prepare is to clean. For example, when someone special comes over, you might clean up before that special person arrives. Jesus loves it when we take the time to prepare our hearts for him. John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize the people with the Holy Spirit. That means when we prepare our hearts by asking God to forgive us for the wrong things we do, God comes into our hearts and our lives and helps us do more right things. Cleaning may take some work, and it may mean we come across some dirty things that we don't like to look at. But it's worth it. In the same way, we prepare our hearts for Jesus because we know it's very important. And when our hearts are ready, Jesus can live in us and help clean our hearts.

Prayer:

Dear God,

We know how special you and Jesus are and we want you in our lives. Please forgive us of our sins and clean our hearts.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Threaded Heart Craft:



Supplies:

Paper- White Card stock

Print of Threaded Heart Template, (see below)

Red yarn or string, tape

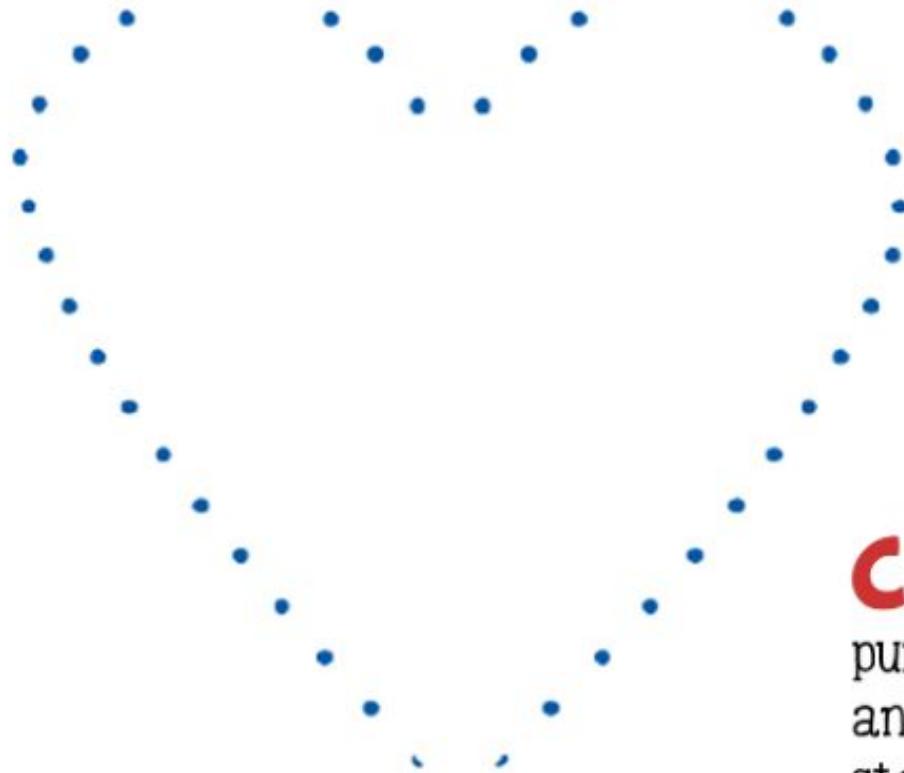
Pencil or skewer to make holes

Instructions:

Print the heart template onto card stock/thick paper or make your own following the template! Start with making holes where the dots are on the template. You can use a pencil or skewer to poke holes. Cut a long piece of yarn, start threading it from the back to the front of the paper.

You can secure the end of the yarn/string with tape to the back of the paper once you thread it through and to the finished end. You can also add tape on the end of the yarn/string to make it easier to go through the holes. Hang up your picture and know that Jesus forgives our sins and loves us all!

Thread Heart Template:



Create in me a
pure heart, O God,
and renew a
steadfast spirit
within me.

- Psalm 51:10