



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Ezekiel 37:1-14

John 5:24-29

Session Theme:

Resurrection

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Rise Up?

Spread a bunch of toothpicks out on a table. Ask kids if they can make these rise up and stand on end without touching them with anything. See if kids have any suggestions or can succeed at actually doing it. Afterwards, explain that lifting up the toothpicks without touching them in any way is practically impossible because of gravity. But what if something like this *could* be done — and more? How might it happen? That's what we are going to learn about in our lesson today.

In today's story, a man saw God resurrect old, dry bones and bring them to life — right before his eyes! What caused this? Who was the man who witnessed it? Let's begin our lesson and find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Faithful Lord, your Holy Spirit brought life even to dead bones. Be with us now, making us faithful and strong so we may stand and serve you always. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" (children's song)
- "Dem Bones" (children's song)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Return

God brought King Cyrus of Persia to power overthrow the Babylonians. God's people were allowed to return home to rebuild their temple and their nation under leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level:

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help the students think about the events of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, and Questions)

Adults: Bible Study (Large or Small Group Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. Use the Bible Rhyme as a short review, or simply ask questions to help the students recall the events of the story.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Ezekiel 37:1-14

1. This story took place during the time of the Exile; God's people were living far from their homeland. How do you think the Jews felt at that time? What might have been some of their worries and doubts?

The exiles would have likely felt homesick, grieving for all they had lost and left behind. Beyond the loss of material things, they had suffered a spiritual loss in the destruction of the temple. They would have wondered if their days as a nation were over, and worried that God had abandoned them. (Read Psalm 137 for a sense of what the Israelites were feeling at the time.)

2. What does it mean that sinews and flesh came on the bones? Why was that not enough to bring them to life? What more did they need?

Dry bones can't do anything by themselves; it was God's power that brought them to life. In our lives, it is God's Spirit that creates faith and gives us life. God was showing Ezekiel not just a physical restoration, but a spiritual restoration as well. Just as God's Spirit gives us life in this world, God's Spirit is also the source of our eternal life through faith.

3. In the Bible, the single Hebrew word "ruach" can be translated as spirit, wind, or breath. How does this story illustrate the way God's Holy Spirit works in our lives? What does the Spirit give us?

The imagery in this story shows the power of the invisible Spirit to influence the things we can see. Like the wind has the power to drive a sailing ship, or create music from wind chimes, God's Spirit has the power to act upon us to give us life. Compare this to the story of Adam from Genesis 2:7: "The Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." God uses physical "breath" to communicate his Word, through which the Holy Spirit gives faith to those who hear it.

4. By using the dry bones as an object lesson, what was God promising to do for his people at this time in history? Did God fulfill his promise?

The people felt their lives were over, never to come back. Their hope was lost. Spiritually, they were like those dry bones. But God was telling

Ezekiel that he had a miracle in store for them. He would give the people new life, return them to their land, and restore the nation. Within that very generation, God did exactly what he promised.

5. What part did God choose Ezekiel to play in all this? What did God want Ezekiel to do? In what sense does God call *all* his followers (including us) to do the same kind of thing?

God called Ezekiel as a prophet to speak his Word. That is to say, Ezekiel served as God's messenger. We tend to think of prophets as people who foretell the future, but they are more like God's ambassadors — speaking on God's behalf (whether that message may have to do with the past, present, or future). As followers of Jesus, the Bible calls us God's messengers as well, since we are meant to bring the promise of Jesus to others (2 Corinthians 5:20).

6. Read what Jesus says in John 5:24-29. What does Jesus say will happen in the end, on the last day? Who will make this happen? How does the Ezekiel story foreshadow that future event?

God showed Ezekiel the picture of dead bodies being raised up and given new life. Jesus said that this will happen in a literal way:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (v. 25).

Jesus is referring to the day of Resurrection, when God will raise to life all those who have died. Jesus has proved that he is the one in whom we have life — in this world and the next!

7. Read Romans 6:5-11. What does it mean to say we are "dead in sin"? What has Jesus done that gives us faith and hope in the face of this reality?

As sinners, left to ourselves, we have no future. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Because Jesus died and rose again, because we are united with Jesus, we know that we will rise from death as well.

8. Continue reading in Romans 6 through verse 14. What does all this talk of death and new life mean for the way we live our lives of faith in the here and now? In what sense are we already living our eternal life in Christ?

Paul encourages us to consider ourselves "dead to sin" and not to continue living in ways that are contrary to our faith. As believers, we have already begun our eternal life in Christ. It only makes sense that we live a life here and now that matches who and what we will be!

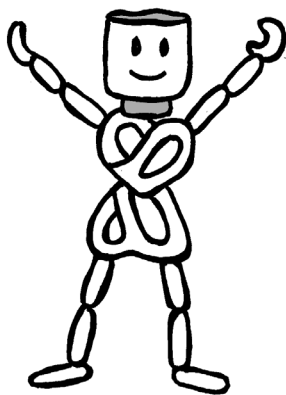
Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Skeleton Treats

Materials Needed:

- White chocolate pretzels
- Marshmallows (large; mini ones optional)
- Vanilla frosting
- Chocolate icing in a tube
- Small paper plates
- Plastic knives or spoons



Instructions:

Give each person a paper plate, a tablespoon of vanilla frosting, a plastic knife or spoon, one or more marshmallows, and five or more white chocolate pretzels.

Invite kids to arrange the white chocolate pretzels to look like a skeleton that is lying down on the plate. (They can break up the pretzels as needed for this.) If using mini marshmallows, kids can use these as hands and feet. Otherwise, broken pieces of pretzels will work for these too. Let them be as creative as they want!

Secure the pretzels with vanilla frosting so they stay in place.

Next, have kids use chocolate icing to draw a face on their large marshmallow. This will be the head of their skeleton.

Attach the head to the top with white frosting as well.

When kids have finished, they can take turns showing the class their completed skeleton. Depending on what else you have planned, you can either invite them to eat their handiwork or take it home to have as a treat later in the day.

Imagine how strange and sad it must have been for Ezekiel to see the valley of dry bones. But for them to rise up and come together while he was prophesying — that would have seemed absolutely miraculous!

Just as the Holy Spirit breathed life into those bones, the same can happen for those who believe in and belong to Jesus, for he gives us new life as well!

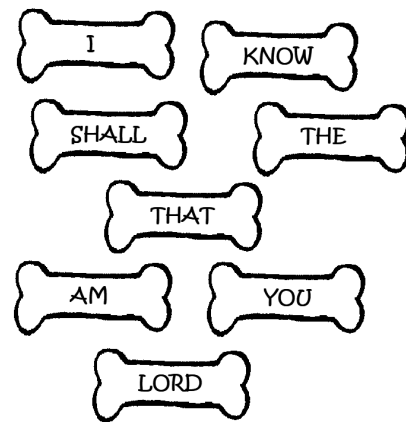
Activity 2: Scrambled Bones Activity

Materials Needed:

- Card stock or white paper
- Markers
- Scissors

Instructions:

Before Class: Cut out a dozen various bone shapes from card stock or white paper. (These don't have to be perfect — any long basic shape will do.)



Write one word of this part of Ezekiel 37:6 on each bone: "YOU/SHALL/LIVE/AND/YOU/SHALL/KNOW/THAT/I/AM/THE/LORD."

Hide the bones throughout the church building or classroom.

When it's time to do the activity: Have kids search for the bones, telling them that they need to find 12 in all. They will be working as one team for this activity.

After they have found all of them, invite kids to put the "bones" on a table and arrange the words into a sentence.

Kids can look at today's Bible story for a hint of what that sentence might be. If they are really stuck, tell them to look up Ezekiel 37:6, which contains part of the sentence.

Sometimes it seems like everything is mixed up, like a pile of dry bones sitting in the sun, or like the seemingly unrelated words in our activity today. We may feel confused, as Ezekiel did, or in despair.

Yet just as the words came together in our activity and started to make sense, that's how life can be when God is in the picture. God breathes new life into things and can use everything for good. We need only trust him.

Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Valley of Dry Bones:

Using the bone letters, the message spells out:

And I will put
my Spirit
within you,
and you
shall live.

(Ezekiel 37:14a ESV)



When God raises us up to new life is called:

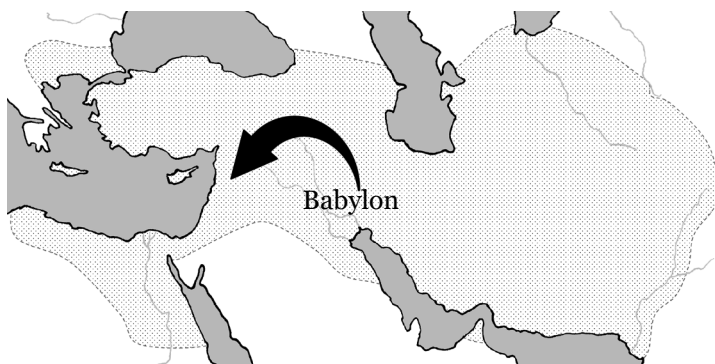
R E S U R R E C T I O N

From Martin Luther's Small Catechism

In this Christian church, [God] daily forgives abundantly all my sins and the sins of all believers. At the last day, he will raise me and all the dead and will grant everlasting life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true!

Map of the Return:

God's people lived in Exile from 587 BC to 538 BC (some had been captured as early as 597 BC, after the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians). The map below shows the direction the exiles traveled when they returned to Jerusalem in 538 BC:



Vocabulary Word for the Week

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary.

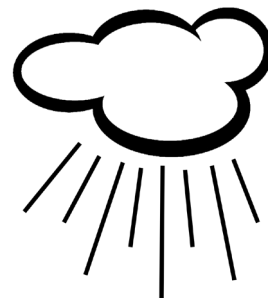
Resurrection

to be raised and given life by God

God told Ezekiel that the old bones would be given life again — a true resurrection!

Reflection for the Week Ahead

The image of a valley of dry bones from today's Bible story is a stark and depressing one. But when the Holy Spirit breathed life into them, hope was reborn! What was it that began this whole amazing process? Ezekiel's obedience to God, and his faithful preaching. Even though it seemed like Ezekiel's words would only fall on deaf, dry bones, things were not as hopeless as they seemed. They never are.



We should not underestimate the power of God's Word. The Holy Spirit can do amazing things through us when we are willing to serve God. Ezekiel wanted his people to return to God and to know that he had not given up on them. That message is still needed today, as much as ever. May God use us to share it within our own generation.

Discuss, or think about individually, a time when you felt hopeless or overwhelmed by what was going on around you. How might looking at that same situation through the eyes of faith change how you see it?

The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer thanking God for bringing restoration and renewal to situations in life where things have become old and dead. Praise him for his power to give new life, and ask for his Spirit to keep you alive in faith.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.