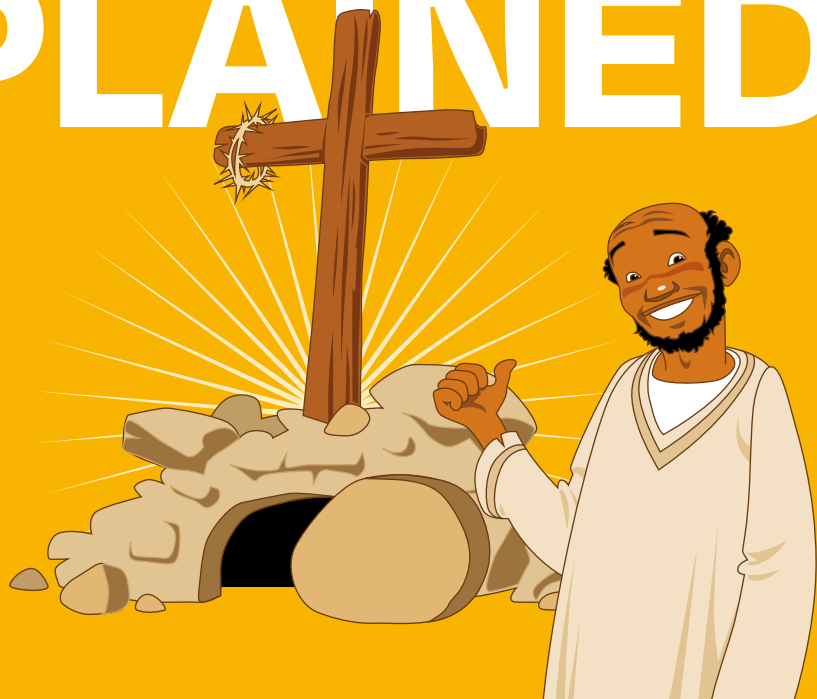


ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

EASTER EXPLAINED





LESSON 3

**THE EMPTY TOMB:
"MY FATHER AND YOUR FATHER!"**

JOHN 20:1-18

faith  **kids**

Contents

PREPARATION	3
ALL TOGETHER TIME	5
 7s and Under Lesson Plan	7
 8s and Over Lesson Plan	10
APPENDIX	
Craft Sheet	14
Chat Time Sheet	15
Visuals	16

Easter Explained

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We recommend the International Children's Bible for use with children during the lesson. Our leader's notes use the New International Version.

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'All for the glory of God alone' (1 Corinthians 10:31)

THE EMPTY TOMB: "MY FATHER AND YOUR FATHER"

JOHN 20:1-18



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Big Idea:

Jesus rises to new life so that we can know God as our Father.



Faith in Kids looks like:

Children who are delighted that they can now belong in God's family.

Preparation



WHERE ARE WE GOING?

We get to walk the children through the confusion, panic and doubt of the resurrection. It is helpful to hear that the first witnesses did not believe or expect the dead Jesus to be alive. The empty tomb convinced John. Meeting the risen Jesus convinced Mary. But it was Jesus' words that meant the most. His resurrection convinced Mary that she was now safe with God as her Father. Jesus' work to bring his followers home was done. The resurrection is not just a cold fact that a dead man is now alive, it offers hope when there are tears and allows the children to know that they belong in God's forever family. They are secure today. They can be certain for their tomorrow.



LOOK AT THE PASSAGE

John at the empty tomb (v8)

The story starts with panic and running in the dark. Mary Magdalene was the first to find the stone rolled away. She ran to John ('the one Jesus loved') and Peter to tell them that Jesus' body had been stolen and they raced to the tomb. John went inside, saw the grave clothes but no body, and so believed that Jesus was alive. He didn't understand all that the Bible had said about it (e.g. Psalm 16:10) but he understood enough. It's the same for us and the children - we don't need to understand everything, it is enough to trust that Jesus is really alive and to keep learning.

Mary met the gardener (v15)

John and Peter went home but Mary stood outside the tomb in tears. She had not yet understood that Jesus was alive. Mary had the privilege of chatting with two angels, but before they said very much, Jesus himself arrived. Not that she



Notes

Pray and read the Bible passage. Read *Where are we going* and *Look at the passage* to give you a better understanding of how to apply the truth.

recognised him - perhaps his resurrection body was slightly different. It was the moment he said her name that the Holy Spirit opened her eyes to the wonderful truth that her teacher was alive!

Jesus said that God is our Father (v17-18)

Jesus was like a parent dropping a sobbing child at the school gate. He peeled Mary's fingers off him and looked her in the eye to explain. She did not need to hold onto him. His resurrection is not the end of the story. Jesus was on his way to his throne in heaven and Mary could know, even when she was away from Jesus, that she was safe with God as her Father. The resurrection shows that Jesus has finished the job that he came to do. He has brought us home to his Father, who is now our Father. Mary was so sure that she burst into the room where the disciples were and shouted "I have seen the Lord!" Let us believe her words and feel her joy.



This truth is for your heart too.



WIN MY HEART

The resurrection is a story of both real evidence and raw emotion. John recorded it all for us - the evidence, eyewitness accounts, confusion, tears and joy. John himself examined the evidence; he saw the empty tomb, he understood that the grave clothes weren't needed and believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. He had seen enough to know that Jesus was alive. In the Lord's kindness, we have Mary's story too, the depth of hurt, tears and confusion. But then Mary heard the living, breathing teacher she had learnt to depend on calling her name and experienced his warm hug. Both experiences are needed - Jesus gives us all we need to confidently believe.

Mary wanted to hold on to her teacher, but she was persuaded to let go because Jesus offered something better - the certainty of belonging at home with his Father. He had risen to lead his friends to glory. His certain journey to his Father, is now our certain journey to our Father. All he achieved is now ours.

Questions for your heart

1. Is there a moment in this story that particularly warms your heart or convinces you of its truth?
2. When are you most pleased that God is your loving Father? Is there a part of your life or a cause of pain that makes the resurrection so important?



5 MINUTES TO FOCUS ON YOUR GROUP

How familiar are your group with the story of the resurrection? For those who come to it fresh, what is the key moment that you want them to remember? For those who have heard it all before, what is the detail of John's story that stands out as beautifully fresh? Do you know what causes tears for the children in your group? Who needs to hear that the resurrection gives them certainty in the pain?

What do the children in your group need?

Pray for them:
· to grasp the truth
· to live it out
· to rely on the Spirit



ALL TOGETHER TIME



This has been written as an all age slot to introduce the whole church family to what the children are learning today, but it could be adapted for the children's classes.



Helpers Needed

Actors to play Mary, Peter and John (if you don't have actors, use three large wooden spoons with faces drawn on to them).



Props

- Items for "that was unexpected" e.g. smarties tube containing coins, ice cream tub with lettuce inside etc.
- A crown to wear as Jesus (or another wooden spoon with a cloak / wrapped in foil)
- One side of the room is "home" with a chair and cushion, the other is the tomb - perhaps a cardboard cut-out, a large bin on its side, or a pop-up tent with the open end visible and some strips of cloth inside
- A three person paper doll chain.



What to Say

We are going to play a little game this morning. I have some containers here and I want you to tell me what will be inside when I open up the container:

- An ice cream tub filled with lettuce
- A tube of smarties filled with coins
- An Easter egg carton – with a rugby ball inside
- A biscuit / chocolate tin – filled with a sewing kit

When I looked inside all of those containers, we didn't find what we expected - we found something surprising!

Today we are following the journey of some of Jesus' closest friends. They saw him die on a cross on Friday, calling out "It is finished!" They saw his body placed in a tomb with a large stone rolled across the entrance. Now it is Sunday and Mary is getting ready to visit the tomb. What do you think she expected to find? *Take answers if you want.* You've got it: Jesus' dead body.

How often do you lose things? Your favourite teddy, school bag, car keys, phone?

When Mary visited the tomb, something was missing, something was lost. We're going to follow Mary's story and find out what. Don't worry, I promise there's a happy ending. You may already know what it is!

Mary got up early on Sunday morning to visit the tomb. She got there and shock!
The stone had been rolled away - not what she expected!
The tomb was empty - the body was missing!



What to Do

Hold up the objects - don't reveal contents

Ask the audience for their guesses for all of the objects before revealing the unexpected contents

Have Mary helper / spoon at "home"

Move Mary to the "tomb" scene

continued →

What to Say

What to Do

She ran back home and told Peter and John; "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him."

Move Mary "home" to tell the disciples

So Peter and John raced to the tomb, run from one side to the other. John made sure that in his gospel he wrote down that he won the race - he was the fastest.

When they got there, John didn't go in. Peter did. Peter saw...

- The empty tomb, the moved stone
- The grave clothes lying inside.

So Peter and John ran to the tomb.

John saw all of this and believed that Jesus had risen from the dead.

He knew that death could not keep Jesus.

Peter and John headed back home.

Take Peter and John and run to the "tomb"

Hold out John

John arrives at the tomb first

Take strip of cloth out and hold up

Hold up John

Take Peter and John back "home"

Mary was standing outside the tomb with no idea what was going on, crying her eyes out.

Then the gardener arrived - at least Mary thought he was the gardener. She asked him if he had moved the body.

When the "gardener" said her name, Mary realised who he was. It was Jesus!

I love that detail. It was him saying her name that did it. If you're trusting Jesus, one day he will say your name and you will be overjoyed, you will smile and you will know exactly who he is.

Move Mary from "home" to the "tomb"

Put the crown on your head as Jesus / reveal a sparkly spoon.

Mary was so pleased to see Jesus, that she gave him a huge hug. She must have wanted to never let him go again. Jesus said, "Don't hold on to me Mary, because I will be going back to Father God in Heaven. To my Father, and your Father. My God, and your God." Listen carefully to that - 'My Father and *your* Father. My God and your God'. Jesus said that just like he can call God Father...we can call God our Father! Because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross we are now part of God's family. Jesus has finished the job he came to do. He has brought us home to *his* Father and now our Father.

Use a paper doll chain of three to illustrate - two figures folded behind the middle one.

Fold out one side = Jesus - connected to the Father.

Fold out the other side - we are connected too!

To be a Christian is to have a forever Father, our Father, who changes our story. He will always be with us, he is always good, and one day we will go home to be with him forever because of Jesus.

Place all spoon characters with Jesus in the "home" / have all actors move there.

Closing Prayer




7s and under



GET GOING

Roll the stone

Have the children sit in a circle and have a large ball that they can roll across the circle to one another. Can they say the name of the person they are rolling the ball to before they roll it?

 **Link:** In today's Bible story Jesus' friends went to the place where he had been buried. See if you can spot the stone that rolled and who said Mary's name in our story?



TEACHING TIME

What John found (v1-8)

Unpack your story bag as you explain what John found. The children could make their own, e.g. using a sandwich bag, so that they can retell the story.

John saw Jesus nailed to a cross, he saw Jesus die and he was very sad. Jesus' body had been wrapped in strips of cloth and placed in a tomb on Friday - a tomb was a cave where a dead body was put. A huge heavy stone was rolled across the entrance like a great big locked door. Mary, one of Jesus' friends, went to the tomb on Sunday morning and she had a big surprise!

- Stone - The huge heavy stone had been moved! She ran to get John and Peter - they raced to the tomb and found the stone had been moved, just like she said.
- Strips of cloth - John looked inside and saw the strips of cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus body - but there was no body.
- Square of cloth - this cloth had been wrapped around Jesus' head - it was folded up and left in the tomb.

John saw all these things and he believed that Jesus was alive! We might not understand everything about Easter, but like John we can believe the good news that Jesus is alive.



Notes

Flexible resource: look at both lesson plans, pick what works for your group.

Use this activity to introduce today's theme.

You will need: Large ball they can roll

Use a suitable Bible translation - we use the International Children's Bible (found online at www.biblegateway.com).

You will need: A story bag - containing a stone, a strip of bandage / cloth, a square of cloth, a piece of card with a sad face on one side and a happy face on the other, a blindfold, a paper doll chain of three people.

Who Mary met (v14–16)

Choose a child to come to the front and be blindfolded. Ask another child to come and stand in front of them silently. Can the blindfolded child guess who it is? Probably not! Then ask the child to say the name of the blindfolded child. Can they guess who it is now? Are they good at recognising other people's voices?

- Hold up the sad face - Mary was outside the tomb, crying because she didn't understand what was going on. Her friend had died, his body was missing, her heart was breaking.
- Hold up the blindfold - Suddenly, Mary met someone. Perhaps with all her tears she couldn't see properly, she didn't know who it was - probably the gardener - until he said "Mary!"
- Hold up the happy face - Mary knew who that was, it was her friend Jesus! He was right there in front of her - he is alive! Mary was so happy.

Mary believed that Jesus was alive, she knew her friend, she knew his voice, he was right there with her.

What Jesus said (v17–18)

Mary has just found her friend - Jesus is alive! She must have wanted to hold on tightly to him. But Jesus says, "Don't hold on to me, go and tell the others that I am alive, I am going back to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

- Hold up a three person paper chain.
- Person 1 - Jesus - he always did what was right, he always lived loving God the Father.
- Person 2 - God the Father is delighted in Jesus and wants to welcome him home to heaven
- Person 3 - us - Jesus says that because he died on the cross and rose again, we can call God our Father too - God is as pleased with us as he is with Jesus.

Jesus has finished the work of saving us, he has fixed the problem of us being apart from God, so now when we trust in Jesus we can call God our Father. God is as pleased with us as he is with Jesus, we are part of the family, God wants to welcome us home to heaven, just like he welcomed Jesus.


Jesus is alive and says that you can call God Father, just like he does.



BRAIN BREAK

Back Home

Scatter a variety of small objects around the room e.g. play figures, toy blocks and socks. Set the children the challenge of bringing everything home to where it is supposed to be - the socks in the laundry basket, the blocks in the toy box, the play figures in their box / house.

 **Link:** Today we have learned that Jesus was alive and soon he would be going back home to his Father's house. Jesus said that because his saving work is finished, we can call his Father our Father and one day we will be welcomed home to heaven just like Jesus.

A chance to rest the children's minds before Heart and Hands. Get moving and have fun with this game.



HEART & HANDS

God, Jesus and me paper dolls

Prepare in advance: Cut out the paper dolls

Kids can colour in the paper dolls, drawing themselves as the last doll.

➡ **Link:** Jesus said we can call God Father, he is alive, his work of saving us is finished now we can call God Father just like Jesus does.

Think time

Big question: What did Mary and John find out today about Jesus?

A follow up question: What does Jesus tell us we can call God now?

Pray

Dear God, thank you that Jesus is alive and that we can be part of your family forever. Amen



Make a craft and have a chat. Give the children time to reflect on today's big truth, so it can impact their hearts.

You will need: Print out of page 14, scissors, crayons





8s and over



GET GOING

Race to the tomb

Set up a simple race - you could split the children into teams and run a relay race - which team was fastest? Or make it a group challenge to link everyone together. The first person runs to the "tomb" and returns to link arms with the next person. They run back together, returning to link with the third person until everyone is running linked together to the tomb. Race against one another, or against the clock.

➔ **Link:** One of the funny things about today's story is that John and Peter raced to the tomb, John wrote down in his gospel that he was the winner of the race, but what John found at the tomb was even better news than beating his friend at running - John believed that Jesus was alive.



TEACHING TIME

What John found (v8)

Have verses printed / Bibles open. Prepare an evidence bag (zip-lock bag with a label) that you can seal up with the evidence that they find for the resurrection of Jesus in the passage.

- Stone - Jesus was buried in an empty tomb, the disciples knew where it was, the entrance was sealed with a heavy stone that Mary knew she couldn't move. She arrived to find the stone had been moved and ran to get John and Peter. They raced back to the tomb, John won and found the stone moved just like Mary had said! Who moved the stone?
- Strips of cloth - John looked inside and saw the strips of cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' body - but no body! Where is Jesus?
- Square of cloth - This had been wrapped around Jesus' head but was now folded and left in the grave. Dead bodies don't fold up their grave clothes! Who did this?

Add the items to your evidence bag - what John found was enough for him to believe that Jesus was alive. He didn't understand all of what was going on, but he knew enough to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead.

- What do you think happened? What do you believe about Jesus?

continued →



Notes

Flexible resource: look at both lesson plans, pick what works for your group.

Use this activity to introduce today's theme.

Use a suitable Bible translation - we use the International Children's Bible (found online at www.biblegateway.com).

You will need:

Bibles / passage printed out, a zip-lock bag, a stone, some strips of cloth, a square of cloth.

Who Mary met (v14-16)

You could act out these verses together, or play the blindfold game suggested in the under 8's teaching time.

There are a lot of emotions in this passage. Look at the verses - crying is mentioned at least four times! Can you see where Mary is...

- weeping - v11
- confused - v13
- crying - v13
- not sure who she was talking to - v14
- holding on to Jesus - v17

Who did she think the man was that she met in the garden to start off with?

Why do you think she didn't recognise him?

When did she know who it was that she was talking to? What made the difference?

What Jesus said (v17)

Draw three figures on a piece of paper - God the Father above in heaven, Jesus and Mary on earth.

Jesus is God the son, he calls God Father - draw a line to connect them. We know that Jesus has finished the task that the Father gave him to do on earth. Now Jesus says he is going back to heaven to be with his Father.

The brilliant surprise of these verses is what Jesus says to Mary. She is overjoyed that Jesus is alive, it makes sense that she wants to hold on to him. Jesus tells her something even better, "Don't hold on to me Mary, because I will be going back to Father God in Heaven. To my Father, and your Father. My God, and your God."

Listen carefully to that - 'My Father and your Father. My God and *your* God'. Jesus said that just like he can call God Father, now, because of what Jesus has done, we can know God as Father too - draw the line from "Mary" to God. And just as Jesus is going back to heaven, so we will be able to go to heaven one day to be with God. Add more people next to Mary to be all of us.

We can call God our Father! Because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross we are now part of God's family. Jesus has finished the job he came to do. He has brought us home to *his* Father and now *our* Father.



continued →



BRAIN BREAK

Solve the crime!

Read the following statement and find the clues to discover who had committed the crime of leaving the kitchen a mess! The kids need to listen to the description of the crime and find the items that are linked to the statement.

"Today at 8.30am some toast was left on the table with one small bite taken out of it. Next to the toast was a knife with something brown on it which smelt very salty. Flour had been spilt on the floor and the shape of a very big footprint could just be seen. In the kitchen there was also a book left open with a beautiful picture of mountains on display. Get up and dance music was also playing in the background!"

Having read through the statement, can you find the items that it talks about to help you solve the crime?


Who committed the crime?

Bert - has big feet, enjoys eating toast with savoury spreads, only reads books about the sea, likes calming music.

Bethany - likes very sweet spreads on her toast, loves walking in mountains and always nibbles her toast when she eats it.

Barny - loves marmite, climbing mountains to see the views from the top, enjoys music that makes you want to move.

Bea - does not like toast, loves books about nature, has small feet.

 **Link:** Today Peter, John and Mary looked at the evidence that showed Jesus had really risen from the dead.



HEART & HANDS

Did you spot it?

- There is a bundle of action in the story. Each of you tell me one moment you loved.
- What did John find at the tomb?
- What convinced John that Jesus was alive?
- What convinced Mary that Jesus was alive?

Work it out

- What did Jesus say to Mary? v17 "I am going back to my Father and your Father. I am going back to my God and your God!"
- How could that be good news for you?

continued →



A chance to rest the children's minds before Heart and Hands. Get moving and have fun with this game.

You will need:

three pairs of shoes with different soles, three books about different things, three pieces of toast with bite marks taken out, three different jars of jam/marmite/peanut butter, three different styles of music played through speakers and a statement.

A chance to reflect and chat about how the truth, through the Spirit's work, changes our thoughts (head), feelings (heart) and actions (hands).

Use the **Chat Time** sheet (see page 15) – you could enlarge it and work on it together. Hand out sticky notes so children can still respond personally.

Live it out

- What convinces you of what actually happened on that first Easter Sunday? Are there questions that you still have?
- How does the resurrection of Jesus help you know that you have a place in God's family forever?
- What could you say to someone who says you aren't good enough to belong in God's family?

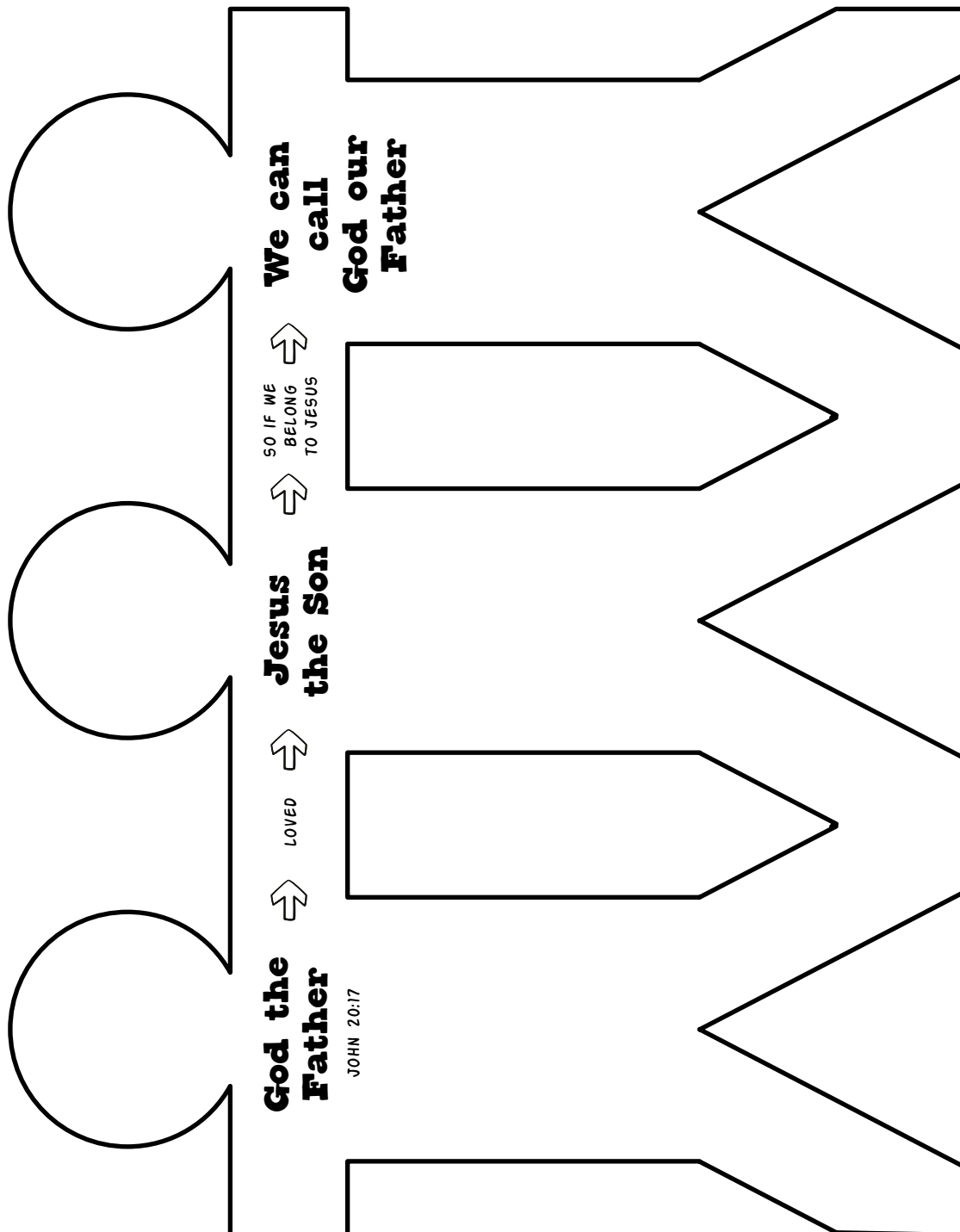
Extra stretch

- How do you explain that John and Mary became convinced after seeing different things?
- What if someone today is still not convinced? What would you recommend?
- "My Father and your Father." Why did this make such a difference to Mary? How does it make a difference to us?

PRAY

- When would it help you to remember that you can call God Father and have a place to belong in his family? When would it be good to think of Jesus - your brother sitting on the throne of heaven loving you? Ask God to help you enjoy and remember these truths today and on a tough day.

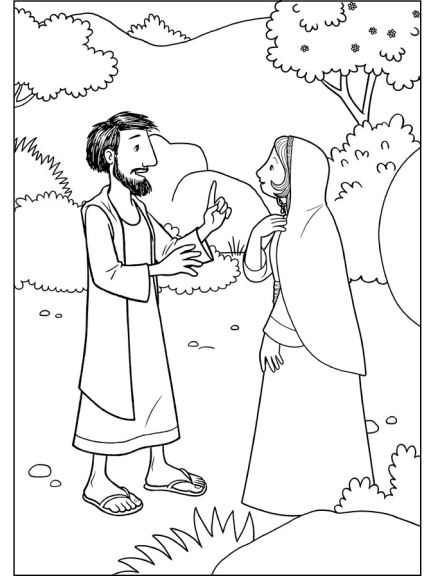






DID YOU SPOT IT?

There is a bundle of action in the story.
What one moment have you loved from the story?



What did John find at the tomb?
What convinced John that Jesus was alive?

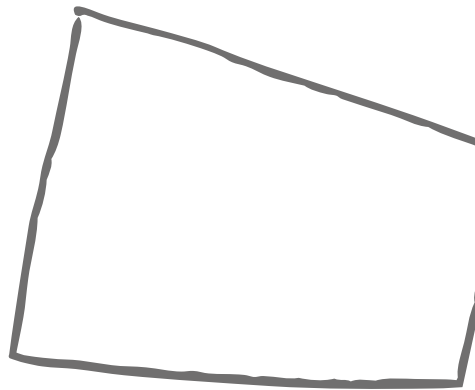
What convinced Mary that Jesus was alive?



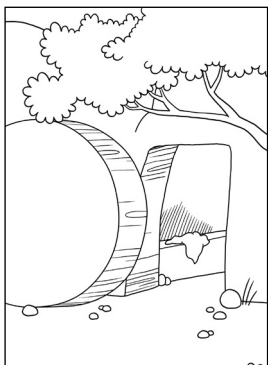
WORK IT OUT

What did Jesus say to Mary?

How could that be good news for you?



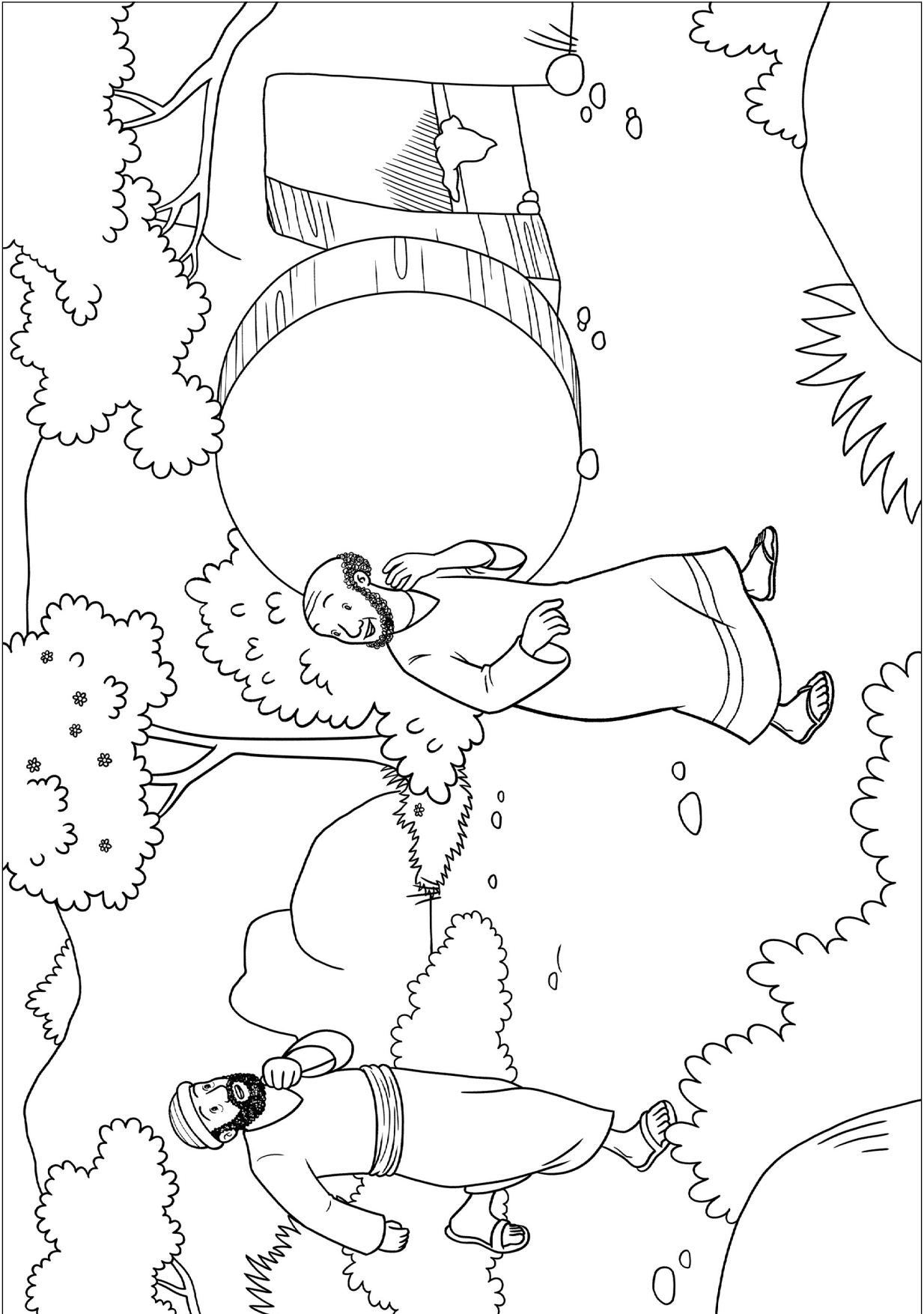
LIVE IT OUT



What convinces you of what actually happened on that first Easter Sunday? Are there questions that you still have?

How does the resurrection of Jesus help you know that you have a place in God's family forever?









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