

united kingdom

JESUS ALIVE
& ASCENSION

the Kingdom story from creation to revelation

JESUS ALIVE AND ASCENSION

Based on NLT

Introduction

Jesus was unjustly executed and, because it was a religious day of rest, was hurriedly buried in a tomb.

Mark 16:1-4

Saturday evening, when the *religious day of rest* had ended, a woman named Mary and some other women who followed Jesus went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body, *as was the custom in those days*. Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside.

John 20:11, 14-16

Jesus' body wasn't there! Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. ... "Dear woman, why are you crying?" He asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought He was the gardener, so *she said* ... "If you have taken Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will go and get Him." "Mary!" *the Man said. Mary realised He was Jesus!* She turned to Him and cried out ... "Teacher!"

John 20:17-18

Jesus said, "Go and find my brothers." ... Mary ... found the followers and told them, "I have seen Jesus!"

Transition (John 20, 21; Luke 24; Acts 1)

Over the next forty days, Jesus appeared at different times to His followers and taught them many things.

Matthew 28:18-20

One day Jesus came and told His followers, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make followers of all people in all the nations, baptising them to show that they've turned away from their disobedience and turned towards God. Teach these new followers to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Acts 1:4-5, 8

Later ... one time when He was eating with them, He commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised, as I told you before. John baptised with water, but in just a few days you will be baptised with *God's Spirit* ... and you will receive power ... to tell everyone everywhere the Good News."

Acts 1:9-11

After saying this, He was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see Him. As they strained to see Him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ... They said, "Why are you standing here staring into *the sky*? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday He will return from heaven in the same way you saw Him go!"

Conclusion

After this Jesus' followers stayed in Jerusalem, praying and meeting together. And they waited for God's Spirit to come, just as Jesus had promised.

TELLING THE STORY

Why this story?

Jesus proves who He is by being raised from the dead. He commissions the citizens of His Kingdom to expand it, and God promises that one day Jesus is coming back to rule! In the meantime, He promises us His Spirit to empower us to live a full life and to rule in our hearts.

Jesus' followers are devastated. Everything they had hoped for is gone. The one they had trusted in is dead, and the hope He brought has disappeared. As the women go to pay their last respects, they discover something they had never expected (although Jesus told them it would happen!). Jesus is not dead! He appears to Mary first, and then to many of His followers over the next 40 days, proving that He is alive. When it is time for Jesus to ascend to His Father, He leaves – giving a commission and a promise. He tells us to go and make followers, baptising and teaching them, and He gives us a promise that God's Spirit will be with us – giving us the power we need to do all He has commanded.

Key concepts to include in your story

- Transition from the death story – Jesus has died and has been hurriedly buried in a garden tomb.
- Mary and some other women went to the tomb early on Sunday morning to properly prepare Jesus' body for burial.
- They wonder how they will roll the stone away, but when they arrive, they find it already rolled aside.
- Mary stands outside the tomb, crying. A Man who she thinks is a gardener comes up to her.
- Mary asks Him if He knows where they have put Jesus' body.
- The Man says "Mary." Mary immediately knows that it is Jesus. Jesus tells her to tell the others.
- Mary tells the others that Jesus is alive.
- Jesus appears to and teaches His followers several times over the next 40 days.
- One day Jesus says: "I have been given authority. Go make followers of all nations, teaching and baptising them."
- Jesus tells His followers that He is always with them.
- Jesus promises that in just a few days, they will receive God's Spirit.
- As his followers watch, Jesus ascends to heaven.
- Two white-robed men tell Jesus' followers: "Why are you looking into the sky? One day Jesus will come back in the same way you have seen him go."
- Jesus' followers wait and pray in Jerusalem, just as He told them to.

Notes about how the story was crafted

In an attempt to follow Mary Magdalene's storyline, this story is taken from all four Gospels. It is very difficult to piece together the timeline of that Sunday morning, so we have chosen one character to follow. We have omitted John 20:12-13, allowing Jesus Himself to show His resurrection, rather than introduce yet another supernatural element (the angels in the tomb) with which our audience may not be comfortable.

Jesus calls His followers **brothers** in John 20:17, indicating His close relationship with them. You may use this title unless your audience will find it confusing, and then you could simply say, **Go find my followers ...**

Jesus taught His followers many things after His resurrection on several different occasions. For the purpose of this story set, we have chosen to focus on Jesus' commission to His followers and His promise of God's Spirit.

Disciples has been replaced by **followers**, following the vocabulary introduced in previous stories. However, you should use the same term you have been using throughout your stories.

Baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit has been replaced by **baptising them to show that they've turned away from their disobedience and turned towards God** for two reasons: 1) The Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) has not yet been explicitly introduced. Although important, we wanted to focus on other things in this first set of stories, and 2) We wanted to stress again what baptism symbolises – the turning away from disobedience (sin) and the turning towards God.

Holy Spirit has been replaced by **God's Spirit** for consistency throughout the story set.

The white-robed men are angels, even though the biblical text does not explicitly state that. You may state that they are angels if there is confusion about who these men were.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Retelling the story

- As your group practices retelling this story, help them see the different scenes in this story.
 - The women go to the tomb with spices, wondering who will roll the stone away.
 - Mary stands outside the empty tomb, wondering where Jesus' body is. A Man whom she thinks is a gardener comes, and she discovers that it is Jesus.
 - Jesus appears to His followers several times over the next 40 days.
 - Near the end of Jesus' time on earth He speaks to His followers
 - He commissions them to make followers, baptise and teach them
 - He tells them to wait in Jerusalem and that He will send God's Spirit to help them
 - Jesus goes back into heaven, and two men say that Jesus will come back someday in the same way they saw Him leave.
 - Jesus' followers wait in Jerusalem.

Questions for discussion

You don't have to ask all of these questions in your discussion times. These questions are discussion starters, but you will find that often, once people feel comfortable, they talk about many of these things naturally. However, these questions are helpful to keep a conversation going where needed, and they provide a logical sequence of working through the story. Even if you don't ask all the questions in a group, try to ask people what this story means for them personally. You'll find that as you continue to interact with God's Word at a deep level, God's Spirit will reveal things for your life in a wonderful way!

- What do you like about this story?
- What bothered you about this story?
- What does this story show you about God?
- What does this story show you about people?
- What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
- How will you remember this story? (*Tell it!*)
- Is there anyone you would like to tell this story to? Or anyone you would like to practice with? E.g. Your children, your best friend, your wife, your husband, a mum at the school gate, your work colleague, your neighbour. (It's true that the best way to learn a story is to tell it. So why don't you give it a go and chat to each other next week about how you found it?)
- How does this story contribute to our understanding of the Gospel? How is this story part of the Gospel?

Questions people may have

This section can never be exhaustive. Remember that during your group discussion times, you want to focus on the above questions rather than get sidetracked by deeply academic issues. Part of the joy of experiencing and studying God's Word in this way is allowing God's Spirit to teach us and reveal His truth to us through the narrative of the individual stories, and ultimately through the narrative of the larger story line. However, we understand that sometimes people feel they need some deeper answers. Sometimes, the storyline has to speak for itself, and we have to trust it to do so. However, if your group needs some deeper answers in order to go on, here are some basics that you can discuss. If you have unresolved questions, please come and ask, and we'll help you find the answers.

- Why did the women want to anoint Jesus' body with burial spices?
 - *In 1st-century Palestine, spices were not used to mummify the body, but to show respect and offset the odours of decomposition and to attempt to keep the body fresher for longer. John 19:39-40 indicates that Jesus' body was wrapped in spices on Friday when He was buried; either the women were not close enough to see this, or they wanted to show additional respect to the body. "Anointing" may refer to the women wanting to pour oil over the head. In that case, the spices that the women carried would have more likely been in the form of liquid perfume (unlike the more solid spices that would have been used at the time of burial). The spices probably would have consisted of oil mixed with myrrh and aloes. The women probably bought their spices either late Friday before the Sabbath began or in the short time that shops opened up on Saturday evening after the Sabbath day of rest was finished. Purchasing the spices that late would have made it impossible to visit the tomb Saturday evening (the Sabbath ended at 6PM and by that time it would have been getting dark)—so they had to wait until the next morning.*
- Was there really proof that Jesus came back to life?
 - *Entire books have been written about this subject, and we would encourage you to research more about the historicity of Jesus' resurrection if that interests you. The biblical text gives us some clues that point to the truth of Jesus' resurrection:*
 - *Jesus appeared to many followers on several different occasions over a 40-day period. 1 Corinthians 15:6 says that He appeared to as many as 500 people! Could that many people have been wrong? Could that many people have been that delusional? Could that many people have lied so well? Would so many people, in the years to come, have willingly given up their lives for such a lie?*
 - *Matthew 28:11-15 refutes a story that the religious leaders tried to disseminate about Jesus.*
 - *Everything fits: the prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament (see Isaiah 53) and Jesus' own prophecies about Himself. Countless lives, many recorded in the New Testament and many in the ensuing years, have been miraculously transformed. In Acts 5:38-39 an influential Jewish teacher gives some wise advice: **"If they are planning and doing these things merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown. But if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You may even find yourselves fighting against God!"** 2000 years later, followers of Jesus are still being transformed, still following, still dying for the cause of Jesus.*

JESUS ALIVE AND ASCENSION – for children

Based on NLT

Introduction

Jesus was *killed unfairly* and, because it was a religious day of rest, *He was quickly* buried in a tomb.

Mark 16:1-4

Saturday evening, when the *religious day of rest* had ended, a woman named Mary and some other women who followed Jesus went out and *bought some sweet-smelling* spices *to put on* Jesus' body. Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside.

John 20:11, 14-16

Jesus' body wasn't there! Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she *bent down* and looked in. She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. ... "Dear woman, why are you crying?" He asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought He was the gardener, so *she said* ... "If you have taken Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will go and get Him." "Mary!" *the Man said*. Mary realised He was Jesus! She turned to Him and cried out ... "Teacher!"

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Transition (John 20, 21; Luke 24; Acts 1)

Over the next forty days, Jesus appeared at different times to His followers and taught them many things.

Matthew 28:18-20

One day Jesus came and told His followers, "I have been given all *power* in heaven and on earth. *So* go and make followers of all people in *the entire world*, baptising them to show that they've turned away from their disobedience and turned towards God. Teach these new followers to obey *everything I have taught* you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of *times*."

Acts 1:4-5, 8

Later ... *one time* when He was eating with them, He *told* them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised, as I told you before. John baptised with water, but in just a few days you will be baptised with God's Spirit ... and you will receive power ... *to tell everyone everywhere the Good News*."

Acts 1:9-11

After saying this, He was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see Him. As they *struggled* to see Him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ... They said, "Why are you standing here staring into *the sky*? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday He will return from heaven in the same way you saw Him go!"

Conclusion

After this Jesus' followers stayed in Jerusalem, praying and meeting together. And they waited for God's Spirit to come, just as Jesus had promised.

TELLING THE STORY – for children

Key concepts to include in your story

The story will need to be simplified at varying levels based on the age group of the children you are teaching. This means that many of the details in the story will need to be summarized. However, you should include the following concepts in your story.

- Transition from the death story – Jesus has died and has been hurriedly buried in a garden tomb.
- Mary and some other women went to the tomb early on Sunday morning to properly prepare Jesus' body for burial.
- They wonder how they will roll the stone away, but when they arrive, they find it already rolled aside.
- Mary stands outside the tomb, crying. A Man who she thinks is a gardener comes up to her.
- Mary asks Him if He knows where they have put Jesus' body.
- The Man says "Mary." Mary immediately knows that it is Jesus. Jesus tells her to tell the others.
- Mary tells the others that Jesus is alive.
- Jesus appears to and teaches His followers several times over the next 40 days.
- One day Jesus says: "I have been given authority. Go make followers of all nations, teaching and baptising them."
- Jesus tells His followers that He is always with them.
- Jesus promises that in just a few days, they will receive God's Spirit.
- As his followers watch, Jesus ascends to heaven.
- Two white-robed men tell Jesus' followers: "Why are you looking into the sky? One day Jesus will come back in the same way you have seen him go."
- Jesus' followers wait and pray in Jerusalem, just as He told them to.

Example of a simplified version of the story for children

Jesus was killed in an unfair way, and He was quickly buried in a tomb since it was a religious day of rest. On Saturday evening, when the religious day of rest had ended, a woman named Mary and some other women who were Jesus' followers bought some sweet-smelling spices to put on Jesus' body. Very early on Sunday morning, just as the sun was coming up, they went to the tomb. While they were walking there, they wondered who would roll away the stone for them that blocked the entrance to Jesus' tomb. But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the very large stone had already been rolled away. Jesus' body wasn't there! Mary stood outside the tomb crying, and she bent down and looked inside the tomb while she was crying. When she turned to leave, she saw someone was standing there. He asked her, "Dear woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" Mary thought the Man was the gardener, and she spoke to Him. "If you have taken Jesus away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will go and get Him." "Mary!" the Man said. Then Mary realised He was Jesus! She turned to Him and cried out, "Teacher!" Jesus said, "Go and find my brothers." So Mary went to go find Jesus' followers, and she told them, "I have seen Jesus!" Over the next forty days, Jesus appeared at different times to His followers and taught them many things. One day Jesus came and told His followers, "I have been given all power in heaven and on earth. So go and make followers of all people in the entire world. Baptise them to show that they've turned away from their disobedience and turned towards God. Teach these new followers to obey everything I have taught you. And know that I am always with you – even until the end of times!" At another time when Jesus was eating with His followers, He told them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until my Father sends you the gift He promised – like I told you before. John baptised people with water, but in just a few days you will be baptised with God's Spirit and you will receive power to tell everyone in the world the Good News." After Jesus said this, He was lifted up into the sky until the clouds covered Him and His followers couldn't see Him anymore. As the people struggled to watch Jesus rising into heaven, two angels suddenly stood beside them. They said, "Why are you standing here staring into the sky? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday He will return from heaven in the same way you saw Him go!" After all this happened, Jesus' followers stayed in Jerusalem – like Jesus told them to do. They prayed together and met together as they waited for God Spirit to come – just as Jesus had promised.

Retelling the story

The following activities can be used to vary your storying sessions with the children and keep the action fresh and exciting. They also help the children learn the stories in different ways. You'll find as children journey through this story set with you, they become more and more capable of learning even complicated stories quickly and well. Varying activities and keeping it fun helps the children write the stories on their heart so that they can pull them out of their toolbox whenever a situation comes up where they can use them!

- **Charades** – Have participants choose one line from the story and use actions to convey that line to the rest of the group. The child that guesses correctly goes next.
- **Skit** – Assign parts to groups and have them act out the story as you or a participant narrates. This can be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, you may choose to have each team act out the whole story, or assign sections and have them perform the skits in chronological order one after the other.
- **Song** – This activity seems to work best in small groups of older and more advanced students. If you believe your group would enjoy this activity, have them write and perform a song based on a story or a portion of a story. To make this task easier, have each group choose a song melody as their foundation and change the lyrics as needed, as opposed to starting from scratch.
- **Sign Language** – This is a great way to incorporate kinaesthetic learning into storying. Work with the participants to develop "sign language" for keywords in the story. This will help them to remember the order and progression of the story. This activity may also be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, have a participant from each team narrate as the group demonstrates their motions. The more creative, the more likely they are to remember it! Sign language is a good activity if younger and more inexperienced storytellers are part of the group.
- **Perspective Shift** – This creative and critical thinking activity works best later in the story set. Assign groups of children different characters in the story. They then adjust the story they have learned to the perspective of that character. For example, they could tell the Fall story from Adam and Eve's perspectives or the Abraham story from Abraham's perspective.
- **Memory** – The storyteller starts this activity by saying the first line of the story. The story then moves around the circle as each participant tells a line. An alternate method is to go back and forth between partners as they tell the story to each other.
- **Popcorn** – The storyteller also starts this activity. As children remember, they raise their hand. When ready, the storyteller yells "pop" and the name of someone with their hand raised. That person will then jump in until more hands are raised and they shout "pop" to pass the story to another child. You will likely need to demonstrate how this works.
- **Interview** – Children are assigned different characters. A child designated as "interviewer" asks the characters questions about what happened in the story and the character answers according to his or her role. For example, the interviewer could ask Adam about what he witnessed or the actions he took in the garden when he ate the fruit, and Adam would give his answer.
- **Action words** – Before telling the story, the storyteller gives instructions associated with particular words. Children listen for those words in the story, and must do appropriate action when heard. For example, the storyteller would tell the participants to wiggle their arm like a snake anytime they hear the word "snake." There should be multiple words associated with actions in the story. This activity also works well with a younger audience.

Children's Teaching Materials

Sunday mornings will begin in the warehouse with a joint children's worship time led by a youth worship band followed by a storying session with the roving storyteller. Then groups will disperse to their usual meeting locations for the age-appropriate teaching of the story and activities that reinforce that story's message.

Sparks

10:30	Retell the story using a Storybook Bible.	Resources Needed: • Storybook Bible • Rice cakes
	Snack – rice cakes	
10:45	Discussion & activity ~ Use puppets/figures to act out Jesus coming back to life and spending time with His followers. ~ Wrap the Jesus figure in something fluffy like a cloud while explaining that He went up to heaven and couldn't be seen again.	• Wadding or cloth • Figures/puppets
11:15	Music: ~ Go Tell is on the Mountain ~ Jesus' Love is Very Wonderful ~ My God is so Big	• Music
11:20	Play	

Little Flames

10:30	Begin with prayer. (Don't repeat a specific prayer, but follow the general idea of the prayer below.) ~ Say "Hi" to God, tell Him we're glad He's there with us and ask Him to help us see Him, hear Him and know Him. Invite Him into everything we'll be doing today. Keep today's focus in mind: "Jesus wants me to tell everyone the Good News!"	Resources Needed:
10:35	Retell the story using visual aids (pictures). ~ Let the children act out the story using costumes.	• Visual aids (pictures) • Costumes
10:45	"Knowledge Harvest" conversation: ~ What did Mary and some of the other women want to put on Jesus' body? ~ What did the women see when they arrived at the tomb? ~ What did Mary do when she saw the Jesus' body was gone? ~ Whom did Mary think she was talking to? ~ Who was Mary talking to? ~ What did Jesus say to Mary? ~ What did Mary tell Jesus' followers? ~ What did Jesus want His followers to do?	

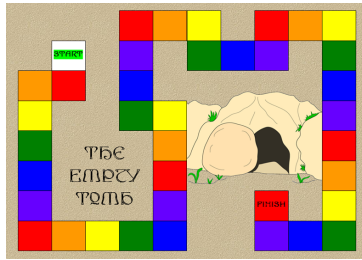
~ What gift did Jesus say that God was going to send to His people?
 ~ What happened to Jesus after He was finished talking to His followers?
 ~ What did the angels say to the crowd that watched Jesus rise to heaven?
 ~ After Jesus went to heaven, what did Jesus' followers do while they waited for God's Spirit?

10:50	Biscuit break – Use this relatively calm opportunity for a little chat and prayer time.	• Biscuits
10:55	Popcorn Prayer ~ Have simple prayers, popcorn style: "Thank you, Jesus, for _____!"	
11:00	Game: ~ Before class begins, hide some cups with sweets. ~ Use a cup with a small ball and follow the trail to find the hidden sweets.	• Cups • Sweets • Ball
11:10	Music: ~ "Jesus' Love is Very Wonderful" ~ "My God is so Big" (with actions)	• Music • CD Player
11:15	Learn the words of the week: "Jesus wants me to tell everyone the Good News!" Use visuals for the kids to help them learn the words.	• Visuals to help learn the phrase
11:20	Craft: This is the Real King ~ Colour and decorate a picture of Jesus being alive and happy.	• Black card • Picture of Jesus • White sheet material • Flowers • Gold, star stickers
11:30	If there is any remaining time (or the previous activities finish early), allow the children to freely choose to do whatever they want to do. Play story-relevant music in the background. Leaders should engage with the children during this time: celebrate them, pray for them, love them. ~ Play with story-oriented toys ~ Role play ~ Play-dough creations ~ Colouring station	• Story-oriented toys • Play-dough • Colouring sheets • Blank paper • Crayons

Resources Needed:

10:30 Share the rules, review last week's story and retell today's story

10:35 Activity:



~ Use the board game (found at the end of this lesson material). Print this and tape it to the wall.

~ Split the kids into teams, and ask them questions about today's story. Each time a team gets a question correct, they get to spin the wheel and move on the board.

- Spinner
- Game board
- Blue tack
- Game markers (one for each team)

10:40 Split into groups and have the children help retell the story

Discuss the questions:

- ~ What do you like about this story?
- ~ What bothered you about this story?
- ~ What does this story show you about God?
- ~ What does this story show you about people?
- ~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
- ~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*
- ~ Who will you tell this story to?

Pray for who they want to share the story with

11:00 Game: Roll the Stone

- ~ Kids stand in a circle with their legs apart. They cannot move their feet.
- ~ Using their hands, kids try to roll a football (representing the stone from the story) between other people's legs. If the ball rolls through someone's legs, that person is out.

- Football

11:15 Craft: Jesus Ascending



- ~ Before class, print out pictures of Jesus and the star shapes (found at the end of this lesson material) onto card paper.
- ~ The kids can colour the pictures and then cut them apart.
- ~ Punch holes in the bottom (middle) of paper/foam/plastic cups.
- ~ Cut blue paper to fit around the cups and tape/glue it on.
- ~ Cotton balls can be glued to the cup to look like clouds.
- ~ Tape a star to one end of a string and push it through the hole at the bottom of the cup. Tape the picture of Jesus to the other end of the string (as shown in the picture). When the children pull on the string, Jesus will ascend to heaven!

- 16 oz cups
- Card paper (white)
- Blue paper
- Cotton balls
- String
- Tape
- Scissors
- Glue
- Crayons/markers

11:30 Circle Time: praying, reflection, responses and offering

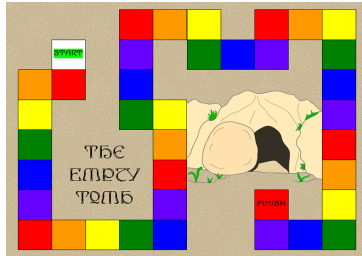
- ~ Activity pages (if needed) for extra time

- Offering box
- Word search
- Colouring pages

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- Activity pages

