



## **MEMORY VERSE**

### **Hebrews 4:16**

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

## **ELEMENTARY**

### **God Is Faithful**

### **Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3**

#### **PARENT DEVOTIONAL**

Born in the hill country of Judah to Elizabeth, a relative of Mary the mother of Jesus, John the Baptist was the cousin of Jesus. He came preaching in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). In a sense, John the Baptist bridged the gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

John's first testimony to who Jesus was came before his birth. When Mary, who was pregnant with Jesus, came into the room, John leaped in his mother's womb (Luke 1:41). This foretold what lay ahead for John's future. His life's goal and mission would be testifying to who Jesus was.

Taking the Nazarite vow, John was set apart to God. He wouldn't drink wine or strong drink, cut his hair, or go near a dead body. His unique appearance and dress added to his likeness to Elijah. Jewish tradition holds that after Elijah's death, his mantle was stored in a small chamber in the golden altar in the temple. Hundreds of years later, when John was born, this tradition tells that Zechariah, John's father, took the mantle for his son to wear during his ministry.

John paved the way for Jesus by calling people to repent and be baptized as a symbol of turning away from their sin. Multitudes flocked to the wilderness to hear the message of John. When Jesus, too, came to be baptized, John acknowledged that this was indeed the Messiah Israel had been waiting for. Even in the face of death, John maintained his witness to King Herod. In Luke 7:28, Jesus described John as the greatest man who had ever lived.

The faithfulness of John reflected the faithfulness of our God. John provided a witness to the coming of God's Son, and John took the responsibility of fulfilling that mission.

Each of us has a sense of what it means to prepare. Preparation requires planning and considering various possibilities. This week, as you're preparing to welcome children to learn more about The Big God Story, consider how God has been faithful in your life. Look back at His promises and how He has worked in ways both expected and unexpected. You may want to make a list of each category to help remind you of His faithfulness in the past.

Then, look ahead. What is He calling you to do in the future? In your home? At church? In your community? How can you be a light and a voice that directs people to Jesus?

Take time to share what you're hearing from God with someone you trust. Ask that person to pray for you and encourage you in the days and weeks ahead. First Thessalonians 5:24 says, "The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it." Watch together as He works in your life and the lives of those around you to accomplish His plans, in His timing and in His way.

## TODAY'S LESSON

### GOD IS FAITHFUL

John the Baptist

Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3

God prepares the way for Jesus through John the Baptist.

### READ IT AT HOME!

For 400 years, God hadn't spoken to His people through prophets or judges. But, suddenly, John the Baptist began teaching that Jesus— the long-awaited Messiah— had arrived! Jesus would offer Himself as the final sacrifice for sin, making the way for all people to be forgiven and enter into relationship with God. Read Matthew 3. Explain that this means all of us can repent of our sins and turn to follow Jesus. If your kids haven't yet chosen to trust and obey Jesus, you might talk with them about making this choice.

After reading the Scripture passage, discuss these questions together:

- What does it mean to repent?
- What happens when we repent?
- How have you seen God's faithfulness in your life?
- How can we respond to God's faithfulness?

These questions can easily extend into the rest of the week. Look for opportunities to bring conversations about how God Is Faithful into your everyday life as a family.

### EXPERIENCE THE STORY

Host a John the Baptist (JTB) night one evening this week. Encourage everyone to go to their rooms and put on the craziest outfit they can find (JTB wore camel's hair and a leather belt). Then, work together to make some Honey Trail Mix (JTB ate locusts and honey in the wilderness).

#### Locust & Honey Trail Mix

Mix 2 C Corn Chex, 2 C Rice Chex, and 1 C Mini Pretzels in a large bowl

In a measuring cup, mix 1/4 C honey and 3 TBLS vegetable oil

Pour honey/oil over dry mixture

Stir & microwave for 5-6 minutes (stirring every 90 seconds)

Serve your Locust & Honey Trail Mix and watch this 5 minute video about John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism --->



#### Talk as a family after you watch:

After thinking more about this part of the Big God Story, what are you curious to know more about or think is different or weird?

After 400 years of silence, why do you think God chose to use John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus?

Do you think JTB and Jesus spent a lot of time together growing up? Do you think they had talked together about who Jesus was before JTB baptized Him? Why or why not?

What else do we know about John the Baptist's life? Explore the Bible together to see what all you can learn about JTB's story.



**16** Ruth 1:16  
But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."  
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How hard do you think it was for Ruth to leave her country, her language, and her family?  
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Ask God to help you His will for your life over your own comfort.

**20** 2 Chronicles 7:14  
If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.  
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What does it mean to humble yourself and seek after God?  
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Thank God for His mercy, goodness, and love for us.

**24** 2 Timothy 4:2  
Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.  
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What is something you can do to help you be more ready to share the Truth of Jesus with others?  
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Ask God for an opportunity to share His love and story with someone this week.

**28** 2 Corinthians 12:9  
But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.  
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How is the world's view of our weaknesses different from how God describes them in this verse?  
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Ask God to empower you to trust Him in your weakness.

**17** Proverbs 10:1  
A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.  
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What does it mean to be wise or to be foolish?  
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Ask God to help you to be wise.

**21** 1 Peter 4:7  
The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.  
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How should the hope of Jesus coming again impact the way we pray today?  
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Ask God to help you live for the things of His Eternal, Good Kingdom.

**25** Psalm 90:12  
So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.  
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How can you number your days when you don't know how many you have?  
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Ask God for a heart of wisdom.

**29** 1 Peter 3:14  
But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled.  
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Have you ever suffered for doing the right thing?  
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Ask God to help you do the right thing no matter what.

**18** Luke 14:27  
Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.  
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What does it mean to be a disciple (or student/follower) of Jesus?  
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Pray and ask God to help you trust and obey Him with every part of your life.

**22** Proverbs 3:5  
Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.  
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How are relationships with people you trust different from relationships with people you do not trust?  
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Thank God for being totally trustworthy.

**26** Hebrews 12:14  
Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.  
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God has set us apart for His good work. How have you experienced this truth in your life?  
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Ask God to help you live a holy life for Him.

**30** Jeremiah 32:27  
Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?  
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Is it easy or hard for you to believe that nothing is too hard for God to handle?  
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Ask God to help you believe in His power.

**19** Isaiah 54:17  
No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.  
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How does this passage help us know how to deal with discouragement in a way that honors God?  
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Thank God for His help for you when you face discouragement.

**23** James 3:18  
And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.  
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When was a time you were a peacemaker?  
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Ask God to help you and your family be peacemakers for God's glory.

**27** Deuteronomy 31:6  
Be strong and courageous. Do not fear for be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.  
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How does knowing God is always with you help you be brave in following Him?  
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Ask God to make you strong and courageous in following Him.

**31** Psalm 16:1  
Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.  
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What does it mean that God is a refuge?  
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Ask God to help you remember that you are always safe in Him.

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