

Empty!

Big Idea *Jesus came back to life after He died.*

Bible Passage *Jesus Leaves the Grave—John 20:1–18*

Lesson Summary

Before she met Jesus, Mary Magdalene had experienced many difficulties. For years, she had been tormented by hateful demons (Mark 16:9). We don't know exactly how those evil spirits had undermined her existence, but ancient texts indicate that Mary may have given herself to prostitution. These accounts associate her with the "woman caught in adultery" (Luke 7:36–50), but that is uncertain. We do know that Mary Magdalene had endured much pain—until the day Jesus cast out the demons and completely changed her life.

Jesus gave Mary what she needed most: forgiveness, freedom from old living patterns, unconditional acceptance, affirmation, and purpose. Before Mary met Christ, she was miserable. Now her life was better than she ever thought it could be. She had found exactly what her heart desired—Jesus.

When the Jews rejected Christ and the Romans crucified Him, the core of Mary's new life collapsed. Who would protect her from the demons now? What would keep her from falling back into sin? Who could she rely on in the future? Without Jesus, Mary was without hope.

That Sunday morning as Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb, she intended to express her love one last time—by caring for His limp body. When she arrived, two angels

startled her. Then the sudden appearance of the resurrected Christ amazed her! With a few encouraging words, Jesus restored her faith and renewed her hope. Mary eagerly returned to tell the disciples what she had seen.

Pray for Wisdom

Precious Heavenly Father, what a glorious day to celebrate! Easter morning has such special meaning because Jesus rose from the grave. Jesus is alive; death has been vanquished! Christ conquered death and promised to never again leave us but to be with us forever.

Lord, generate excitement and faith among my students. Plant within them a desire to tell their friends and family that Jesus is alive! In Christ's name, amen.



DISCIPLE TARGETS

In this lesson, children will...

KNOW (knowledge)

- Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to Mary outside His empty grave

FEEL (character)

- Excited that Jesus is alive again

DO (conduct)

- Tell their friends that Jesus is alive

SUPPLIES

General Supplies

- Bibles, Disciple Guide pages
- Pencils, markers, crayons
- Paper, scissors, tape, glue

Welcome & Worship Time

- EGG HUNT: colored plastic eggs, rocks, basket

Bible Time

- Teaching Image (back cover)—Empty!
- SNACK—biscuit mix or cookie mix
- ON EASTER SUNDAY MORNING: none

Disciple Time

- Puppets (optional)

Welcome & Worship Time

Teacher—Welcome each child warmly. Encourage children to bring their offerings to the Lord.

Learn By Doing—Egg Hunt

Supplies: colored plastic eggs, small rocks or stones, large basket

(For alternate ideas to introduce this lesson, refer to the Additional “Learn By Doing” Activities on page 4.)

Before class, put a small rock or stone inside each plastic egg and hide the eggs around the room. As children arrive, encourage them to search for the colored eggs and put them into the large basket. After the eggs have been found, the children may want to hide them from each other. Show the children the rock inside each egg. Explain that each rock represents the stone that was rolled away from the tomb where Jesus was buried. Tell them they will be hearing about a woman, in the Bible story, who was searching for Jesus.

Sing With Joy

Move the children to worship with a favorite song. Select one below or use a preschool songbook or recording.

- *Praise the Lord Together* (traditional)
- *Praise Him; Praise Him* (traditional)
- *Ho-Ho-Ho-Hosanna!* (traditional)
- *Christ the Lord is Risen Today* (traditional)

Rehearse the Verse

Have the children say the words while cupping their hands over their mouths.

John 20:18—“*Mary told the disciples, ‘I have seen Jesus!’*”

Seek God's Blessing

Talk with God about your time together with the children today, about the Bible story, and about any special needs.

As you pray, use meaningful and simple words from your heart. The children will learn to pray by listening to you.

Bible Time

Teacher—Bring your preschoolers to the Lord. Encourage them to apply Biblical truths in practical ways.

Tell the Truth

Open your Bible to the passage and place it on your lap. (The Bible story is printed on page 3.)

The story, *Empty!*, is based on John 20:1-18. It captures the interest and attention of older preschool children. If you are teaching younger preschoolers, you may want to use the shorter *Summary/Review*.

Talk and Snack

Consider making and serving “Empty Grave Biscuits.” You can prepare these at home; however, the activity may be more meaningful if the children are included in the process of baking.

As you serve the biscuits, remind the children that there were marshmallows inside them before baking. Let the children open their biscuits and discover that they are now empty. Talk about how the grave was empty when Mary went to look for Jesus.

Instructions: Buy buttermilk biscuits in a can (make sure there are enough biscuits for each child). Roll out each biscuit and place three to four miniature marshmallows in the center. Bring edges of biscuits up over the marshmallows and pinch the dough together at the top. Bake according to the directions on the can. Allow the biscuits to cool before serving.

Variations: Other recipes can be found on the Internet by typing “Easter Story Cookies” into your search engine. Several versions of the recipe are available.

While you eat, talk about the Bible story. These questions will help you get started.

- Why was Mary running to see Peter and John?
- What did Mary say to Peter, John, and the angel?
- Whom did Mary see standing near the grave?
- When Mary found out the truth about Jesus, what did she tell all her friends?
- What is the wonderful news we can tell all our friends?

Play and Move

Have the children walk in a circle and shout, “Jesus is alive! Jesus is alive! Let’s go tell all our friends.”

You can vary the activity by having the children hop, skip, run, etc.

Disciple Guide pages

Instruct the children to look at the people in the pictures around the empty grave. Ask them which ones they could tell that Jesus is alive. Have them trace the lines to those pictures.

Learn By Doing—On Easter Sunday Morning

(For alternate ideas to reinforce the Bible story, refer to the Additional “Learn By Doing” Activities on page 4.)

Sing the words and do the actions with the children to the tune of *The Mulberry Bush*.

*Mary was sad as she ran to the grave,
Ran to the grave, ran to the grave.
Mary was sad as she ran to the grave,
On Easter Sunday Morning.*

Other verses:

*When Mary got there, Jesus was gone...
She saw an angel sitting there...*

Bible Story—Empty!

(based on John 20:1-18)

Note for teachers: As you read the “running” part of the story, move your arms as if you were really running. Encourage your students to join you.

Mary is running and running and running. Mary is in a hurry! Where is she going? Why is she running? She has a message to share!

Mary ran down the road, through the town and all the way to her friends’ house. Peter and John were surprised to see her running. “Mary!” they said, “Why are you running? What’s wrong?”

And Mary says,

“Someone has taken Jesus from the grave—and I don’t know where they put Him!”

Now Peter and John were even more surprised! They started running, too! They were running and running and running. They were in a hurry!

Where are they going? Why are they running? They wanted to see for themselves!

When they came to the grave, they looked in. It was empty, just like Mary had said! They saw the place where Jesus had been. They saw the strips of cloth that had been around Jesus. But Jesus wasn’t there!

Peter and John left the grave and ran back toward town. But Mary, who had followed them back to the grave, was crying. She knew Jesus had died, and she thought someone had taken Him away.

Suddenly, an angel came! “Why are you crying?” asked the angel. “What’s wrong?”

And Mary said,

“Someone has taken Jesus from the grave—and I don’t know

As Mary was leaving, Jesus appeared...

What Mary said was, “He is alive!”...

Jesus said, “Go tell my friends”...

Pray for People

Ask the children for prayer requests. Pray for each personal concern. Thank God that Jesus came back to life after He had died. Ask Him to help them share the Good News with their friends that Jesus is alive.

where they put Him!”

Just then, Mary turned and saw someone standing near the grave. It wasn’t Peter. It wasn’t John. Do you know who it was?

It was Jesus! But Mary was so sad, she didn’t know it was Him. “Why are you crying?” asked Jesus. “What’s wrong?”

And Mary said,

“Someone has taken Jesus from the grave—and I don’t know where they put Him!”

If you’re the one who took Him, Please tell me where He is!”

Then Jesus smiled and said her name: “Mary! It’s Me, Jesus. Go and tell My friends that I’m going to see God, My heavenly Father. Then I’ll come back to visit you and all my friends.”

Wow! Mary wasn’t crying any more! She was very happy! Now she knew the truth! Jesus’ grave is empty because He is alive!

There she goes again! Mary went running and running and running. Mary is in a hurry! Where is she going, now? Mary is going to tell her friends that Jesus is alive!

Empty! (Summary/Review)

Tears flowed down Mary’s face as she walked to Jesus’ tomb. *He’s been dead three days*, she thought.

Mary was surprised when she arrived. Someone had moved the giant stone! Mary looked inside—Jesus’ body wasn’t there!

Two angels asked, “Why are you crying?”

“I can’t find Jesus,” she sobbed.

Mary turned and saw a Man standing nearby. “Mary! It’s Me,” Jesus told her. “Go, tell My friends that I’m alive! I’ll visit them soon.”

Mary ran to tell her friends the wonderful news. Jesus is alive!

Additional Learn By Doing Activities

Both *Learn By Doing* sections in this lesson include a suggested learning activity. However, you may want to substitute one or more of the activities below to capture the specific interests and needs of your children.

Select activities based on the ages of your children, their learning style preferences, and their developmental needs.

Coloring Page

Provide copies of the reproducible Bible story picture for this lesson on the inside back cover of the packet.

Happy Easter to You (for younger preschoolers)

Supplies: large rubber ball

Have the children sit in a circle on the floor with their feet spread apart. Take turns rolling the ball to each person and singing, "Happy Easter to You" to the tune of *Happy Birthday*. Be sure to say each child's name in the song as you play this game. Encourage the children to roll the ball instead of throwing it to each other.

Act It Out (for older preschoolers)

Supplies: Bible costumes (optional), large empty box, plants, strips of cloth

Before class, cut a large round circle in the box to represent the stone that was rolled from the grave. Keep the large circle and place it loosely against the box on one side of the hole. Place plants around the box to look like a garden. Lay strips of cloth inside the empty box to show that Jesus is not there. Have children play the parts of Mary, angels, Jesus, and Jesus' friends as you retell the Bible story.

Sand Pictures (for older preschoolers)

Supplies: lightweight cardboard or card stock, glue, colored sand (available in pet, hobby, or craft stores), shallow bowls, spoons, newspaper, markers

Before class, write on each paper in large print, "Jesus is Alive!" Pour colored sand into shallow bowls and cover the table with newspaper. Give each child a piece of heavy paper and with the glue, show them how to trace over the letters. Sprinkle the colored sand over the glue with a spoon and let the sand set for a few minutes. Help children shake the excess sand off their papers back into the bowl and allow the glue to dry completely.

Sewing a Cross

Supplies: card stock or heavy paper, markers, hole punch, yarn, tape, glue

Before class, draw a large cross on a piece of paper and make a copy for each child on card stock or heavy paper. After cutting out the crosses, punch holes around the edge of the crosses. Cut a piece of yarn (approximately 30" long) for each child and tape the ends or dip the ends in white school glue, roll between fingers and hang to dry. Give each child a cross and a piece of yarn. Show the children how to put their yarn through a hole and up through the next. Help them "sew" all the way around their cross. They can either tape the ends to the back of their cross or take the yarn out and do the activity again.

Real or Not Real

Supplies: items that are real and artificial (such as a real/artificial flower, hard-boiled/plastic egg, child/toy person, crackers/plastic play food, fairy tale book/Bible, etc.)

With children sitting down, hold up each item and ask them if they believe it is real or not real. Help them to understand that some stories they hear are make-believe and not real, but that everything the Bible says is true. Talk about the Bible story and how Jesus' resurrection is true. Jesus is alive!

Easter Cards

Supplies: construction paper, markers, scissors, crayons, miscellaneous Easter stickers

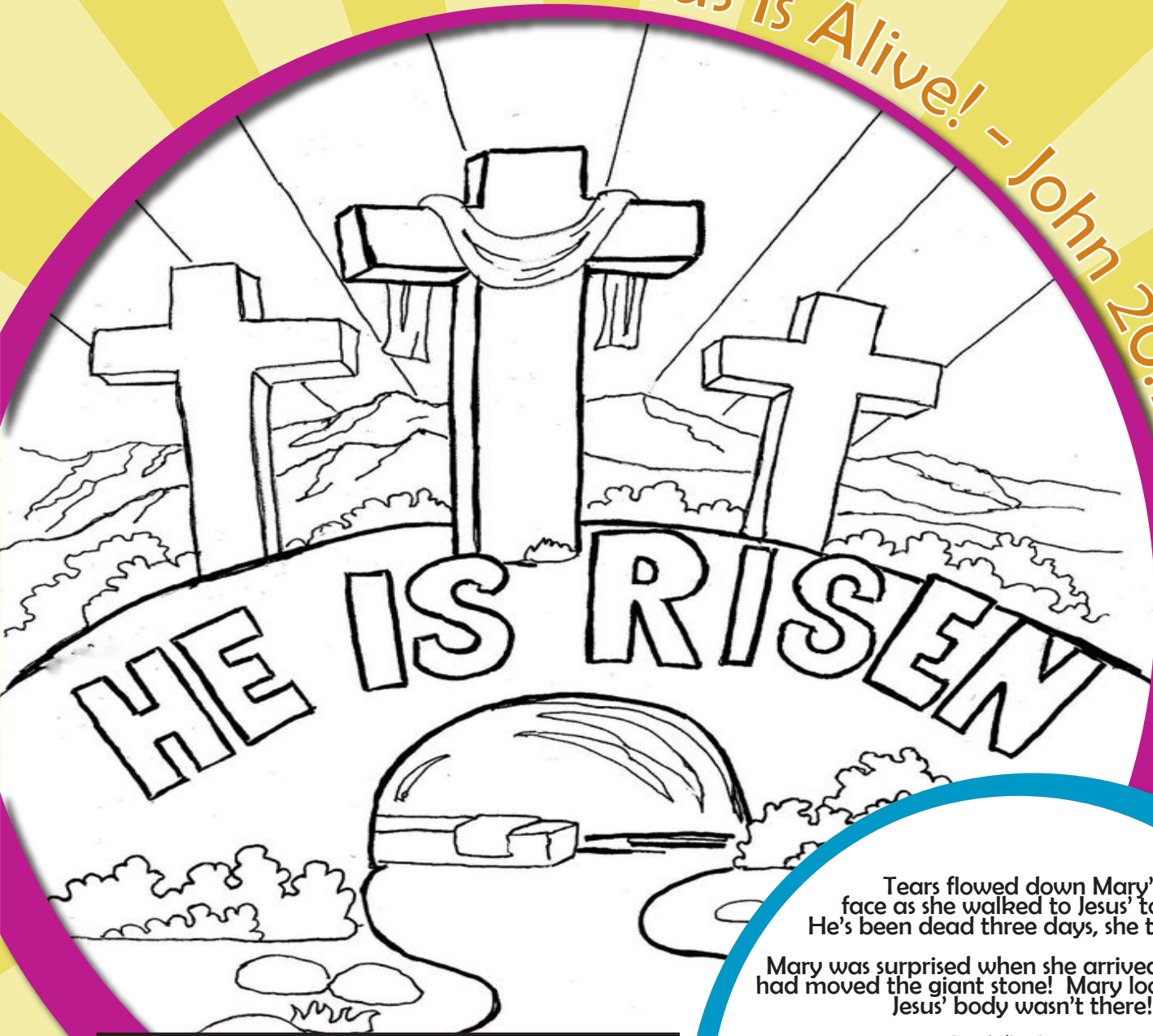
Before class, cut construction paper in half, horizontally, and fold the ends toward the middle to look like double doors. With the ends still folded, draw a large oval shape and cut it out, so that your folded paper now resembles an egg. Give each child a paper egg and let them color them like an Easter egg. Have them open their eggs and place Easter stickers or write, "Jesus is Alive!" on the inside. Tell them they can give their card to someone who needs to hear the Good News.

Empty!

Jesus Leaves the Grave
John 20:1-18

Name: _____

Jesus Is Alive! - John 20:1-18



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Mary was surprised when she arrived. Someone had moved the giant stone! Mary looked inside-- Jesus' body wasn't there!

Two angels asked, "Why are you crying?"

"I can't find Jesus," she sobbed.

Mary turned and saw a Man standing nearby.

"Mary! It's Me," Jesus told her.

"Go, tell My friends that I'm alive! I'll visit them soon."

Mary ran to tell her friends the wonderful news. Jesus is alive!

Jesus Leaves the Grave - John 20:1-18

Parent Partners

Lesson Focus: Jesus Is Alive!

Ways to reinforce this truth with your child:

ASK:

- Where did Mary walk?
- Was Mary surprised when arriving at Jesus' tomb?
- Who was the man standing nearby?
- What did Jesus want Mary to do?

ACT:

- Read the Bible story together (or read the summary on the front of this page). Let one of your friends know that Jesus is alive.
- Learn the Bible verse: John 20:18
Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

