

The Empty Tomb

Lesson At-A-Glance

Scripture Reference
Matthew 28:1-10

Lectionary Sunday/
Church Season
Easter Day

Lesson Focus
Empty tomb, full hearts.

Bible Memory Verse
He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.
Matthew 28:6



Gather (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Arrival Activity Kids take out the “hopes” they sealed up in the last lesson.	Activity Pages 	Pencils, sealed envelopes from Holy Week lesson
Opening Conversation Kids talk about the ways God uses “bad” things for “good.”	Leaflets	None
Opening Prayer Kids pray by clapping a rhythm and saying, “Alleluia!”	None	None

Open the Bible (20 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
The Empty Tomb Story Kids “empty” their minds while reading.	Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers, Leaflets	None
Tracking Jesus Kids follow footprints and scripture to see where people go next.	Spark Bibles, Leaflets	Pencils
Now THAT’S a Short Story! Kids write very short stories with a lot of meaning.	Leaflets	Pencils
Remember It Kids memorize the Bible Memory Verse.	Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers, Leaflets	None

Activate Faith (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
This Week in Good News Kids share the news of something small or big they did.	Leaflets	None
Forwarding Good News Kids send encouraging messages to the other kids to fill them up.	Leaflets	Slips of paper, pencils, colored pencils, small container
Something to Flip For Kids make a flipbook of angels in their Bibles.	Spark Bibles, Leaflets	Pencils

Send (5 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Closing Conversation Kids talk about “emptying” the plans we’ve made in exchange for better ones.	Leaflets	None
Closing Prayer Kids read a creed, repeating the part about Jesus’ resurrection.	Family Pages 	Hymnals or service books



Looking for additional Spark content to further engage kids? Visit wearesparkhouse.org/kids/SHOSS to learn more about these options for purchase.

- The Director’s CD-Rom contains Activity Pages, Coloring Pages, Family Pages, Large Group Openings, and two additional in-class activities for each lesson.
- A Spark Online annual subscription gives you access to all content contained in the Director’s CD-Rom and the Spark Leader Guides, plus administrative tools and other extras.

Gather (10 minutes)

Arrival Activity

If some kids arrive earlier than others and you need a lesson-based activity, make copies of the downloadable Activity Page and set them out for kids to try.

See if the kids remember what you did in the Sealed Hope activity during the Holy Week lesson. **Today, let's resurrect those hopes to see what it feels like to bring back something you've buried.**

Pass the envelopes back out to the kids. If any kids are willing to read their hopes out loud, that's great! **Today is all about good news, and hope being alive!**

Spark Resources

Activity Pages



Supplies

Pencils

Sealed envelopes from Holy Week lesson

Opening Conversation

Who was able to try the Faith on the Go! activity this past week? Tell us what you did. Allow time for sharing.

Who can tell me the Bible Memory Verse (BMV) from last week? If kids remember the BMV, invite them to recite it for the group. Guide kids to help them remember parts they don't.

Today's story also has an earthquake in it!

- **Do you remember any earthquakes that you've heard about in the news? What details do you remember?**
- **Do you think God causes earthquakes? Why or why not?**

I'm not sure that God causes earthquakes—I don't think God would cause suffering for anyone. But today's earthquake is definitely caused by God. We'll hear about that in a little while.

- **Whether or not you think God makes earthquakes, do you think God can work for good when something bad happens? Can you think of an example?**
- **What about Jesus' death? Was that "good" or "bad"? How did God use it for good?**

I think that God is so very full of goodness that God's goodness tends to overflow—it runs over into the cracks of the places that feel bad, or empty. God is full of goodness!

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

None

Opening Prayer

Now, let's fill this room up with our opening prayer. First, we'll start a clapping rhythm together. For every prayer I offer up, we'll sing, "Alleluia!" How should our song sound? Accept an idea of how "Alleluia!" gets sung. For example, is it Handel's Messiah? Or something more original?

Start a rhythm together as a group, clapping, or stomping feet! Then pray these petitions in rhythm with the beat, and indicate when you'd like the group to respond in song:

God of life and hope and peace, *(Alleluia!)*
We come here with empty hearts. *(Alleluia!)*
Come and be our victory feast, *(Alleluia!)*
Fill our lives with brand-new starts. *(Alleluia!)*
We love you and sing your praise *(Alleluia!)*
For what you've done for everyone. *(Alleluia!)*
Forevermore, for all our days *(Alleluia!)*
We'll worship Jesus Christ, your Son! *(Alleluia!)*
Amen.

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
None

Open the Bible (20 minutes)

The Empty Tomb Story

Help kids find Matthew 28:1-10 on page 1097 in the Spark Bible.

Sometimes, before we learn anything new, we have to empty our heads of the ideas we've already created. I bet many of us have heard today's story before. So before every sentence in today's story, I'm going to pause for 10 seconds of silence, where we can forget our previous ideas, and get ready to listen with new ears.

As you read the story, do just that—pause before each sentence, leaving room for kids to really listen. When you've finished, ask,

- **What new ideas did you get filled up with while listening today?**
- **What empty things did you hear about in today's story? Were there any empty things that you *didn't* hear about but that might have been there, too?**
- **How can a place that seems empty, like the tomb, be *full* of something?**
- **How can something small, like a trip to a grave, turn into something *big* and wonderful?**

Encourage kids to work in pairs to complete the assignment in Look It Up! on the third page of the leaflet. The other accounts of Jesus' resurrection are in Mark 16 on pages 1124-1125, Luke 24 on pages 1167-1169, and John 20 on pages 1198-1200.

Spark Resources
Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers
Leaflets

Supplies
None

Tracking Jesus

As soon as Jesus is resurrected, things get crazy pretty quickly. Everyone is headed somewhere important, with important news to share.

Work with kids to solve the maze in Tracking Jesus on the third page of the leaflet. They should be using the text from their Bibles to learn the answers of who's headed where. Afterward, ask,

- **What do you think the disciples had planned before this news? What was on their calendars?** (*not much*)
- **What do you think changed when they learned Jesus was alive?** (*Everything!*) **What did they have to do now?** (*A lot—telling others, traveling, etc.*)
- **When was the last time your life changed in a big way over a small passage of time? What happened?**

Spark Resources

Spark Bibles
Leaflets

Supplies

Pencils

Now THAT'S a Short Story!

Compared to the length of last week's Holy Week story, is this Bible story short or long? (*really short!*) **Can a story that's short on words mean a whole lot?** (*Yes!*)

Take a look at the stories in Now THAT'S a Short Story! on the second page of the leaflet.

- **What do you think these stories mean? In the first story, by Brian Herbert, what do you think the person fed?**
- **In the third story, what happens at the end of the sentence?**

Now you'll have a chance to write a six-word story of your own.

- **How can you make your story interesting with only a few words?**

After kids have shared their stories, say,

I think these short stories are so meaningful because there's a lot of room to interpret and guess about what they mean. There's potential for anything to happen! That's like today's story.

- **Today's story is pretty empty on small details. What is it full of?**
- **What sort of hope or potential hope does this story give us?**

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

Pencils

Remember It

Ask kids to look up Matthew 28:6 on page 1097 in the Spark Bible. They can also look at the fourth page of the leaflet to find the BMV. Teach the following actions to help the kids learn the BMV.

He is not here; (Shake your head no.)

for he has been raised, as he said. (Raise both arms, palms up, from waist to shoulder.)

Come, see the place where he lay. (Make a beckoning motion with your hand.)

Go through the verse with the motions several times. When the group has memorized the verse, encourage kids to put I Memorized It stickers in their Bibles.

Spark Resources

Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers
Leaflets

Supplies

None

Activate Faith (10 minutes)

This Week in Good News

Help illustrate this lesson for the kids: The things that seem small or empty can be full of life and promise. For the headline news in this activity, ask kids to come up with something they've done today that might *seem* small but could lead to bigger, good things.

A good way to approach this might be to brainstorm as a group, and add your own submission. For example, "This morning I took out the trash before my mom/roommate/spouse could ask me to. This tells that person that I care about them!"

Ask kids to find and complete This Week in Good News on the second page of the leaflet. Once kids have created their own headlines, ask,

- **What day of the week did the women in today's story visit Jesus?** (*the first day*) **Why might this be important?** (*First days can mean new beginnings. Something new was happening!*)
- **How are the little things we do (as well as big things, like resurrection) beginnings? Are all beginnings important?**
- **Why do we do things like this, that "add up" to loving our neighbors?** (*because our hearts are full of love—love that God has shown us!*)
- **Would you call a life that loves other people a full life? Why?**
- **What's something you can do on the first day of this week that marks a new beginning?**

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

None

Forwarding Good News

Ask a volunteer to read Forwarding Good News on the last page of the leaflet. Distribute paper and pencils. Ask kids to think of some things from the news or from their lives that is good news. They should write each thing they think of on a slip of paper and put it into the container.

I'm going to read these pieces of good news one at a time. If you think someone else's good news is good news to you, color in a line on the jar of your leaflet. When your jar is full, shout out, I'm full of good news.

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

Slips of paper

Pencils

Colored pencils

Small container

Something to Flip For

Help kids create a flipbook in their Bibles by working with them on Something to Flip For on the third page of the leaflet. **In today's story, things start happening so fast! Even the angels are like lightning! Let's create a flipbook animation of the angels from today's story.**

Step 1: Turn your Spark Bibles upside down and over, so you're looking at the back cover, upside down.

Step 2: Pick a small chunk of your Spark Bibles to illustrate with your story. The Gospel of Matthew is a good idea.

Step 3: On the top right of each page, there's a blank space that would work well for our animation.

Step 4: On each page, draw a stick-figure angel slowly appearing, giving good news, and then disappearing bit by bit. The key to making a good flipbook is to change only a little bit between pages.

Let kids work on their own to complete this activity. When they've finished (or when you think you're running out of time), have one kid read the paragraph after the flipbook instructions (the paragraph starts with, "Now, whenever you need a reminder"). Help kids remember that God's good news can show up anywhere, even in places that seem empty!

Spark Resources

Spark Bibles

Leaflets

Supplies

Pencils

Send (5 minutes)

Closing Conversation

Again, before today's story, the disciples had probably given up on any plans they made to follow Jesus. But after they hear the good news, they knew that anything could happen!

- **If we empty our plans in exchange for Jesus' plans, what might happen?**
- **What can we do if our plans change unexpectedly? What kind of attitude do we need?**
- **How can we face changes with joy?**
- **Why would we want to give up on our own plans to follow Jesus?**

Remember that behind every change, God could be at work, shaking the earth with a good kind of earthquake. Easter joy overcomes frustration and confusion!

Ask a volunteer to read Faith on the Go! on the last page of the leaflet. Encourage kids to try out the suggestion during the week and be prepared to report back next week.

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

None

Closing Prayer

Distribute hymnals or service books that your congregation uses during worship. Use one of the creeds your church uses for your closing prayer. Tell the kids that you will pray the words of this creed, but when you reach the part about Jesus' resurrection, you'll repeat those lines three times to remember the three days that the disciples had to wait for good news.

Be sure to send a leaflet and a Family Page home with each kid.

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

Hymnals or service books