

Jesus Lives!

(a lesson for Easter or any time)



LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ God's resurrection power is with us today.

OBJECTIVES

Kids will

- try to break free from licorice ropes,
- learn how Jesus broke the bonds of death,
- discover the power in kernels of popcorn, and
- see how God's power can change everything.

BIBLE BASIS

John 20:1-18

John 20 is filled with poignant vignettes in which Jesus' love and invincible power touch his followers at their most hopeless, vulnerable moments. We see those closest to Jesus pass from overwhelming loss to hopeful wonder to heart-searing joy. In the garden, Mary Magdalene wanders in confusion and pain so wrenching that she doesn't even recognize the risen Jesus. He simply speaks her name: "Mary." The sound of his voice stirs recognition and immediately banishes oppression and fear. It isn't over after all—death is the loser, Christ is alive, and all is right in God's world!

We all have reason to mourn in our lives. We all have things to fear. Injustice and tragedy break our hearts. Hunger, poverty, and disease don't go away. Evil people control terrible instruments of destruction. *But all of these are nothing compared to God's power.* There may be times when we wan-

YOU'LL NEED

- ropes of red licorice
- a trick candle
- matches
- a Bible
- a glass of water
- unpopped popcorn
- plastic eggs
- a popcorn popper
- photocopies of the "Resurrection POWER!" hand-out (p. 124)
- markers
- scissors
- tape or glue sticks
- a bowl

der confused, like Mary. There may be times we rub our chins in doubt, like Thomas. Crawl into the pages of John 20. Walk in the garden with Mary. Listen for the Savior to speak your name. *It isn't over after all—death is the loser, Christ is alive, and all is right in God's world. Hallelujah!*

Ephesians 1:19-20

Satan mustered all his formidable powers to try to defeat the crucified Christ. What happened on Golgotha was a battle far more cataclysmic than any human war. But the very gates of hell crumbled when Jesus broke death's chains and burst from the grave to life everlasting.

This same power is at work in us! It's a concept that's hard to take in. We don't need to tremble in the face of tragedy or evil. We are agents of the living God, empowered by the same irresistible force that raised Christ from the dead. Wow.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

All kids feel powerless from time to time. It's one of the most frustrating feelings of childhood. And it's what draws many kids into gangs.

To kids, one of the most important parts of growing up is gaining control of their lives. They want to choose their own interests and activities, decide what to do with their money, and determine where and with whom they'll spend their time. Kids are drawn to gangs because gangs seem to spell instant power. In reality, what kids see as power becomes self-perpetuating bondage.

Use this lesson to help your kids see that they can belong to the most powerful "gang" of all time—God's gang! And that since "nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing" can stand in the way of God's power, they can do great things for God.

The Lesson

ATTENTION GRABBER

Breakout Power

Have kids form trios.

Say: **Find out which person in your trio will volunteer**

to go through a test of strength. It doesn't have to be the biggest or strongest person—this is just for fun. Who's comfortable trying a strength test?

Have the people who offer to do the strength test hold their arms in front of them, fists together. Give the other members of each trio two ropes of red licorice.

Say: Wind the licorice ropes around your brave volunteer's wrists. Volunteers, when your wrists are all wound up, you can try to break free. Wait until your partners have you all tied up. OK—let's see what happens.

Cheer for all the volunteers as they try to break the licorice ropes. Have trio members help their volunteers by unwinding the licorice ropes one loop at a time until all the volunteers are able to break free. Then give everyone a big round of applause and allow kids to share the licorice.

Ask the volunteers:

- **How did it feel to be tied up with licorice?** (Silly; kind of fun.)
- **What was it like trying to get free?** (Frustrating; fun; embarrassing.)

Ask the other trio members:

- **What went through your minds as you cheered on your volunteer and loosened the licorice rope?** (I hoped he would break free; I wanted to be encouraging.)

Say: Our Bible story today is about someone who was able to break free from one of the most powerful forces in the world. Let's see how it happened. Follow me.

BIBLE STUDY

Life in a Dark Place (John 20:1-18)

Before class, explore your church to find a room you can darken completely to tell the story of Jesus rising from the dead. Place matches and a trick candle in your pocket or in a small bag. Take your Bible, this book, the candle, and matches with you as you lead the children to the place where you'll tell the story.

Gather children in a circle in the darkened room, open the Bible to John 20, and ask:

- **Who can tell me about how Jesus was crucified?**

Allow several children to contribute to the story. Draw out information with questions such as "Why did the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus?" and "Why did God let Jesus die?" Fill in any important information kids leave out. Then ask:

TEACHER TIP

It's important that this be an exciting experience, not a scary one. You may want to leave the door open a crack and have younger children stand near it.

● **If you'd been Jesus' follower, what would you have done after they took Jesus down from the cross and buried him?** (I would've run away; I would've cried.)

Say: Friends who wanted to take care of Jesus' body couldn't do it because it was dark and time for the Sabbath day of rest. But Mary Magdalene came back early on Sunday morning to put burial spices and perfumes on Jesus' body. Ask:

● **What do you think it was like to come to a dark tomb?** (Scary; quiet.)

Say: Well, Mary expected the tomb to be quiet and dark, but that wasn't the case. The stone was rolled away, and the tomb was empty. Mary ran back and told Peter and John. Ask:

● **What did Mary think had happened to Jesus' body?** (She thought someone had come and taken it away.)

● **But what had really happened?** (Jesus had risen from the dead.)

Light the trick candle. Ask:

● **Did anyone expect Jesus to rise from the dead? Why or why not?** (No, because they didn't understand God's plan; no, even though Jesus told them he would rise from the dead, they didn't understand.)

Invite someone to blow out the candle. Ask:

● **What about the soldiers and Jewish leaders? Did they think Jesus was gone for good? Why or why not?** (Yes, because they didn't understand God's power.)

As you wait for the flame to relight, say: **Mary didn't know what to think. Peter and John went back home, but Mary stayed by the tomb crying. Suddenly two angels appeared in the tomb and asked why she was crying.** Ask:

● **What would it be like to suddenly see two angels in a dark tomb?** (Surprising; kind of scary; they'd probably be bright.)

Say: Then Mary turned around and saw a man standing in the garden. The man also asked why she was crying. Mary asked, "Did you take him away, sir? Tell me where you put him, and I will get him." The man said "Mary." Suddenly Mary recognized the man. Ask:

● **Who do you think it was?** (Jesus.)

Say: You're right! Mary said "Teacher!" Mary wasn't sad or frightened any more. She found out that God's power is greater than anything—even death!

Return to your classroom, carrying the candle. Ask:

● **How was Jesus' rising from the dead like what this candle does?** (Trick candles surprise us when they light

again after we think they've gone out, and Jesus surprised people because no one thought he could live again after he'd died.)

Invite a child to dip the candle in a glass of water. Then ask:

● **How was Jesus' resurrection different from this trick candle?** (The candle can be put out with water, but nothing can make Jesus die again.)

Say: **Earlier today some of you tried to break out of licorice ropes.** Ask:

● **Do you think any of you could break away from the power of death?** (Not without God's help.)

Say: **Before that first Easter, no one had ever risen from the dead by his or her own power. But now we don't need to be afraid of death's power anymore because God's power is stronger than death. God's power is stronger than anything. And ★ God's resurrection power is with us today.**

LIFE APPLICATION

Easter Egg Hunt

Before class, fill plastic eggs about one-third full of unpopped popcorn and hide the eggs around the room or an open area in the church. If possible, have one egg for each student.

Say: **Let's find out more about God's resurrection power by going on an Easter egg hunt. When you find an egg, don't open it! Just bring it back here. You may bring back only one egg. Ready? Go!**

You may want to give younger students a few seconds' head start. When everyone returns with an egg, invite students to sit in a circle on the floor and carefully open the eggs. Ask:

- **What's inside your eggs?** (Popcorn.)
- **Is it alive?** Allow children to disagree.

Invite students to pour a few kernels of popcorn into a popcorn popper. Turn on the popper.

Then say: **Well, let's see. Examine a handful of popcorn. It doesn't squeal when I pinch it. There's nothing green or growing. There's no heartbeat. I don't know—I guess it's not alive.** Ask:

● **What happens when this popper gets hot?** (The popcorn pops; we can eat the popcorn.)

TEACHER TIP

If the eggs don't close tightly, you may want to tape them shut.

TEACHER TIP

If you have an air popper, you might want to remove the top and let the popcorn fly into the air and let kids try to catch it.

Say: **It's amazing to me that God put inside each of these hard little kernels the ability to pop into fluffy, white popcorn. And God puts special power in each of us, too, when we believe in Jesus.** Read Ephesians 1:19-20. Ask:

● **How is God's power in us like the power in a kernel of popcorn?** (We can't do anything special without God's power, and the popcorn can't pop unless it gets hot; popcorn does surprising things, and when God's power is in us we can do surprising things, too.)

Say: **Let's nibble on our popcorn and celebrate the fact that ★ God's resurrection power is with us today!**

COMMITMENT

Poppin' Power

Put the lid on the popcorn popper and invite kids to pour the rest of their popcorn kernels into the popper. Keep it on until everyone's popcorn is popped. As the popcorn pops, ask:

● **How did the disciples use the resurrection power God gave them?** (They told everyone about Jesus; they started the church around the world; they healed people.)

● **Did God's resurrection power make the disciples strong and brave? Explain.** (Yes, because they weren't even afraid of the people who killed Jesus; yes, because they kept telling others about Jesus even when some disciples were killed or put in prison.)

● **Can God's resurrection power make you strong and brave? Explain?** (Yes, because with God on my side I don't have to be afraid of anyone; yes, because I know that God's side will win in the end.)

● **How can God use his resurrection power in you?** (God can have me tell others about Jesus; God's power can make me loving and kind; God can use his power in me to solve problems in the world.)

Pass out photocopies of the "Resurrection POWer!" handout (p. 124), markers, scissors, and tape or glue sticks. Pair older kids with younger ones.

Say: **We'll use these handouts to make bags for our popcorn. But before we do that, write or draw on the front of your bag one way you think God might use his resurrection power in you. Then tell your partner about what you wrote or drew.**

Help kids make bags according to the instructions on the handout. Encourage partners to help each other. Pour the

popped popcorn into a bowl as kids are working on their bags.

CLOSING

Sharing the Power

Have kids line up in front of the popcorn bowl. As you scoop some popcorn into each child's bag, say: ★ **God's resurrection power is with us today!**

Have kids stand in a circle with their bags of popcorn. Drop a plastic egg into each person's bag. Ask:

● **What part of the Easter story can the empty egg remind us of?** (The empty tomb.)

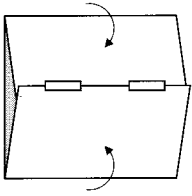
● **What can the popcorn and the bags remind us of?** (God's resurrection power is with us; God's power can make anything happen.)

Say: **When you go home, tell your families about the egg and the popcorn and the bag. And be sure to share some popcorn with them, too!**

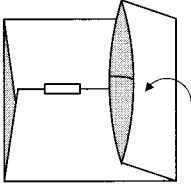
Close with a prayer similar to this one: **Dear Lord, only a great, great God could raise Jesus from the dead. Thank you that Jesus lives! Thank you for the power you have for our lives today. Help us to serve you well. In Jesus' name, amen.**

RESURRECTION POWER

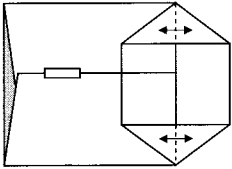
- A. Write or draw on the front of the bag one way you think God might use his resurrection power in you.
- B. Cut out the bag.
- C. Fold and tape.



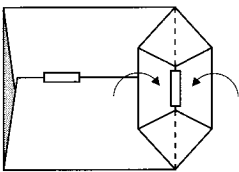
- D. Fold up the bottom.



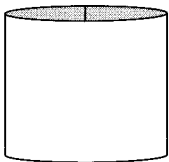
- E. Push in the corners.



- F. Fold the edges over and tape.



- G. Pinch and crease the sides at the bottom.



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“And you will know that God’s power is very great for us who believe. That power is the same as the great strength God used to raise Christ from the dead” (Ephesians 1:19-20a).