

First Sunday after Epiphany

He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me."

Explore

—Mark 1:7 NRSV

Follow Me

When the class arrives, call them together and say, "Follow me." Immediately leave the room and walk a path that you have predetermined either in the building or outside, weather permitting. If anyone asks what's going on, only reply, "Follow me." After about five minutes, return to the classroom. Ask the following questions and discuss them with the class:

1. Why did you follow? Did you choose not to follow?
2. What were your thoughts while you were walking?
3. Would you follow anyone?
4. Would you follow Jesus?

Extract

John the Baptizer

All the Gospels of the New Testament tell of the preaching of John the Baptist. Luke wrote the most about him. The Gospels say John fulfilled prophecies from the Old Testament and came to prepare the way or tell the people of Jesus' coming. John was an only child whose parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, were well past the age of childbirth when he was born. John was different. Read Mark 1:4–11/1:3–9 IV. As an adult, John lived in the desert of Judea close to Mount Nebo where Moses had seen the promised land. John could see the Jordan River where Joshua crossed and the land where Amos kept his sheep. He waded in the water of Cherith where Elijah was fed by ravens. He was homeless. He lived off the land in the wilderness around the Dead Sea surviving on locusts and wild honey. In early times, locusts were a food source. They were roasted or sun dried, eaten like parched grain, and supposedly tasted like shrimp.

Bible, Map of area where John ministered

Mark 1:4–11/
1:3–9 IV.
II Kings 1:8
Matthew 17:9–14

John knew from early childhood that Jesus was coming to earth and waited for his call from God. He dressed and copied the habits of Elijah. Read II Kings 1:8 and Matthew 17:9–14. Some authors describe John's preaching as a bulldozer opposing Israel's ways; others saw it as an equalizer that laid groundwork for Jesus. His tone was urgent, and his preaching was independent from the religion and politics of the day. With John, it was either do as I say or suffer the consequences. He carried the same message as Jesus, but his delivery was different.

John preached near Jericho, one of the main crossroads of the country and a principal gateway into Jerusalem. Take a look at a map of this area. In John's day, people from all over the area came to the Jordan River, the main river of Israel. John had a powerful testimony. Many repented and were baptized. Ask the class to again look at today's scripture and respond to the following questions:

1. What response did John give to Jesus' request?
2. What was Jesus' reply?
3. What was the outcome of the discussion?
4. How might you have responded if you had lived in that day?

Experience

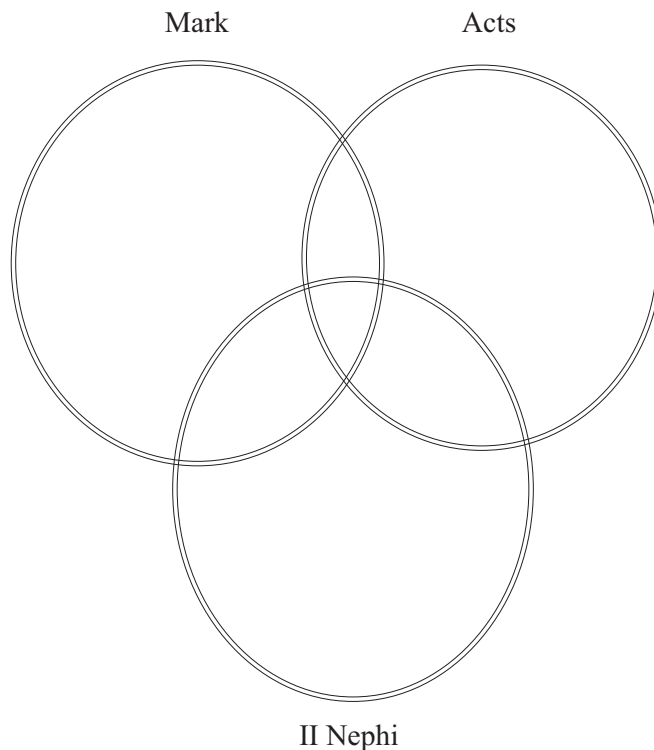
Baptism and Confirmation

Jesus modeled actions for us to follow. Baptism is an act that shows our willingness to repent, seek forgiveness, and follow Jesus' example—to emulate, to imitate his actions in our everyday lives. It is a symbol of our promise (our covenant with God), a symbol of cleansing, and a new beginning. It is a response to God's love for us. Have the class read again from Mark 1:4–11/1:3–9 IV, Acts 19:1–7, and II Nephi 13:7–14 to learn more about the importance of baptism and confirmation. Ask the class to find partners, and, if possible, divide the readings among the group members to insure all three scriptures are read. After the class has explored what the scriptures say about baptism and confirmation, have the partners tell about it or act it out for the others.

Bible, Book of Mormon, flip chart or chalkboard, markers or chalk

Mark 1:4–11/
1:3–9 IV
Acts 19:1–7
II Nephi 13:7–14

Compare the differences and similarities shared by each of the writers in the diagram below. Where the circles overlap, write information the writers have in common.



Expand

Have a student read Section 161:7 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Ask the class what it means to “embrace its call.” Baptism is one response to the call “Follow me.” What are other responses? List the ideas on a flip chart or chalkboard. On the paper provided have students respond to the question, “How can I embrace the Spirit’s call?”

Doctrine and Covenants, flip chart or chalkboard, paper and pencils or pens
Doctrine and Covenants 161:7

Lectionary scriptures—Genesis 1:1–8 IV/1:1–5; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1–7; Mark 1:3–9 IV/1:4–11