

It's Empty!

UPPER ELEMENTARY LESSON PLAN

Theme: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Scripture: John 20:2

Memory Verse: So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' - John 20:2

The Children's Sermon

As you can see, I have a glass with some juice in it. There are two ways of looking at this glass of juice. Some people would look at the glass and say it is half empty. There are others who would look at the glass and say it is half full. (Drink all of the juice in the glass.)

Well, we solved that problem, didn't we? Now everyone who looks at this glass would say that it is empty, but guess what? Everyone still wouldn't look at the glass in the same way. Some would look at the glass and grumble and complain because it empty. Others would look at the glass and see it as a glass just waiting to be filled with good things to drink. I guess there are always different ways to look at any situation.

On the Sunday morning after Jesus was crucified, a woman named Mary went to visit the grave where the body of Jesus had been laid. When she got there, she found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb. She ran to find someone to tell them what she had seen. She found two of the disciples, Peter and John, and she said to

them, "They have taken our Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put him."

The three of them immediately ran to the tomb. When they got there, they all saw the same thing, but they didn't all look at it in the same way.

Peter looked and was curious. The Bible says Peter went in the empty tomb and looked around. He saw strips of linen laying around and the cloth that Jesus had been buried in folded neatly and placed where the body had been. "Hmmm, very interesting," Peter might have said to himself.

Mary looked and was sad. The Bible tells us that Mary didn't even go inside the empty tomb. She just stood outside the tomb and wept because she feared that someone had stolen the body of Jesus.

John looked and believed. The bible says that John went inside the tomb and he saw and believed. Now, I don't know exactly how much John understood, but I think he believed that Jesus had risen from the grave just as he said he would.

Three people – they all saw the same thing – one was curious, one was sad, and one believed. I think that is pretty much the same way people react to the story of Jesus today. Some people hear the story and they are curious, others hear it and think it is sad, others hear it and believe. How do you look at it?

Let's imagine a bit more about that special morning. The sun was just coming up, and the birds were starting to sing. It was a new day, but for Mary, Peter, and John, it felt

like the saddest day ever. They missed Jesus so much. But something amazing was about to happen at the empty tomb.

When Peter stepped into the empty tomb, his eyes opened wide. He saw the linens but no Jesus. "Where could He be?" Peter wondered. He scratched his head, thinking hard. The empty tomb was a big puzzle he wanted to solve.

Mary, standing outside, was crying. Her heart felt so heavy. She loved Jesus so much and now she couldn't even say goodbye. But the empty tomb was more than just a place of sadness. It was the start of something new, something full of hope.

John, when he saw the empty tomb, felt something warm in his heart. It was like a little light turned on. "Could it be true? Did Jesus really do what He said He would?" John thought. He remembered Jesus talking about rising again. The empty tomb was starting to make sense to him.

The empty tomb wasn't just an empty space. It was a message from Jesus. He was telling everyone, "I am alive! I have beaten death!" This is what we call the Empty Tomb Resurrection. It's a big word, but it means Jesus came back to life, and because of that, we can all have hope.

The Empty Tomb Resurrection is like the first flower blooming after a long, cold winter. It's a sign that good things are coming. Jesus defeating death means we can all be friends with God forever. That's the best news ever!

Now, think about how you feel when you hear about the Empty Tomb Resurrection. Are you like Peter, full of questions and wanting to learn more? Or maybe you're like Mary,

feeling a bit sad but also hopeful. Or are you like John, believing and feeling happy in your heart?

This is a story for everyone. It doesn't matter if you're curious, sad, or believing. Jesus loves all of us. He wants us to know that He is always with us, and because He lives, we can face tomorrow with a smile.

So, next time you hear about the Empty Tomb, remember it's not just an old story. It's about Jesus, who loves us so much that He came back to life. It's about hope, love, and the promise of being with God forever.

Dear Lord, today we look into an empty grave. Help us all to see and believe that Jesus has risen just as he said he would. Help us to remember the Empty Tomb Resurrection every day, to feel the hope it brings, and to share that hope with others. Amen.

Remember, the Empty Tomb is not the end of the story. It's just the beginning. It's the start of a beautiful friendship with Jesus, who is always with us, loving us, and guiding us.

Bible Memory Verse

So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' - John 20:2

You Will Need:

-Construction paper

-Scissors

- Markers or crayons
- Glue
- Printed pictures of the empty tomb, Jesus, and the disciples

Get Ready:

- Cut out shapes from the construction paper that resemble stones or rocks.
- Print out pictures of the empty tomb, Jesus, and the disciples.

Do This:

1. Have each child choose a construction paper 'stone' and write the memory verse on it with markers or crayons.
2. Discuss the significance of the empty tomb and how Mary Magdalene must have felt discovering it empty. Encourage the children to share their thoughts.
3. Using the glue, have the children create a collage on a larger piece of construction paper with their 'stone' verse, the printed pictures of the empty tomb, Jesus, and the disciples. Encourage them to arrange their collage in a way that tells the story of John 20:2.

Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- A large piece of fabric to act as the stone rolled away from the tomb
- Small flashlights or glow sticks to represent the light of Jesus
- Printed maps of a garden (to represent the Garden Tomb)
- Small, empty boxes or containers to act as spices that Mary Magdalene might have carried
- Costume pieces (optional) for Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John

Get Ready:

- Set up a corner of your classroom to represent the tomb with the large fabric piece acting as the stone that can be rolled away.
- Hide the small flashlights or glow sticks around the classroom.
- Prepare the maps with a marked path leading to the "tomb" and several stops along the way where the spices (boxes or containers) are hidden.
- If using costumes, have them ready for the characters in the story.

Do this:

1. Start by dividing the class into small groups. Give each group a map of the garden and tell them they are on a mission to find the spices that Mary Magdalene and the others would have brought to Jesus' tomb. Explain that these spices are hidden around the "garden" (classroom) and they need to follow the map to find them.
2. Once all the spices have been collected, the groups must find the tomb. When they reach the tomb, have one child from each group roll away the stone (fabric) to reveal the flashlights or glow sticks inside, symbolizing the light of Jesus and His resurrection.
3. After discovering the empty tomb, have the children regroup and select volunteers to act out the roles of Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John based on John 20:2. Mary runs to tell Peter and John, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" This can be done in a simple dramatization or a relay race where "Mary" runs to "Peter" and "John," tells them the news, and then all three rush back to the tomb (the classroom corner set up as the tomb).

This activity combines physical activity, teamwork, and a creative retelling of the resurrection story, helping children engage with the Scripture in a memorable way.

Snack Activity: Empty Tomb Rolls

You'll Need:

- 1 can of crescent roll dough
- 8 large marshmallows
- 1/4 cup melted butter
- 2 tablespoons cinnamon sugar
- Parchment paper
- Baking sheet

Get Ready: Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C) and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Do this:

1. Explain to the children that the marshmallow represents Jesus, pure and sinless (white). The crescent roll represents the tomb.
2. Dip a marshmallow in melted butter, symbolizing the anointing oils, and then roll it in cinnamon sugar, representing the spices used to prepare His body for burial.
3. Place the marshmallow in the center of a crescent roll piece, wrap it up, and seal the edges tightly. This represents the sealed tomb. Make sure to completely cover the marshmallow and seal the dough so the marshmallow is not visible, symbolizing Jesus hidden in the tomb.
4. Place the rolls on the prepared baking sheet and bake for 10-12 minutes, or until golden brown. While baking, explain John 20:2, focusing on Mary Magdalene finding the stone rolled away from the tomb and the tomb being empty, symbolizing Jesus' resurrection.

5. Once the rolls are baked, let them cool slightly. When children open their rolls, they will find the inside empty, as the marshmallow has melted. This represents the empty tomb on Easter morning, signifying that Jesus has risen.

Game Activity: Resurrection Run

You'll Need:

- A large open space (preferably outdoors)
- Cones or markers to set boundaries and create paths
- Printed images or symbols representing Mary Magdalene, Peter, the other disciple, the empty tomb, and Jesus

Get Ready: Set up a path with cones or markers that zigzags across the open space. At various points along the path, place the images or symbols in order of the narrative in John 20:2 (start with Mary Magdalene, then the empty tomb, followed by Peter and the other disciple, and finally Jesus at the end). Divide the children into two teams.

Do this:

1. The game begins with the first player from each team at the starting line. When you say 'Go', the first player from each team races to find the first symbol (Mary Magdalene) and then follows the path to find the next symbols in order.
2. Once a player has found all symbols and reaches the end (Jesus), they race back to the start and tag the next player in line.
3. The game continues until all players from one team have completed the course. The first team to finish wins. Throughout the game, encourage discussions about the significance of each symbol and how they relate to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Craft Activity: Empty Tomb Garden

You'll Need:

- A small clay pot or plastic cup
- Potting soil
- Grass seeds or fast-growing herb seeds like basil or chives
- A large stone
- Small pebbles or gravel
- Craft sticks and markers
- Optional: small figurines to represent the angel and Mary

Get Ready: Gather all your materials, and read John 20:2 together. Discuss the significance of the empty tomb and what it meant for Mary and the disciples.

Do this:

1. Fill your clay pot or plastic cup about three-quarters full with potting soil. This represents the garden where Jesus was buried.
2. Plant the seeds in the soil. These will grow to represent new life, symbolizing Jesus' resurrection.
3. Place the large stone partially covering the top of the pot, similar to how the stone covered Jesus' tomb. This is your 'empty tomb.'
4. Use the small pebbles or gravel to create a path leading to the tomb.
5. Write 'He is Risen' on a craft stick with markers and place it in the soil near the entrance of the tomb.
6. If using, place the figurines of the angel and Mary near the tomb to represent the scene described in John 20:2.

As your seeds grow, remember the new life we have in Jesus because of His resurrection. This garden serves as a visual reminder of the empty tomb and the hope of Easter.

Prayer Activity: Discovering the Empty Tomb

You'll Need:

- A Bible or printed copy of John 20:1-18
- Blankets or large towels
- Flashlights

Get Ready: Create a 'tomb' area in your classroom by arranging chairs in a circle and draping them with blankets or large towels to make it dark inside. Place a flashlight inside the 'tomb.'

Do this:

1. Have the children sit in a circle around the 'tomb.' Read John 20:2 together, where Mary Magdalene finds the tomb empty and runs to tell Simon Peter and the other disciple. Discuss the feelings of confusion, fear, and excitement she might have experienced.
2. Turn off the lights in the room (if possible) and give each child a flashlight. Allow them to take turns entering the 'tomb' with their flashlight to 'discover' it is empty, symbolizing the empty tomb of Jesus on Easter morning.
3. After each child has had a turn, gather them back in the circle. Encourage them to share how they felt when they saw the 'empty tomb' and relate these feelings to what the disciples and followers of Jesus might have felt upon hearing the news. Conclude with a prayer, thanking God for the resurrection of Jesus and the hope it brings to all believers.