

JOHN THE BAPTIST

LESSON TEXT

Matthew 3:1-15

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- The students will describe John the Baptist's deep convictions.
- The students will explain why the Pharisees and Sadducees were not leading the people spiritually.
- The students will discuss specific times when they needed to trust God.

MATERIALS NEEDED

For each student:

- pen or pencil

For the teacher:

- several dictionaries
- 1 copy of "Good News from the Kingdom"
- globe or map of the world
- costumes for the characters (be imaginative, using sheets, tablecloths, etc.)
- costume for John the Baptist (fake fur, if possible, with a belt around the waist)
- 2 pieces of poster board, approximately 22" x 28"
- extra Bibles

Reproducible Pages:

- Page A, 1 copy for each student
- Page B, 1 copy for each student
- Page C, 1 copy for each student
- Page D, 1 copy for the teacher
- Page E, 1 copy for each student

LESSON PLAN

Getting Ready

Faithful Instruction
 Teacher Focus
 Teacher Tips
 Preclass Activity: Definitions
 Starting Up
 Welcome and Singing
 Opening Prayer
 Victories
 Good News from the Kingdom

Getting into God's Word

Story: "The Signature"
 Activity 1: John the Baptist Skit
 Scripture Study
 Activity 2: "Which Word" Competition

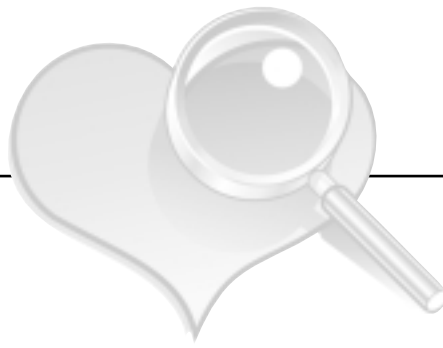
Getting It to Others

Scripture Memory: Deuteronomy 31:6
 Weekly Challenge and Snack time
 Conclusion

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

Deuteronomy 31:6



FAITHFUL INSTRUCTION

TEACHER FOCUS

Pray before preparing the lesson. Read and meditate on Matthew 3:1-15 until you understand the basic story and the lesson it holds. Remember your deep convictions about the truth when you were baptized, when your faith was challenged, or when you were being persecuted. How deeply are you convicted about the truth now? What evidence is there in your life of your convictions? John was considered by Jesus to be the greatest prophet who ever lived (Luke 7:24-28). John was an incredible man with deep convictions who should inspire you and your students to please God by standing up for what is right and by speaking out about it.

TEACHER TIPS

The Pharisees and Sadducees were two major groups of religious leaders in Israel at the time of Jesus. Both of these groups got security from the fact that their lineage was of Abraham. The Pharisees believed that salvation came from faultless obedience to the law. They put the emphasis on outward activity, not on the inward change of the heart that we hear from John the Baptist.

PRECLASS ACTIVITY

DEFINITIONS

The students will learn definitions to words in Matthew 3:1-15 that help define John the Baptist's convictions.

MATERIALS USED

For each student:

- pen or pencil

For the teacher:

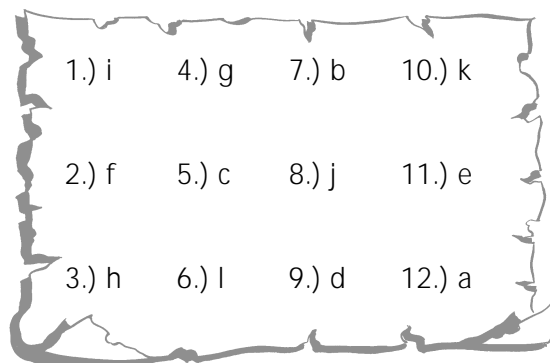
- several dictionaries

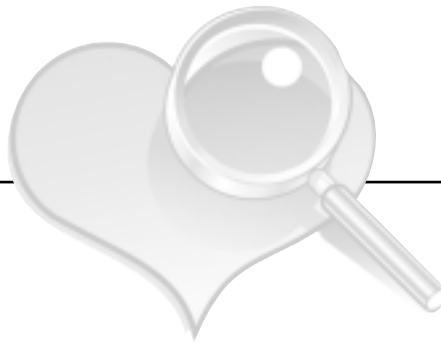
Reproducible Pages:

- Page A, 1 copy for each student

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Distribute copies of Reproducible Page A (Definitions) and a pen or pencil to the students as they arrive.
2. Help each student understand the instructions to complete the worksheet.
3. See Answer Key below.





STARTING UP

WELCOME AND SINGING

Call the students together in a circle. Welcome everyone by name, being sure to recognize anyone who is visiting. Let them know how glad you are to see them and how much you looked forward to being with them. Sing a few great songs.

OPENING PRAYER

Who would like to say a prayer to start today's time together? Let a few students lead the prayer. Encourage the students to mention missing students, special church activities, illnesses, and to be especially thankful for the chance to be together.

VICTORIES

Take the time to have the students share about the challenges they were given at the end of last week's class. *Did everyone complete their challenge? How did it go? What fears did you face as you met the challenge to put the lesson into practice? How did everyone do with having consistent quiet times? Would anyone like to share something they learned this week?*

Praise and encourage all the students' efforts, especially noting any area of significant growth. Offer help and suggestions so they can have even more victories in the coming week.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE KINGDOM

MATERIALS USED

For the teacher:

- 1 copy of "Good News from the Kingdom"
- globe or map of the world

INSTRUCTIONS

Now let's take a few minutes to share "Good News from the Kingdom." Be excited as you read about what is happening around the world. Have a globe or map ready, pointing out the location as you share. Remind your students that the kingdom of God is worldwide and that the victories of our brothers and sisters in other countries can inspire us and spur us on.





STORY

"THE SIGNATURE"

In this story Stefani proves she has deep convictions by not going along with the crowd.

MATERIALS USED

Reproducible Pages:

- Page B, 1 copy for each student

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Distribute copies of Reproducible Page B ("The Signature") to the students.
2. *What does "conviction" mean? As we read the story, note Stefani's convictions.*
3. Read the story to the students.
4. *What reasons did Stefani have to feel secure in her new school? (She made the cheerleading squad. / She had friends. / Other students liked her.)*
5. *Do you think Stefani was caught off guard when she received the note? Why?*
6. *How do you think Ellen felt upon receiving the note and seeing there was someone who stood up for the truth?*
7. *Why would this be a difficult time for Stefani to trust God?*
8. *What was the result of Stefani's deep convictions? (She was able to do what was right even if it meant losing friends. / She could have a peace in her heart, knowing she had done what was pleasing to God. / Even if the other girls cut her off, Ellen would appreciate her friendship.)*

ACTIVITY 1

JOHN THE BAPTIST SKIT

This skit is designed to help the students understand how the Pharisees and Sadducees were viewed by the common people and the significance of John's boldness in standing up for the truth.

MATERIALS USED

For the teacher:

- costumes for the characters (be imaginative, using sheets, tablecloths, etc.)

- costume for John the Baptist (fake fur, if possible, with belt around the waist)

Reproducible Pages:

- Page C, 1 copy for each student

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Hand out Reproducible Page C (John the Baptist Skit) to each student
2. Select ten students to play the parts listed on Reproducible Page C. (Choose a confident student to play the part of John the Baptist. See drawing below for clothing suggestions.)
3. Have the ten students pull aside to read through their parts for a few minutes. (The rest of the class can read through the script.)
4. Place the ten students in appropriate areas in front of the audience (the other students).
5. Reading from their scripts, the students will act out the skit.





SCRIPTURE STUDY

MATERIALS USED

For the teacher:

- extra Bibles

Have the students take out their Bibles and turn to Matthew 3:1-15. Select three volunteers to read the passage aloud. Divide the reading into three parts:

Matthew 3:1-6

Matthew 3:7-10

Matthew 3:11-15

- *Why did John the Baptist choose to live this way? (because he was a prophet / to stand out / to make a point / because he was radical / had deep convictions / was totally focused on spreading God's message)*

Reread Matthew 3:7-10. Explain to the students from the Teacher Tips who the Pharisees and Sadducees were.

John was different from other religious leaders of his day. While many were greedy, selfish and preoccupied with winning the praise of people, John was concerned only with the praise of God. He denied himself the comforts of the world in order to teach the word of God to as many people as possible. He showed people that what was most important was serving God.

- *Why did he call the Pharisees a group of poisonous snakes (vipers)? (They were dangerous. / They caused people to turn away from obeying God from the heart like the serpent did in the Garden of Eden.)*
- *In what way were they dangerous? (They taught people incorrectly about God and how to know him. / They were not devoted to God from their hearts.)*
- *What are the truths that John told the Pharisees? (to produce fruit in keeping with repentance /not to depend on what family they are from / judgment is coming.)*

God continues to use people who are like John the Baptist to speak his word with conviction. God can use us when we have faith and conviction. We don't have to live in the desert and eat bugs in order to be pleasing to God and to have a deep conviction about the truth. But, we do have to have the same kind of heart and attitude that John had as he sought to be obedient to God.

ACTIVITY 2

"WHICH WORD" COMPETITION

This exercise will help the students become familiar with the practical meanings of some of the words introduced in Matthew 3:1-15.

MATERIALS USED

For the teacher:

- 2 pieces of poster board, approximately 22" x 28"
- Reproducible Pages:*
- Page D, 1 copy for the teacher

PREPARATION

1. Cut each poster board into 7 pieces approximately 10" x 5" each.
2. Write on the pieces of each poster board the following words: truth, conviction, courage, repent, confess, flee and confidence
3. You will then have two sets of these words (1 set for each team).

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide the students into two groups.
2. Hand out a set of the words to each team.
3. Read the statements one at a time from Reproducible Page D ("Which Word" Competition).
4. Each team will discuss among their members which word best describes the statement.
5. Ask for a response from the teams.
6. Both teams will then hold up the word chosen by their team.
7. Each correct answer wins one point for the team.
8. Explain that there might be more than one possible answer for a statement. They are only to give one answer, though.
9. The group ending with the most points is the winner.



SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."
Deuteronomy 31:6

MATERIALS USED

Reproducible Pages:

- Page E, 1 copy for each student

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Distribute Reproducible Page E (Memory Verse) to the students.
2. Ask the students to pair up and take turns saying the verse aloud.

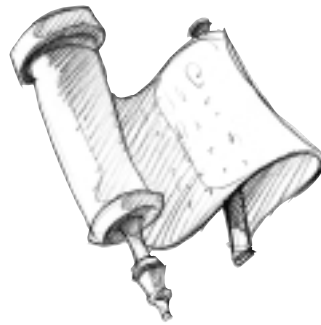
WEEKLY CHALLENGE AND SNACK TIME

If your students bring a snack allow them to eat while you explain to them the challenge for the week.

Each student is to identify one area in which he or she wants to trust God more and have stronger convictions (being honest with their friends about their faith, not going along with the crowd, being willing to stand out, etc.) Ask the students to pray each day about this and to look for opportunities to grow in this area. Take note of students for whom this will be difficult. Make sure you encourage them and find ways that they can be successful with the challenge.

CONCLUSION

End today's meeting with a prayer.



WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Identify one area in which you want to trust God more and have stronger convictions. Pray each day and look for opportunities to grow in this area.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

LESSON TEXT

Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:7-20

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- The students will explain how John the Baptist chose to stand apart from the religious leaders of the day.
- The students will explain why it is important to avoid compromise and stand on their own convictions.
- The students will discuss specific times they needed to trust God.

MATERIALS NEEDED

For each student:

- 2 pieces of clear contact paper, 5" x 7"

For the teacher:

- colored pencils and markers
- glitter (optional)
- scissors
- 12 balloons
- 12 pieces of paper, 2" x 3"
- 12 sheets of construction paper

Reproducible Pages:

- Page F, 1 copy for every 3 students

LESSON PLAN

Getting Ready

Faithful Instruction
 Teacher Focus
 Teacher Tips
 Preclass Activity: Bookmark
 Starting Up
 Welcome and Singing
 Opening Prayer and Review
 Great News Sharing

Getting into God's Word

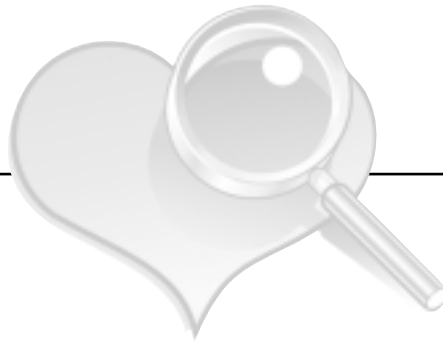
Scripture Study
 Activity: Compromised or Confident?

Getting It to Others

Scripture Memory: Deuteronomy 31:6
 Weekly Challenge and Snack Time
 Conclusion

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."
 Deuteronomy 31:6



FAITHFUL INSTRUCTION

TEACHER FOCUS

Pray before preparing the lesson. Read and meditate on Mark 1:1-8 and Luke 3:7-20 until you understand the basic story and the lesson it holds. Remember your deep convictions about the truth when you were baptized, when your faith was challenged, or when you were being persecuted. How deeply are you convicted about the truth now? What evidence is there in your life of your convictions? John was considered by Jesus to be the greatest prophet who ever lived (Luke 7:24-28). John was an incredible man with deep convictions who should inspire you and your students to please God by standing up for what is right and speaking out about it.

TEACHER TIPS

The Pharisees and Sadducees were two major groups of religious leaders in Israel at the time of Jesus. Both of these groups got security from the fact that their lineage was of Abraham. The Pharisees believed that salvation came from faultless obedience to the law. They put the emphasis on outward activity, not on the inward change of the heart that we hear from John the Baptist.

PRECLASS ACTIVITY

BOOKMARK

The activity will reinforce the correlation between “deep convictions” and “deep impact” on the lives of others.

MATERIALS USED

For each student:

- 2 pieces of clear contact paper, 5" x 7"

For the teacher:

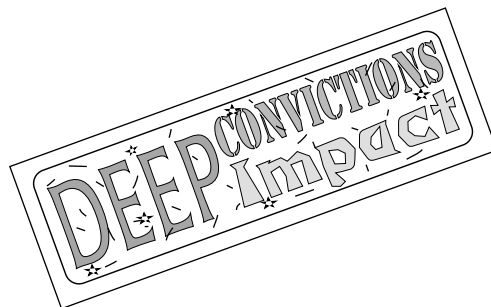
- colored pencils or markers
- scissors
- glitter (optional)

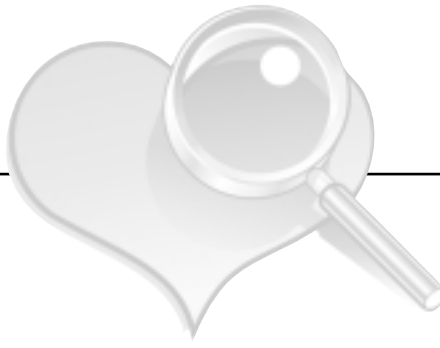
Reproducible Pages:

- Page F, 1 copy for every 3 students

INSTRUCTIONS

1. As the students arrive, hand out 1 copy of Reproducible Page F (Deep Convictions/Deep Impact) to every three students.
2. Have each student cut out one bookmark and decorate the letters with markers and colored pencils and glitter.
4. Have the students cover both sides of their bookmarks with clear contact paper by placing the bookmark in the center of one half of the contact paper and folding the other half over so that the edges meet.
5. Trim the edges, making sure the contact paper forms a seal around the bookmark. This will reinforce and protect the bookmark.
6. (See sample below.)





STARTING UP

WELCOME AND SINGING

Call the students together in a circle. Welcome everyone by name, being sure to recognize anyone who is visiting. Let them know how glad you are to see them and how much you looked forward to being with them. Sing a few great songs.

OPENING PRAYER AND REVIEW

- Open with one of the students praying for God to help the students to stand up for their convictions.
- Have one student recite the memory verse for this lesson: Deuteronomy 31:6.
- Have a student briefly review the previous lesson (Core Lesson).

GREAT NEWS SHARING

Allow several minutes for the students to share great news about their lives. This could be about a family member who became a disciple, someone healed from an illness, someone studying the Bible, great grades, etc. Remind the students to be brief, so that as many as possible can share.



SCRIPTURE STUDY

Ask the students to take out their Bibles and turn to Mark 1:1-8. Select a couple of volunteers to read the passage, dividing it as follows:

Mark 1:1-4

Mark 1:5-8

Select three volunteers to read Luke 3:7-20:

Luke 3:7-10

Luke 3:11-14

Luke 3:15-20

Ask the students to share what they learned about John the Baptist during their last class .

- *What are some areas of John's life that were different from the lives of the people around him?* (lived in the desert / his diet / his clothing / his preaching / unafraid to speak the truth)
- *What are some ways that you want to be like your peers.* (dress / music / jewelry / hairstyle / make-up / sports gear / attitudes / the way I talk)
- *Why do you think John the Baptist was willing to be so different from the people around him? so uncompromising?*
- *In what ways do you need to be willing to be different from those around you?*
- *In what areas do you need to be careful not to compromise?*

Read Luke 7:24-28 to the class.

- *In verse 24, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John. What two things did he say John was not?* (a reed swayed by the wind / a man dressed in fine clothes)
- *What did he mean when he said John was not " a reed swayed by the wind"?* (He didn't go with the crowd or give in to pressure from others.)
- *How did Jesus describe him?* (more than prophet / a messenger / among those born of women, no one was greater)
- *How do you want Jesus to describe you?* (Make sure each student gets an opportunity to share a personal answer.)





ACTIVITY

COMPROMISED OR CONFIDENT?

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have one of the students run a brief errand that takes them away from the group. This might be taking a note to someone or getting paper towels from the restroom. Choose a student who has confidence and a very good self-image.
2. While the student is away explain to the class that when the student returns, you are going to ask a question and that the whole class will band together against the student and have a different (wrong) answer. Explain that their job is to convince the *unknowing* student that he/she is wrong and that they are right (even though it's not true.) They may even begin to lightheartedly tease this student about being different or having some strange ideas.
3. When the student returns from the errand, announce to the class that it is time for the next activity.
4. Ask a question of the class such as *what is your favorite color?* Get a couple of responses and then show the class a colored object and ask the class to describe it. Tell the kids ahead of time what color you want them to call it (an obviously incorrect choice).
5. The teacher should remain neutral but encourage the discussion. After a couple of minutes, the teacher should end the discussion and explain what happened.
6. Have the student share what it felt like being the only one standing for what he/she thought was right.
7. Have the other students explain what it felt like to be in the majority.
8. Ask the students to come up with practical examples of being in the minority when they stand up for what is right. (examples: in health class when teacher or students say it is fine to have sex with someone when you are not married / when a friend says it's okay to tell a "little white lie" / when a classmate says there is nothing wrong with copying someone's homework, etc.)



SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."
Deuteronomy 31:6

MATERIALS USED

For the teacher:

- 12 balloons
- 12 pieces of paper, 2" x 3"
- 12 sheets of construction paper

NOTE: You may or may not have time for this activity. If not, simply allow several of the students to say the memory verse.

PREPARATION

1. Write 1 through 12 in large numbers on the twelve sheets of construction paper.
2. Then write the following twelve phrases on the twelve 2" x 3" pieces of paper (one phrase on each piece).
 1. Be strong
 2. and courageous.
 3. Do not be afraid
 4. or terrified
 5. because of them,
 6. for the Lord
 7. your God
 8. goes with you;
 9. he will never
 10. leave you
 11. nor forsake you.
 12. Deuteronomy 31:6
3. Fold each paper.
4. Place one in each balloon.
5. Blow up and tie the ends of the balloons.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Lay out the twelve sheets of numbered construction paper (in order from 1 to 12).
2. Call out a student's name to choose and pop a balloon.
3. The student will retrieve and read the phrase on the folded paper.
4. The student will have to decide which number the word belongs on and place it there.
5. Repeat until all the students have had a chance.
6. NOTE: If there are more students than balloons and you want every student to have a chance to play, you will have to set up as many separate memory verses as are needed. Otherwise, just choose twelve students to participate.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE AND SNACK TIME

If your students bring a snack, allow them to eat while you explain to them the challenge for the week.

The students are to identify one area in which they want to trust God more and have stronger convictions (being honest with their friends about their faith, not going along with the crowd, being willing to stand out, etc.) Ask the students to pray each day about this and look for opportunities to grow in this area. Take note of students that this will be difficult for and make sure that you encourage them and find ways that they can be successful with the challenge.

CONCLUSION

End the class with a prayer.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Identify one area in which you want to trust God more and have stronger convictions. Pray each day and look for opportunities to grow in this area.

DEFINITIONS

Understanding Matthew 3:1-15

Match each word with its correct definition by drawing a line connecting the two. Use the dictionary as needed.

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. mental or moral strength to withstand danger, fear or difficulty | a. conviction |
| 2. reality or actual existence | b. brood |
| 3. the fact of being or feeling certain | c. baptist |
| 4. a large grasshopper | d. flee |
| 5. a person who baptized | e. confess |
| 6. to change | f. truth |
| 7. a group | g. locust |
| 8. a poisonous snake | h. confidence |
| 9. to run away | i. courage |
| 10. intense anger | j. viper |
| 11. to admit | k. wrath |
| 12. a strong belief | l. repent |

THE SIGNATURE

Stefani's father was transferred to another job during the school year. Certainly this move was a challenge to Stefani, who had just settled in for her sixth grade year with friends she had known since kindergarten.

She arrived at Morgan Thomas Middle School just in time for cheerleading try-outs. She made the squad and everyone seemed to like her. Everything was going great until one day in English class. One of the other cheerleaders passed her a note with a bad rumor about Ellen, a girl who didn't make the squad. Stefani was asked to sign her name to the note to show her support for the things said against Ellen. All the other cheerleaders had already signed their name to the note. Stefani knew that if she didn't sign it, she could be giving up her good standing on the squad. She knew that they could easily turn against her.

She glanced over at Ellen and knew the rumor wasn't true. Stefani couldn't help but think how she would feel if the note were about her. Her decision was made. Instead of signing her name she wrote the words "THIS IS NOT TRUE" and put her name next to it.



JOHN THE BAPTIST SKIT

CHARACTERS:

Narrator	Sarah
John the Baptist	Benjamin
Sam	Pharisees (at least 2)
Hannah	Sadducees (at least 2)

Narrator: John the Baptist is in the Desert of Judea preaching about the kingdom of heaven. People are coming from Judea, Jerusalem and the whole region of the Jordan to be baptized by him. Many are waiting to be baptized and are confessing their sins.

(Scene opens with John the Baptist "baptizing" people with his back turned to the audience. Sam, Hannah, Sarah and Benjamin are all waiting to be baptized.)

Sam: (To the others waiting to be baptized) I am so excited about having all my sins forgiven.

Hannah: Look how many people are here confessing their sins and getting baptized! I've never seen anything like this.

Sarah: Have you seen anyone from the ruling council here?

Benjamin: (With a fearful tone in his voice). No, do you think they even know about this?

Hannah: I hope so... I wonder if they will approve?

Sam: (Pointing to the Pharisees and Sadducees entering) Here they come down the hill now! They don't look very happy.

Sarah: (With a puzzled look on her face) What sins would they have to confess?

Benjamin: John is preaching about the kingdom of heaven. The Sadducees don't even believe in heaven.

Hannah: The Pharisees do! But I've never heard of them confessing sin.

Benjamin: Whoa! John stopped baptizing. He sees the group of Pharisees and Sadducees.

John the Baptist: (Turning to the audience and crowd with a loud, intense voice). You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do you think you can say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father"? I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Sam: (With shock and amazement in his voice) John was so bold! I would have been so afraid to speak like that. This is really serious. Even the leaders from the ruling council won't go to heaven unless they repent.

Sarah: I know I need to repent...

"Which Word" Competition

Choosing from the following words the one that best describes each statement.

Conviction Courage Repent Confess Confidence Flee Truth

1. I believe the Bible is God's word.
2. I am going to change my attitude and wake up happy in the morning.
3. I am a good singer.
4. I broke my mom's sugar bowl. I'm going to tell her I did it.
5. I will have my parents sign the test that I failed.
6. I will be honest and tell my teacher that I forgot to have my mom sign my paper.
7. I wouldn't smoke a cigarette even if my friends dared me to.
8. When my friends were picking on the little kid, I asked them to stop.
9. I told my dad that I swore when I got angry on the bus.
10. I'm going to stop watching TV when I study so that I can get better grades.
11. I called my dad to pick me up when my friends decided to watch an R-rated movie. I left as soon as he came.
12. I left the party when my friends began to pass the beer around.
13. I quickly raised my hand to answer the difficult question that the teacher asked.
14. My friend and I stole something, and I told my parents what I did.

ANSWER KEY:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. conviction | 8. courage |
| 2. repent | 9. confess |
| 3. confidence | 10. repent |
| 4. confess/truth | 11. flee/conviction |
| 5. courage | 12. flee/conviction |
| 6. truth | 13. confidence |
| 7. conviction | 14. confess/truth |

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

DEUTERONOMY 31:6

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Identify one area in which you want to trust God more and have stronger convictions. Pray each day and look for opportunities to grow in this area.



BOOKMARK

DEEP CONVICTIONS
Impact

DEEP CONVICTIONS
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Impact