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Jesus Appears to His Disciples

Scripture: Luke 24:13-49, John 20:19-31

Theme: The risen Jesus is real, and He is with us

Jr High (Ages 12-14)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Title: "A Risen Savior Who's Still Here" (Luke 24:13-49 & John 20:19-31) Hook (Engage): Imagine you just got a text from your best friend, "I'm coming over at 7!", but they didn't say how. You're skeptical: "They're probably just joking or lost." But then you see them pull up with a confused look... only to realize they're not there because they've already been resurrected from the grave! That's what happened with Jesus! The disciples didn't just hear rumors; they experienced His alive-ness. And today, we'll ask: How does knowing Jesus is real change how we handle doubt and worry in our own lives? --- Main Point (Teach): Jesus didn't just rise from the dead, He showed up again, in ways the disciples (and us!) would never forget. His appearance broke their fear, filled their hearts, and proved He's not just a story. The real question? How will we respond when life feels uncertain? Do we run from doubt, or trust that He's already there, even if we can't see Him? --- Real Question (Address): "What if I feel like God's answers are slow or unclear?" Luke and John's stories don't sugarcoat the disciples' doubts, after all, they still didn't understand everything at first (John 20:15). But Jesus' first words to them? "Peace." Why? Because He knew their fears, and He's the same today. Life app: When we're stuck in worry or confusion, we're not just supposed to wait for answers, we're invited to ask for peace anyway. And guess what? He's already got a seat at the table. --- Call to Action (Encourage): Here's your mission: Next time you're tempted to doubt God's presence (maybe in a test, a friend's loss, or your own struggles), pause and ask: "Is Jesus really here?" Not as a magic trick, but as the One who reappeared after the darkest night. His peace isn't about making things easy, it's about showing up even when we're scared. So volunteer to share this story with someone this week. Challenge them (or yourself): "What's one way Jesus has 'appeared' in your life recently?" --- Closing (Emphasize): Jesus didn't just fix the past, He's fixing your future, too. And He doesn't need your perfect answers. Just your trust. So lock arms, because no matter how many times life throws curveballs, the risen Lord has already won the game. Now go, be His witnesses. 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 Road to Hope and the Mystery of Doubt" (A Bible Story from Luke 24:13-49 & John 20:19-31)

The sun hung low over Galilee on a rainy evening, turning the dusty roads into slick mirrors. Two disciples, Cleopas and an unnamed friend, were walking back to their village, their steps heavy with sadness. They had left Jerusalem just hours earlier, their hopes crushed when Jesus was crucified. The leaders had called it a fraud. The crowds had turned. Even his closest friends had abandoned him. As they trudged along, a stranger joined them, asking, "What's going on?" Cleopas paused. "We were hoping this Jesus would save Israel," he said, "but it's all gone wrong. We didn't even recognize him!" Their sadness turned to frustration, and then, in that quiet moment, something shifted. The stranger kept talking, pointing out things in Scripture they hadn't noticed before. By sunset, their eyes widened: "Wasn't our hearts burning inside us?" (Luke 24:32).

--- That same night, Jesus appeared to his disciples in a locked room. His hands and side were still there, the wounds from the crucifixion, but he was alive again. The disciples were terrified. Thomas, the one who'd doubted everything, was absent that evening. When the others told him what had happened, Thomas wouldn't believe it. "Unless I see his hands and put my finger in the nail marks, I won't trust it," he muttered. (John 20:24-25) Jesus didn't scold them. Instead, he invited Thomas to touch the wounds, not as proof, but as invitation. When Thomas obeyed, Jesus said, "You believe because you've seen me. But blessed are those who trust even without seeing!" (John 20:27-29). Thomas's doubt wasn't sin, it was real. And Jesus didn't condemn it.

--- Here's the hard truth: Jesus doesn't want us to be perfect. The disciples had failed, doubted, and even abandoned him. But his resurrection wasn't just about fixing their mistakes, it was about saying, "I see you." After seeing him, the disciples didn't instantly become perfect. They still struggled. They argued. They hid. But they trusted. And that's the point. Their fear and doubt didn't ruin their relationship with Jesus. Instead, they became the first witnesses to tell the world about hope.

--- Life Application: Do you ever feel like God's plans don't work out? Or like your doubts keep you from believing? Jesus didn't fix the disciples' failures, he embrace them. His resurrection isn't just about the past (his death and resurrection); it's about today. You don't have to have it all figured out to trust him. Thomas's doubt doesn't disqualify him. And neither does yours. God meets us where we are.

Why This Story Matters: This isn't just about "belief" or "perfect faith." It's about real people, real questions, and real hope. Jesus didn't come to judge our doubts, he came to tell us, "I've got this." Whether you're afraid, confused, or just waiting, his wounds remind us: he's here, and he's not done with you.

--- Discussion Questions for Junior High: 1. Why do you think the disciples felt so sad after Jesus died? 2. What's one way you've doubted God in the past? How did he show you he's still with you? 3. How can we trust God even when we don't understand everything?

Key Verse

John 20:29 , 'Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

The Verse in a Story: Imagine you're playing video games, and someone tells you the secret code to unlock the treasure room. You watch the game, see how the characters solve the puzzle, and guess the code, but you never actually step inside the game. If you believe the secret code without seeing it for yourself, you're still right! That's what Jesus means here: Some of us got to see Him rise from the dead (like Peter and Mary), but many of us, like you and me, never got to physically touch Him. But that doesn't mean we're wrong! Our faith is real even if we never saw Him with our own eyes. Why It Matters: This verse reminds us that God's truth isn't just about proof, it's about trust. Even if you can't see Jesus right now, His love and promises are real. If you believe in Him without seeing it all, that's how God honors you, like a superhero who wins battles they can't see coming! Ask Him today: What's one way you can trust Him even when you don't have a perfect answer? (Bonus question for reflection: If someone said, "I know God loves me because I saw Him do it," would you believe them? Why or why not?)

Activities

Activity 1:

1. Set the Scene (2 min):
2. Begin by sharing a brief story from Luke 24:13, 35: How the disciples met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Ask:
3. "What was their biggest doubt? What surprised them?"
4. Hold up the tomb outline. Say:
5. "Jesus didn't just appear to them, He changed their lives forever."
6. Clue Hunt (3 min):
7. Distribute the printed tomb outline. Give each group 1, 2 minutes to brainstorm 3, 4 "clues" from the Gospels about what Jesus did after appearing to His disciples (e.g., ate with them, appeared in the middle of the room, spoke of His future suffering).
8. Have them write/draw these clues on their tombs.
9. Art & Reflection (5 min):
10. Assign each group one "clue" to decorate visually. For example:
11. "Jesus' hands were scarred" Draw nail marks.
12. "He ate bread" Add a slice of bread.
13. "He spoke to Thomas" Add a silhouette of Thomas.
14. Afterward, discuss: "How did Jesus' appearance change the disciples? How can His presence change your fears or doubts?"
15. Life Connection (3 min):
16. Ask: "What's something you've doubted or felt afraid of? How can you trust Jesus in those moments?" Leave space for honest sharing (or use a private journal if uncomfortable).

Activity 2:

1. Read & Role-Play (4 min):
2. Read John 20:24, 29 aloud. Pause after Thomas' line: "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger into them, and unless I put my hand into His side, I will not believe."
3. Ask: "Why do you think Thomas doubted?" Let students share.
4. For the next few minutes, have one student act as Thomas, asking skeptical questions (e.g., "How can I know God really works this way?"). Others can respond with scriptural answers.
5. Personal Doubts (5 min):
6. Turn to students: "Thomas' doubt was valid. What's a question or fear you've had about God, faith, or His promises?" Write it on an index card.
7. In pairs, share their cards and brainstorm one Bible verse or principle to answer it.
8. Faith in Action (4 min):
9. Ask: "How can you put your doubts to rest with God's help? For example, Thomas didn't doubt after seeing Jesus. What's one step you can take to trust Him this week?"
10. Journal prompts:
11. "Where do I struggle to believe?"
12. "What's one way I can 'touch' God today?"
13. Closing Prayer (2 min):
14. Pray together: "Lord, help us like Thomas to find hope in You. Remind us that Your love is bigger than our doubts." Encourage students to pray their own doubts aloud.

15. Why These Work for Junior High:
16. Engagement: Both activities use hands-on tools (art, role-play) to keep energy high.
17. Honesty: They invite real questions (e.g., "How can God be real if I can't see Him?") without sugarcoating.
18. Life Application: Tie doubts to everyday struggles (exams, friendships, fears of failure).
19. Small Groups: Perfect for 3, 10 students; easy to adapt with more time for sharing.

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for junior high students that dive into the heart of the story of Jesus appearing to His disciples, helping them reflect on its meaning and relevance to their lives:
- The Road to Emmaus: A Question of Hope
 - Imagine you're on that long, confusing road with two disciples, wondering what tomorrow will bring. Jesus walked with them, answered their doubts, and suddenly it all made sense. What's something in your life right now that feels like it's missing a piece, like you're walking blind? How do you think Jesus might meet you there?
 - (This question invites students to connect the disciples' longing for answers with their own struggles, encouraging them to reflect on how Jesus can be present in their own uncertainties.)
- The Empty Tomb: Fear and Faith
 - When the disciples saw Jesus after He rose from the dead, they were scared, until He showed Himself and said, "Peace be with you." The apostle Thomas even doubted at first, but then he got the chance to put his hands in the wounds. What's something that makes you hesitate to believe God is working in your life, even when you can't see it? How do you think Jesus would comfort you in that moment?
 - (This question helps students grapple with doubt and fear, showing how Jesus meets them with reassurance, just like He did for the disciples.)
- Doubting Thomas: A Lesson in Trust
 - Thomas didn't believe until he saw for himself. What's something you've held onto because you needed proof, even when you didn't have to? How might Jesus be calling you to trust Him more, even when you can't see the outcome yet?
 - (This question pushes students to think about their own tendency to seek control or certainty, and how faith often means learning to trust before we fully understand.)
- The Great Commission: Why It Matters
 - After Jesus appeared to His disciples, He told them to go and share His message. If you could ask Jesus one question about how to follow Him in your daily life, what would it be? Then, imagine you're one of those disciples, what would it look like for you to share what you've learned with someone else this week?
 - (This question ties the story to real-life action, helping students see how their faith is meant to grow through sharing it with others, just as Jesus did with His disciples.)
- These questions encourage students to reflect deeply, connect the story to their own lives, and think about how they can apply it to their own journey with faith.

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus for Junior High Students: "Jesus Comes Back, What Does That Mean for Us?" "Teacher, let's pray together like the disciples did that night in the upper room. When Jesus stood among them, full of light and not afraid to show His hands and feet, they weren't just amazed; they were changed. They had walked with Him for years, but now He wasn't just a teacher, they saw Him as their King, their friend, and their promise keeper. Just like the disciples, we might feel like we've had our doubts, our questions, or even our worst moments. But Jesus isn't

just showing up once; He's saying, 'I'm here for YOU, even when the world feels messy.' Today, let's ask Him to help us see like He does, through the cracks, not just the bright spots. Help us trust that His presence isn't just a one-time miracle, but a daily invitation to follow, learn, and believe. And when we mess up (because we will), remind us that He still walks with us, even if we don't see Him first." --- How to Use This in Class: 1. Hook: Start by asking, "What's the hardest part about trusting someone you've known for a long time?" Let students share honestly (e.g., "I've been hurt before," "I'm not sure I'm ready"). 2. Read Luke 24:36, 43 or John 20:19, 20 (the disciples' reactions: fear wonder doubt joy). 3. Pray Together: Use the above prayer, but invite students to whisper answers to their own questions aloud (e.g., "Jesus, if you could show yourself to me right now..."). 4. Life Application: End with: "Jesus doesn't just fix problems, He gives us a new way to see them. Today, let's ask Him to show us one thing we can trust Him for, even if it's small." Why It Works: - Honesty: Acknowledges doubt and past mistakes (e.g., "we've been hurt"). - Hope: Frames Jesus' appearance as an ongoing promise, not a one-time event. - Engagement: Uses their own struggles ("what's the hardest part?") to connect.

>> Missions Spotlight

In secular Europe, many people doubt the resurrection. Yet in the same cities where doubt is strongest, immigrant churches are growing rapidly. African, Asian, and Latin American believers are bringing the joy of the resurrection back to Europe.

-> To the Cross

Jesus appeared to His disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.' Because of the cross, we have peace with God. Because of the resurrection, we have the living Jesus with us always. Thomas doubted, and Jesus gently proved He was real. He meets our doubts too.