



Day 1



John the Baptist

Invite the kids to gather around the campfire and to get comfortable, sitting on the upright logs/stumps or hay bales. Stretch your hands out over the fire as if you are warming them.

Did you know that John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin and that even though they were family, they didn't meet each other until they were 30 years old? How many of you have a cousin? Most of you probably have several cousins! *[Raise your hand and wait while kids raise theirs.]*

How many of you have a cousin you've heard about, but have never met?

[Raise your hand and wait while kids raise theirs.]

That's the way it was with Jesus and John. Even before he was born, God had a special plan for John's life. His special calling was to tell about Jesus' coming. The day they first met, John even got to baptize Jesus in the Jordan River! But wait a minute, I'm getting ahead of my story. John the Baptist was born into the tribe of Levi and grew up in a small town with his parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth. Later, when he was a young adult, God let John know that it was time to leave home and go live on his own. God called John to tell people that Jesus, the Messiah, was coming soon and to tell people to repent. To repent means to be sorry for the wrong things you've done and to want to change and live a better life. John started preaching down by the Jordan





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River and inviting everyone who came to listen to turn from their sins and repent. He also told them that God's kingdom was coming soon. That was John's job—to tell people Jesus was coming and to call people to be different. To challenge them to change from their selfish, sinful ways and choose to live like God wanted them to. Whenever people said, "Yes, we want to repent and change how we're living," John would baptize them in the Jordan River, giving a visual demonstration that their sins were washed away. That's why John became known as John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was different from most of the people around him in ways that were easy to notice. For instance, if you had seen the way he dressed, you might have thought he looked a little weird. The Bible says he wore clothes made out of camel hair with a leather belt around his waist—not exactly the latest fashion trend! We could say that he was rocking his own style. *[Show fake camel hair.]*

His simple diet was also a bit out of the ordinary. According to Matthew 3:4, John the Baptist ate locusts and wild honey. Some people think the locusts John ate were grasshoppers. At certain times of the year grasshoppers would fly in swarms so big that the sky would turn black. Others say the locusts he ate were the long bean pods that grew on a specific type of tree found in that part of the world. Maybe you have eaten this kind of pod; today we call it carob. Either way, he wasn't the only person to eat that type of food, but it sure wasn't on the list of the 10 most popular foods of the day! Now it's your turn to sample locusts and wild honey. Let me know what you think! *[Hand out honey sticks and carob energy bar bits for the kids]*





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to sample and show them the grasshoppers. Watch out for any kids with allergy alert tags.]

John the Baptist was a simple man who dedicated his life to telling people about the coming Messiah, the Savior that God promised would come. He wasn't worried about being popular or well-liked. He wasn't afraid to tell the truth and point out the wrong things that people were doing. At the same time, he was quick to tell people exactly what they needed to do in order to be saved. Basically, John the Baptist told people to repent of their sins, obey God, and give to the poor. He was faithful, obedient, and totally committed to God's call to be different. Just like God called John the Baptist, He has called you! We are called! [Motion kids to respond.]

Kids Called to be Different! Yee-haw!

The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." When we ask Jesus into our hearts and lives, it should change the way we think, talk, and act. People should be able to see that there is something different and unique about us. The way we live our lives as followers of Jesus should make other people want to follow Him too. The good news is, we don't have to worry about doing this on our own. God will give us the strength and everything we need to be different for Him. This reminds me of our Gold Nugget. Let's say it together... [Hold up poster with today's Gold Nugget.]

