

Family Worship Guide – Week 1

MEMORIZE

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2

READ

This week's memory verse comes from John the Baptist just as he began his ministry of preparing "the way of the Lord." John heralded the coming of King Jesus and thus the arrival of the kingdom of heaven. He called everyone, the religious and the pagan alike, to repent. True repentance, according to John, meant turning from or abandoning one's sins and past ways of doing things and turning to or embracing a new way of living, specifically, as subjects to King Jesus. This type of repentance literally means to "change one's mind." When a person repents, they are changed by the transforming work of God in their lives through Jesus, his Son.

Questions:

- What exactly is repentance?
- Why is repentance important in the kingdom of heaven?
- How have you repented before?
- What things do you need to repent of now?

Bottom Line: Repentance means turning from sin and starting again, with Christ as King over our lives.

SING

As we continue in worship we will sing 'Lead me to the Cross.' As we sing these words, "Lead me to the cross where Your love poured out. Bring me to my knees Lord I lay me down. Rid me of myself, I belong to You. Lead me, lead me to the cross," we recognize that it is Christ who draws us to himself and empowers us to turn from sin, and it is Christ who cleanses us. We rejoice knowing that through the blood of Christ we are made new!

SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions were created by the age-group ministry leaders as a way to help parents better communicate the biblical truths discussed in the Family Worship Guide. These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions, and any other means necessary, to help their children discover the truths of God's word and worship Him together.

Preschool

- Before you begin open your Bible to Matthew 3 and gather a bowl of water, pepper and small amount of dish soap.
- Read Matthew 3:2 with your preschooler.
- Now, sprinkle the pepper in the bowl of water. Tell your child that they are the pepper and to watch what happens when we drop in a small amount of dish soap in the bowl. The dish soap is like the sin or bad choices we make. We should be like the pepper and run away from sin. We should repent.
- To repent means to be truly sorry for your sin and not wanting to sin or make bad choices and asking Jesus to help you with your sin. It means hating sin and wanting to obey Jesus.
- Just like John told us in the verse we read, we should repent of our sins. Sin keeps us away from God. God wants people to repent so they can come to him. If you are truly sorry for your sin, God will know. God is faithful and he will forgive you.
- Let's pray ask God to help us repent when we sin.

Children

- Begin by reading Matthew 3:1-6. This week will focus on John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, and his preaching about the coming kingdom of heaven. John is probably one of the most interesting characters in the New Testament, although there is not a lot of information about him. How is John "interesting" or "different"?
- If you are familiar with the Christmas story (Luke 1), you may remember that John is a cousin of Jesus, and John was born to the priest Zecharias and his wife Elizabeth in their old age (just a few months before Jesus). So John was from the line of priests, but he is not one. Instead, John has lived in the desert and has now begun to preach and baptize people in the

Jordan River who are coming and confessing their sins.

- John has a simple message. Read Matthew 3:2 again. What is John’s message? “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- Does this seem like a strange message? Why doesn’t he tell people to obey the 10 Commandments? Why doesn’t John tell people to worship and love God with all their hearts? Why doesn’t he just tell people that Jesus is the Messiah? (People aren’t able to obey on their own, and they won’t believe Jesus is the Messiah – don’t go into this unless you have an older, advanced child.)
- Let’s take a closer look at that verse, Matthew 3:2. What does “repent” mean? Most adults have heard it explained that it means if you are going in one direction, then you stop and turn around, and go in the opposite direction. So if you are walking into a room, you would turn around and walk out of the room. Why don’t you try it! See if you can “repent”.
- Well, John the Baptist obviously wasn’t telling people to turn around and walk out of the room. He was in the wilderness by a river, so there probably weren’t any rooms around. So what else does it mean? The word “repent” does mean to “turn around and go in the opposite direction”, but it also literally means to “change one’s mind”.
- So why did people need to “change their minds” because the “kingdom of heaven” was at hand? We’ll come back to this in a minute. First, let’s talk about the “kingdom” part of the verse.
- When Jesus was born, the angels, the wise men, etc. all referred to him as a “King”! And to be a King, every King must have a Kingdom. But Jesus was born to poor parents in a lowly manger, so he didn’t look like a king a first. But God had told John the Baptist to preach that the kingdom of heaven was coming. This was the Kingdom of Christ Jesus. Jesus came to make available the Kingdom of Heaven to the people on Earth through his death and resurrection. Jesus would die on the cross for our sins so that we could have a right relationship with God the Father. So Jesus, the King, was bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to men. What an amazing thought!
- Now that we understand that the King was coming, John’s job was to “prepare the way of the Lord.” John was literally to prepare the hearts of people for Jesus. So John was telling people to “change their minds” about all the old things they believed, because the Promised Messiah was coming soon.
- Have you ever changed your mind about something? Perhaps your favorite color, cereal, animal, or even toy. Maybe you decided you liked a different friend better, so you changed your mind about your best friend. You might recently even have changed your mind about what you wanted for Christmas last month. Is that what John is talking about? Did the people need to pick something new or different that they would like for a while until they changed their minds again?
- This is NOT what “repent” means! It means to change your mind, but in a way where God, through the Holy Spirit, helps you turn from sins and wrong actions that you have been doing and turn to Christ, our King Jesus, and serve him out of a pure love that no longer desires to continue in past habits and thoughts. As you truly repent, you are transformed “from the inside out” and are able to obey Christ.
- Think of it like this. Repentance (or truly changing your mind and actions) should be more like changing from one size of clothes to another than from switching from one favorite toy to another. As you grow, your clothes become too small, and you can’t wear them any longer. So what usually happens? You donate your old clothes and get new ones. Do you still keep all the small clothes anyway? No, they no longer fit you. You have changed and grown.
- In the same way, when you have repented from your sins, you don’t keep going back to them. You should have “outgrown” them. You need new habits that will help you not turn back toward old ways. You should also pray with your parents and read your Bible. You will still sin some of the time, but hopefully you will see that the Holy Spirit is helping you not want those “old clothes” (sins) anymore. They should feel uncomfortable and hurt your heart when you do them. But always remember that God’s grace is sufficient to cover all of our sins, even if we blow it sometimes!
- Lastly, talk about any sins that you need to confess and repent of. Pray together, asking for God’s forgiveness and thanking him for his grace and mercy, as well as the work of the Holy Spirit that transforms us into the image of our King and Savior, Christ Jesus.

Students

- **Preparation:** A few days before this week’s time of Family Worship, encourage your family to begin memorizing Matthew 3:2.
 - Find a creative way to encourage your family to memorize Matthew 3:2.
 - 1. Have everyone create fun index cards with Matthew 3:2.
 - 2. Allow everyone to write the verse on their bathroom mirror with a dry-erase marker (it comes right off with Windex).
 - Encourage your family to meditate on different parts of the verse everyday.
- **Repent**
 - What does it mean to repent?
 - What is the inward action of repentance?

- What is the outward result of repentance?
- Why should we repent?
- **The kingdom of heaven**
 - What is the kingdom of heaven?
 - The ESV study notes say: “The kingdom of heaven has come near to people in the person of Jesus (the Messiah), who was soon to be revealed as the ‘beloved Son’ of the Father, and who himself was soon to begin proclaiming that message of repentance, because ‘the kingdom of heaven is at hand’.”
 - When does/did the kingdom of heaven begin?
 - How do we become part of the kingdom of heaven?
 - What does repentance have to do with the kingdom of heaven?
- **Is at hand**
 - What does this phrase mean?
 - Why is it important in light of the command to repent and the promise of the kingdom of heaven?
- **In closing**
 - Spend time in personal reflection.
 - Is repentance a normal part of your life?
 - Pray for one another.

