



Date: _____
Series: Signs on Believers Hwy
Spring Year 4, Lesson 49

Hang on to Believing—Jesus is Alive!

Primary Scripture: John 20:1-23

Key Verse: John 20:18, “Mary from Magdala went to the disciples and told them, ‘I have seen the Lord.’ She also told them what he had said to her.”

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

Kids like adults need encouragement in their faith. Faith is being able to believe in something or someone we cannot see. We cannot see Jesus in person, yet through one's faith, he/she believes that Jesus is truly alive after being raised from the dead. Early Easter morning, the stone was rolled away, not to let Jesus out, but to let Mary and the two disciples in. They could see the evidence that Jesus was alive. When Mary saw Jesus alive personally, she wanted to cling to him. Jesus told her that she could not. He was going to his Father, and she was to spread the news that Jesus is alive! Today we celebrate that same news. Our faith allows us to cling to the risen Christ even if we can't see him.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus rose from the dead. This is proof that his work on the cross is complete and he has done all that is necessary for us to be friends with God forever.

Jesus in us: Jesus breathed on his disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus lives in us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus through us: Our faith embraces the fact that Jesus is alive which entitles us to talk about this with others and share the confidence of Jesus' victory over death.

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Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

The presenter will need a child volunteer, preferably his/her own child or one who can demonstrate what it looks like to cling to an adult in a way that's comfortable and appropriate for both the child and the presenter. Arrange this beforehand and have the child show this action as you begin.

Boys and girls, do you remember a time when your mom or dad had to leave you and you didn't want them to go? Maybe it was the first day of school. Look at this child here clinging to me. Does this remind you of that?

Raise your hand if you would like to share this experience with us. I gave one example of clinging to a parent and not wanting to let them go on the first day of school. Can you give me some other examples? Take about three responses. (Some might be: When Dad had to go on a trip, leaving for summer camp, staying with a new babysitter, etc.)

In today's Bible presentation, we will learn what it was like for Mary to see Jesus after he was raised from the dead. You can imagine that she was so excited to see him and Jesus was happy to see her, too. But Jesus told her that she could not hang on or cling to him because he was going back to be with his Father in heaven.

That is where Jesus is right now. But even if she couldn't hang on to his body like we do with a hug, could she still hang on to her belief that he is still alive? Of course she could. That's called hanging on to faith. We, like Mary, can't hang on to Jesus in person, but we can hang on to faith. Our faith helps us to be sure that Jesus is really alive. Since he gave his life for us on the cross, we can know that all who believe in him will live forever. That is what we're thankful for today.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of music.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Supplies: cross (not a crucifix)

Hold the cross (making sure it is not a crucifix with Jesus hanging on the cross).

Boys and girls, have you ever seen a cross that showed Jesus on it? Yes, there are many crosses like that. But this cross doesn't have Jesus on it. Why do you think that is? This cross is empty. What does it remind us of? That Jesus is no longer on the cross!

Write on a board or large paper: *Jesus is alive!*

Because he is alive, he hears our prayers and even talks to the Father for us when we can't see him. We know he is alive and we can call on him to help us. Let's pray for his power in our lives.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, we thank you that you are alive. Even if we can't see you, we believe in you. We know that you are in heaven hearing our prayers and speaking to our heavenly Father about our needs. One of our important needs is to have your power in our lives. We need your power to live the way you want us to.

If there are ways we have not lived like that, we need your forgiveness. If there are any times during the past week that we have not shown love to others and have been mean instead, please forgive us and change us. If

there are any times we have not honored our parents but disobeyed them instead, please forgive us and change us. If there are any ways we have not honored you or trusted you, please forgive us and change us. Thank you for doing this, Jesus. Our faith lets us hold on to you. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Jesus hears our prayers and answers them. Let us worship him.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Did you ever wonder why God rolled away the big stone in front of Jesus' tomb? Was this to let Jesus out? Or was this to let us in? Did you know that when Jesus rose from the dead, he could appear wherever he wanted? He didn't have to walk through doors if he didn't want to. So, the tomb was opened not for Jesus to get out. More importantly, it was opened so that we could come in. It was to give us a chance to see that he is alive and risen from the dead.

Today when you come to the altar, I want you to imagine that right here is a big opening to a cave like where Jesus was laid. When we go inside, we realize that Jesus' body isn't with us on earth because he is alive. Our faith hangs on to that trust. Let's bring our offerings to Jesus, remembering that he is alive even if we're pretending to step inside the tomb to tell him thank you by giving our offerings.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

Supplies: ten medium-sized rocks that comfortably sit in a child's hand

The Message of the Rocks:

I need five volunteers to join me on the stage.

Choose volunteers and have them stand in a line facing the audience. Then ask for another cooperative volunteer who will stand by you to judge the kids' mystery number guesses.

Hold out both of your hands in front of you with your palms facing up. I will put rocks on them as part of my visual demonstration today. But these are not ordinary rocks. These rocks can give off messages! To show you how, I'm going to have the rocks give us a mystery number anywhere between one and ten. Once you figure out the number, it's very easy to understand the message of the rocks. However, once you figure out how the message is given, talk to a Kids Church assistant to see if you're right, but let the other kids have a chance to understand the mystery numbers for themselves. For example, the first mystery number is this.

Place four rocks randomly on any of the ten palms. Whisper the mystery number to child judge next to you. Then face the audience and look at the rocks as if you are thinking about what the message could be. Cross your arms in front of your body with your fingers either tucked under the opposite arm or showing above the opposite arm—depending on the mystery number. In this case, one hand exposing only three fingers of one hand and no fingers on the other hand reveals the mystery number of three. It has nothing to do with how many rocks are on the palms.

Okay, who can see what the mystery number is? Right, it's three. Now try this one.

Add any number of rocks and change their order. Whisper the mystery number to the judge who will tell whether guesses are right or wrong. This child's role will diminish as more and more understand the trick and guess the answer together.

What mystery number message is this? Seven.

In this example, you have five fingers exposed on one hand and two on the other. This game continues for several more rounds. Kids are not to tell the secret. They're just to be able to guess correctly. Kids who cannot guess the mystery number will get suspicious as others catch on and call it out at the same time.

Kids Church assistants may begin to take kids off to the side and tell them the secret of how to watch for the presenter's fingers rather than the number of rocks. But remind them to keep the trick a secret.

Learning Point

On Easter morning, the rock was rolled away from the tomb's opening. When Mary thought the message of this was that someone had stolen Jesus' body, she was very sad. But instead of just looking at the rock, she looked at the person who was standing nearby. That person was Jesus. He had a message. He was alive. The same thing happened to Peter and John. They saw the rock, but they went inside the cave. Once inside, they saw an angel who told them, "Jesus is alive!" The message wasn't about the rock being rolled away. The message was of God pointing to the empty tomb and saying, "Jesus is alive!"

Bible Presentation:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Supplies: Video of The Gospel of John, produced by Visual Bible International

Introduction

Imagine how you would have felt if you were Jesus' close friend and you watched him die on the cross. Imagine that you didn't understand that Jesus said he would rise again from the dead. Instead, all you could think about was that Jesus was dead and all the good that he did would now come to an end. Can you imagine how sad you would be and how much you would miss him?

Now on the third day after he died, it was early Sunday morning, notice how different it was when people saw that the stone had been rolled away and could look inside to see for themselves that he was no longer dead. In fact, they saw him alive. Let's watch.

Video

Please show the video of *The Gospel of John*. Begin at John 19:38 and have kids watch it through John 20:23.

Teaching point

Boys and girls, faith is about believing something or someone you can't see. Can you see Jesus face-to-face? No. Do you know that he's alive? Yes. Our faith lets us hold on to Jesus even if we can't see him.

Those who saw him alive after he died on the cross were careful to write down what they saw so that we, too, would know it. But Jesus didn't stay in person with all the early disciples after he rose from the dead. He went back to his Father in heaven. The disciples also had faith that he was alive even if they couldn't see him.

Today we might wish we can see Jesus right here in this room. Instead, we can remember the rock that was rolled away so that everyone could look inside the empty tomb and see that Jesus is alive. Here's a story that might help.

Remember Rock

Props: five or six rocks, a bag for mixing the rocks, couch or chairs placed together

NOTE: If you want to be extra sure that this "trick" will work, you can keep these rocks in the refrigerator for a while before they are needed as props. However, it is suggested that you keep one out of the refrigerator for your own comfort.)

In order to act out the story, you will need a narrator, an adult to act as Dad, a child from the audience to act as daughter, and an assistant to possibly help with the rocks.

Closeness on couch

Jenna is eight years old and one of her favorite things in the whole world to do is read. Her favorite place to read is snuggled up with her dad on the couch. They read together because she is old enough now to read books on her own while her father reads the newspaper or his own book. They definitely enjoy this time together because they are so close, especially since her mother died several years earlier. But the best part of an evening reading closely with her dad on the couch is when they stop and read aloud together from the same book. Sometimes it would be a Bible storybook or another

book of devotions. It was a special time for Jenna and her dad because it made her feel warm and loved inside, especially right before bed when she would place her tiny hand into her father's big strong, warm hand and be together at bedtime.

Dad's Trip

But one night Jenna found out that her reading routine with her dad would soon change. It was not welcome news to her. It all began when her dad explained with a great deal of excitement that he would have a chance to travel to Africa and do something special there. He said, "Jenna, I will have a chance to speak with more than fifty teachers. I'll show them what I know about how to help children learn about Jesus. They're very eager to have me there to help them. I'm excited about seeing new places and learning more about their culture in Africa."

Jenna was excited at first, too. But then asked, "But, Dad, how long will you be gone?"

"It will be twenty-five days," he explained. "That's three and a half weeks."

Child's worry

She said, "But, Dad, I'll miss you. I don't want you to go that long! Who will read with me at night?" Jenna felt a tear come to her eye. She felt sad and a little worried but she didn't know why. "Do you HAVE to go, Dad?" she asked.

"Yes," he said. "I have to go."

Jenna insisted, "But I don't WANT you to go. It won't be the same here without you. Where will I stay?"

"You get to stay with your Aunt Susan and she can read with you, too," he said.

"But, Dad, that's not the same," said Jenna.

Memory rock

He replied, "Now, Jenna, I know it's hard, but it's something that I must do." Pause. "Hey, I've got something to show you that will help you to understand," said her dad before dashing outside quickly. When he returned, he was holding a special rock in his hand. He said, "This is our memory rock. When you hold this special rock in your hand, you're going to be able to remember me when I'm gone."

Make sure to hold the rock long enough in your palm to get its temperature warm.

Jenna was not impressed and said, “That’s just like any other rock. How is that one special?”

“It IS special. I bet that if I put this particular rock into a pile of rocks just like it and mix them up without even looking, I can pick THIS special rock out of the group,” he said.

Demonstration

Act out the following scene.

So, he went back outside and brought back three other rocks about the same size and placed them on the table.

“See all these rocks together?” he asked Jenna. “We can put them all in a bag, mix them up, and without looking I can pick out this one special memory rock that is yours. Here, let’s mark it so we can be absolutely sure that I pick out the truly special one.”

Put the rock (or have the child place the rock) into a bag with the refrigerated rocks, and mix them up. The presenter reaches down into the bag, feels for the warm one and brings up her special memory rock. He then shows Jenna (and the audience) the mark they made on it.

Jenna couldn’t believe her eyes and asked, “Well, Dad, how did you pick that rock out of all the others? Can you do it again?” So he threw it back in the bag, had her mix up the rocks and pulled it out again. “That really is our special memory rock! Can you show me how you do that?” she asked.

Hold on to the rock

Yes,” Jenna’s dad replied. “First take the rock and squeeze it tightly in your hand. Do you know that the warmth from your hand actually warms the rock up? So when you put it into the bag and reach down and feel for it, the other rocks are cold but the rock that has been warmed in your hand stays that way and you can feel that it is warmer than the rest. You see, when you hold this rock, you can remember that this is the same rock that I held in my hand just like you’re holding it in yours. This will remind you that even though we’re far away from each other, you can still hold onto the rock and it will be like we’re holding hands. You can remember me and I can remember you. It will be like we’re sitting closely on the couch and holding hands just like we do when we’re reading before bedtime together.”

Boys and girls, so what do you think happened? Do you think that Jenna's dad left? Yes. Do you think he came back safely twenty-five days later? Yes. Do you think Jenna missed him? Yes. But what do you think she did at night before bed when it was time to read? What do you think she held on to? Yes, it was the rock. Even though she couldn't see her dad, she felt close to him and she could remember him.

Teaching point

How does this story remind us of our relationship with Jesus? Let's ask the audience some questions. If you know the answers, raise your hand and then you may be able to come up on stage and answer.

Today we read about Jesus rising from the dead. Was there any rock in that story? Yes, a rock was rolled away from his tomb.

When people saw that the rock had been rolled away from the empty tomb, what did it remind them of? That Jesus was alive.

How is Jesus being gone from the tomb like Jesus not being seen today? Jesus said that he had to go away but that he would come back again someday and we can still remember him.

How is this story of Jenna and her dad NOT like the story of Jesus? *This is a trickier question.* Jenna's dad really was very far away from her when he went to Africa. But, with Jesus, he is really never far away. Even if we can't see him, he's right here with us always. As a matter of fact, as we trust him, he lives in our hearts and listens to our prayers. So let's pray to him now.

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus to us. Like Mary, we can't hang onto his body because he had to go be with you in heaven. But we thank you that he's still with us even if we can't see him. Our faith helps us to hold onto that. Today when we think of these rocks, we think of how Jesus is alive and with us always. Help us to remember this always. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Pass out a rock to children to help them remember that Jesus is with them always. Kids can come up and share a time when they prayed that Jesus would be with them and help them, and how he did actually help.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Options: (select one from the options below)

_____ **Prayer Line Option:** Kids line up and take turns stepping in front of the microphone to speak their prayers briefly.

_____ **Prayer Chair:** Adults or children with special prayer needs are invited to sit in the chairs. Kids gather around them, lay hands on their shoulders or knees and take turns praying.

_____ **Popcorn Prayer:** The leader moves through the crowd with a microphone and turns it toward kids who are raising their hands to pray. The kids speak their prayers into the microphone.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the children through the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, or let them pray the entire prayer along with you.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Your choice of music.

Supplies:

Power of the Cross:

- cross (*not a crucifix*)

Offering:

- basket or plate

Learning Game:

- ten medium-sized rocks that fit comfortably in a child's hand

Bible Presentation:

- video of *The Gospel of John*, produced by Visual Bible International—order from www.visualbible.com
- five or six rocks (refrigerated, but keep one out for warmth)
- bag for mixing the rocks
- chairs placed next to each other or a couch

Witness and Tell:

- a rock for each child

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