

Prepare Ye the Way: Living like John the Baptist

Purpose

This session focuses on the life of John the Baptist and how to evangelize and spread the word about Jesus like John the Baptist did. Participants will learn about the life of John and will participate in activities reflecting on appropriate ways to share the good news.

Session at a Glance

7:00 p.m.	Welcome and Introductions
7:05 p.m.	“John the Baptist Game”
7:20 p.m.	Opening Prayer
7:30 p.m.	Who was John the Baptist? <i>Extend the Session: Script Writing and Sharing (add 20 minutes)</i>
7:50 p.m.	Sharing My Faith like John the Baptist
8:05 p.m.	Letters to the Editor
8:20 p.m.	Closing Prayer <i>Extend the Session: Welcome New People! (add 10 minutes)</i>

Extend the Session Ideas

1. Announce before the meeting that a prize will be awarded to the person who brings the most new people with them. This goes along with the session’s theme of evangelization. Extra time at the end would be spent introducing the visitors and letting them share a favorite part of the night.
2. Ask small groups to write a script with a scene where a youth is challenged to share his/her faith. Exchange scripts and have groups perform another group’s script.

Materials Needed

- Sponges, one for each participant
- Two buckets of water
- Prayer table supplies: table, cloth, Bible, bowl with holy water
- Bibles, one for each small group of six to eight
- Props and costume ideas that could go with the story of John the Baptist (i.e., robes, staff, sandals, water), *optional*
- **Resource 1, Who is John the Baptist? Skit Scripture Passages**, cut into slips, one for each small group
- **Resource 2, Letter to the Editor from John**, one for each small group of six to eight
- Pens
- Newsprint sheets and masking tape
- Markers

Prepare in Advance

1. Set up tables for refreshments and sign-in. Have one or two people at the sign-in table with a check-in sheet and name tags. **Hospitality is important:** As the facilitator, do not use the gathering time before the session begins to take care of last minute preparations. Spend the time moving among the participants, greeting and speaking with them.
2. Have two buckets of water filled with sponges beside it, preferably in an outdoor space.
3. Set up a prayer space by covering a table with a cloth. On the table, place a Bible and a bowl filled with holy water.

4. Have Bibles spread out so each group can gather around a Bible.
5. Cut out pieces of paper in the shape of articles in the newspaper.
6. Put newspaper pages you used up around the room.

Session Outline

Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)

As people arrive, make sure each person gets a nametag (leaders wear one as well). Introduce yourself and any other leaders. Welcome the young people, and ask them to introduce themselves if there are people who don't know each other.

"John the Baptist Game" (15 minutes)

Once everyone is gathered, explain that tonight's session is on John the Baptist and his life. To get started, play the "John the Baptist Game." This game, a combination of dodge ball and a water fight, is best played outdoors. Divide the participants in half, and put one bucket of water on each side with enough sponges for the people on each team.

In this game, the rules of dodge ball now apply: Throw the sponges at your opponents. At the same time, sponges are being thrown at you and your team. You want to "dodge" the sponges while hitting people on the other team with wet sponges. If someone is hit, they are out. The last person standing is John the Baptist, because they have "baptized" the most people!

Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

After the game, gather the participants together for the opening prayer, which focuses on baptism.

Gather

Begin with the song "Prepare Ye the Way," from the musical *Godspell*.

Listen

Invite the reader to proclaim Matthew 3:13-17. Allow a few moments of quiet reflection after the reading.

Respond

Prayer Leader:

Baptism is an important sacrament in our church. One essential part of the ritual is the baptismal vows. When you were baptized as an infant, someone else took these vows for you. Tonight we will revisit these vows, and I invite you to respond "I do." As you renew these vows, realize you are recommitting yourself to these promises.

Do you reject sin so as to live in the freedom of God's children?

I do.

Do you reject the glamour of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?

I do.

Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?

I do.

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

I do.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

I do.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting?

I do.

This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Send Forth

Prayer Leader:

As a community we help and support each other. As a sign of our commitment to encourage each other to keep and live these baptismal promises we will go in pairs to the prayer table where there is a bowl of holy water. Dip your hand into the holy water and sign each other with the sign of the cross.

Play instrumental music in the background while this is taking place.

Who was John the Baptist? (20 minutes)

Divide the participants into small groups of six to eight. Give each group a Bible and a slip of paper with a Scripture passage about John the Baptist (see **Resource 1**). Provide these instructions:

Each group received a slip of paper with a Scripture passage that tells *part* of the story of John the Baptist. After you read your Scripture passage, your group's task is to bring this part of John the Baptist's story to life by creating a short skit.

When they perform their skits, they should perform them in this order:

Luke 1:5-25

Luke 1:39-45

Luke 1:57-66

Luke 1:67-80

Matthew 3:1-11

Matthew 3:13-17

Luke 7:18-35

Matthew 14:1-12

After ten minutes of planning, have them perform their skits in the order above.

Note to Leader: If you do not have enough small groups for each of the Scripture passages, use as many passages as you can beginning with Luke 1:5-25 and going down the list until you run out of small groups.

Sharing My Faith Like John the Baptist (15 minutes)

Congratulate the groups on their skits, and continue the session by saying:

Now that we have seen an award-winning recap of the life of John the Baptist, let's evaluate his main mission and work on earth. John was a man who lived a simple life in the desert and he took his job of 'preparing the way' for the Lord seriously. He spent his life spreading God's word and speaking out against the social injustices and immoral practices of his day. His courage and conviction to share his faith is what led to his death. Each of us is challenged to share our faith. Sharing our faith with another often can be scary and uncomfortable. Using the stories that we heard about John the Baptist, what values do you think John the Baptist embodied?

Write their answers on a sheet of newsprint. Then ask:

What were the ways that John the Baptist shared his faith that we could use to share faith today?

Write their answers on another sheet of newsprint. Then ask:

What do you think are the most effective ways for people to share their faith today?

Write their answers on another sheet of newsprint. Then begin the next activity.

Letters to the Editor (15 minutes)

Explain that now they will go back to their small groups and participate in an activity where they get to practice sharing their faith.

Give each group a copy of **Resource 2, Letter to the Editor from John**. Give these instructions:

As a group, brainstorm and then select a current issue about which you want to share your faith and values. Write a "Letter to the Editor" using the tips on the newsprint. Be open and honest about what your faith tells you is the moral, right thing to do about the topic. When you are done writing your letter, tape it to the large sheet of newsprint on the wall to create a 'newspaper' of letters to the editor.

While the groups are writing post the newsprint sheets on the wall and then go to each small group to answer any questions they may have.

When everyone is done allow the participants time to read walk around and read the letters written by the other groups. If time allows, ask for volunteers to read their group's letter.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Prayer Leader: (begin with the Sign of the Cross)

Lord, thank you for the inspirational life of St. John the Baptist. May his example lead us to have the courage to share our faith and stand up for our brothers and sisters of faith. We reflect now on the blessings that come from being Catholic. Please feel free to spontaneously respond to these unfinished sentences.

It is great to be Catholic because... (pause for responses)

I would encourage others to be Catholic because... (pause for responses)

My faith is important because... (pause for responses)

I ask for God's help with... (pause for responses)

Let us close with the prayer Jesus taught us: Our Father ...

Announcements and Refreshments (10 minutes)

As you adjourn invite everyone to share in a snack of "locusts and honey." Explain that grasshoppers and locusts are from the same family, so make Grasshopper Cookies or bars and also offer honey granola bars. Serve water as the drink. This website has recipes for Grasshopper Cookies and Grasshopper Bars: <http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/~cbader/ghpcookies.html>

Who is John the Baptist?

Skit Scripture Passages

Luke 1:5-25

Luke 1:39-45

Luke 1:57-66

Luke 1: 67-80

Matthew 3:1-11

Matthew 3:13-17

Luke 7: 18-35

Matthew 14:1-12

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,