

# John Prepares People for Jesus' Coming

Luke 3:7-18



### Worship Theme:




Living right honors God.

### Weaving Faith Into Life:



Kids will worship God by committing to live right.

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<p><b>1</b> Let's Praise God! (up to 25 minutes)</p>	<p><b>Sing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Joy to the World!"</li> <li>• "He Is the Light"</li> <li>• "God With Us"</li> <li>• "Love the Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)</li> <li>• "The Golden Rule"</li> <li>• "Be Strong in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:10)</li> </ul>	<p><b>KidsOwn Worship Kit:</b> KidsOwn Worship DVD, Yo-Yo</p> <p><b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Video equipment, gift, gift box, trash, tissue paper</p> 

## Preschool

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<p><b>2</b> Let's Learn the Point! (up to 25 minutes)</p>	<p><b>Jesus Christ Is Coming to Town</b> Sing about living right to show love for Jesus.</p>	
	<p><b>* It's in the Bag</b> Use props to discover a way to live right.</p>	<p><b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Lunch bag, several copies of the handout at the end of this session, glue stick, scissors</p>
	<p><b>* Spotlight on Good Deeds</b> Play a game to talk about right actions that honor God.</p>	<p><b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Flashlight, music player, children's music</p>

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<b>2</b> Let's Learn the Point! (up to 25 minutes)	<b>* "Listen!"</b> Watch the video segment and talk about how not to miss out on Jesus.	<b>KidsOwn Worship Kit:</b> <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> <b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Video equipment
	<b>Room for God</b> Play a game to learn about making room for God in their lives.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Bibles, large box
	<b>Making Room for Jesus</b> Throw away what they don't want in their lives and add what they do want.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> 1 paper lunch bag, paper, index card, and pencil per child; Christmas tree

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<b>3</b> Let's Pray! (up to 10 minutes)	<b>The Offering</b> Learn how their offerings honor God.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Offering bowls
	<b>Prayer of Confession</b> Personalize and pray 1 John 1:9.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Paper, pencils, trash can
	<b>Praise the Lord!</b> Sing a song in celebration of Jesus.	<b>KidsOwn Worship Kit:</b> <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> <b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Video equipment

\* Starred activities can be used successfully with preschool and elementary children together. Customize your session to fit your needs. You can separate preschoolers and elementary children for Section 2. Or, if you keep the children all together for the entire worship session, we suggest you choose from the starred activities.

# *John Prepares People for Jesus' Coming*

*Luke 3:7-18*

We often hear of John the Baptist's mission: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him'" (Luke 3:4b-6). However, we don't often hear much about John's message.

From his name, most people understand that John baptized people. Crowds came to him to be baptized as a symbol of being cleansed of their former way of life and as a commitment to worship the true God of Israel. However, Luke 3:7-18 makes it clear that John didn't willingly baptize and bless everyone who came to him.

John's strong admonition in Luke 3:7 was directed at those whose requests to be baptized stemmed from a desire to satisfy outward appearances rather than a sincere intention to change their unfaithful ways. John was demanding changed lives as a visible sign that people had turned to God.

John pointed out that those who believed they had an advantage because they were descendants of Abraham were mistaken. Who their ancestors were was unimportant. What counted was repentance. John wanted people to truly repent and turn to God because he saw the judgment coming. God was about to get rid of the unfruitful trees. John knew that judgment was about to come to the Jews, and it did 40 years later when Jerusalem was destroyed.

It should be made clear that John's statements in Luke 3:10-14 are not requirements for salvation. They are examples of what John was suggesting—lives that are changed as a result of choosing to live for God.

Crowds of people thronged to hear John and be baptized; many accepted his cutting message; some even suggested that he himself might be the Messiah (Luke 3:15). In the face of such acclamation, John could easily have allowed himself to become a prideful leader. However, his statement in Luke 3:16 reveals his true character. He was fully aware of the greatness of the One who was yet to begin his ministry, One for whom he felt unworthy of performing the most humble task—untying his sandals.

## ***Devotion for Leaders***

As your relationship with Jesus grows, so will your desire to produce fruit to please him.

**Weaving Faith Into Your Life:** Read John 1:26-27. How did John respond to the people who believed he may be the Christ? How difficult is it for you to humbly point people to Jesus? Write down one way you can humbly share the love of Jesus with others.

## Why We Worship for Leaders

We worship a powerful God who is righteous and just. He rules over heaven and earth, yet he has time to be concerned with individuals. Based on his knowledge of the intricacies of our nature, and on the holiness of his nature, God has pointed out attitudes and behaviors he wants to see in us. These attitudes and behaviors are the same for all of us, even though they may look different for each of us. We stand in wonder that God's plans are so global—yet so personal. The God who set the earth in its orbit cares about how *I* act today. We try to live right to honor his great and caring plans for us and those around us.

### Easy Prep for Leaders

**Let's Praise God!**—Make sure your video equipment is ready. Stuff junk mail, newsprint, and other trash in a gift box. Have clean tissue paper and a gift that will fit in the box on hand.

**"Listen!"**—Watch "Listen!" at least once before the children arrive so you're familiar with it.

**Making Room for Jesus**—Prepare a lunch bag for each child by crumpling a piece of paper and putting the crumpled paper in the lunch bag.

**Preschool Activities**—Refer to the preschool pages for preparations.

## 1 Let's Praise God!

Play music videos from the *KidsOwn Worship DVD* as children arrive. Greet each child by name, and say, "Jesus is coming! Are you ready?" Have children tell other children how they are preparing for Jesus to come.

When you are ready to begin,

**Say** Hello, everyone! We are here to worship and honor God!

**Ask** • What does it mean to honor God? (To put God first; to obey him; to live the way God wants us to.)

**Say** Coming to church is one way to honor God—and you've all done that today—but we also honor him by living right all week long. Greet your neighbor with a handshake or a high five right now. Then tell your neighbor something you did this week that honored God.

**Ask** • Why would we want to live lives that honor God? (Because God has done so much for us; because the Bible tells us to.)

**Say** We serve an awesome God who created tall mountains and mighty rivers. God also created each of you and cares enough about you to count the hairs on your head. God sent his one and only Son to live in our world and to pay the price for our sins. And God's preparing a special home for each of you in heaven.

**Ask** • Why do you think God has done all this for you? (Because he loves us; because he said that he would in the Bible.)

### Worship Leader Tips

Treat today's subject matter carefully. Be sure children understand that, while living according to God's rules honors him, it won't save them from their sins. You may want to take the time today to carefully explain to children that our faith in Jesus will get us to heaven rather than our good deeds. We don't follow God's rules in order to earn his favor—we already have his unconditional love. As Christians, we live according to God's rules because Jesus has set us free from sin. And we live according to God's rules because we want to show him our love, our devotion, and our commitment. Thank you for leading children to know God's love.



**Say** ▶ You must really matter to God. God loves you and cares about what happens to each one of you. That gives me joy and makes me want to live in a way that shows that God matters to me! I want to show my love and gratitude to him. Let's stand and sing "Joy to the World!" to celebrate the gift of Jesus, our king.

▶ Sing "Joy to the World!"

**Ask** ▶ • **What do you think "Let every heart prepare him room" means?** (We need to make room for Jesus to come into our hearts; we need to let Jesus into our hearts.)

**Say** ▶ Let's think about getting ready for Jesus as we sing a song that tells the Christmas story and reminds us of our Christmas present from God. Let's sing about Christmas.

▶ Sing "He Is the Light."

▶ Sing "God With Us."

**Ask** ▶ • **How does it make you feel to think about Jesus leaving heaven and coming to earth to show his love?** (I feel special; I am thankful; I am happy that he did that for me.)

**Say** ▶ Jesus' coming to earth brought us joy, love, and light from the heart of God. It's good to think about and praise God for those gifts that Jesus brought to us.

Joy, love, and light are wonderful gifts that God gave when he sent his Son, Jesus. We talked earlier about the meaning of "prepare him room," but we didn't really talk about *how* to do that. Let's say I want to give a gift. Show the gift you brought, and tell who it's for. I have a box to put it in.

Show the box. Ask one of the children to help you by opening the box.

**Say** ▶ **What's all this?**

Name some of the things you've stuffed in the box while you pull them out and put them back in the box. Then try to put the gift inside the box. The lid shouldn't fit well with everything in the box. Ponder aloud how the person you're giving the gift to might feel about receiving all your trash along with the gift.

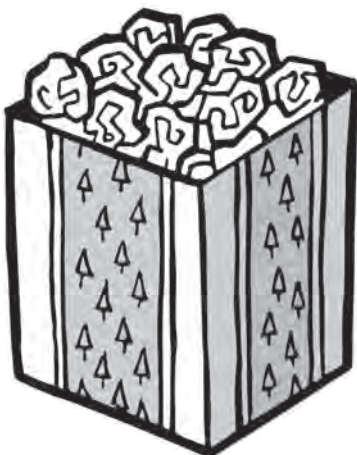
**Ask** ▶ • **What do you think I should do?** (Throw away the trash; take the trash out of the box; smash the trash down to make more room.)

Remove all the trash from the box, and line it with clean tissue paper.

**Say** ▶ **Now the box is prepared for the gift I have to give.** Place the gift in the box, cover it with the tissue, and put the lid on.

**Ask** ▶ • **How is the box like our hearts?** (Our hearts have a lot of trash in them; we need to make room in our hearts.)

• **How can our hearts be cleaned out?** (By praying and asking for forgiveness; by taking out all the things that shouldn't be in there.)



**Say** God wants our hearts to be clean so that he can fill us with the gift of his Son. After the sin is cleaned out of our lives, we can begin to live right. Living right is like lining the box with fresh tissue paper. It tells God we believe that he deserves more than our trash. As we sing our next song, think about how important Jesus is.

 Sing "Love the Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

**Say** I brought something fun to show you today. Hold up the Yo-Yo. This is my new Yo-Yo. I've never tried it, but the package says it can do all sorts of cool tricks. Isn't it a pretty color?

Describe the Yo-Yo, and explain that it can do Walk the Dog, Around the World, Rock the Cradle, Around the Corner, and other cool tricks.

**Say** A Yo-Yo like this can do incredible tricks. Let's test it.

Release the Yo-Yo so that it goes down and stays down. Frown. Roll it up and try again. Look perplexed.

**Say** This isn't a good Yo-Yo. It didn't do anything!

**Ask** • Why do you think my Yo-Yo didn't work? (Because you weren't using it right; because you need to read the directions; because you were just letting it fall.)

Let the children share their ideas.

**Say** Maybe it wasn't the Yo-Yo's fault. Maybe I just haven't learned how to use the Yo-Yo right.

Ask if anyone else would like to try the Yo-Yo. Let every interested child test the Yo-Yo.

**Say** I guess you've proven there's nothing wrong with this Yo-Yo. It's built perfectly to do what it's supposed to do. But the person using the Yo-Yo has to use it the right way to make it do great things. We're made to honor God. But if we don't live right—if we don't use our lives the way God made them to be used—God can't be honored.

One of the most important parts of living right is loving with the love of Jesus. God is honored when we act as Jesus acted. Let's sing the song "The Golden Rule."

 Sing "The Golden Rule."

## Leader Skillbuilder

Object lessons can be seen as mini-performances. Some, like the Yo-Yo activity, require rehearsal. Read the Yo-Yo segment carefully, and practice it two or three times. As you practice, try to anticipate and prepare for the children's responses. Watch for possible problems, and fix them before children's church. If the Yo-Yo works, you won't make your point.

**Say** ➤ **God promised to send his Son to save his people from their sins. That promise is for us, too. Jesus came to give us clean hearts, to fill us with good gifts, and to give us life by the Holy Spirit.**

▶ Sing "Be Strong in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:10).

**Pray** ➤ **Lord, we thank you for coming. We welcome you to our lives. Thank you for your Spirit giving us life. Help us live right and honor you in everything we do. In Jesus' name, amen.**

## 2 Let's Learn the Point!

### Preschool Activities, pages 41-42

At this time, have the preschool leader invite the preschoolers to go to their own room for this section of activities. Tear out the Preschool Activities page, and give it to the preschool leader. Have the preschool leader bring the preschoolers back to participate in Let's Pray! with the older children. If you prefer to keep all the children together, do the starred (\*) activities. They will work well with both elementary and preschool children.

### Elementary Activities

#### \* "Listen!"

▶ Show the "Listen!" video. The video is about a Bible-times boy who misses out on an important message. Distracted by his cell phone and iScroll, he doesn't hear several people tell him about the coming Savior.

When the video is over, ask the following questions:

- Ask** ➤
- **What message is so important that it would make John so sad to watch the boy walk away?** (It was about Jesus; God wants everyone to know about Jesus.)
  - **Has anything like this ever happened to you?** (No, I always listen; yes, one time I got lost because I didn't listen.)
  - **Why do you think some people choose not to listen when there's something important to hear?** (They're caught up in their own world; they don't realize how important the message is.)

**Say** ➤ **Let's suppose that we're in a situation similar to the one we saw on the video. Let's suppose that Jesus is coming—and we're the only ones who know it. The rest of the world is busy going about its business. We want to make sure people don't miss out on seeing Jesus. Find a partner, and come up with a plan to spread the news about Jesus. Think about how you're going to persuade people to pay attention to your message. Think about how you're going to get people to get ready for Jesus.**

Give the children two minutes to come up with a plan. Then have each pair find another pair to make a foursome. Have kids in each pair explain their plan to the other pair in the foursome.

**Ask**

• **Why is it so important that people realize who Jesus is?**

(Because they need him to get to heaven; because they need to see that he is the Savior; because they need him to forgive their sins.)

• **How do you think John the Baptist felt when he was spreading the word about who Jesus is?** (He was excited to talk about Jesus; he was scared people wouldn't listen.)

• **How do you think he felt about people who listened to his message?** (He cared about them; he hoped that they would follow Jesus.)

• **How do you think he felt when some people didn't pay any attention to his message?** (He was sad; he was angry; he felt like he didn't do a good job.)

**Say**

I'm sure the boy in the video wished he hadn't missed out on what people were saying. I know for sure that people who miss out on Jesus will be terribly disappointed when they realize how great Jesus is. John the Baptist had a very important message to tell. He wanted people to know that Jesus was the best thing that had ever happened. And he had a specific plan to help people get ready for Jesus so they wouldn't miss out on him. Let's learn more about John the Baptist's plan.

## Room for God

Gather the children around the large box.

**Say**

Let's see if there's room for all of you in this box.

Let the children try to squeeze into the box.

**Say**

You tried really hard to fit everyone in the box, but there just wasn't room for all of you.

**Ask**

• **How do you feel now that you realize you can't all fit?** (I felt frustrated; I felt left out.)

• **How did you feel if you were left out of the box?** (I was sad; I wanted to get in the box.)

**Ask**

• **Can you think of anything else you might do to fit everyone in?** (We could break the box open; we could squeeze even tighter.)

If there were observers for this activity, let them tell what they saw and offer any suggestions that might have occurred to them. Let kids try their ideas. Then have kids sit down together.

### Worship Leader Tip

Some of the children may prefer to sit out "Room for God." They may be claustrophobic, shy, or even too dressed up. Let those who prefer to sit out serve as observers. Have them record and share their observations with the rest of the class.





**Say** John the Baptist told people what they needed to do to get ready for Jesus. John told the people that their lives were kind of like our box as we tried to get everyone in it. John said their lives were crowded with sinful, selfish things. He told people to show that they were really sorry for their sins and to start doing the right thing. Let's explore what John told the people.

Have children form small groups, and have each group look up Luke 3:3-16. Have the groups read the passage and answer the following questions.

- Ask**
- **What was John the Baptist's job? Look at verses 3-4.** (John was supposed to prepare the way for Jesus; John was supposed to make the paths straight for Jesus.)
  - **What did John tell the people to do to get ready for Jesus? Look at verses 10-14.** (He told them to share; he told them not to collect more money than they were supposed to; he told them to be kind to each other.)
  - **Why do you think John gave them the instructions he did? Look at verses 15-16.** (He wanted to show them that he was not Jesus; he wanted them to know that they had to do more than just be baptized to follow Jesus.)
  - **How will following John's instructions help these people get ready for Jesus?** (They will learn how to be kind to others; they will learn what they need to do to follow Jesus.)

Have the groups report their findings.

**Say** John said that, to get ready for Jesus, we need to be sorry for our sins and honor God by living right. John wanted the people to uncrowd their lives by getting rid of things or not doing things that were wrong or that took their focus from God. Now let's look at how we can prepare for Jesus.

## *Making Room for Jesus*

**Say** John the Baptist told people to stop doing wrong things and to start doing good things. He wanted people to see that doing only what they wanted to do takes up all the space in their hearts—it doesn't leave any room for Jesus.

Let's pretend that Jesus is coming and that we're getting ready for him, just as the people in the Bible were doing. Think about what things you'd like to take out of your life to make room for Jesus. Also think about the things you'd like to add to your life to show that you're living for Jesus.

Hand out the paper lunch bags you prepared before worship. Also hand out pencils and index cards. Have the children take the crumpled paper out of the paper bag, smooth it, and list on it the things they'd like to take out of their lives. Have the children list on the index cards the things they'd like to add to their lives. Have them put the index cards inside the paper bags and put the bags under the Christmas tree.

# John Prepares People for Jesus' Coming

Luke 3:7-18

## Worship Theme:



Living right honors God.

## Easy Prep for Leaders

**It's in the Bag**—Prepare one set of bags for every three children. In each set, one bag should contain three bears cut from the handout at the end of this session, one bag should contain three coats cut from the same handout, and one bag should contain a glue stick.

## Using Theo

Consider using Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet today in these ways:

- Have Theo lead the preschoolers from the main worship area to the preschool room.
- Have Theo lead the song, "Jesus Christ Is Coming to Town."
- See the KidsOwn Worship Kit for a puppet skit written for today's worship session.



## Jesus Christ Is Coming to Town

Gather the children in a circle.

**Say** Raise your hand if you know the song "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town." Pause.

That song teaches us we need to be good so we'll get a lot of presents.

**Ask** • Do you think getting presents is a reason to be good? Why or why not?

• Are there better reasons to be good?

**Say** We try to be good because we love Jesus and want to honor God. Today we're going to sing that song in a way that will honor God. We'll call the song "Jesus Christ Is Coming to Town" because it will soon be Christmas.

Sing this song one line at a time, and have the children repeat each line after you.

## Jesus Christ Is Coming to Town

Oh, prepare your hearts well.

Live for Jesus and pray.

Obey your parents

Every day.

Jesus Christ is coming to town.

Oh, prepare your hearts well.

Live for Jesus and pray.

Obey your parents

Every day.

Jesus Christ is coming to town.

He watches while you're sleeping.

He sees you when you sing.

He loves and wants to be your friend,

And we honor him as King!

(Repeat chorus.)

(Place your hands over your heart.)

(Shade your eyes with one hand, and then fold your hands for prayer.)

(Point your right index finger twice.)

(Open your arms wide.)

(Point up.)

(Place your hands over your heart.)

(Shade your eyes with one hand, and then fold your hands for prayer.)

(Point your right index finger twice.)

(Open your arms wide.)

(Point up.)

(Shade your eyes; then rest your head on your hands as if on a pillow.)

(Sing "la-la.")

(Hug yourself.)

(Point up, and then point your right index finger twice.)

## Jesus Christ Is Coming to Town (continued)

**Say** The Bible tells us about a man who was sent by God to help people get ready for Jesus. His name was John the Baptist. He told people that they should live right to show they were sorry for the bad things they'd done. If John had been talking to children like you, he might have said something like this:

Repeat the song, along with the motions.

**Ask** • Why do you think John told people to live right?

**Say** Living right honors God.

**Ask** • How can we live to honor God?

**Say** God is so pleased when we love, obey, and live right. That's how we prepare our hearts for Jesus. Let's sing our new song together once more. Sing the song one more time.

### \* It's in the Bag

Help the children form groups of three and find places to sit in their groups. Give each child in the group a bag, but ask children not to open the bags.

**Say** These paper bags will help us learn a lesson about living right. Follow my directions. I want each of you to put a coat on a teddy bear by using what's in your bag. Now open your own bag, and look at what's inside. Don't tell your friends what it is.

**Ask** • Can you use what's in your bag to put a coat on a teddy bear?

**Say** Hmm. It seems that you each have a problem. Tell the others in your group what your problem is. Walk around and help any children who are having difficulty expressing themselves to their partners.

**Ask** • Can any of your groups come up with a way to fix the problems you are all having?

**Say** The idea you came up with is the same one that John the Baptist taught people. He told them to share. He said that sharing was part of living right. You can share right now so that

each of you can have a teddy bear wearing a coat. If you have bears, give one to everyone in your group including yourself. If you have coats, give a coat to everyone. If you have the glue stick, share it in your group. As you share, say "I share to honor God." Let the children complete the task on their own. Walk around to give individual instruction to any group having difficulty. When everyone is finished, collect the bears, and gather the children in a circle.

I saw lots of things in your group that honor God. I saw sharing, cooperating, kindness, and helpfulness. You are learning to live right, and that honors God.

### Preschool Leader Tip

Have crayons or markers ready to give to groups who finish the task quickly. Suggest that they decorate the bears' coats.

### \* Spotlight on Good Deeds

Have the children stand in a circle. Choose one child to stand in the middle of the circle, and give that child a flashlight.

**Say** We're going to play a game to learn more about living right to honor God. I'm going to turn out the lights and play some music. While the music is playing, [name of child in the middle] will walk around the circle and shine the flashlight on different children's feet. When the music stops, our friend will stop moving the light. Whoever's feet are in the light will tell something we can do to show our love for God and then take a turn in the middle.

Dim the lights, leaving a door or window open a bit so the room will be just dark enough to make the light from the flashlight visible. Play children's music, and stop the music whenever you wish. Play several times.

Have children stay in a circle and hold hands.

**Say** You came up with some great ideas! When we do those things, we are living right, and living right honors our (lead the children in bending down so that your hands almost touch the floor) **great** (hold your hands out in front of your knees), **mighty** (continue, lifting your hands to waist level), **holy** (raise your hands to shoulder level), **loving** (raise your hands above your head, and wave them), **God! Let's shake our arms to praise him together!**

(continued from page 40)

**Say** John wanted the people to pay attention to the things they did. He wanted them to make good choices about their actions. John knew that when the people started living right, they'd be ready to welcome Jesus. And John knew that right living would please and honor God.

**Pray** God, we know that it's important to get ready for Jesus. We want to get ready for Jesus by living our lives in a way that's pleasing to you. Please help us live for you every day. Amen.

## 3 Let's Pray!

### The Offering

**Say** Giving an offering is like giving an extra shirt to someone who doesn't have one. It's being so happy with what we have that we are willing to share with others. Maybe you didn't bring money today, but you'd still like to honor God with generosity. While we take the offering, tell God about a way that you will live "rightly," a way you can be more generous, or a way you can be fairer.

**Pray** Lord, we honor you today. We give offerings because it's the right thing to do. We want to show you are our God by doing the right thing. We want to live right to honor you. In Jesus' name, amen. Take the offering.

### Prayer of Confession

Give each child a slip of paper and a pencil.

**Say** Anything that keeps us from living right is sin. But I have good news from 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." That means if we tell God about the wrong things we do, he will forgive us and help us to live right.

Let's make that verse really personal for each of us. Let's substitute a blank as we read it. We'll say, "If I confess *blank*...he is faithful and just and will forgive *blank*...and purify me from all unrighteousness."

Now on your paper, write or draw a picture of whatever you filled in the blank with in your mind. No one is going to look. Only God will know what you write. When you finish, crumple your paper into a little ball.

Give the children time to do this.

**Say** I have a trash can up here. After you've asked God to forgive you, come put your paper in the trash.

Let the children do this and return to their seats.



**Say** ▶ Let's use 1 John 1:9 as a prayer.

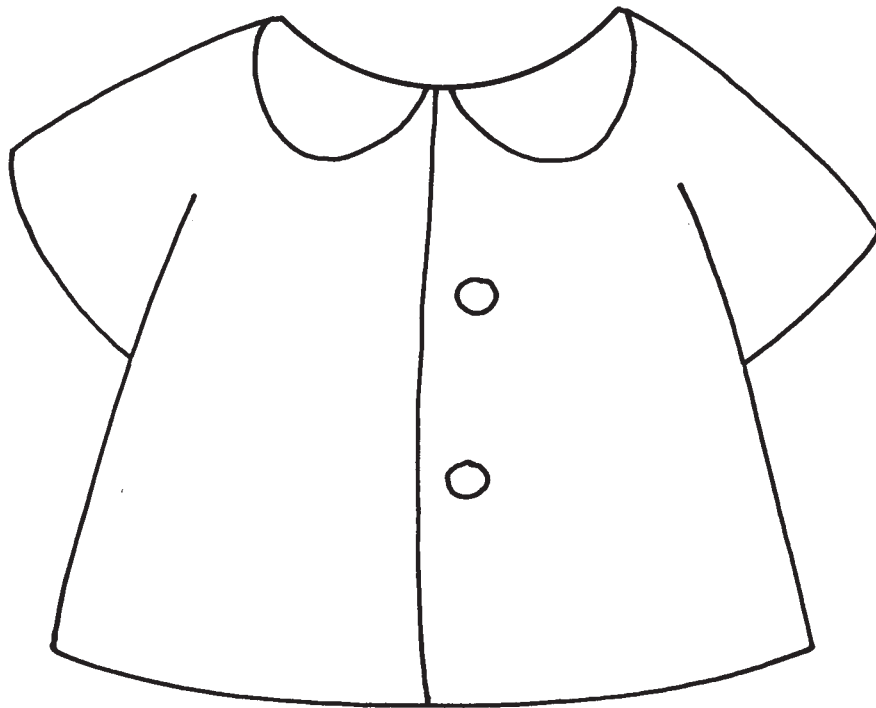
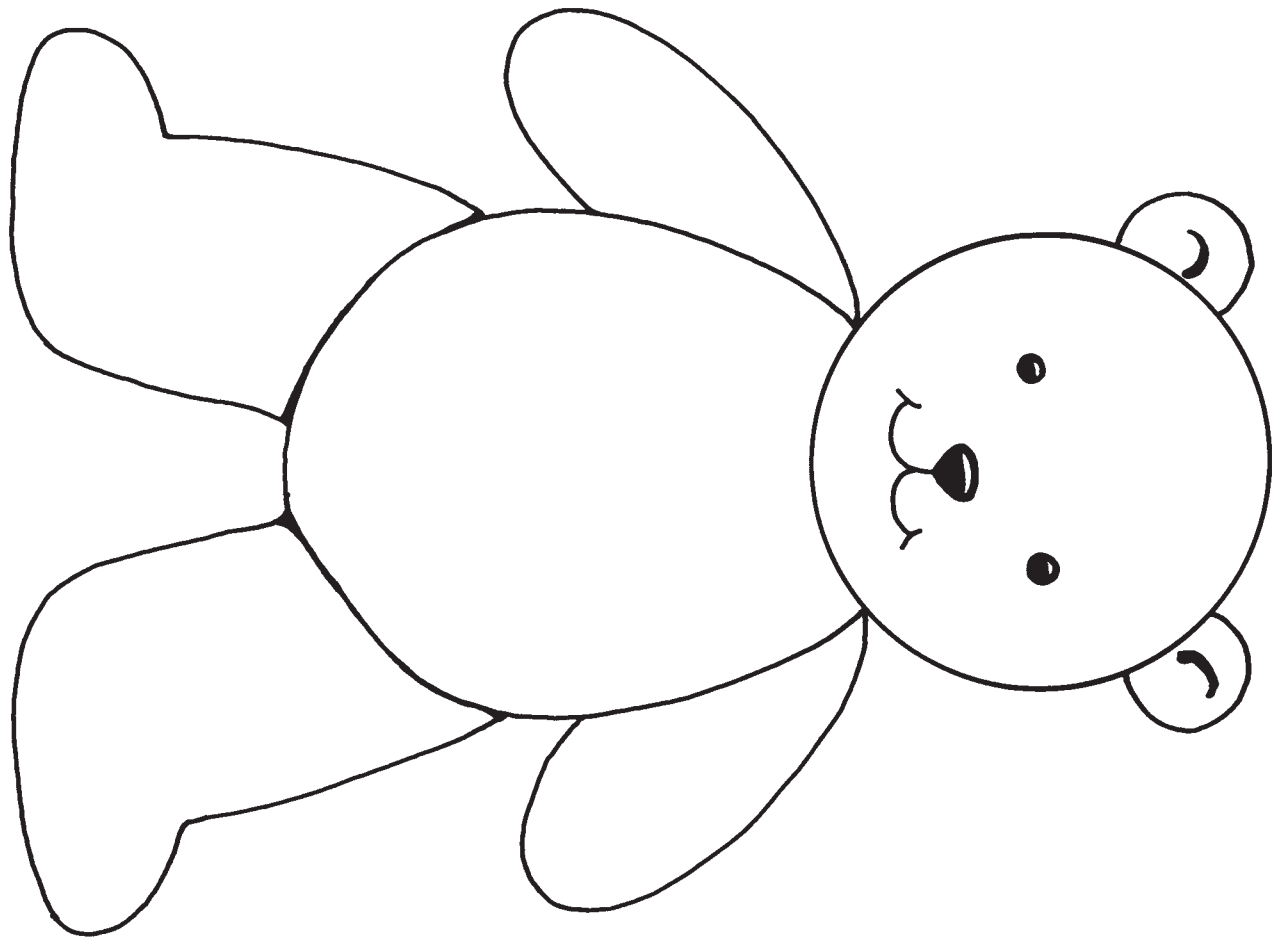
Have the children repeat the following after you, a phrase at a time.

**Pray** ▶ Lord, we confess our sins. You are faithful and just. You will forgive our sins. You purify us. May we live right and honor you. In Jesus' name, amen.

### *Praise the Lord!*

**Say** ▶ Let's celebrate! This song will be a prayer of praise and commitment to live right and honor God.

 Sing "Praise Him."



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