



Purpose

To affirm the claim of God on each baptized person's life despite the temptations that bombard God's people.

Bible Lesson

Mark 1:4-8, 12-13
Background: Mark 1:4-13

Key Verse

"A voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with

you I am well pleased.'" (Mark 1:11)

Bible Information

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four New Testament Gospels. Most scholars believe that Mark was the earliest of the four Gospels to be written and that Matthew and Luke both used Mark as a major source for the books they wrote.

Despite Mark's brevity, this Gospel must not be taken lightly; it packs an intense punch. There is a noteworthy urgency in the Gospel of Mark. Mark uses words like *immediately* to show fast action and rapid transition in the stories of Jesus' life. Mark also excludes some events that other gospels include.


You will notice that the "Bible Lesson" falls near the beginning of the Gospel. Note that Mark does not include the Christmas story: There is no birth narrative, no Mary and Joseph, no angels at the manger, and no magi. Mark introduces Jesus full-grown and on the verge of entering his ministry. In other words, Mark wastes no time telling the story of Jesus and allowing that story to speak to readers.

As is evident in today's "Bible Lesson," Mark has hardly begun before Jesus is baptized and tempted by Satan. The baptism story is reminiscent of other Gospels with their introductions of John the baptizer as a precursor of Jesus. Matthew, Luke, and John all include the heavenly proclamation of Jesus as God's beloved Son. This is an important point, for it is pertinent not only to Jesus' baptism but also to all Christians' baptisms. Your youth should understand that baptism is one way that the church affirms God's acceptance of God's people. And while Jesus is

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Baptism and Temptations



Key Verse

A voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11)




Bible Lesson

Mark 1:4-8, 12-13

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁵ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁶ He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁷ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.



Baptized people belong to God
in a very special way.

certainly uniquely God's Son, every act of baptism is a reflection of the love and grace God shows to all God's children.

Another poignant portion of this Scripture is the temptation of Jesus by Satan in the wilderness. Unlike Matthew and Luke, notice that Mark's version of the story is only two verses. There are precious few details about what happened when Jesus was tempted. Refrain from invoking the more extended versions of Jesus' temptation as presented by Matthew and Luke. For Mark, it is enough to confirm that, despite his status as God's beloved Son, Jesus is still subject to the wiles of the tempter in the wilderness. Mark also makes it clear that Jesus resisted that temptation.

All Christians can benefit from remembering that our Savior was tempted like we are. Also, God claims us, as God claimed Jesus, as God's own in our baptism.

The Lesson Plan

Begin by Remembering Your Baptism

✓ *Before the class session:* Collect paper, scissors, glue, and posterboard.

Optional: As class members arrive, give each student a blank sheet of paper. Explain that you will be talking about baptism during today's session. Ask students to sketch symbols that they think represent baptism. Then have them cut out their symbols and glue them to a sheet (or sheets) of posterboard. Use the baptism posters to highlight this part of the "Bible Lesson's" theme.

A. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the introductory paragraph of this activity.

B. Say: "Today's 'Bible Lesson' includes the story of Jesus' baptism as it is recorded in the Gospel of Mark. Our personal experiences with baptism may help us to think more clearly about Jesus and his baptism."

C. Invite the students to recall their experiences with baptism. Use the questions in this section as a guide. Encourage youth to take this exercise seriously. If there are youth who have not been baptized, suggest they think of a friend or loved one's baptism.

D. After students have had time to record their thoughts in the



Remembering Your Baptism

Baptism has been practiced by nearly all Christian denominations through the centuries. All but a very few churches recognize baptism as a significant moment in a Christian's life. Different churches understand baptism in different ways. For some, only believers who can speak for themselves may be baptized, and baptism must be by immersion (being dunked underwater). For them, baptism occurs only when someone publicly confesses Jesus as Savior. In other churches, not only adults are baptized but also infants and older children. And different methods of baptism are acceptable (like pouring and sprinkling). For these families of faith, baptism represents God's grace in claiming us as God's children, even before we are able to know who God is. But regardless of how your denomination carries out baptism, the basic meaning is that baptized people belong to God in a very special way.

☆ HAVE YOU BEEN BAPTIZED?

☆ Do remember the day of your baptism (or have you been told about it)? Describe it.

☆ IF YOU HAVE NOT YET BEEN BAPTIZED, IMAGINE WHAT YOUR BAPTISM WILL BE LIKE AND DESCRIBE IT.

student book, invite those willing to tell the class what they wrote.

E. Conclude this activity by emphasizing the importance of baptism. Say, "Remember that in baptism, God claims us and lets the whole world know it."

Explore the Baptism of Jesus

Optional: Invite your pastor to come and talk with the class about what baptism means for your church or denomination. He or she may also explain the baptismal service used in your church, along with any pertinent symbolism.

A. Ask a volunteer to read aloud today's "Bible Lesson" while the rest of the class follows along.

B. Then ask the students to close their eyes while you read the "Bible Lesson" a second time. Instruct them to imagine the scenes described in the Scripture as you read.

C. Now ask the students what they saw in their mind's eye. Allow them to be as descriptive as they wish. Discuss any interesting images.

D. Next, choose two volunteers to read aloud the dialogue between the imaginary characters of Rufus and Lucas in the student book.

E. After reading the lighthearted dialogue, ask your students the following questions:

- (1) Would you have responded with the same surprised feelings that Rufus and Lucas experienced after Jesus' baptism? Why or why not?
- (2) Rufus and Lucas were a bit confused about what the voice from heaven said. When they finally figured it out, do you think they clearly understood who Jesus was?
- (3) What do you think it means for Jesus to be proclaimed as God's beloved Son?
- (4) Do you think Jesus' baptism will make the upcoming events in his life easier or more difficult for him?

Watch Out! Here Comes Trouble

A. Ask a student, or a few students, to read aloud the introductory paragraphs for this activity.

B. Divide the class into small groups of two, three, or four, depending on your class size.



The Baptism of Jesus

Read today's "Bible Lesson" from the Gospel of Mark. The following is a conversation between Rufus and Lucas, two imaginary Bible characters, after seeing Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan River:

- RUFUS:** Well, I sure didn't see that coming!
- LUCAS:** Me neither. I just came out here to see what kooky old John was up to.
- RUFUS:** Yea. Everybody in Jerusalem has been talking about John and his baptizing. Do you think we're as sinful as John says we are in his preaching?
- LUCAS:** I don't know. I figure that I'm pretty good. I haven't done anything really bad. But John's been saying that everyone needs to repent and be forgiven.
- RUFUS:** You know, with the things he says and the way he dresses, he reminds me of the old prophet Elijah. He said some pretty important stuff, you know.
- LUCAS:** Well, after what just happened with the guy John baptized, (I think they were calling him Jesus), my guess is that we should pay attention to John.
- RUFUS:** You're not kidding. Did you see how John acted when that Jesus fellow came to be baptized? He seemed pretty excited.
- LUCAS:** Well, I guess so. Did you hear that voice and see that dove fly out of the clouds? What did it say again?
- RUFUS:** I think it said: "You are my Son, and I love it; with you I will trim trees."
- LUCAS:** No. I think it said: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I will kill fleas."
- RUFUS:** Now that I hear you say it, I think the voice said: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Do you think that Jesus guy is somebody special?
- LUCAS:** Well, when was the last time a voice out of the sky spoke to you?
- RUFUS:** I guess you've got a point. Do you think that means Jesus is God's Son? Wow! I wonder what will happen next to him?

C. Instruct each group to reflect upon and answer the questions included in this activity.

D. After giving the groups adequate time to answer and discuss the questions, ask a representative from each group to tell insights and thoughts from each conversation.

E. Record each groups' responses on a markerboard or large sheet of paper.

Responses to each of the questions may include:

(1) What is temptation?
a. *Temptation is something that seems appealing even though it is dangerous or harmful.*

b. *Temptation promises something good but ultimately delivers something bad.*

(2) What temptations do Christians face?

a. *Christians face the same temptations (and more) that non-Christians face.*

b. *Christians face the temptation to shy away from our faith when it is inconvenient or embarrassing.*

c. *Christians face the temptation to behave one way in public and another way in private.*

(3) What makes temptation so tempting?

a. *The promises it seems to make*

b. *The prospect of getting something for nothing*

c. *The thrill of doing something that is forbidden*

(4) What are some good ways to resist temptation?

a. *Choose friends who will help you to be accountable.*

b. *Just say no.*

c. *Stay away from people and places that offer temptations.*

Hear God's Blessed Assurance

Say to your students: "The Christian life, as wonderful as it is, is not always an easy life."

Being part of God's family brings demands and challenges as well as joy and peace. However, God truly does claim us as God's own, and even if we sometimes fail or give in to temptation, God forgives us and helps to continue on our way with Christ."

A. Invite a volunteer or two to read aloud the first two paragraphs of this activity.

B. Instruct students to carry out the exercise explained in the final paragraph.

C. If your students wish, suggest they take a few minutes to discuss with a partner possible words God could have spoken to them

Here Comes Trouble

After the miraculous events at Jesus' baptism (the dove, the Holy Spirit, and the voice from heaven), it would be easy to think that there would be only clear sailing ahead for Jesus. After all, to be proclaimed as God's Son in front of everybody is pretty exciting news.

People today who are baptized sometimes have similar thoughts. Baptism is seen as the beginning of a person's public life with God; it is a time of celebration. Surely, as a Christian, life will be much easier, right? Wrong!

You probably noticed in the "Bible Lesson" that the trouble starts immediately after Jesus is baptized and proclaimed as God's Son. He heads out into the wilderness and is greeted by someone who hopes to "trip him up." It is only after Jesus' relationship with God is made public that Satan shows up with temptations especially for him.

What is temptation? Write a definition below.

WHAT TEMPTATIONS DO CHRISTIANS FACE?

WHAT MAKES TEMPTATION SO TEMPTING?

What are several good ways to resist temptation?

at their baptisms. However, remind each student to complete the final task individually.

D. After the students have completed the final part of the activity, invite anyone who is comfortable to read aloud his or her statements.

Optional: After the students have written their individual baptismal statements, ask the class to work together to compose a statement that God might have said to the entire class.

Pray a Closing Prayer

A. Before praying the closing prayer, invite the students to take a moment and pray silently, asking God to help them withstand or overcome particular temptations they are facing in their lives.

B. Ask students to stand, form a circle, and join hands. Then lead the group in praying together the prayer printed in the student book.

Blessed Assurance

Baptism is wonderful. It is the way that people are welcomed into the church and claimed as members of the family of God and as brothers or sisters of Jesus Christ. But being baptized and claiming Christ as Savior does not guarantee an easy life or smooth paths. As we saw with Jesus, temptations still come.

However, just as Jesus heard the voice from heaven affirming that he belonged to God, we are claimed as God's children in our baptism—and even before we are baptized. No matter what comes along, we can be confident that we belong to God!

In the space below, imagine a voice from heaven, speaking at your baptism just as it did at Jesus' baptism. What awesome, loving, assuring words would God say to you?



A voice came from heaven and said:

Closing Prayer

Thank you, O God, for your grace given to us in the gift of baptism. Like Jesus, help us always remember that we are also your beloved children. Defend us from every temptation and give us the strength of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.