

Focus: Believing in Jesus

Materials:

Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest's vestment) and Altar Cloth
CD: America's 25 Favorite Bible Songs
Gospel: The Big Picture Story Bible

Gathering (children find/sit on a carpet square)

Say: *Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week we talked about letting our light shine. Will any one share something they did to shine the light of Jesus on others last week? (Acknowledge appropriate answers) This week we are going to hear a story about Jesus' greatest miracle.*

Opening Prayer

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

Say: *Now let's put our hands together and bow our heads.*

Let us pray.

*Dear Jesus, thank you for giving us new life with God in heaven. You are the savior of the world.
Amen.*

Song/Movement

I Will Call Upon the Lord, track: 17, from America's 25 Favorite Bible Songs

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc.

*I will call upon the Lord
Who is worthy to be praised
So shall I be saved from my enemies*

*(Echo in parentheses)
I will call upon the Lord (I will call upon
the Lord)
Who is worthy to be praised (Who is
worthy to be praised)
So shall I be saved from my enemies
(So shall I be saved from my enemies)*

*Chorus:
The Lord liveth, and blessed be the Rock
And let the God of my salvation be exalted
The Lord liveth, and blessed be the Rock
And let the God of my salvation be exalted*

*(Echo in parentheses)
I will call upon the Lord (I will call upon the
Lord)
Who is worthy to be praised (Who is worthy to
be praised)
So shall I be saved from my enemies (So shall I
be saved from my enemies)*

Repeat the Chorus 2 times

Memory Verse

Say: *Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.*

Whoever believes in me will live.

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: *In today's reading, we will hear the story of how Jesus performed his most powerful miracle, he raised a man from the dead. Jesus did this when he lived here on earth as a very special sign that he was God's own Son. We don't expect God to raise all people from the dead until the end of time, when Jesus comes in all glory of God in Heaven. It is then that Jesus will raise all believers to new life with God forever.*

Gospel Story

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of John.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *"Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it."*

Read: The Big Picture Story Bible, pp. pp.337-357, *A Dead Man is Raised to Life*

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion Starters:

- *What did Martha and Mary do when they realized that their brother Lazarus was very sick?*
- *What did Jesus do when he heard?*
- *What did Martha say when she ran to greet Jesus?*
- *What did Jesus do before Lazarus came back to life?*
- *Many people were happy, was everyone happy?*

This story shows the most powerful of all of Jesus' miracles. He changed water into wine at a wedding in Cana, he made the blind man see. He did these things so that the people would believe he was the Son of God. Some people saw the miracles and believed, some heard about them and believed and some wouldn't believe even though they had seen them.

Reflection on Reading:

Many of us have known someone who has died—a relative or a pet. Death is sad. We miss our loved ones, because we won't see them again in this life.

Jesus waited until Lazarus had died because Jesus had already cured many people from illness. Jesus wanted his followers to know that he was more powerful than anything they had seen him do already. Jesus wanted them to know that he really was the Son of God. Jesus is the Lord of Life, even life after death. Jesus gave his followers hope in everlasting life.

Martha was upset because she thought it was too late for Jesus to help her brother, Lazarus. She didn't realize all that Jesus can do. Sometimes we forget that Jesus can bring wonderful things out of the worst situations. Sometimes we forget what Jesus can do for us.

It is important to let the children comment and ask questions about this reading and to answer their questions honestly. Children at this age see things as black and white and may wonder why God doesn't raise their loved ones too. Stress that this was something Jesus did to help us believe that we will all one day live with him and see all our loved ones in heaven.

Gospel Activity

Activity 1:

Seeing and believing

Have the children close their eyes.

- Do you still believe that you are sitting in a room?
- Do you believe that your friends are there with them?
- Do you believe that your family is still in the church?
- Would you believe that Big Bird was in the church or a birthday cake the size of a house was in the parking lot?

How do you know what to believe and what is made up? –Trusting the person telling them.

Have them open their eyes.

This is what happened in Jesus' time. Many people spread the stories of Jesus had done and others believed the stories because they knew they wouldn't lie. So even though they hadn't seen what happened they believed and here we are so many years later, we don't see Jesus, but we believe he is here with us.

Activity 2:

Praying for Others:

Explain that when Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that their brother Lazarus was ill, they were asking Jesus to come and heal him. Jesus asked his heavenly Father to hear his prayer before he called Lazarus from the tomb. Asking God to do something, not for ourselves, but for someone else is called intercessory prayer.

Begin in prayer by saying: **Heavenly Father, hear our prayer. Hold our loved ones in your care.**

Ask for God's help for people you know are in need (a friend who is sick, the poor, the homeless etc) Finish each intercession with these words: **Let us pray to the Lord.** Have the children respond with: **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

Invite the children to ask God's blessing on people they know who are in need of God's love and peace and end each intercession the same way. **Let us pray to the Lord./ Loving God, hear our prayer.**

Finish your prayer with the opening couplet: **Heavenly Father, hear our prayer. Hold our loved ones in your care.**

Complete the weekly bulletin as a group-let the children color them if there is extra time

Closing Prayer

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, who promised to raise us to everlasting life?*

Do you believe in Jesus, who raised Lazarus back to life?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to believe in God's promises?

Sending Forth

Say: In the springtime the whole world seems to be coming back to life. The trees are budding and the flowers are starting to bloom. Say a prayer this week to thank God for the miracles we see everyday. Maybe you can plant some seeds so you can watch them grow.

Lining Up/Closing Song

Play "Change my heart o' God." track 23 from America's 25 Favorite Bible Songs while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.