



awake to Jesus! sunday school resources

2: Jesus the Healer

Sunday school lesson 2: Luke 5-8

Teacher's notes / Devotional for teachers

This story is all about Jesus' spontaneous compassion and care for broken hearted humanity. Jesus has just healed the servant of a centurion living in Capernaum. He has done so in response to the great faith of the Gentile soldier whose faith Jesus commends as being greater than any other he has found elsewhere in Israel.

But now He enters another town called Nain accompanied by his disciples and a large crowd and faith is nowhere to be found. Instead Jesus performs another miracle simply out of his great love for a devastated widow. Only this is on a higher scale altogether: on this occasion Jesus raises the dead!

Imagine the scene with me. Jesus meets the funeral procession at the town gate. The professional mourners are there wailing at the top of their voices. The noise is meant to give the son's mother freedom to release her grief in a way that won't cause the woman embarrassment. And how great her grief must have been! She has already lost her husband to death and now it has struck a second time at her beloved son. It is awful enough to lose a child at any time, but to lose your only son in the Middle East at the time of Jesus was to lose your future security. Now she had no one to provide for her and to protect her. She had no hope of a daughter-in-law to bear her grand-children; she was utterly alone. If she could not find another husband (which was unlikely) she may, like many widows before her, be forced into the slavery of prostitution.

The procession is on its way through the town gate to the family burial plot outside the town where the widow's husband had been laid some time before. As they come through the gates they are met by a crowd of strangers. The man at the centre of the crowd is obviously the leader. Inexplicably he steps out of the crowd and makes his way to the mourning mother. Jesus is stirred with deep compassion. This was not how his creation was made to be. His heart simply goes out to this woman. Looking into her tearful eyes, he gently speaks to her: 'Don't cry'.

And before she could respond, Jesus is off towards the bier that carries her son. Everyone is utterly amazed and agog. But this turns to horror when he reaches out and touches the coffin. No one except the official bearers would do this, because to do so made anyone else ritually unclean.

The bearers stop in surprise and then Jesus speaks into the ear of the dead boy. 'Get up!' Jesus commands, and immediately the son awakens.

Can you picture the scene? What would you have experienced? Disbelief, astonishment, or perhaps like the widow, unbridled joy.

Gently Jesus lifts the boy and walks back towards the woman, who once again is a mother with hope and love. With compassion Jesus gives her back her son.

No wonder the people were filled with awe and started to praise God. Not only had they witnessed a miracle of the hugest magnitude, but they had become aware that someone was in their midst who had been sent from God to save the whole nation of Israel. But that salvation would not come initially with great acts of power. Luke wants us to see this story as a precursor to another death of a Son. This time it is Mary mourning the loss of her beloved Jesus, her innocent boy violated by men so that God might save them. Such is the compassion of God.

Jesus on the cross gives his mother to John to watch over her once he has gone. In Jesus' Kingdom family there would be no one in need. The early church was renowned as the community who cared for widows.

And having entrusted Mary to John, Jesus goes all the way to the grave alone and there awaits another voice to say 'Get up'. On the third day after his death, Jesus rose, only this time, He will not taste death again, unlike the widow's son.

And he promises us that he will also call us out of death to participate in His new life. But we will look at that soon. What compassion and love permeate this story about Jesus. What a picture of comfort and hope.

But what can we personally derive from this story here and now? Listen to these words from Tom Wright: 'Now go through the scene again; but this time, instead of it being a funeral procession in a small first-century Galilean town, make it the moment you most dread in this next week or next year. Maybe it's something that you know is going to happen, like a traumatic move of house or job. Maybe it's something you are always afraid of, a sudden accident or illness, a tragedy or scandal. Come into the middle of the scene, if you can, in prayer; feel its sorrow and frustration, its bitterness and anger. Then watch as Jesus comes to join you in the middle of it. Take time in prayer and let him approach, speak, touch, command. He may not say what you expect. He may not do what you want. But if his presence comes to be with you there that is what you most need. Once he is in the middle of it all with you, you will be able to come through it all.'

Let this story encourage you to wait on Jesus and to know his compassionate presence with you.

- **Explanation of Lesson**

- This lesson looks at the idea of Jesus as Healer and based on the miracles of Jesus in Luke. The lesson is looking at the *healing* miracles only and you may want to mention that obviously Jesus did other miracles that are in the book of Luke and indeed around this story within that Gospel, e.g. the calming of the storm. We cannot look at everything in this short session of 6 lessons but you may want to mention the other ones too.

- **Aims of lesson**

- To help the children see that there is a purpose for Jesus' miracles and they were not random acts of kindness
- To show that Jesus wants to help us when we worry about things, that He is there to help us deal with problems
- That Jesus understands how we feel when we are hurting or sad
- That Jesus wants to turn our negative feelings into positive ones

- **Equipment needed**

- Sheet of paper for brainstorming or whiteboard and pens
- Copies of the bible story (printed at end of lesson)
- Plasters and pens
- Words for part 4 on paper to hide around the room

Introduction

(Depending on how young the children are in your class/group may depend on the topic that you want to discuss at this point. Be sensitive to the age of the children, or their history of loss that you know of.)

Ask the children what sorts of things get lost? Have they ever lost something? How does it make you feel? You may want to make a list on a poster or whiteboard or just talk about it in the group. Think through things that they lose like toys, books, maybe someone will say lose their temper, etc.

If appropriate, ask them then what it feels like to lose someone, or if they have no experience of this, how they imagine it may be to lose someone or maybe they have lost a pet and they can draw on that experience. Be very sensitive though to this issue and do not push children to respond if they do not want to.

Explain that in the story today we learn about a widow (explain that a widow is someone whose husband has died so she had already lost someone) and had now lost her son. In this story it is the day of his

funeral. It does not say how old the boy was, just that he was a boy and he was this woman's only son.

How do you think she felt? She had already lost her husband at some point and now her only son, and possibly her only child had also died.

Part 2

- Read the passage (printed at the end of the lesson) with the children. You could maybe get one of them to read it or simply you read it so that they get the idea of the story.
- Have the children act out the story as it is and think through the emotions that the characters would have had. Stop them at certain points and ask them how they would feel if they were the characters, e.g. when they see the boy being carried through by the people, when Jesus tells the woman not to cry, when He goes over to the body and speaks to him, when the boy sits up, etc.
- Help the children to understand how surprising and shocking this would be but also how Jesus saw the pain of a mother and wanted to change her devastation into rejoicing.

Part 3

- Tell the children that Jesus knew how the mother in the story felt when her son died and he did something to help her. Sometimes our worries or sadness can feel enormous, but no matter how bad we feel, Jesus cares and wants us to bring our worries to him and tell him about them.
- Give the children some plasters and a pen and ask them to write on them something that they worry about. Give them a new plaster for each thing that they may worry about. Some children will struggle to come up with one while others will need several plasters to write on! If they don't have any worries, then say that's great and ask them to write or draw something that they want to tell Jesus.
- Take it in turns around the group to lay out your plasters and ask Jesus to look after each worry. Collect all the plasters and write a reminder to yourself to get them out again in a few weeks' time to see what Jesus has done for each situation. Maybe they could be stuck to the wall and looked at over the following weeks.

Part 4

Write the following words on separate pieces of paper:

- joy
- sorrow
- laughter
- sadness
- healing
- pain
- life
- death
- peace
- worry
- freedom
- captivity

Depending on the age of the children in your group, there may be some words that you will leave out or need to explain to the children. Hide the words around the room and challenge the children to race to find one pair of opposites each (for example, sorrow and joy). You may need to have multiples of some or all of the words depending on how many children that you have.

When everyone has a pair, get them to lay them out in the middle of your circle and talk about how Jesus can take each of these negative words and give us the opposite.

Then say that just like Jesus helped the widow in the story, taking her sadness and making her happy again, Jesus can take the things that make us sad and worried and help us to be happy again too with his help.

Finish the session by asking the children for things that they would like to pray for and pray together for those things.

Bible Readings

Luke 7:11-17

A Widow's Son

¹¹Soon Jesus and his disciples were on their way to the town of Nain, and a big crowd was going along with them. ¹²As they came near the gate of the town, they saw people carrying out the body of a widow's only son. Many people from the town were walking along with her.

¹³When the Lord saw the woman, he felt sorry for her and said, "Don't cry!"

¹⁴Jesus went over and touched the stretcher on which the people were carrying the dead boy. They stopped, and Jesus said, "Young man, get up!" ¹⁵The boy sat up and began to speak. Jesus then gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶Everyone was frightened and praised God. They said, "A great prophet is here with us! God has come to his people."

¹⁷News about Jesus spread all over Judea and everywhere else in that part of the country.