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Jesus Raises Lazarus

Scripture: John 11:1-44

Theme: Jesus has power over death

Jr High (Ages 12-14)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

"Power Over Death: A Lesson on Jesus' Resurrection of Lazarus" Imagine this: Mary and Martha's brother, Lazarus, had been sick for four days, long enough for friends to stop visiting, for time to blur, and for fear to set in. When Jesus arrived, Lazarus was already buried. That's right, dead. And not just any death, but one that seemed final. But here's the kicker: Jesus didn't just walk away. He chose to raise Lazarus, not as a once-and-done miracle, but as a preview of what's coming for all who trust Him. This story isn't just about Lazarus getting back to life; it's a bold declaration that Jesus owns death and gives us a glimpse of what victory looks like. For us, that means when we face hard losses, sickness, or even the fear of our own mortality, we can ask: Does God still have power over these things? The answer is yes, because He's already shown it. And like Lazarus, we don't have to be afraid anymore. Death isn't the end; it's just the pause before real life with Him starts. Life Application: Ask students to imagine a time they felt "buried", maybe a failure, a relationship that fell apart, or even just the weight of their own fears. Then challenge them: What if Jesus could raise you from that moment today? Encourage them to pray, trust, and remember: no matter how dark it gets, He's already won the ultimate battle. Bonus: Play soft background music or a short video clip of Jesus walking through the tomb (e.g., The Passion of the Christ scene) to make the moment visceral, then transition to discussion. Keep it real, keep it hopeful, and remind them: They're not alone in their battles. Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

Bible Story

Title: The Miracle That Changed Everything

The town of Bethany was just a short trip outside Jerusalem, but it held a special place in the hearts of many, especially Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus. Lazarus had been sick for days, so long, in fact, that his friends

and family had already packed up and headed to Jerusalem, hoping to catch Jesus before it was too late. (John 11:1-6) They didn't want to lose him, but the news spread fast, and by the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead for at least three days. The stench of decay made it hard to even approach the tomb, much less bury him again. This was the kind of crisis that made people question everything, "If God cares, why did this happen?" And in that moment, Jesus didn't offer empty words or vague promises. He answered.

Jesus didn't rush Lazarus back to life just because it was convenient. No, He faced the unthinkable: "Unbelieving Israel," as He called them (John 11:45), the crowd that had cheered Him just weeks earlier for turning water into wine. (John 2:1-11) Some still doubted, Thomas, in particular, had grumbled that he wouldn't believe until he saw the proof (John 11:16). But Jesus didn't let doubt stop Him. He wept, not because He was sad for Lazarus, but because He knew how much the family and friends hated this moment. Then, He told them plainly, "Take off the stone" (John 11:39). The tomb was already open, but the stench was still there, a silent reminder that death had won. For the first time, Jesus didn't hesitate. He commanded, "Lazarus, come out!" And when the dead man stepped into the light, the crowd gasped. (John 11:44) Lazarus wasn't just alive, he was whole, with wounds still visible, as if time had stood still.

This story isn't just about a miracle; it's about the heart of God. Lazarus was dead, buried, and forgotten, yet Jesus didn't wait for permission. He acted when others had given up. That's how God works with us: when we feel like death has won, He sees our brokenness and says, "Wait here." (John 11:6) Sometimes, like Lazarus, we're buried in regret, fear, or sin for days, or years. But Jesus doesn't just fix us; He rushes to us. He calls us out of the tombs we've built for ourselves, even when it feels impossible. The disciples were terrified, what if this got them in trouble with the Pharisees? (John 11:7) But Jesus didn't care about their fear. He cared about Lazarus, and He cared about the truth of His power. That's why He did it: because love doesn't wait for the perfect moment.

Here's the hard part: Lazarus stayed alive for two more days before he died again. (John 11:45-46) The crowd didn't understand why Jesus let it happen, why He didn't rush Lazarus back to life immediately. Maybe they were angry. Maybe they were confused. But Jesus knew this was part of the plan. If He had raised Lazarus instantly, it would have made the resurrection later look like a cheap trick. Instead, He let time unfold, showing that death wasn't the last word. The Pharisees hated this too, and they tried to take Jesus out. (John 11:48-49) But Jesus had bigger plans, He was going to die and rise again, proving that death couldn't hold Him. Lazarus' story was a foreshadowing of that truth.

This miracle doesn't just teach us about healing, it teaches us about hope. When life feels hopeless, when others say "this is it," Jesus doesn't say, "Wait." He says, "Come out." (John 11:43) That's why this story matters today. Whether you're dealing with a broken relationship, a failed dream, or just feeling stuck in the "dead zone" of life, Jesus sees you. He's already called you out of the tomb, whether you've been there for days, years, or even a lifetime. The question is: Will you answer? The Pharisees wanted to destroy Jesus because His miracles threatened their control. But Jesus didn't care about their power, He cared about yours. So today, ask yourself: What's the tomb you're still buried in? What's the "three days" you're waiting to be rescued from? Jesus isn't waiting. He's already holding the stone back, will you step out into the light?

--- Life Application: - When you're stuck in regret or failure, remember Jesus doesn't ask for your "perfect" story, He just needs you to come out of the tomb. - When others doubt your faith, like Thomas, remember Jesus isn't afraid to ask you to see His power for yourself. - When life feels hopeless, like Lazarus' family, trust that God's plan is bigger than your pain. He may not fix it immediately, but He'll bring you out.

(Prayer suggestion: Thank Jesus for the hope He gives us in the darkest moments. Ask Him to show you where you've been buried and help you step into freedom!)

Key Verse

John 11:25 , 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die.'

The Story Behind John 11:25 Imagine Lazarus, someone you loved deeply, gets sick and dies. Friends and family feel heartbroken, and even Jesus sees their pain. But Jesus doesn't let that stop Him. He says, "I'm the

resurrection and life!" Here's the real-life kicker: His words aren't just about Lazarus coming back to life after death, but about you trusting Him today. When you believe in Jesus, no matter what life throws at you, sickness, loss, or even death itself, He promises to be with you. He doesn't just fix the past; He gives you hope for right now, too. That means even when things feel hopeless, His love is your lifeline. How does this help me? Think of Jesus like a superhero who's already won the big battle (death). His promise isn't just for the afterlife, it's a daily power-up for you. When you're scared or struggling, ask: "Does God see me? Does He love me?" His answer? "Yes, and I'll be with you." --- Real question, honest answer: "What if I'm already tired of life?" Jesus didn't come to fix only the sad parts, He came to lighten everything. Even when life feels heavy, He's the rock you lean on. (Psalm 23:4 says He guides you even when the path is hard.) You're not just surviving; you're living for the future He's already written for you.

Activities

Activity 1:

Students explore the emotional weight of Lazarus' death and Jesus' resurrection by designing a "missing person" poster (like the one Mary and Martha would have made) and then debating how Jesus' miracle changed their perspective on life and death.

1. Reflection & Art (5 min)
2. Ask: "If you were Mary or Martha, what would you post about Lazarus to show everyone how important he was?"
3. Split into small groups. Give each group a poster board and ask them to design a "missing person" poster for Lazarus (include details like his favorite hobbies, family, or roles in their community).
4. Let students write/draw with markers.
5. Share & Analyze (5 min)
6. Have each group present their poster. Discuss:
7. What emotions do you feel when you look at this poster? (Fear, sadness, hope?)
8. Why was Lazarus important to his family? How might Jesus' love have changed their view of death?
9. Share a Bible verse (e.g., John 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will never die").
10. Life Application Debate (5 min)
11. Pass out notecards with prompts like:
12. "Have you ever felt like death was permanent for someone close to you?"
13. "How can we trust in God's promise of life even in hard times?"
14. Groups discuss and share responses. Connect to today: "Jesus didn't just fix Lazarus' body, He gave us hope for eternity!"
- 2.

Activity 2:

A kinesthetic activity where students "roll the stone" (literally and figuratively) to understand Jesus' command to Lazarus' friends ("unbind him"). They learn that Jesus doesn't just fix problems, He frees people from the chains of fear and hopelessness.

1. Setup the Scene (3 min)
2. Explain: "When Jesus came to Lazarus, his friends were grieving. They had rolled the stone away, but something was still stopping Lazarus from being raised, maybe fear or sadness. Jesus told them to unbind him (let go of the chains)."
3. Place a paper cone/cup at a distance (e.g., 5 feet) labeled "The Stone."
4. The Physical Challenge (5 min)

5. Groups of 3, 4 students each get a ball. One person rolls the ball to the "stone," then runs back to help another student "unbind" them (e.g., by shaking off imaginary "chains" or high-fiving).
6. Repeat 2, 3 times. Debrief: "What did it feel like to roll the stone? How is Jesus like a 'ball' that helps us move forward?"
7. Relate to Lazarus & Today (5 min)
8. Read John 11:43, 44 aloud: "Jesus shouted, 'Lazarus, come out!'... The dead man came out... Jesus had not died yet."
9. Ask: "What did Jesus do that was different? He didn't just lift the stone, He called Lazarus to life!"
10. Life Application: "Sometimes we feel stuck in grief or fear, but Jesus calls us to unbind and believe in His promise of hope. How can we share that hope with someone today?"
11. Why These Work:

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions designed to spark meaningful conversation and reflection for junior high students (ages 12-14) while connecting Jesus' miracle of raising Lazarus (John 11) to their lives. Each question invites exploration, empathy, and personal application of the story's lessons.
- 1. The Heartache of Loss
 - "Martha and Mary had already lost their brother Lazarus for three days, days filled with sadness, doubt, and maybe even frustration. In the story, Jesus comes to them, but Mary weeps so hard that she doesn't even recognize Him when He arrives. How do you think Martha and Mary were feeling during that time? Why do you think Jesus waited so long to show up? What would you have done if you were one of them? How does this story show us that even when life hurts or doesn't make sense, God is still present, and maybe more present than we realize?"
 - Life Application:
 - Encourage students to think about times they've experienced loss (a friend moving away, a pet passing, a broken relationship, or even a big test where they felt like giving up). How could they apply this lesson, that God isn't absent during hard times, to comfort themselves or help others?
- 2. The Power of Faith vs. Doubt
 - "Lazarus had already been dead for four days when Jesus arrived. The tomb was sealed, the body was stiff with decay, and everyone was convinced, Lazarus was gone forever. But Jesus didn't just walk up to the tomb and say, 'Let's fix this.' He first asked Martha, 'Would you like me to do something?' Imagine being Martha at that moment. What would have been your instinct? Would you have been angry at God for letting this happen, or would you have trusted Him to handle it? Why do you think Jesus asked for her permission before acting? What does this teach us about the role of faith, and doubt, in trusting God?"
 - Life Application:
 - Discuss times when students have felt like their problems were unsolvable (academic struggles, social challenges, or even small disappointments). How could they respond like Martha, asking God to do something, even if they didn't know exactly how?
- 3. The Miracle of Second Chances
 - "When Jesus told Lazarus to 'come out,' the crowd gasped. The whole town had seen the body lying there for days, no one expected it to move. But Jesus didn't just make Lazarus appear, He gave him a second chance to live. Lazarus was no longer the same person, but he was alive. How do you think Lazarus felt after that moment? Was he overjoyed? Overwhelmed? Terrified? What about you? When have you felt like you've had a 'second chance', whether in school, with a friend, or even in your own heart? How did you respond? How could you show gratitude or kindness to someone who has given you a chance to start over?"

- Life Application:
- Connect this to real-life moments of redemption (forgiveness, starting over after failure, or healing from past mistakes). How can students practice gratitude or mercy toward others who've had their own struggles?
- 4. Why Does God Choose to Work in Miracles?
- "Some people in the crowd that day were angry with Jesus because He made Lazarus 'disappear' for so long. Others were amazed. Others still argued, 'We shouldn't ask for miracles, God's ways are too different from ours.' Jesus didn't explain why He waited, but He did say something powerful: 'For my sake, not for yours, did I not do this?' What does that mean? Why might God choose to work in ways that feel confusing or hard for us? Think about a time when you didn't understand why something happened, but later realized it was part of God's plan. How can you trust that even when we don't see the 'why,' God is still working?"
- Life Application:
- Use this to explore faith in the unknown. Ask students to share a time they've doubted God's plan or felt like life wasn't fair. How could they hold onto hope when things don't make sense?
- Why These Questions Work:
- Emotional Connection: Each question invites students to feel into the story (sadness, doubt, joy) rather than just analyzing facts.
- Real-Life Links: They tie the Bible story to relatable struggles (friendship, school, failure, healing).
- Honest Reflection: Avoids overly simplistic answers, encouraging students to wrestle with the complexity of faith and doubt.
- Action-Oriented: Ends with practical ways to apply the lesson (praying, forgiving, trusting God).
- Would you like any of these adjusted to focus more on a specific theme (e.g., friendship, perseverance, or God's sovereignty)?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus: "When Life Feels Like a Dead End... Where Do You Go?" Teacher opens with a moment of quiet reflection: "Imagine this: Mary and Martha sent Jesus a desperate message, 'Our friend Lazarus is sick, and he's been in the tomb for four days.' That's like saying, 'Help! We've already given up!' But Jesus chose to go where they didn't want Him to go. Today, He's not just asking us to believe in miracles, He's saying: What if you let Him resurrect something in you that's been buried for too long?" (Pauses for a beat, then continues with honest, prayerful words:) --- "Lord, You know we're not perfect. We get tired, we doubt, and sometimes we pretend things are 'fine' even when they're not. Like Lazarus in the tomb, we've held back from asking for real help, whether it's for our families, our friendships, or even our own hearts. But You didn't wait until we were 'ready.' You ran toward the mess, and You turned death into life. Today, Jesus, raise something in us that's been weak, quiet, or forgotten. Let us learn to trust You, not just when things are easy, but when they're hard, when we're the ones who've given up, or when we're the ones who need to be revived. Help us to follow Your example: to go where the 'too late' calls out for You, even when it's uncomfortable. And when we mess up? Teach us to ask You, like Martha did, 'Come, Lord!', not in fear, but in hope. Amen." --- Why this works for junior high: 1. Relatable pain: Uses their own struggles ("mess up," "give up") to connect with the story. 2. Action over words: Challenges them to apply the lesson, like Lazarus, what's one thing they're burying that Jesus could raise? 3. Hope for today: Ends on faith, not just gratitude, so they leave with what to do next. Optional follow-up: Ask: "What's one thing you're holding back from God right now? Let's pray He brings it back to life."

>> Missions Spotlight

In Madagascar, the Famadihana ceremony involves exhuming the dead and celebrating their lives. The concept of resurrection is deeply embedded in the culture. Missionaries share that Jesus doesn't just remember the dead , He raises them to life.

-> To the Cross

Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb , even though He knew He was about to raise him. Jesus felt the pain that death causes. Then He raised Lazarus, showing He has power over death. At the cross, Jesus Himself would die and rise again , conquering death forever.