FOLLOWING JESUS VBS · TEACHER GUIDE · GRADES 1-3

Day 4: Jesus Saves Me

He Is Risen! | The Cross and the Empty Tomb

Bible story	The Cross and the Empty Tomb (Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30)
Memory verse (NKJV)	"He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." (Matthew 28:6)
Takeaway	Jesus died for my sins, was buried, and rose again, so I can be saved and live with Him.
Daily call	Leader: "He is not here" Kids: "He is risen!"

Objectives

- Retell the main events of The Cross and the Empty Tomb (Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30).
- Say Matthew 28:6 from memory.
- Name one way to thank Jesus for the cross this week.

Materials

- Bible (NKJV) for the teacher and for each student
- Prop for the attention getter: a large gray ball or paper "stone" and an empty box
- Copies of today's student lesson and activity sheets (one per child)
- Crayons, pencils, and name tags
- Craft supplies: Cardstock folded in half; Tomb and stone cutouts; Brad fasteners; Markers

Teacher preparation

- Read Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30 in your own Bible at least twice this week.
- Read the matching "31 Days with Jesus" devotionals at The Preacher's Pen: Day 26: The Crucifixion (The Ultimate Sacrifice); Day 27: The Guarded Tomb (Waiting in Hope); Day 28: The Resurrection (Risen Indeed).
- Make copies, prepare craft pieces, and set out the prop before children arrive.

Background for the teacher

- Crucifixion was reserved for slaves, rebels, and the worst criminals. Roman citizens were normally exempt.
- The sign above the cross was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (John 19:20).
- The tomb was cut out of rock and sealed with a large stone. The guard and the seal made tampering a serious crime (Matthew 27:62-66).
- Jesus was in the tomb parts of three days (Friday, Saturday, Sunday), rising "the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:4).
- Jesus, the sinless Son of God, willingly died on the cross for our sins (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb that was sealed and guarded (Matthew 27:57-66).
- On the third day Jesus rose from the dead, just as He said (Matthew 28:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
- Because Jesus lives, we have forgiveness, hope, and good news to tell (Matthew 28:7).

Lesson plan (40 minutes)

Time	Segment	What to do
0:00-0:05	Welcome and review	Take attendance. Review yesterday's verse and call.
0:05-0:08	Attention getter	Show a large gray ball or paper "stone" and an empty box. Ask the opening question.
0:08-0:18	Bible story	Tell the story from your Bible (script below). Show the coloring page as a picture.
0:18-0:23	Discussion	Ask the discussion questions.
0:23-0:28	Memory verse game	Write the verse on the board. Read it together, then erase one word at a time until the class can say it from memory.
0:28-0:37	Activity sheets	Word search, maze, fill-in-the-blank, matching, coloring.
0:37-0:40	Wrap-up and prayer	Ask, "How will you thank Jesus for the cross this week?" Close with prayer.

Attention getter

Show a large gray ball or paper "stone" and an empty box. Ask: What is the best news you have ever heard? Today we will hear the best news in the whole world.

Bible story

Teach from an open Bible so students see that the story comes from God's word. Use this script as a guide; tell it in your own words.

Jesus never did anything wrong. But some leaders were jealous of Jesus, and they had Him arrested. The soldiers made fun of Him and put a crown of thorns on His head (Matthew 27:29).

They nailed Jesus to a cross between two other men. Even on the cross, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Jesus was taking the punishment for our sins. Then Jesus said, "It is finished!" and He died (John 19:30).

A Roman soldier watching said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54). A rich man named Joseph put Jesus' body in his own new tomb and rolled a big stone across the door (Matthew 27:57-60). Soldiers sealed the stone and guarded the tomb (Matthew 27:66).

Early on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb. Suddenly there was a great earthquake! An angel rolled the stone away and sat on it. The guards shook with fear (Matthew 28:1-4).

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matthew 28:5-6).

The women ran with fear and great joy to tell the disciples. On the way, Jesus Himself met them and said, "Rejoice!" (Matthew 28:9). Jesus is alive! He died for our sins and rose again, so we can be forgiven and live with Him forever.

> **Teacher note for today**
>
> Be reverent, not graphic. Emphasize God's love (Romans 5:8) and the joy of the resurrection.

Discussion questions

1. What did Jesus pray for the people who hurt Him?
2. Who rolled away the stone?
3. What did the angel tell the women?
4. Why did Jesus die on the cross?

Review

- Jesus died on the _____ for our sins. (Answer: Cross)
- Jesus was laid in a _____. (Answer: Tomb)
- A big _____ was rolled in front of the door. (Answer: Stone)
- An _____ rolled the stone away. (Answer: Angel)
- “He is not here; for He is _____.” (Answer: Risen)

Memory verse activity

Erase-a-word: write the verse on the board, read it together, then erase one word at a time until the class can say it from memory.

Craft (Craft Time): He Is Risen Pop-Up Card

Materials: Cardstock folded in half; Tomb and stone cutouts; Brad fasteners; Markers

1. Glue the tomb inside the card and attach the stone with a brad.
2. Under the stone write, “He is not here; for He is risen” (Matthew 28:6).
3. On the front, draw the hill with three crosses.
4. Give the card to someone and tell them the good news.

Recreation and snack

Game: Roll the Stone: teams roll a large ball (the stone) along a course to the finish. Or “He Is Risen!” freeze tag: tagged players crouch until a teammate taps them and shouts, “He is risen!”

Snack: “Empty tomb”: half a mini pita or a round roll (the tomb) with a grape or round cracker “stone” rolled beside it. Open the pita to show it is empty. Always check allergy information on registration cards before serving food.

Songs (a cappella)

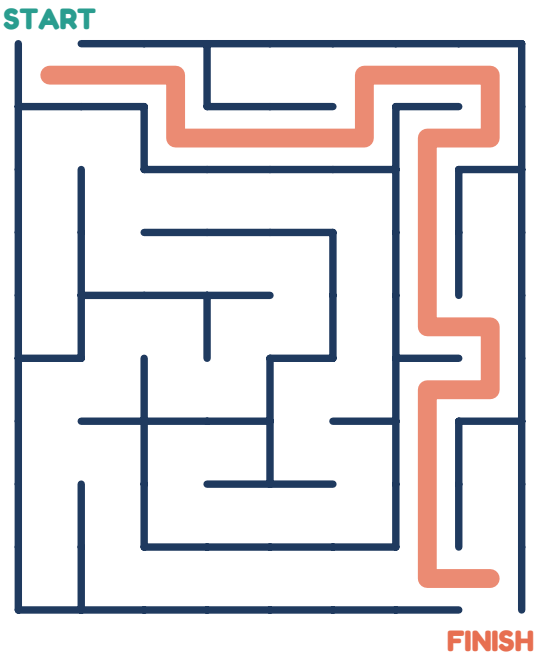
Sing without instruments. Suggested titles: Low in the Grave He Lay (Up from the Grave He Arose); Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross; Nothing but the Blood; Jesus Loves Me; He Is Lord.

Answer keys

Word search

T	G	C	F	B	J	Z	W	Q	R
D	R	R	B	K	I	A	U	S	L
D	I	O	L	Q	P	O	P	D	T
O	S	S	B	Q	D	V	V	N	O
J	E	S	U	S	T	P	S	F	M
C	N	S	I	L	F	A	F	S	B
U	U	A	N	G	E	L	G	T	X
B	X	J	X	P	E	I	L	O	V
V	V	M	W	L	O	V	E	N	I
E	K	B	T	X	D	E	L	E	S

Maze



Fill in the blank

1. Jesus died on the CROSS for our sins.
2. Jesus was laid in a TOMB.
3. A big STONE was rolled in front of the door.
4. An ANGEL rolled the stone away.
5. “He is not here; for He is RISEN.”

Matching

- Joseph: put Jesus in his new tomb
- Angel: rolled away the stone
- Mary Magdalene: came to the tomb early
- Centurion: said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”
- Jesus: died, was buried, and rose again

Sources for this lesson

- “31 Days with Jesus” by Christopher Gallagher, The Preacher’s Pen: Day 26: The Crucifixion (The Ultimate Sacrifice); Day 27: The Guarded Tomb (Waiting in Hope); Day 28: The Resurrection (Risen Indeed) (preacherspen.org/courses/31-days-with-jesus/)
- Preaching Library lessons and outlines: A Slave’s Punishment for a King (Matthew 27:54); Jesus’ Burial and Ours (Matthew 27:57-66; Romans 6:3-11); Opening Our Eyes to Jesus (Luke 24:13-32); Love As Displayed By God (Romans 5:8)
- Scripture: Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30. All quotations from the New King James Version (NKJV).