

Lesson 13: Water & Wilderness

Key Takeaway

Jesus obeyed God, and I can too—even when it is hard.

Scriptural Basis

Matthew 3-4

Bible Verse

“In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” (Matthew 5:16, NLT).

Learning Objectives:

- Children will describe how Jesus' baptism showed his obedience to God.
- Children will understand that Jesus was tempted but never sinned.
- Children will explain how Jesus used Scripture to resist temptation.

Materials Needed for Small Group:

- ☐ A Bible
- ☐ Name tags
- ☐ A snack per child

Materials Needed for Large Group:

- ☐ A Bible

Object Lesson: Washing Our Hands (Obedience & Baptism)

- ☐ Large bowl of water
- ☐ Soap
- ☐ Towel
- ☐ Optional: something to make hands "dirty" (like cocoa powder, washable marker, etc.) to make the visual stronger

Activity: Repent- How Potato

- ☐ A beanbag (or small soft item to pass)
- ☐ Music player (music the kids will enjoy)
- ☐ Open floor space where students can sit in a circle

Materials Needed for Games:

Game: Temptation Toss

- ☐ Soft balls or crumpled paper ("temptation" items)
- ☐ Tape to mark the centerline

Game: Scripture Shield Tag

- ☐ Paper "shields" with simple Bible verses written on them

Game: Follow the Leader — Wilderness Version

- ☐ Chairs
- ☐ Painters tape
- ☐ Chairs
- ☐ Tape lines
- ☐ Optional props for obstacles

Game: Obedience Freeze Dance

- ☐ Music player

Small Group Session 1

15 Minutes

Distribute name tags and snacks. Choose one of the following activities to do together while children eat their snack.

Share and Listen

Option 1

Ask the children to share their highs and lows (the best and worst things that happened to them either today or from the past week).

Option 2

Ask the children to take turns sharing how they are feeling today using the [“How Are You Feeling?” chart](#).

Pray Together

Collect prayer requests from the students. The leader or a student can pray for the entire group, or a leader can pair up students and invite them to pray for one another.

Opening Questions

- ***“Why is it important to follow a good example rather than a bad example?”***
- ***“Who in your life has been a good example for you to follow?”***
- ***“What could happen if you follow a bad example?”***

Activity: Would You Follow That Example?

Materials Needed: None!

Instructions:

Tell the kids you are going to read a few scenarios—things someone might do.

After each one, they will decide:

- Is this a good example to follow?
 - If yes, they should give a thumbs up or jump up!
 - If not, they should give a thumbs down or sit down/stay seated.

Read each scenario slowly and clearly, allowing time for them to respond. After each response, take a moment to briefly explain why it is or isn't a good example.

Example Scenarios:

- Someone helps a friend who dropped their books.
- Someone lies to their parents about doing their homework.
- Someone shares their snack with a new kid.
- Someone makes fun of a classmate.
- Someone prays before lunch at school.
- Someone invited a lonely classmate to play at recess.
- Someone took a toy without asking.
- Someone said “thank you” to their teacher.
- Someone ignored their parents when they were called.
- Someone helped clean up even though they did not make the mess.
- Someone told the truth, even though they were scared.
- Someone refused to share their crayons.
- Someone comforted a friend who was sad.
- Someone said something mean just to be funny.

“It is not a good idea to follow everyone’s example. There are some bad examples and we should not follow those examples but there are some good examples that we should follow. God sent Jesus so that we would have a good example to follow. Today we are going to learn about how Jesus obeyed God, even when it was hard.”

Large Group

10-15 Minutes

Welcome the students to Crossroads and tell them you are glad they came this week.

Optional Starters

Feel free to choose one, two, or even all of these ideas to start Large Group!

“Who is Jesus” call and response

Prayer Prompt: “God, please help me make a good choice about...”

(Talk to God about a choice you need to make and ask for his wisdom.)

Opening Song: “Jesus Loves Me!” by Go Fish

Opening Prayer

Tell kids that closing their eyes and folding their hands together can help keep them focused and not distract those around them.

Opening Question

- **“Have you ever had to get cleaned up for something really important?”**
(Wait for a few responses—examples like weddings, church, fancy dinners, etc.)
- **“Why do you think it is important to be clean for something special?”**
(Guide toward the idea of being ready, respectful, or prepared.)

“Today we are going to learn why Jesus chose to be baptized, even though he never did anything wrong. He did it to obey God—and to set an example for us to follow. We are also going to talk about repentance—which is when we turn away from sin—and how baptism shows the world that we are ready to follow Jesus with our lives.”

Helpful Hint: Baptism Definition – Baptism is a special way Christians show they belong to God and are starting a new life with him. We use water to show that God’s love is making us new. It is like you are saying, “I am a part of God’s family now, and I want to follow Jesus!”

Object Lesson: Washing Our Hands (Obedience & Baptism)

Objective: Just like we clean our hands to get ready for something important, Jesus was baptized to show obedience to God—and we can follow his example.

Material Needed:

- ☐ Large bowl of water
- ☐ Soap
- ☐ Towel
- ☐ Optional: something to make hands “dirty” (like cocoa powder, washable marker, etc.) to make the visual stronger

Set-Up Instructions:

1. Place the bowl of water on a table where everyone can see.
2. Have the soap and towel nearby.
3. Choose a volunteer or use yourself for the demonstration.

Step 1 – Set the Stage:

“Have you ever had to clean up before going somewhere special—like a wedding or party? We do not go to important places without getting cleaned up. You get cleaned up first!”

(Optional: Rub a “dirty” substance on your hands or your volunteer’s hands.)

Step 2 – Start the Object Lesson:

“Dirty hands remind us of all the choices we make every day. Sometimes we choose to do what is right, but other times... we do not. We might argue, disobey, or be selfish. And when that happens, we need to be cleaned—not just on the outside, but in our hearts.”

(Begin washing hands slowly and visibly.)

“Baptism is something Christians do to show that they belong to Jesus. It’s kind of like how we wash our hands to get ready for something important.

Jesus got baptized—not because he had sinned, but to obey God and show he was ready to do what God sent him to do. When we see someone get baptized today, it is a sign that they are part of God’s big family.”

Step 3 – Apply It to the Kids:

“Baptism does not make us clean on the inside—only Jesus can do that. But baptism is a special way we show others that our hearts are being changed by God.

Jesus gave us the perfect example. He obeyed God by being baptized—and we can follow his lead by doing what is right, even when it is hard or new. Baptism is one big way we say, “Yes, I am following Jesus!””

Leader can read or have several older students read.

Setup & Background:

“John the Baptist was a special man sent by God to get people ready for Jesus. He wore clothes made of camel’s hair and ate wild honey and bugs—yep, bugs! But even though he looked and lived differently, people came from all over to hear him.

John had a really important message:

“Turn away from your sin and get ready—because the Savior is coming!”

He baptized people in the Jordan River when they decided to follow God. That is why he is called John the Baptist! His job was to prepare hearts for Jesus, and one day, Jesus himself came to be baptized by John. That is what we are about to read!”

Read Matthew 3:11-17 out loud.

“I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.”

Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. “I am the one who needs to be baptized by you,” he said, “so why are you coming to me?”

But Jesus said, “It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.” So John agreed to baptize him.

After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”

Ask:

- ***“Why did John feel unsure about baptizing Jesus?”***
(He knew Jesus was greater and had never sinned.)
- ***“Why did Jesus say he needed to be baptized?”***
(To do what God wanted and to set an example of obedience.)
- ***“What happened after Jesus was baptized?”***
(The heavens opened, the Spirit came down like a dove, and God spoke.)

- ***“What did God say about Jesus?”***
*(“This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”)
- ***“What can we learn from Jesus choosing to be baptized, even though he had never sinned?”***
*(He obeyed God and set an example for us to follow.)
- ***“How do you think it feels to know that God is pleased when we obey him, just like he was pleased with Jesus?”***

“Right after Jesus was baptized and showed obedience to God, something big happened. He went into the wilderness—a dry, quiet, empty place—to be alone with God. But while He was there, someone else showed up... the devil.

The Bible says Jesus was tempted. That means the devil tried to get Jesus to do something wrong.

Temptation is when you feel like doing something you know you should not—like lying, cheating, or disobeying.

It is not a sin to be tempted, but it is a sin if you choose to do the wrong thing.

Jesus was tempted, just like we are—but he did not give in. He fought temptation by remembering God’s Word and obeying him.

Now let’s read what happened when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness.”

Leader can read or have one or more students read.

Read Matthew 4:1-11 out loud.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

During that time the devil came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.”

But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say,

***‘People do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”***

Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

***‘He will order his angels to protect you.
And they will hold you up with their hands
so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’”***

Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the Lord your God.’”

Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. “I will give it all to you,” he said, “if you will kneel down and worship me.”

“Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say,

‘You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’”

Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

Ask:

- ***“What did the devil try to get Jesus to do?”***
(Guide them to remember the three temptations: turning stones to bread, jumping off the temple, and worshiping the devil.)
- ***“How did Jesus fight temptation each time?”***
(Answer: He used God’s Word—the Bible—to say “no” to sin.)
- ***“What can you do when you feel tempted to do something wrong?”***
(Help kids think practically—pray, remember a Bible verse, walk away, ask a grown-up for help, etc.)

Activity: “Repent-How Potato” (Hot Potato with a Twist!)

Objective: Repenting means turning away from sin and choosing to follow God. Baptism shows we want to follow Jesus and live God’s way.

Material Needed:

- ☐ A beanbag (or small soft item to pass)
- ☐ Music player (music the kids will enjoy)
- ☐ Open floor space where students can sit in a circle

Instructions:

Gather students in a circle on the floor and give one child the beanbag.

“We are going to play a game called ‘Repent-How Potato’! It is like Hot Potato, but with a twist to help us learn what it means to repent.”

Explain the rules:

- **When the music plays, pass the beanbag to the person on your left.**
- **When the music stops and you hear me shout, “REPENT!”, the person holding the beanbag must quickly start passing it in the opposite direction (to the right this time).**

- When the music starts again, everyone keeps passing in the new direction.
- Keep going as time allows, switching directions each time you shout “Repent!”
- Play multiple rounds, pausing music randomly to call out “Repent!” and switching directions each time.

After a few rounds, gather the kids and say:

“You had to turn and go the opposite direction when I said “Repent!” That is kind of like what it means to repent in real life. When we repent, we realize we are going the wrong way—doing things that do not please God—and we make a choice to turn and follow him instead.

John the Baptist told people to repent and be baptized. When we follow Jesus, we turn away from sin and try to live God’s way. Baptism is one way some Christians show they belong to Jesus.

Even though Jesus never sinned, he was baptized to show obedience to God and to set an example for us. After that, he was led into the wilderness to be tested—but he stayed strong and obeyed God.”

Close in Prayer

Small Group Session 2

20-25 Minutes

Share the Key Takeaway: We can obey God like Jesus did, and we can say “no” to temptation by trusting God’s Word.

Activity: Fake Follow the Leader

Prep: Before small group time, pull one student aside and give them this special role:

“During our game, I want you to try to get as many other kids as you can to follow you instead of me. Do not tell anyone it is a game—just start leading and see who follows!”

Instructions:

“We are going to play Follow the Leader! Your job is to follow me and do what I do.”

Begin the game by doing simple movements (clap, jump, spin, etc.), leading the group around the room.

Meanwhile, the student you prepped will try to quietly pull others away to follow them instead.

After a minute or two, pause the game and gather everyone.

Ask:

- ***“Who were you following?”***
- ***“Why did you choose to follow that person?”***
- ***“Was it easy or hard to know who to follow?”***
- ***“How is this like our choice to follow Jesus instead of other things or people?”***

“We always have choices about who or what to follow. Jesus is the true leader who leads us the right way—even when others try to pull us in different directions.”

Jesus followed God, even when Satan tried to pull him away.”

- ***“How did Jesus fight the temptations of Satan?”***
(Jesus used the Bible to fight against temptation)

“We can also use the Bible like Jesus did to fight against doing wrong things.”

Activity: Is this a Bible Verse?

How to Play: Read each phrase out loud.

Kids respond with:

Thumbs up = "Yes, that is from the Bible!"

Thumbs down = "Nope, not a Bible verse!"

After each response, reveal the answer and reference (if it is Scripture).

Is this a Bible Verse:

1. "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power."
➤ Revelation 4:11a
2. "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine."
➤ Song lyric – children's song
3. "Don't stop believin', hold on to that feelin'."
➤ Song lyric – Journey
4. "Hakuna Matata! It means no worries."
➤ The Lion King
5. "The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does."
➤ Psalm 145:13b
6. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart."
➤ Proverbs 3:5
7. "The cold never bothered me anyway."
➤ Frozen
8. "Do to others as you would have them do to you."
➤ Luke 6:31
9. "You've got a friend in me."
➤ Song lyric – Toy Story
10. "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid."
➤ Joshua 1:9

"Jesus used Bible verses to fight against temptation. We can learn from the Bible to obey what God asks us to do just like Jesus. We can also use the Bible when we are tempted to do something wrong."

Going Deeper

- ***"What do you think it means that Jesus is our example?"***
(Let them share thoughts about what that looks like in real life.)
- ***"Why do you think Jesus obeyed God, even when it was really hard?"***
- ***"When are some times you feel tempted to do something you know is not right?"***
(Optional: Give a few relatable examples—lying, being mean, not sharing, etc.)
- ***"What can we do when we are tempted to do something wrong?"***
- ***"What did Jesus do when he was tempted?"***

- ***“How can the Bible help us when we have to make hard choices?”***
- ***“What is one way you can follow Jesus’ example this week at school or home?”***
- ***“Can anyone remember a Bible verse we talked about today that helps us follow God?”***
- ***“Who in your life helps you follow Jesus—who is a good example for you?”***

Ending Together

5-10 Minutes

“Baptism is something that Christians do to show they are part of God’s family. In every case, baptism is a special way we celebrate what God is doing in someone’s life.

When Jesus was baptized, he was showing his obedience to God. He did not need to be forgiven, because he had never sinned. But he still chose to be baptized to show he was following God’s plan. Jesus gives us the perfect example of obeying God and trusting him.

It is important to remember that baptism does not save us—only trusting in Jesus does that. Following Jesus is a choice each of us must make.

Baptism points to our new life with God and our place in his family. Whether we have been baptized already or are still learning what it means, we can all follow Jesus by obeying him and trusting his Word.”

Younger Kids

“When you feel like doing something you shouldn’t—like yelling at someone, lying, or not sharing—you can pause and ask, “How can I love others the way God wants me to?” Then you can pray and ask God to help you make a good choice.”

Example Scenarios:

- Your little brother breaks your toy and you want to yell—but Jesus teaches us to be kind and forgive.
- A friend tells you to sneak a treat before dinner—but Jesus obeyed God, and we can too.
- You feel scared to tell the truth—but Jesus used the Bible to help him stay strong. You can too!

Practice Together:

Have kids repeat: “I can follow Jesus, even when it is hard!”

Older Kids

“When you’re faced with peer pressure or temptation, remember how Jesus responded—with Scripture and obedience. We can prepare our hearts by reading God’s Word and asking for His help to follow the right path.”

Example Scenarios:

- Your friends are gossiping and you do not want to be left out—but you remember that God says to build others up.
- You are tempted to cheat on a test—but you know Jesus wants us to be honest.
- You feel like no one is watching so you can break the rules—but Jesus followed God even when no one else was looking.

Challenge:

“Pick one verse from today (like Joshua 1:9 or Proverbs 3:5) and memorize it. When you are tempted this week, remember what Jesus did—and use God’s Word to make the right choice.”

Response and Reflection

“What is one thing you learned about Jesus’ example today?”
“How will you apply it this week?”

Print out the memory verse.

Practice the memory verse for this unit (Matthew 5:16). Take a look at the [Memory Verse Game Ideas](#).

Close in Prayer

Pray with the students and dismiss them.

Games

25 Minutes

Game: Temptation Toss

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Soft balls or crumpled paper ("temptation" items)
- ☐ Tape to mark the centerline

How to Play:

- Divide the room into two teams.
- Use soft balls (or crumpled paper) as "temptations."
- Teams try to toss the "temptations" onto the other team's side.
- At the same time, players work together to clear temptations from their own side, representing how we fight temptation using God's Word.
- After a set time, the side with fewer temptations wins.

Connection to Lesson: Teaches that temptation comes at us from many sides, but we can resist and clear it out using Scripture and God's help—just like Jesus did.

Game: Yes to God, No to Sin (Jump or Sit)

Materials Needed:

- None

How to Play:

- Leader calls out choices (e.g., Help a friend / Lie to a friend).
- If the choice is obedience to God, kids jump up.
- If it's a temptation or sin, they sit down or stay still.
- Go faster to challenge them.

Connection to Lesson: Reinforces listening carefully and making fast, wise choices to obey God like Jesus did.

Game: Scripture Shield Tag

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Paper "shields" with simple Bible verses written on them

How to Play:

- Choose a few "Temptations" (taggers) and several "Scripture Shield Holders" (who hold a shield with a Bible verse printed on it).
- The "Temptations" try to tag other players.
- If a player gets tagged, they must freeze.
- A "Scripture Shield Holder" can unfreeze them by coming over and saying, "God's Word helps us say NO to sin!"
- Switch roles every few minutes.

Connection to Lesson: Reinforces how God's Word protects us when we face temptation, just like Jesus used Scripture.

Game: Follow the Leader — Wilderness Version

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Chairs
- ☐ Painters tape

How to Play:

- The leader leads the group through “wilderness” obstacles (crawl under chairs, walk on tape lines, pretend to walk through sand, etc.).
- Along the way, the leader throws in temptations (e.g., “Take the easy path!” “Eat the pretend bread!”) — kids must resist and stay on the leader’s path.
- Reflect afterward on how Jesus stayed focused and obedient in the wilderness.

Connection to Lesson:

- Helps kids picture staying on God’s path and not giving in to temptation, even when it’s hard or tiring.

Materials Needed:

- Chairs, tape lines, optional props for obstacles

Game: Obedience Freeze Dance

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Music player

How to Play:

- Play upbeat music and let kids dance.
- When the music stops, the leader calls out an obedience action (e.g., pray hands, bow to Jesus, pretend to read the Bible).
- Kids freeze in the pose.
- Play multiple rounds.

Connection to Lesson: Reinforces the joy of choosing to obey God and listening carefully for His instructions.