

# The Connection

▶ January 18, 2026

**Weekly Bible Verse:** And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17

## Together



Train up a child in the way he should go; Even when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

## Pointing the Way

Ever since John was a baby his parents knew that he would be special. Just the fact that he was born was a miracle. It was a miracle because his parents were very old when he was born – way too old to have a baby. Only God could make that happen.

Another special thing about John was that he was the cousin of Jesus. They were born only a few months apart.

When he grew up John lived in the desert. There is not much food in the desert. John had to learn to eat all kinds of unusual things. He found some wild bees and was able to eat some of the honey from the honeycomb. He also ate something else that was unusual. John ate bugs! Sometimes people back then would eat locusts. In some places today, people still eat locusts.

John also wore unusual clothes. He wore animal skins instead of regular clothing. John was a good man. He obeyed God and always tried to do the right thing. God gave John a special job. John's job was to get people ready for Jesus to start preaching. This was a job that was planned by God many, many years before. What kind of things do you think he needed to do to get the people ready? John did not build a church building or hand out invitations to hear Jesus preach. John knew that Jesus



“hard heart” that means that their heart will never change. If they have a “soft heart” they will let God change their heart into the kind of heart that he wants. John knew that the people needed to have soft hearts so they would be ready to hear Jesus preach.

John did not preach at the temple or in a church building. John would go down to the Jordan River and begin to preach by the water. Soon crowds of people gathered around John and listened to his message.

When John talked about soft hearts there was one word he used to say a lot. That word was “REPENT”. To repent means being very sorry for the bad thing or things you have been doing. But repentance is more than saying you are sorry. To repent means to be sorry and then to also stop doing the bad thing. But repentance does not just mean being sorry and then to stop doing the bad thing.

Repentance also means to be

would want people to have good hearts. So John taught people how to have soft hearts. If a person has a

sorry, stop doing the bad thing AND THEN to change your life and start doing good things instead. To repent means to change both your heart AND your actions.

Many people came to hear John preach. Some of them wanted to change their hearts and their actions and some did not. Some asked John what they should do. John told some that changing their hearts meant that they must stop being selfish. They must repent and start sharing the way God wanted them to. He told the tax collectors that they had to stop cheating people. They must repent and start being fair like God wanted them to.

He told the soldiers that they needed to stop blaming people when things were not their fault. The soldiers must repent and stop complaining about people. Then John told the people who were listening that they needed to be baptized in the Jordan River to show that they really meant what they said. The baptism would mean that they repented of the things they were doing wrong. It would show that their hearts were soft and good. Many people were baptized when John preached. That is why he is called “John the Baptist”.

All of the Jewish people knew that a Messiah would come some day to save the people. John the Baptist was a great preacher. Was John the Baptist the Messiah? No! John the Baptist was just the one who was getting everyone ready to listen to the Messiah. JESUS was coming. JESUS was the Messiah who would save his people - John was only pointing the way to Jesus.

More than ever before, parents should teach all aspects of social media including social networking etiquette, digital literacy, and standards of moral conduct. always know that they can seek support from an adult when they feel threatened, bullied, or fearful.

◆ **Share meaningful stories.** Examples of integrity are contained in human stories everywhere. When you read books with your kids, listen to stories about their peers, watch TV or movies together, or talk about what's going on in the world, ask your kids to find examples of how individuals stood up for their beliefs in ways that made a difference for themselves or the world around them. Make the topic of integrity part of the conversation!



## Growing Integrity

Ways to foster integrity in your child!

◆ **Develop a moral vocabulary.**

Words like *honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage* are core to centuries of religious, philosophical, and family beliefs. Use them and others to express and reinforce your family values. Teach children the behaviors that flow from these principles.

◆ **Reward respectful behavior.**

When children feel good about doing what's right, they learn to measure the quality of their lives beyond grades and extra-curricular achievements.

◆ **Explore consequences.**

Learning integrity takes practice. Like all learning, failure produces consequenc-

es. When children explore, understand, and accept the consequences of failure, critical learning occurs.

◆ **Respond appropriately.**

Parents cannot control their child's behavior, but they can respond with *consistency* when reinforcing family values. When learning is considered the foremost goal, dishonest or disrespectful behavior becomes a *teachable moment* for parents.

◆ **Be a role model.**

Children often name parents as their role models. Research shows that role models live their values in the world. They help children understand how values, like integrity, are part of a successful and rewarding life.

◆ **Teach digital etiquette.**



## "I Wonder" Questions for this week's lesson . . .

I wonder how the people felt when John told them to change the way they live and get ready for the special Son of God?

I wonder how they felt when they went through the waters and went under the water to

I wonder if they felt ready to be close to the special Son of God?

## Character Word of the Week:



Integrity is not just about honesty or trustworthiness. Integrity involves every decision we make. It is about making the right choice for the right reason — not because of the praise we receive, but because it's the right thing to do.

And it isn't only about what we do in front of others; it's about how we respond even when we're alone, when no one sees or knows. It demands that we hold moral principles so dear that we stand for them when others walk away.