John the Baptist
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John the Baptist came and began preaching in the desert area of Judea.

John said, “Change your hearts and lives because the kingdom of heaven is coming soon.”

Matthew 3:1-2 International Children’s Bible (ICB)
REPENT
“I baptize you with water to show that your hearts and lives have changed. But there is one coming later who is greater than I am. I am not good enough to carry his sandals.”

Matthew 3:11a International Children’s Bible (ICB)

2. 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.

3. 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.

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

5. 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.

6. When John talked about soft hearts there was one word he used to say a lot. That word was “RECENT”. John told all the people they needed to 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 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.
7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Then John told the people who were listening that they needed to be baptised 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 baptised when John preached. That is why he is called “John the Baptist”.

11. 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.
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