

Read: Luke 3:1-6

God's Great Construction Project

Luke 3:3-6 (EHV)

[John] went into the whole region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Just as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: A voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord! Make his paths straight. Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be made low. The crooked will become straight, and the rough ways smooth. And everyone will see the salvation of God."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Are you kidding me?" Dad vented in frustration. While the family tried to make the two-hour trip to Grandma's house, this was the third time orange barrels and flashing signs told them to slow down. Why? Road construction.

You see, the old road had taken a beating over the years. Thousands of cars traveled over it every day. Extreme changes from heat in the summer to cold in the winter put stress on the asphalt, leaving the road bumpy and difficult to drive on. The road needed to be replaced, so traffic slowed as the construction crew and their heavy machinery tore up the old road and replaced it with a new layer of smooth asphalt that would last for years to come.

Did you know that God is in the road construction business too? Centuries before the birth of Jesus, a prophet named Isaiah promised the coming of someone who would prepare the way of the Lord. He would call people to repent or turn from their sins and live because the long-promised King was coming to save them from their sins. He was to fill in the valleys and level the mountains of sin and guilt in their hearts. He was to straighten out the crooked road and smooth the bumpy places of their sinful hearts. That man would come 700 years later—a man we know as John the Baptizer.

John came to prepare the way for Jesus. Sin and guilt had wrecked the hearts of the people. Deep valleys and enormous mountains of guilt formed and stood between them and God. Sin turned their hearts down wrong, crooked paths away from God. So God sent John to call the people to repent, to turn away from their sins and live. He baptized them so they would receive the forgiveness that only the Savior-King could give to them. He prepared the way of the Lord because Jesus was coming.

John calls us to repent too. We need God's help to fill in our valleys and level our mountains. He knows how to make our crooked roads straight and smooth out the rough ways of sin. Through his Word and through the waters of Baptism, the Lord carries out his great construction project through our hearts as Jesus comes to us to heal and help us, to forgive and save us.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What's the name of the man God sent to prepare the way for Jesus?
- What does the word *repent* mean?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How did John prepare the way for the coming of Jesus?
- Why did John have to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Why is repentance so important to changing a sinful heart?
- Identify a valley or mountain in your heart that you would like God's help to fill in or remove.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, carry out your great construction project within our hearts. Help us to repent of our sins and be patient as you prepare us for your coming in these weeks before Christmas. Amen.