



LAZARUS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: JOHN 11:1-53

Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Jesus knew in advance that Lazarus would rise – Jesus received word that His friend Lazarus was very ill, but He delayed His departure for Bethany for two days, announcing that the sickness “would not lead to death.” Jesus tells His disciples that Lazarus’ illness is for the glory of God and so that the Son may be glorified. Jesus then waited two days and announced that He would go to Lazarus. The disciples objected because the Jews wanted to stone Him. But Jesus remained steadfast. No one could take Jesus’ life. Only He could lay it down. Then Jesus told the disciples that Lazarus had died. This time there was no courier with the news. Jesus, the Son of God, simply knew. Jesus knew that Lazarus was dead, but He also knew that Lazarus would not be dead for long.

Jesus tells Martha that Lazarus will rise again to comfort her. Martha’s faith is strong. She believed that Jesus could have healed her brother had He come sooner. She rightly concludes that if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died. Martha, like many of the Jews, believed in a future resurrection. So when Jesus announced that Lazarus would rise again, she agreed, thinking Lazarus would rise on the final resurrection day. But Jesus meant he would rise today!

Jesus called Lazarus out – Up until now, Jesus had not demonstrated grief for the death of His friend. But when He saw Mary and all the Jews crying, it touched His heart. Of all our actions in life as sinners, perhaps the purest of all our motives is grief. Death is such a wicked enemy of life that those who grieve are pitted resolutely against it. Life is so precious that when it is gone, those who are close can’t help but suffer its loss. When our hatred for death and our love for life come together in grief, it is beautiful in the sight of the Lord.

The family and friends of Lazarus would not grieve for long. Jesus called them to take away the stone. He called to Lazarus to come out. Immediately, Lazarus came out! Many people believed He was the Messiah, and news of this miracle spread. A short time later, Jesus was greeted with praise by a large crowd upon His entrance to Jerusalem. But while some were praising him, others were plotting His death.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

"I am the resurrection and the life." With these words, Jesus revealed that He is the author of life, God over all creation, and the object of our faith. He had already explained to the disciples that He was glad He was not in Bethany to heal Lazarus so that Lazarus might rise again. Now, Jesus declared that He is the one who rules over life itself. Martha, who had earlier complained that her sister Mary was wasting time at the feet of Jesus, declared her faith with two simple words: "I believe." These two simple words are all that God requires. This is not works; it is faith. Her statement points to Jesus, the object of our faith. "I believe" humbles the speaker and looks to the object of its faith. The raising of Lazarus is a picture of the gospel. Death looks to claim people, but the plan of God through Jesus conquers death and saves people from eternal death. Jesus told His disciples that He would lay down His own life that He might "take it up again" (John 10:17). Jesus would soon die, but, like Lazarus, be raised again to new

ON THE ROAD TO EMMANUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Hosea 13:14

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Jesus is the one who ransoms us from the power of the grave. Jesus raised Jairus' daughter. Jesus raised Lazarus. And Jesus Himself was raised from the dead. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life," (John 11:25).

Questions for reflection:

- How does Hosea's prophecy point to Jesus? (Jesus is the one who ransomed us by dying for our sins and then rising again from the grave. It is by Jesus' sacrifice that death was conquered. [see 1 Corinthians 15:55-58].)
- Could this passage be describing anyone else? (No. Jesus is the only one who has the power over death.)

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

LIFE AND DEATH

Supplies

Bring a variety of things that are alive and those that are dead. Some examples of things that are alive: hamster, butterfly, student from your class, potted plant, etc. Examples of things that are dead that you could use: leather shoe, dried up plant, animal pelt, dried up insect, etc.

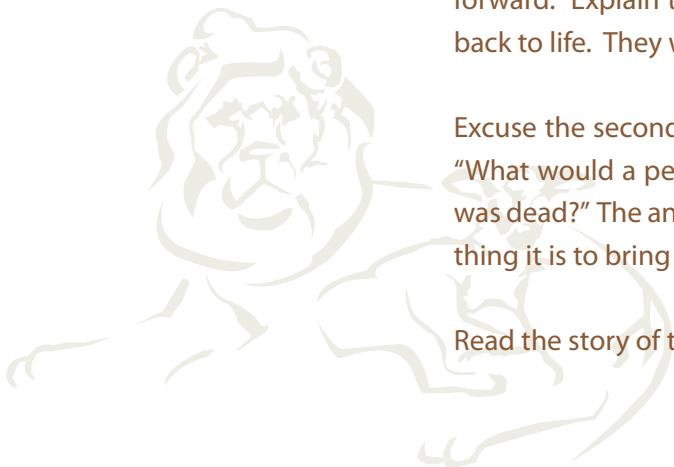
Use this lesson to open your class in order to help the children marvel at life and to show them the glory of Christ in raising life.

Place the objects on a table in front of your class and ask for a volunteer. Ask the volunteer to tell you how you could sort these items into two groups. Tell them the two things are opposite of each other. After a number of guesses, tell them the answer: life and death. Have the student pick out all the objects that are dead. Then try to challenge the student to explain why a particular object is dead. Don't let them say, "Because it is not alive." It is actually a difficult thing to explain life. If a student says, "Because it doesn't move," ask him if the plant moves. If the student says, "Because it doesn't breathe," ask him if the plant breathes. Have a little fun with this.

Excuse the first volunteer and call a second. Ask the second volunteer to come forward. Explain to the volunteer that his or her task is to bring the dead objects back to life. They will look at you like it is impossible, which, of course, it is.

Excuse the second volunteer. Then draw out the class in answer to this question, "What would a person need to be able to do to bring back to life something that was dead?" The answer is not as important as the class seeing just what an amazing thing it is to bring something back from the dead.

Read the story of the raising of Lazarus.



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A LARGE CLASS DRAMA

Supplies:

Tell the children in advance that you are going to do a large class drama and have each child bring in a costume for a character from Biblical times (even a large bathrobe will work fine).

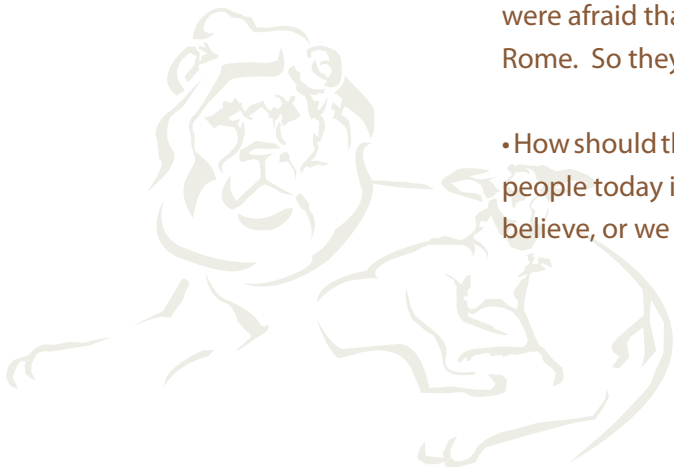
This is a great passage to do a drama involving the entire class. The story has a multitude of characters and the impact of raising Lazarus can wonderfully affect your students.

Don't worry about memorizing lines. Just perform the drama as a mime with a narrator.

Divide your stage, the front of a large class, into thirds. The far left is Bethany at the tomb, the center is the road on the way where Martha greets the Lord, and the far right is where Jesus and the disciples first learn that Lazarus is ill. Act out the Bible story.

When the drama is complete, ask the children the following questions:

- Why did Jesus say He was glad that He was not in Bethany? (Jesus was glad for the sake of the disciples so that they might believe in Jesus. Jesus knew that He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead and that He would use it to help His disciples and those who love Him to believe.)
- Why do you think Jesus waited so long? (Jesus said he waited so that His followers might believe. After four days, no one would doubt that Lazarus was truly dead. When Jesus called Lazarus out from the tomb, they would all see it as a resurrection, and Jesus would be glorified.)
- How did the raising of Lazarus affect the people watching? (Many Jews present believed, just as Jesus predicted.)
- How did the raising of Lazarus affect the Pharisees? (They became upset. They were afraid that so many believers following Jesus would result in trouble with Rome. So they made plans to put him to death.)
- How should the raising of Lazarus affect us? (The ministry of Jesus always affects people today in the same way it affected them while Jesus was alive. Either we believe, or we don't. God, through Jesus, is calling all of us to believe.)



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REMEMBERING THE WORDS OF JESUS

Memorize Jesus' response to Martha in John 11:25-26 as a class. This is a wonderful verse to memorize and an easy one to memorize. It represents the central message of this entire chapter of John's gospel.

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

AN ACTIVITY

Supplies:
pencil and paper

Have the children draw a picture of Lazarus coming out of the tomb wrapped in grave clothes. Write the words, "Lazarus, come out" on your paper.

FOR THE OLDER GRADES

JESUS IS THE LIFE!

Supplies:
paper and pencils for the class

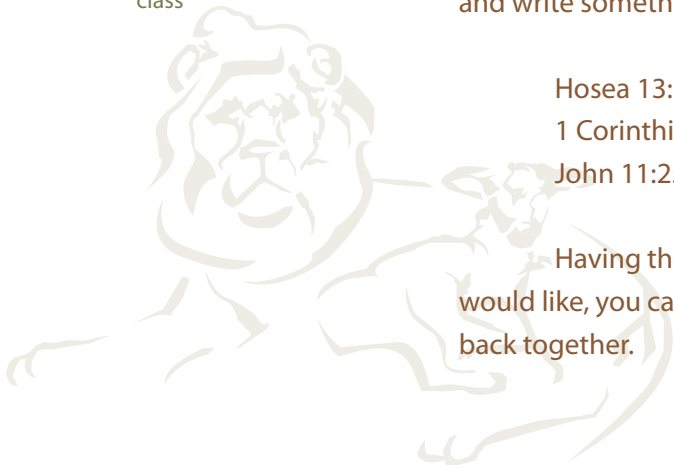
Compare the following three scriptures and write a paragraph explaining how they are similar. Once you give the students an opportunity to examine the scriptures and write something down, talk about it as a class.

Hosea 13:14

1 Corinthians 15:55-58

John 11:25-27

Having the students do their own analysis forces all of them to think. If you would like, you can break the class down into groups of four and then gather them back together.



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

Grave clothes – The dead in Jesus' day were tightly wrapped with cloth strips. A face cloth would be wrapped around their heads. They would be placed in a tomb, at which time spices were added to cover the smell of the body decomposing. Even so, after a few days in warm weather, the body would begin to smell. Bodies would be left in tombs in the outward chamber for a year or so, and then the family would reclaim the bones and place them in a cavity in the wall. That helps to explain why tombs would have stones which can be opened and closed again like a door.

