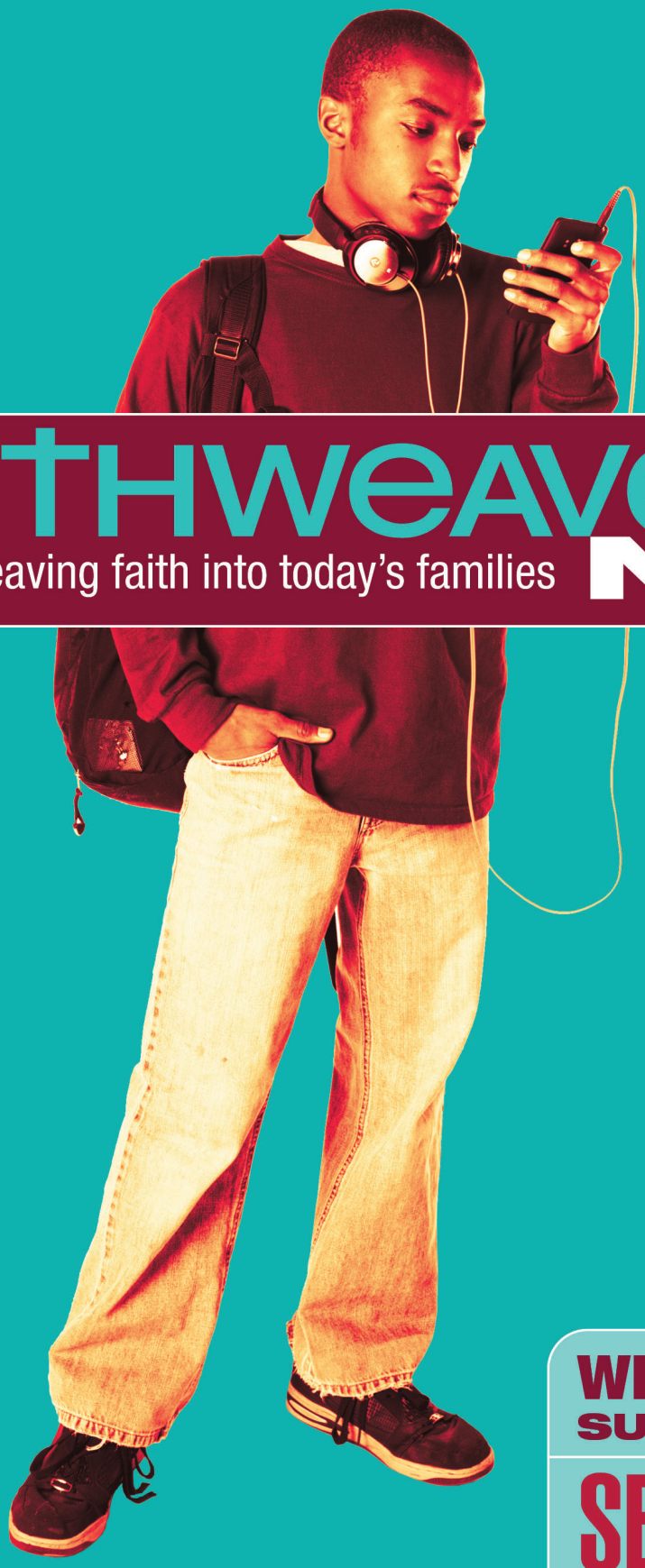


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Weaving faith into today's families

WINTER
SUNDAY SCHOOL
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LEADER GUIDE

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WINTER SUNDAY SCHOOL

SENIOR HIGH LEADER GUIDE



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** Due to the way Christmas falls, we recommend shifting studies as needed so Study 3 lines up with Christmas.*

The future of Sunday school + family ministry is NOW.

No doubt about it, the world is changing. Families used to go to church every week. Kids used to have longer attention spans. Teachers used to have more time to prepare. And didn't our budgets used to be bigger?

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It combines Sunday school with family ministry.

Sure, you've seen Sunday school aimed at families. But FaithWeaver NOW actually hits the target by having everyone in the family learning about the same Scripture each week.

It's simpler and easier.

Sometimes change is a wonderful thing. Gone are the days when you needed to spend hours preparing your lessons and hunting for supplies. FaithWeaver NOW will have you and your team ready to go in a snap.

It's made for NOW.

Life is complicated and full of distractions. FaithWeaver NOW keeps faith on track through even the most frenzied lifestyles.

What makes FaithWeaver NOW the perfect curriculum for TODAY's church?

- Families learn the same Bible passage in age-appropriate ways.
- Kids don't just hear the Word. They experience it.
- Simple and easy lessons fit even the busiest lives.
- Kids see God in their everyday world.
- The Scope & Sequence goes through the Bible every three years.
- You can customize it however you like, with both print and digital versions.



Create a vibrant family ministry that's new…that's wow…that's NOW. FaithWeaver NOW gives you a fresh strategy for being more successful than ever in bringing families closer to Jesus.

Thom and Joani Schultz
Chairman and Chief Creative Officer
Group Publishing, Inc.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus Mark 1:1-8

Many teenagers are told that the Christian life is all about heart change and developing character, but they find out very quickly that the main emphasis for a lot of Christians is really on appearances and clean-cut images. Heart change is put on the back burner. For too many who commit to Christ, the Christian life becomes a grocery list of external rules, while internal characteristics such as learning to love, discarding hate, and practicing forgiveness are not emphasized nearly as much. Use this study to help students see that what God really values is a repentant heart that's open to him.

STUDY	WHAT STUDENTS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Faith Connection	**Gettin' Ready** *(about 15 min.)* Prepare to play a game, and then play it.	masking tape, 1 of each of the following for every 4 students: cup, ping-pong ball, paper grocery bag, piece of paper, timer (optional)	Set up an area for students to play the game. You'll need a masking-tape line, a cup about 5 feet away from the line, a paper bag 5 feet away from the cup, and a piece of paper 5 feet away from the bag. The items should be arranged as corners of a 5x5 square. You'll also need extra supplies available.
	Media Connection (Option) *(about 10 min.)* Watch a movie scene in which a man gets ready for a golf tournament.	video player, movie *Happy Gilmore*	Cue the movie *Happy Gilmore* to 01:04:26, when the movie pans over a miniature golf park.
2 Bible Exploration	**The Message of Repentance** *(about 20 min.)* Explore the meaning of John the Baptist's message, and make speeches.	Bibles, paper, pens	

Bold text *within the lesson is spoken text.*

▶Bible Point

We prepare our hearts for Jesus.

Key Verse

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

Weaving Faith Into Life

Students will repent for their sins to prepare for celebrating Jesus' birth.

STUDY	WHAT STUDENTS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	**What Repentance Looks Like** *(about 15 min.)* Look at Bible passages about repentance, and depict what repentance really is.	Bibles, index cards, pens, several rolls of tape, markers	
	Preparing My Heart *(about 10 min.)* Listen to Psalm 51:10, and create bags that demonstrate repentance.	Bibles, paper lunch bags, scrap paper, pens	
4 Lasting Impressions	**Daily Challenges** *(about 5 min.)* Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Senior High Handbooks or 1 copy per student of the "Taking It Home" handout (at the end of this study), pens	
	Weaving Faith at Home *(about 2 min.)* Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.		

Bold text *within the lesson is spoken text.*

John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus

Mark 1:1-8

BIBLE BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Jesus Brings Good News

Mark saw Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection as the beginning of the gospel. The word *gospel*, derived from the Old English *godspel*, means "good news."

Prophets Foretold About Jesus

As Mark began his Gospel, he launched into a quotation from the Old Testament. By connecting what he was saying about Jesus with the words of the prophets, Mark built validity for his own message in the minds of his Jewish readers.

Some question why Mark said the quotation is from Isaiah when in reality the first part is from Malachi 3:1. Mark is mentioning together two quotations on the same topic, and crediting both to Isaiah would have been acceptable for Mark's audience.

By using the quotation from Isaiah in Mark 1:3, Mark emphasized the kingly nature of Jesus. In those days, a servant often traveled ahead of a king to alert people that the king was coming.

John the Baptist Comes Before Jesus

The last half of this passage shows that John the Baptist did what was prophesied in the Old Testament: He came to prepare the way—more specifically, the people—for Jesus' coming. As people repented in response to John's preaching and confessed their sins, their hearts were prepared to accept their coming King.

John the Baptist's choice of clothing was not accidental: He likely was identifying himself with the prophet Elijah, who dressed the same way (2 Kings 1:8). His was the clothing of the poor, and his food was also that of the very poor. John was humbling himself, knowing how great the coming Jesus would be. In those days, it was the job of the lowest servant to untie a visitor's sandals and wash his feet. John let people know that as eloquent and persuasive as his preaching might be, he was the lowest of the low in comparison with the glory of the coming Savior, Jesus.

The Jesus Connection

At Christmas, we anticipate the birth of Jesus. His birth, death, and resurrection make our lives in heaven possible. There is always much to do before Christmas. But Jesus cares more about our hearts than about gifts and decorations. We can prepare our hearts by turning from actions and attitudes that distract us from Jesus. What do you need to turn from? You can write your prayer here.



Gettin' Ready
Supplies

masking tape
1 of each of the following for every 4 students: cup, ping-pong ball, paper grocery bag, sheet of paper
timer (optional)

Gettin' Ready
Easy Prep

Set up an area for students to play the game. You'll need a masking-tape line, a cup about 5 feet away from the line, a paper bag 5 feet away from the cup, and a piece of paper 5 feet away from the bag. The items should be arranged as corners of a 5x5 square. You'll also need extra supplies available.

1 FAITH
CONNECTION

Gettin' Ready

What You'll Do

Welcome students to the group. Form groups of four, and say: **We're going to play a game. But before we play, you'll have five minutes to prepare. You can strategize, practice, assign roles, or do whatever other preparation you think needs to be done.**

Show students the game area you set up. Demonstrate each step as you explain it, even if you miss. Say: **Here's how you play the game: One person will stand behind the tape line and roll the ping-pong ball into the cup. Another person will stand where the cup is, pick up the cup, and fling it to launch the ball, trying to get it into the paper bag. Once the ball is in the bag, a third person will pick up the bag, walk to the paper, and dump the bag so that the ball hits the paper. (It's okay if the ball bounces off.) Finally, the last person will pick up the paper with the ball on it and carry it to the masking-tape line without dropping the ball. If at any point someone misses a target or drops the ball, you only need to start that step over again—not the whole game.** Make sure everyone understands the rules, and allow five minutes for groups to prepare. Have extra supplies available for each group of four so they can practice.

After five minutes, say: **Now that you're all prepared, let's play!** Have groups take turns going through the course. You may want to time them so you can report on how well they did.

Talk With Students

Lead students in this discussion. Students can find these questions in their Senior High Handbooks.

Ask:

- **What did you do to prepare for the game?**
- **Now that you've seen how well you did, is there anything you wish you'd done differently to better prepare?**
- **Tell about something you've prepared for.**
- **Why is preparing for something important?**

Say: **If I'd had you play this game without any practice or any time to assign team roles, you probably would've taken a lot longer to complete it. Preparation was important to succeeding in this game. And we've all prepared for more important things, too—like tests, championship sports games, or band performances. But there's one thing that's far more important than any of those things: a relationship with Jesus. Let's look at how ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS.**

Media Connection (Option)

Tip In general, federal copyright laws do not allow you to use videos or DVDs (even ones you own) for any purpose other than home viewing. Your church can obtain a license from Christian Video Licensing International for a small fee. Just visit cvli.com or call 1-888-771-2854 for more information.

Many movie clips are available at youtube.com. This clip is available at wingclips.com under the title "Mini Golf."

What You'll Do

Instead of doing the "Gettin' Ready" activity, show students a movie clip that illustrates preparation.

Cue the clip to 01:04:26, when the movie pans over a miniature golf park. In this clip, Happy prepares for a golf tournament by playing mini golf to work on his short game. End the clip at 01:06:18, when Happy beats up a clown figure with his golf club.

Talk With Students

Lead students in this discussion. Students can find these questions in their Senior High Handbooks.

Ask:

- **How open would you say Happy was to preparing for the game?**
- **Based on his actions in this clip, how prepared would you say he is for his tournament?**
- **Tell about something you've prepared for.**
- **Why is preparing for something important?**

Say: **Happy was clearly not thrilled to be playing mini golf to prepare for a real golf tournament. But mini golf emphasized the parts of his game he needed to work on. We've all prepared for more important things, too—like tests, championship sports games, or band performances. But there's one thing that's far more important than any of those things: a relationship with Jesus. Let's look at how ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS.**

Media Connection
Supplies

video player
movie *Happy Gilmore*

Media Connection
Easy Prep

Cue the movie *Happy Gilmore* to 01:04:26, when the movie pans over a miniature golf park.

The Message of Repentance
Supplies

Bibles
paper
pens

2 BIBLE EXPLORATION

The Message of Repentance

What You'll Do

Say: **We're going to look at a man who came to help people prepare for Jesus. We'll look deeply into God's Word for the next few minutes to discover not only the information in the passage but also the symbolism.**

Make sure each student has a Bible, and have the kids read Mark 1:1-8 on their own. After they've read the passage, ask them to think about what the passage means symbolically. Encourage them to look at the connections between what is written and the spiritual world. For example, you may ask students to consider what it means to "make straight paths" for Jesus. When they've had time to think, have them get into pairs and share their observations. Provide pens and paper for pairs to list their observations.

Once pairs have made their lists, ask each pair to exchange its list with another pair and write a speech about Jesus based on the ideas or words in the other pair's list. Have pairs take turns presenting their speeches to the entire group, making sure both partners get to talk. But for each pair, have the audience react in a different way, such as with wild applause, booing, boredom, leaning forward to catch every word, not looking at the speakers, or coming closer to hear more.

Talk With Students

Lead students in this discussion. Students can find these questions in their Senior High Handbooks.

Ask:

- **What did you think about having to give a speech? about the way people responded to your speech?**
- **How did your speech reflect what John said about preparing for Jesus?**
- **What difference does it make how we respond to his message?**
- **What's the most important part of getting ready to meet Jesus?**
- **What's *unimportant*? Why?**

Say: **The major part of John's message was "Repent!" John certainly wanted people to know that Jesus was coming, but just giving them the information wasn't enough. He knew that for people to be totally ready for Jesus meant being ready to turn from the wrong things they had done and let Jesus transform their lives. That's how ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS.**

3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

What Repentance Looks Like

What You'll Do

Say: **John talked a lot about repentance. Let's consider what repentance really looks like.**

Have students form groups of four, and make sure each group has a Bible, a stack of index cards, tape, and a pen. Have each group brainstorm ideas to go with the words *repentance* and *unrepentance* and write their ideas on index cards. For example, under *repentance* students might write things such as "being sorry" or "stop sinning." Under *unrepentance,* groups might write things such as "not caring when people sin" or "ignoring God." When groups have finished, have students share some of their group's responses and then tape the index cards to the wall, with one section for each category.

Say: **John points out the need for repentance. It might be easy for us to think that his message was only for people who lived during John's lifetime. However, repentance is essential today as well. Both repentance and unrepentance lead to certain results. Let's look at the results that repentance and unrepentance have in our lives.**

Have groups combine to form two large groups, and give each group index cards, markers, and tape. Assign one group to be "Unrepentant Sinners" and the other group to be "Repentant Sinners." Have each group choose one person to be its subject.

Have groups look up the following passages: Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:18-20; Zechariah 12:10; and Acts 20:21. Have students use their earlier responses and the Scripture passages to brainstorm possible results of repentance or unrepentance. Each group will write each effect on an index card and tape it to the group's subject. For example, Repentant Sinners might write "a clean heart" and place it on the chest of their subject. Unrepentant Sinners might write "walking in sin" and place it on the shoes of their subject. Encourage groups to each cover their person with as many effects as they can.

When groups have finished, have them each present their subject person to the other group.

Talk With Students

Lead students in this discussion. Students can find these questions in their Senior High Handbooks.

Ask:

- **What did you notice about people who live repentant lives?**
- **Why is repentance so important?**
- **How would you define repentance?**
- **How does repentance get us ready for Jesus?**

What Repentance Looks Like
Supplies

Bibles
index cards
pens
several rolls of tape
markers

Say: **We've discussed the difference between repentance and unrepentance. But the fact is, none of us can make our lives better on our own. Here's the key to repentance—it's in asking forgiveness. The first step in forgiveness is confession. We have to tell God about what we know we've done wrong and that we desire to change. Only God can change our hearts, and ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS by having an attitude of repentance like the one John preached.**

Preparing My Heart
Supplies

Bibles
paper lunch bags
scrap paper
pens

Preparing My Heart

What You'll Do

Say: **We've all done wrong things, so we all need to repent and let God change our hearts. Let's hear a verse about how God can change our hearts.**

Read the Key Verse, Psalm 51:10, aloud: **"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).**

Distribute Bibles, paper lunch bags, scrap paper, and pens. Say: **Think of several things you need God to clean out of your life. It might be sinful behavior or attitudes that make you less willing to let him change your heart. Write each one on a scrap of paper, and put it in your bag.** Allow time.

Say: ***Repentance*** **means turning our lives around. Turn your bag inside out. As you do, all the papers will fall out.** Allow time. Then have students pick up and throw away their scraps of paper, and write the Key Verse, Psalm 51:10, on the part of the bag that now faces out. Students can also write directly on the bag the new attitudes or behaviors they'd like God to help them have.

Talk With Students

Lead students in this discussion. Students can find these questions in their Senior High Handbooks.

Ask:

- **What are some changes that repentance would mean in your life?**
- **How open are you to letting God change your heart?**
- **What can you do this week to prepare your heart for Jesus?**

Say: **▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS. It's what John came to preach before Jesus began his ministry. As we enter the Christmas season, it's a great time to refocus our hearts on Jesus and allow him to work in our lives.**

4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do

Have students get out their handbooks, or distribute "Taking It Home" handouts to all students. Say: **Let's think about how ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS and commit to doing so this week.**

Direct students to find this week's Daily Challenges in their Senior High Handbooks or on their "Taking It Home" handouts and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- **Use your paper bag to repent this week. Write the things that are making your heart impure, and turn the bag inside out as you ask God to purify your heart.**
- **Identify barriers that have made you less open to God working in your heart. Pray with someone that God will remove those barriers.**
- **Ask someone whose faith you respect about repentance and preparing your heart for Jesus.**

Talk With Students

Lead students in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, a place, and other ideas.**

Say: **John had an important message: ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS. Let's do that this week as we follow through with our Daily Challenges.**

Weaving Faith at Home

Encourage students to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about preparing for Jesus. Students can also do the "Talk With Your Family" activity in their handbooks or on their "Taking It Home" pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church's families. Available at group.com/digital.

Close in prayer, having students repeat the Key Verse with you as a prayer for their hearts. Pray: **"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."**

Daily Challenges Supplies

Senior High Handbooks or 1 copy per student of the "Taking It Home" handout (at the end of this study)
pens

John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus—Mark 1:1-8
▶**Bible Point**—We prepare our hearts for Jesus.
Key Verse—"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

TAKING IT HOME

Daily Challenge

- **Use your paper bag to repent this week. Write the things that are making your heart impure, and turn the bag inside out as you ask God to purify your heart.**
- **Identify barriers that have made you less open to God working in your heart. Pray with someone that God will remove those barriers.**
- **Ask someone whose faith you respect about repentance and preparing your heart for Jesus.**

Faith Journal

What can you do to make your heart more open and ready for Jesus?

Quotables

"[God] has entrusted us with gifts and talents, and He expects us to guard and use them wisely...We'll not only make the most of each moment, we'll also prepare ourselves for the next season of our lives."
—Joshua Harris, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*

Talk With Your Family

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 with your family, and then discuss the following questions:

- **What does it mean to be "in Christ"? What does it mean to be new?**
- **What old things do you need to let go of in order to prepare your heart for Jesus?**

Each family member will need to trace one of his or her thumbs on an index card. A "thumbs up" means that you feel ready for Jesus to make changes in your life; a "thumbs down" means that you're not as ready as you'd like to be. Bring your thumbs to a few meals throughout the week, and discuss reactions to the directions family members' thumbs are pointing. Talk about ways to change any thumbs down to thumbs up, but be sure not to judge or push anyone.

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Weaving faith into today's families

WINTER SUNDAY SCHOOL SENIOR HIGH LEADER GUIDE

FaithWeaver NOW is for today's Sunday school teachers. It's developed by real Sunday school teachers, examined by real ministry leaders, and tested and approved by thousands of churches so you get great lessons that work with today's families.

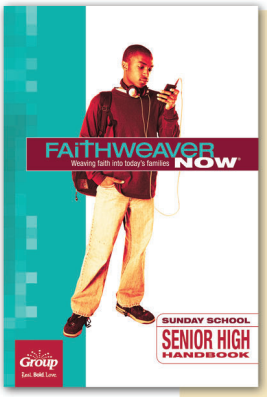
This quarter you'll explore these Bible passages:

	BIBLE CONTENT/SCRIPTURE	KEY VERSE	BIBLE POINT
WEEK 1	John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus (Mark 1:1-8)	"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).	We prepare our hearts for Jesus.
WEEK 2	God Dwells With Us (John 1:1-14)	"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).	Jesus is God.
WEEK 3	Jesus Is Born (Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-20)	"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).	Jesus was born for us.
WEEK 4	Faithful People Thank God for Jesus (Luke 2:22-40)	"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name" (Psalm 100:4).	We thank God for Jesus.
WEEK 5	Wise Men Find Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12)	"For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations" (Psalm 100:5).	Jesus deserves our worship.
WEEK 6	John Baptizes Jesus (Mark 1:4-11)	"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).	God sent Jesus.
WEEK 7	Jesus Surprises Nathanael (John 1:43-51)	"O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways" (Psalm 139:1-3).	Jesus knows all about us.
WEEK 8	Disciples Follow Jesus (Mark 1:14-20)	" 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men' " (Mark 1:17).	Follow Jesus.
WEEK 9	Jesus Demonstrates His Authority (Mark 1:21-28)	"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).	Jesus is all-powerful.
WEEK 10	Jesus Heals, Prays, and Preaches (Mark 1:29-39)	"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).	Jesus cares for us.
WEEK 11	Jesus Calms a Storm (Mark 4:35-41)	"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).	We turn to Jesus when we're afraid.
WEEK 12	Four Friends Help a Paralyzed Man (Mark 2:1-12)	"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).	Jesus forgives us.
WEEK 13	Jesus Heals the Blind Man (Mark 10:46-52)	"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).	We have faith in Jesus.

PLUS...

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- **FREE digital copies of Leader Guides** in PDF format so you can easily download, print, and email any lesson. Sharing lessons with busy volunteers couldn't be easier! *See inside for activation code.*
- **A FREE downloadable Director Manual** to help you structure your program for maximum effectiveness.
- **FREE weekly FamilyConnect pages** you can print out or email to parents to help families grow together in faith throughout the week.



Senior High Handbook*

Includes the "Taking It Home" handouts for each week, along with any other reproducible pages found in this quarterly Leader Guide.

Optional—get one for each student.

Printed in the U.S.A.

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