FOLLOWING JESUS VBS · TEACHER GUIDE · NURSERY (AGES 0-2)

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" (Matthew 28:6) (full verse for helpers: "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.")
Takeaway	Jesus loves me and He is alive!
Daily call	Leader: "He is not here" Kids: "He is risen!"

Objectives

- Hear the story of the cross and the empty tomb in simple words.
- Say the memory phrase: "Jesus loves me and He is alive!"
- Experience God's love through a caring teacher, songs, and play.

Materials

- Bible (NKJV) for the teacher
- An enlarged copy of today's coloring page to use as the story picture
- 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: Paper plates folded in half (tomb) with an opening cut; Gray paper circle (stone); Brad fastener (teacher attaches) or tape; Crayons

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
0:00-0:08	Welcome and free play	Greet each child by name. Offer soft toys that match today's story (a large gray ball or paper "stone" and an empty box).
0:08-0:15	Bible time	Sit in a circle. Hold up the picture and the Bible. Tell the short story with props.
0:15-0:20	Songs and finger play	Sing softly (a cappella) and do today's finger play together.
0:20-0:32	Activity time	Coloring page and the "Find the Picture" sheet with a helper beside each child.
0:32-0:37	Craft	Simple craft (see Craft section). Teachers do any gluing or cutting.
0:37-0:40	Prayer and goodbye	Say the memory phrase, pray a short prayer, and send the take-home story card.

Attention getter

Show a large gray ball or paper "stone" and an empty box. Let children touch and explore it while you say a simple sentence about today's story.

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 loves everyone very much.
- Some people did not love Jesus. They put Jesus on a cross.
- Jesus died on the cross because He loves us.
- Jesus' friends put Him in a tomb. A big stone closed the door.
- On the third day, some women came to the tomb.
- The big stone was rolled away! An angel said, "He is not here; for He is risen!"
- Jesus is alive! The women ran to tell His friends.
- Jesus loves me, and Jesus is alive!

Teacher note for today

Keep this gentle and simple: “Jesus died because He loves us. Jesus is alive!” Do not describe the crucifixion in graphic detail.

Discussion questions

1. Who loves you very much?
2. What was rolled away from the tomb?
3. Is Jesus alive?

Review

- Who was in our story today? (Jesus, the women, and the angel)
- Say our phrase: “Jesus loves me and He is alive!”

Memory verse activity

Say the short verse slowly and have children echo it. Add a motion for each phrase. Repeat it at the start and end of class.

Finger play: The Stone Rolled Away

- Jesus died because He loves me, (cross arms over chest)
- In a tomb so dark was He. (cover eyes)
- The big stone went roll, roll, roll! (roll hands)
- The tomb is empty, look and see! (hands open, peek)
- Jesus is alive today, (jump up)
- Hip, hip, hooray! (cheer)

Craft (Craft Time): Empty Tomb Plate

Materials: Paper plates folded in half (tomb) with an opening cut; Gray paper circle (stone); Brad fastener (teacher attaches) or tape; Crayons

1. Children color the tomb.
2. Teacher attaches the stone so it can roll aside.
3. Roll the stone away together and say, “Jesus is alive!”
4. Write the child’s name and Matthew 28:6.

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

Find the Picture: the empty tomb.

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).