

LESSON 7

JOHN THE BAPTIST

BEFORE YOU TEACH

John the Baptist

John's name means "Yahweh [God] is gracious." John the Baptist was a bold prophet who prepared the way for Christ's ministry by preaching repentance. The birth and ministry of John the Baptist were announced to John's father Zechariah by an angel (Lk 1:13).

In his adult years John lived a solitary life in the desert, where he dressed in a simple tunic of camel hair and survived on locusts and honey (Mt 3:4). John the Baptist followed the footsteps of past prophets when he preached, warning the Jews to repent (Mt 3:1-12, Lk 3:1-20). He adhered strictly to the ethical views of the Old Testament laws (Lk 3:10-14).

John the Baptist was an admirable example of humility and submissiveness towards God. He understood his place in preparing the way for Jesus, confirming Jesus' status as the Christ to his own followers (Jn 3:26-36).

Priests and Service in the Temple

A Jewish priest was a minister of God who worked in the temple, managing its upkeep, teaching the people the Scriptures, and directing the worship services. During this period of time, there were about 20,000 priests throughout the country—far too many to minister at one time.

Therefore, according to King David's directions, the priests were divided into twenty-four separate groups of about 1,000 each (1 Chr 24:3-19).

Each morning, lots were cast to decide which priest was to enter the Holy Place inside the temple to burn incense. Incense was burned in the temple twice a day. When the people saw the smoke from the burning incense, they prayed. Smoke drifting heavenward symbolized their prayers ascending to God's throne.

Zechariah was a member of the Abijah division. On the day that the angel came to announce the birth of John the Baptist, the lot fell to Zechariah.

BIBLE TEXT

Luke 1:1-25, 57-80; Matthew 3:1-10;
Mark 1:1-8

BIBLE TRUTHS

1. John the Baptist was a righteous worker who lived a holy life.
2. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord.
3. Jesus wants us to be His disciples and bear good fruit by doing good works for Him.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To learn to repent before God.
2. To remain in the Lord Jesus and do good works for Him.
3. To bear good fruit by doing good works.
4. To learn the correct way of water baptism.

MEMORY VERSE

"That you bear much fruit;
so you will be My disciples."

(John 15:8b)

PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Lord, we praise You for Your wonderful love and mercy. Thank You for protecting us throughout this past week. Please help us live out Your word by bearing good fruit through our good actions in the next week. We pray that You will be glorified by our actions, and that our friends and family around us will know that You are our God. Hallelujah! Amen.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

Today's lesson will explain the importance of bearing good fruit for God. The students have been taught the importance of having faith in Jesus Christ, but they can now learn how to apply their faith by bearing good fruit.

Bearing good fruit means doing good works for the Lord Jesus. Jesus once said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

Jesus taught His disciples that in order to bear good fruit, they must remain in Him. To remain in Him means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so that the Holy Spirit can help us do good and be more like Jesus. Students will learn that after they believe and are baptized in Christ, the next important step is to follow in His footsteps by bearing the good fruit of good works.

What does bearing good fruit look like? That is, what

are some good works we can do for Christ? Here are some examples from the Bible of how to bear good fruit:

- Praise Jesus' name (Heb 13:15), by singing hymns or saying "thank God" when we are blessed
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can show more love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23)

In this lesson, students will understand that good fruit must be shown through their actions. Students will learn practical ways to bear good fruit every day. They will also learn that bearing good fruit honors God and shows that they are true followers of Jesus Christ.

VOCABULARY

incense: a perfume that smells good when it is burned

vision: a dream you have either when you are awake or when you are asleep

prophet: a messenger who speaks for God

locust: a type of insect that looks like a grasshopper

preach: to tell people the good news about Jesus Christ as our way to salvation

repent: to be sorry for our wrongdoings and to resolve not to do them again

REVIEW

In the past few lessons, we learned about the Israelites and their leaders, some of whom were judges. Raise your hand if you can name some of the judges who led the Israelites? (Deborah, Gideon, Samson) These judges tried to save the Israelites.

Even though God came to their rescue by sending judges, the Israelites continued to return to their sins, so God continued to give them over to their enemies. In the next few lessons, we will learn about someone who came to the world to save not only the Israelites, but everyone else in the world. Can you guess who He is? This new leader is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Today, we will learn about a prophet of God who came before Jesus. A prophet is a messenger God sends to the people with an important message. The prophet we'll learn about today spent his life telling people about Jesus' coming. His name is John the Baptist.

BIBLE STORY

Zechariah and Elizabeth

During the time of King Herod, there was a priest named Zechariah who had a wife named Elizabeth. Both of them were descendants of Aaron. Does anybody remember who Aaron was and what he did? Aaron was Moses' brother. Aaron and his descendants were chosen to be God's priests.

Zechariah and Elizabeth did what was right before God and they obeyed all of the Lord's commandments. They were both quite old now, and they had not been able to

have any children.

An Angel Tells of John's Birth

During that time, there were so many priests that they had to be split into different groups and take turns serving in the temple. One day, when it came time for Zechariah's group to serve in the temple, the lot fell on Zechariah to go into the temple to burn incense. Incense is a perfume that smells good and it is burned as a sacrifice to God.

When Zechariah went into the Holy Place to burn incense,

the other priests in his group remained outside and prayed. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah and stood at the right side of the incense altar. Can you imagine how Zechariah must have felt when he saw an angel of the Lord appear out of nowhere?

When Zechariah saw the angel, he was surprised and afraid. The angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will have a son, and you are to name him John. He will give you much joy, and many will be happy when he is born. He will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to drink any wine, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit since the time of his birth. He will bring back many people to the Lord, and he will prepare them for the Lord."

What a great promise the angel gave to Zechariah! Even though he and his wife were very old, they would have a son because God promised that it would happen. Nothing is impossible for God! And this son was very special, because even before he was born, he was set aside to do God's work.

Zechariah Cannot Speak

If you were Zechariah, would you have believed what the angel said? Most people probably wouldn't. Zechariah was a bit dumbfounded, too. He asked the angel, "But how can I be sure of this? My wife and I are both quite old."

The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand before God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now because you did not believe what I said, you will be unable to speak until it happens."

The priests outside were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he was taking so long. When Zechariah came out, he could not speak to them. They then understood that he had seen a vision in the temple. A vision is like a dream that can happen even when we are awake. Because he couldn't speak anymore, Zechariah kept making signs to them to tell them what happened.

Elizabeth Gives Birth to a Son

When the time for Zechariah's group to serve was over, he returned home. Shortly after, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She said, "The Lord has made this possible. He has taken away my shame of not having a child."

When Elizabeth gave birth to a son, her neighbors and relatives heard what the Lord had done and they were happy for her. Her baby boy showed that God fulfills His promises, and that nothing is impossible for Him.

Naming the Child

When the boy was eight days old, they were going to name him after his father Zechariah. But Elizabeth spoke up and said, "No, he is to be called John."

They replied to her, "But no one in your family has that name."

Then they made signs to Zechariah to ask him what he would like to name the child. Zechariah asked for

something to write on, and to everyone's surprise, he wrote, "He will be called John," just as the angel had instructed him.

Zechariah Tells About John's Future

Immediately, Zechariah's mouth was opened and he was able to speak and praise God. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and said:

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has come to save His people. He has raised someone through the family of David to rescue us from the hand of our enemies. As for you, my child, you will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way for Him."

The neighbors were all amazed, and throughout the land people talked about what had happened. Everyone who heard about this wondered, "What is this child going to become?" They understood that the Lord was with this boy.

John Grows Up

John the Baptist grew and became strong in spirit. He lived a simple life in the desert. All he wore was clothing made of camel hair and a leather belt. Can you guess what he found to eat in the middle of the desert? He ate honey and locusts, which are insects that look like grasshoppers. (Teachers: Locusts are still commonly eaten in Arabia. Eaten either raw or roasted, they are quite nutritious and a source of many vitamins. While most insects were considered unclean under Mosaic Law (Lev 11:22), it specifically states that locusts are permitted.)

When it was time, John the Baptist began to preach diligently, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is coming." He was described as "a voice calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.'"

People from Jerusalem, Judea, and the whole area of the Jordan went to meet him. They repented of their sins and John baptized them in the Jordan River.

John the Baptist Rebukes the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law

When John the Baptist saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was performing baptism, he said to them:

"You snakes! Who told you to run from the bad things that are about to happen? You must change your lives to show that you are really sorry for the wrongs you have done. And don't think you can say to yourselves, 'Abraham is our father,' because God can turn these stones into children for Abraham. The ax is ready to cut down any tree that doesn't bear good fruit! Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire!"

John was warning them to truly repent about the things they had done, and not be so confident that they

would be saved because they were Abraham's descendants. Only the people who repent, change their ways, and bear good fruit through good works will be saved. The people who don't do these things will be judged and punished. John the Baptist also said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Mt 3:11). **John the Baptist was preaching the importance of water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.** In Acts 2:38, Peter says, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The teachings of water baptism and the Holy Spirit did not stop even after Jesus ascended to heaven.

John Proves to Be a Faithful Prophet

Later on, John the Baptist was imprisoned and executed by King Herod for boldly preaching against his marriage. John the Baptist spoke against King Herod because he married his brother's wife, Herodias. She held a grudge against John and wanted him put to death. But King Herod protected John because he enjoyed listening to him and thought John the Baptist was a prophet. One day, King Herod celebrated his birthday by hosting a banquet. During the feast, the daughter of Herodias danced before Herod and his guests. She so pleased King Herod that he swore to give her anything she requested, up to half of his kingdom. The young woman went to her mother for guidance in what she should request. Herodias told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. She did so, and Herod was sorry when he heard this. However, because of his oath and his dinner guests, Herod ordered John the Baptist to be beheaded.

What can we learn from John the Baptist? He lived a holy

life and did not compromise (Lk 1:15). Rather than changing his message to accommodate the king, John the Baptist was willing to go to prison and ultimately die for God! He confronted King Herod, which cost him his life (Mk 6:17-29). **JOHN PROVED TO BE A FAITHFUL PROPHET!**

Teachings from John the Baptist

John the Baptist ministered for a very short period in comparison to the other men and women of God. Still, God rewarded him for his faithfulness. In Matthew 11:11, it records: "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." **From the life of John the Baptist, we can learn the following teachings:**

- John was a righteous preacher and a holy worker.
- To serve God wholeheartedly by leading a simple life style (not worried about luxuries)
- To prepare, to preach the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to make the crooked paths straight
- To confess our sins by repenting (Prov 28:13, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.") Jesus warned us several times to repent. Jesus teaches us to be holy, pure, and perfect. Repenting from sin is God's heart. "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord God. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin" (Ez 18:30).
- Workers of God should confront sin boldly, regardless of the cost involved
- Not to claim God's glory and to be a humble worker by exalting God

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. **Although Elizabeth and Zechariah were both quite old, what was one thing they did not have?** Children.
2. **Why couldn't Zechariah speak after the angel appeared to him?** He didn't believe what the angel told him.
3. **What did Elizabeth and Zechariah name the child?** John, as the angel instructed.
4. **What happened to Zechariah after they named the child?** His mouth was opened and he could speak.
5. **When John the Baptist grew up, where did he live? What did he wear and eat?** He lived in the desert; he wore camel's hair with a leather belt tied around his waist and ate locusts and honey.
6. **What did he tell the Pharisees and teachers of the law to do?** He told them to change their lives, repent for the wrong things they had done, and bear good fruit.
7. **John the Baptist also said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I [...] He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Mt 3:11). What was John referring to?** (John was referring to water baptism and baptism of Holy Spirit.
8. **Why did King Herod order John the Baptist to be beheaded?** Because he was pleased with her, he allowed Herodias' daughter to ask for whatever she wanted, so she asked for John the Baptist's head on a platter.
9. **Why is repentance so important?** If we cover our sins, we will not prosper; however, whoever confesses and forsakes his sins will have mercy. If we don't repent, God will judge us, and we will not lead a holy life that is pleasing to God.

MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.
You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

“That you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” (John 15:8b)

SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

1. Understand what is REPENTANCE.

John's life purpose was to prepare the way for the Lord. He had a simple message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." The word "repent" means to change one's thinking from a sinful mindset. John was baptizing and preaching a message of repentance so people could have changed minds and changed lives. It is not a shameful thing to confess our sins. A change of thinking, a change of heart, is found in repentance.

When we do something wrong, we need to kneel down and tell God we are sorrowful about what we have done, not sorrowful that we got caught. Don't outwardly say sorry and inwardly keep the same state of mind. Tell God, "Dear God, I have sinned. I sin secretly with my words, actions, and thoughts." We come to God with repentance, with a change in thinking. "Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm" (Joel 2:13). Repentance is not a weakness; it is a way to show God that we are depending on Him to help us overcome our sins.

2. Remain in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the same way a branch must stay connected to a tree, we need to be connected to Jesus Christ. Here are some ways we can stay connected to Jesus every day:

1. At least once a day, we can say a prayer and thank God for all the blessings He has given us.
2. During Sabbath, we can share something we have learned from the sermons with a brother, sister, or family members.
3. After the RE class on Sabbath, we can pick one teaching from the word of God to put into practice at home or at school during the week.
4. During the week, we can ask our family to set aside 15 to 20 minutes every day to read and share about the Bible, pray, ask questions and share about God, or sing hymns to draw closer to Jesus and to one another.

3. Bear good fruit by doing good works.

1. We can observe what older brothers and sisters do to serve God and to serve others, and we can try to put these actions into practice in our own lives.
2. Every week, we can pick one family member and show kindness to them (e.g., it could be helping them with their chores, being kind and nice to them, etc.), pray for them, and find time to spend with them.
3. Ask your mom and dad, your schoolteacher, or RE teacher how you can be their helper during the day or during class.

4. Jesus said we can bear fruit only if He "abides" in us (Jn 15:4-5).

What does it mean to abide in Jesus? It means we need to constantly go to church, pray, and read the Bible! We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to dwell in us! God's Spirit is like a living foundation that flows up the trunk of a tree to all its branches so they can yield fruit. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit" (Jer 17:7-8). With the help of God's Spirit, we can produce love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). That is truly good fruit! God wants us to bear much of this fruit!

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. "That you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." (John 15:8b)
2. a. Zechariah
b. Elizabeth
c. Gabriel
d. Desert or wilderness
e. Camel hair
f. Locusts and honey
g. Prepare the way for Jesus
h. The Baptist
i. Doing good works
j. Incense
3. He was burning incense.
4. He couldn't speak/became mute.
5. When John was eight days old. The people asked him what he wanted to name his son. He wrote "John". At that moment, his mouth was opened, and he was able to speak and praise God.)
6. He told people to repent, change their wrongdoings, and bear good fruit.
7. If we cover our sins, we will not prosper; however, whoever confesses and forsakes his sins will have mercy. If we don't repent, God will judge us, and we will not lead a holy life that is pleasing to God.
8. It means we need to constantly go to church, pray, and read the Bible! We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to dwell in us! With the help of God's Spirit, we can produce love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control" (Gal 5:22-23).

ACTIVITIES

1

Picture the Verse

Objective: To help remember this week's verse by making a picture.

Materials

- Fruit patterns (apple, orange, cluster of grapes, banana, pear)
- Cardboard
- Construction paper, various colors (try to match the fruit)
- Crayons or markers
- Scissors

Preparations

1. Using green and brown construction paper, create one tree for each student that is large enough to hold the fruit patterns.
2. Copy the fruit patterns onto cardboard; make one set per student.
3. Cut out the fruit patterns.

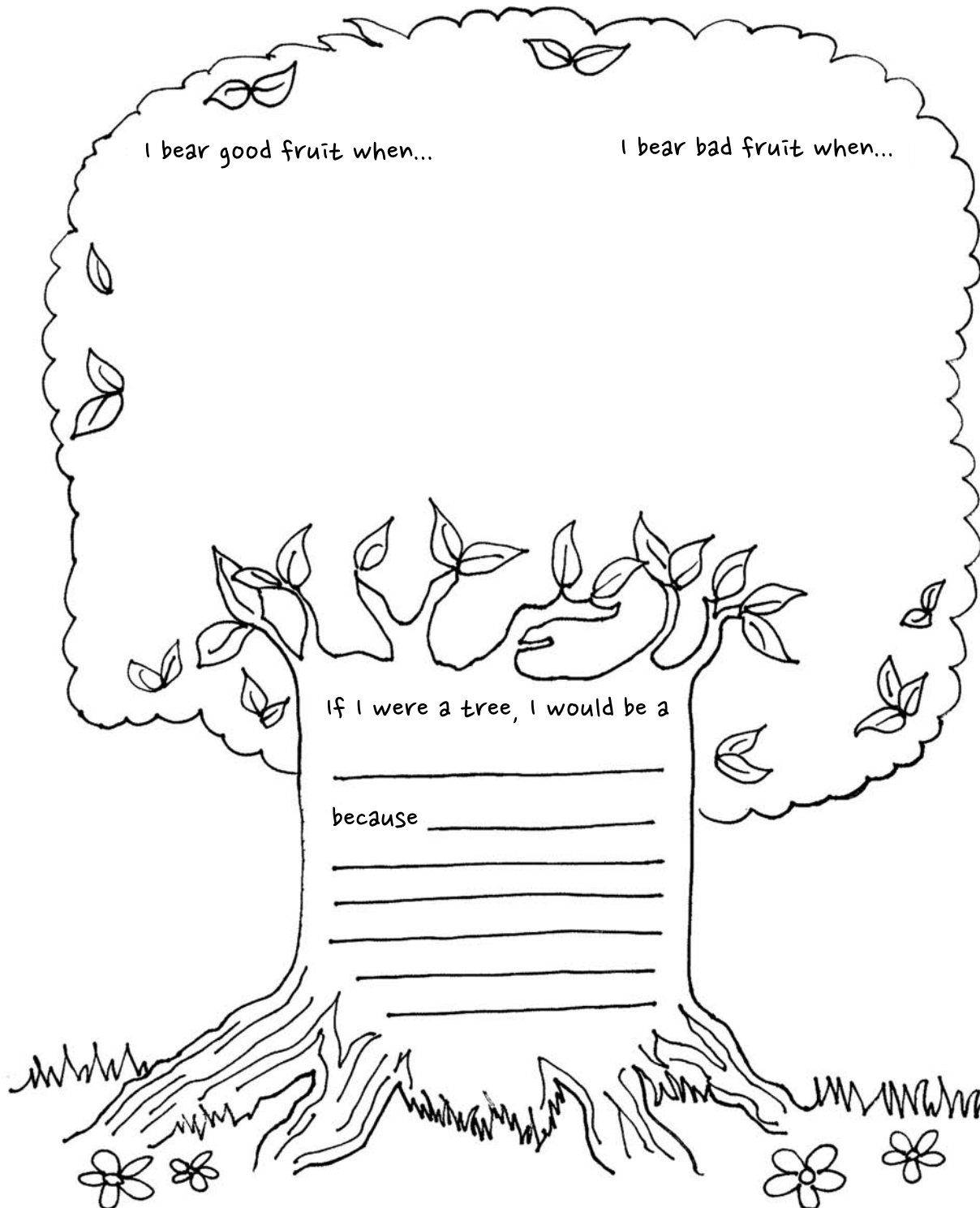
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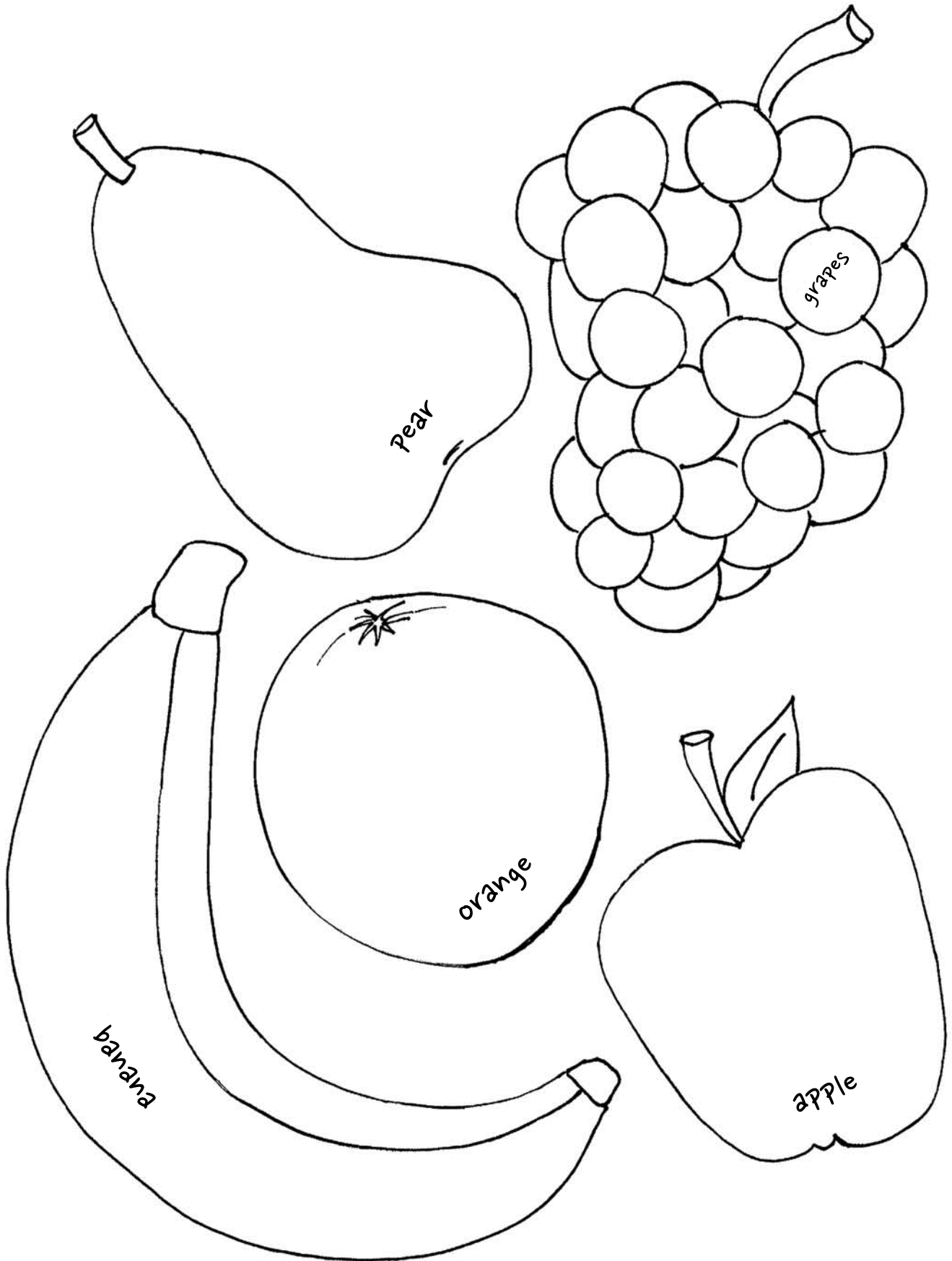
1. Pass out the fruit patterns and one tree to each student.
2. Have students trace the fruit patterns onto construction paper and cut them out.
3. On each piece of fruit, write a good deed that would be considered "good fruit." Glue the fruit onto the tree.
4. At the top of their picture, have students write, "Bear Much Fruit." (Jn 15:8b)

2 Bear Good Fruit

Objective: To reinforce to students that we need to bear fruit.

John compared people to trees (Mt 3:10; Lk 3:9). How are you like a tree? Answer the following questions on the worksheet.





E1 Year 1 Book 4 Lesson 7—John the Baptist

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

- Bible Truths:**
1. John the Baptist was a righteous worker who lived a holy life.
 2. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord.
 3. Jesus wants us to be His disciples and bear good fruit by doing good works for Him.

- Lesson Objectives:**
1. To learn to repent before God.
 2. To remain in the Lord Jesus and do good works for Him.
 3. To bear good fruit by doing good works.
 4. To learn the correct way of water baptism.

Bible Reading: Please put a checkmark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

Prayer: Please put a checkmark in the space on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bible Reading							
Prayer							

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(John 15:8b)

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homework Assignment

Understanding What You Have Learned

1. Write down the memory verse for this week without looking.

Matching

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 2. a. John's father, a priest | The Baptist |
| b. John's mother | Doing good works |
| c. Angel who appeared in a vision | Zechariah |
| d. John's home | Prepare the way for Jesus |
| e. John's clothing | Desert or wilderness |
| f. John's food | Gabriel |
| g. John's work | Incense |
| h. John's title (what people called him) | Elizabeth |
| i. Bearing good fruit | Locusts and honey |
| j. Perfume offered to God | Camel hair |

Short Answer

3. What was Zechariah doing when the angel appeared?

4. What happened to Zechariah when he didn't believe the angel?

5. When did Zechariah speak again?

6. What did John the Baptist preach?

Life Application

7. Why is repentance so important?

8. Jesus said we can bear fruit only if He "abides" in us (Jn 15:4-5). What does abiding in Jesus mean?
