

The LORD is good to everyone and everything; God's compassion extends to all his handiwork! (Psalm 145:9)

Jesus' Baptism – Matthew 3:13-17

Prepare to Wonder

When we read or hear this story, we often turn our focus on Jesus. While Jesus is an important part of the story, we overlook the crowd. Before Jesus arrived on the scene, a large crowd was being baptized. We might wonder who was in the crowd.

Jesus did not begin as the example in this story; the people did. When Jesus chose to be baptized, he showed that his ministry would be different. He demonstrated his humanity and connectedness to God's people. Jesus was like the people, and Jesus is also like you.

God spoke to Jesus during his baptism and showed a deep sense of joy and happiness in Jesus. God finds happiness in each of us too. The voice from heaven was a voice for all. We all are examples of Jesus' message and ministry. Each of us plays an important role. We are like the crowd. Each one is called to be named and claimed by God so that we can spread the joy and happiness we find in God through Jesus.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

What role do you play in your relationships? Are you the leader, the listener, the comic relief? We all have roles we play, and in these roles, we have gifts. Baptism is a way God claims us, names us, and honors our gifts.

This week place some water in a bowl. Gently touch your fingers to the water, and then let the water slowly drip off. As you feel the water leave your skin, say this prayer:

"With every drop of water, I remember your love. With the gifts I have been given, I will share your love. With your happiness, I will be an example of love. Amen."

Welcome to Wonder

Supplies: CEB Bible, Annual Music CD or song download, optional: Digital Class Pack

- Gather together near your Wonder Table.

SAY: Today's faith word is *include*.

- Show the children the "Include" poster (Digital Class Pack).

SAY: When we include, we welcome all of God's children in God's love.

SING together

- Use your Annual Music CD or download the song, "Welcome" (<https://www.cokesbury.com/Celebrate-Wonder-Annual-Music>).
- Play the song, "Welcome." Sing and celebrate.

Wonder with Me

Supplies: CEB Bible, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, optional: Wonder Cube (Digital Class Pack)

READ the Bible Story

- Read the Bible story, Matthew 3:13-17.
- Roll the Wonder Cube. Take time to answer a few of the questions.

WATCH the Bible Story

- Visit <https://www.cokesbury.com/Celebrate-Wonder-Video> to download and watch today's Bible story, or watch on www.amplifymedia.com.

WONDER together

- How do you imagine John the Baptist's face looked when Jesus asked him to baptize him? (*Let the children make faces.*)
- Have you ever seen a dove in real life? If so, what did it look like?
- What do you imagine God's voice sounds like? (*Let the children demonstrate voices.*)

CONTINUE to Wonder

- Why do you think Jesus was baptized?
- Why did Jesus choose John to baptize him?

PRAY together

- Dear God, help me to show your love and to include everyone. Amen.

Experience Wonder—Who Was There? (Art)

Supplies: canvas, thick paper, or cardboard square; magazines; glue; markers

WONDER: Who do you think gathered at Jesus' baptism? What did they look like? What were their names? Have you been baptized? Who was there? If you have not been baptized, who would you like to be there?

- Have the children create a collage of Jesus' baptism or their own baptism.
- Encourage the children to include all the people who were a part of this special ritual.

Spiritual Practice—Exploring Inclusion Through Community

Supplies: bowl of water, towels

- Gather the children in a circle.

SAY: Water is a symbol of baptism. Whether we have been baptized or not, we all are connected through baptism. Baptism is not something we do alone. We are baptized in community.

WONDER: Why do you think we use water during baptism?

- Pass the bowl of water around the circle. For each child, have the child dip her or his fingers in the water, and then say the following blessing for that child.

SAY: (*Child's name*), you are a child of God. I find happiness in you.

- Encourage the children and their families to use the Celebration Chart (Digital Class Pack) and to read together the *Winter 2020–21 Celebrate Wonder Family Activity Book* (if purchased) at home this week.