Covenant Renewal 2019 - My Friend Jesus

The Raising of Lazarus | John 11:1-44

### Activity

#### Toilet Paper Shrouds

You will need:

* Rolls of toilet paper

In pairs, children race to turn their partner into a wrapped corpse or a mummy.

#### Lazarus Come Out, Lazarus Go In (game comes from [www.daniellesplace.com](https://www.daniellesplace.com/html/lazarus-bible-crafts.html#comeout))

You will need:

* Masking tape
* A clear space

Place a line of tape down the middle of your space. Designate one side "inside the tomb" and the other side "outside the tomb". Have the children stand anywhere they would like. Tell them that when you say, "Lazarus Come Out", they should all jump to the "outside of the tomb" side of the room. When you say, "Lazarus Go In", they should all jump to the "inside" side of the room. You will try to trick them to jump on the wrong side depending on what you say. If a child jumps to the wrong side, he is out. Keep playing until only one child is left. When you say "Lazarus go in or go out" always jump to the opposite side. The children may automatically follow you to that side even though you said something different.

### Story

*Sit the children in a circle with storyteller preferably on a swivel stool in the middle so they are sitting at the same height as the children, Alternatively they can stand. As they tell the story slowly move around to make eye contact with the children. Gestures, tone, volume, and expression help tell the story; for example, when asking a rhetorical question, lean in to help the children engage with the question. When This builds an atmosphere of anticipation and the feeling of it being a sacred space. There are some suggested directions included below if you would like to use them.*

Jesus had friends named Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They lived in Bethany, a little town not far from Jerusalem. They were good friends of Jesus and they trusted him a lot.

*Leaning in, and in a quiet, serious tone*

One day Lazarus became very ill. This was before there were doctors, and medicines, and hospitals. Lazarus kept getting worse, and Mary and Martha were very worried. They knew Jesus was God’s special son. He was their friend, and they trusted him, so they asked him to come and make Lazarus better. They couldn’t text him, or email him, or phone him. Instead they had to send a friend to go find Jesus in Jerusalem and ask him to come back to Bethany to help Lazarus.

When Jesus heard he said, “Lazarus’ sickness is not going to end in death. No, instead everyone is going to see God’s glory”. Even though he loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus very much he did not go and see them right away. Instead he stayed put for two days, then he said to his disciples, “Our friend, Lazarus, has fallen asleep, but I will go and wake him up.”

*Confused and with a puzzled look*

The disciples thought that was a strange thing to say, because if Lazarus was asleep then it might help him feel better.

*Calmly with a sense of mystery*

But what Jesus really meant was that Lazarus had died. He was going to do something amazing that showed God’s glory.

*With a sense urgency and grief*

Martha came running up to Jesus as he walked into Bethany. She was very upset that her brother Lazarus had died. She knew that Jesus was God’s special son, and she knew that he could have healed Lazarus if he had come sooner. She trusted Jesus even though she did not think he could make things better.

Not long after Mary came out to meet Jesus, her friends came with her.

*Upset and a little angry, point fingers or ball hands into fists*

She was crying and told Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here Lazarus would still be alive”. She was so sad, and crying so hard that Jesus began to cry as well.

Jesus went with Mary and Martha to Lazarus’ tomb, he was still crying when he got there. He asked for the stone to be rolled away from the tomb, but Martha did not think it was a good idea.

*Leaning back, quietly shocked and appalled*

“Lazarus has been dead for 4 days, it will be very smelly in there,” she said. But Jesus insisted.

*Firmly and confidently*

Jesus gave thanks to God, and then shouted into the tomb, “Lazarus, come out!”

*In amazement, and joyously*

It was amazing! Jesus’ friend Lazarus came out. He was still wrapped in burial cloth, so Jesus asked people to unwrap him. Mary and Martha were no longer sad, their brother was alive again!

### Discussion

This year’s covenant renewal focuses on the children choosing Jesus as a trusted friend. There may be children in your programme who have already decided to be Jesus’ friends, but there may also be some who are still deciding. Therefore this discussion should allow space for all children to express their questions and observations.

#### Observational Questions

* I wonder which part of the story you like best?
* I wonder which part of the story is the most important?
* I wonder which part of the story you like the least?
* I wonder if there is a part of the story we could leave out and still have all of the story?
* I wonder which part of the story is most about you?
* I wonder what it might have been like to be friends with Jesus back then?
* I wonder if the sisters found it hard to trust Jesus?

### Response

This response time is designed to include all children, regardless of the decisions they have come to in their faith. After a time of discussion and allowing the children to explore their thoughts and feelings on the story, and Jesus’ actions, take a moment to pray. You may use the prayer below or your own, whichever is best for your group and setting.

#### Prayer

*Lord, thank you for the friendship you showed to Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Thank you that you are trustworthy. Please join us as we think about friendship with you. Help us to know you are near, and that you love us.*

*Amen*

#### Renewal / Decision Making

There are three choices for response (although 2 will use the Covenant Renewal bookmark):

* Continuing to be friends with Jesus
* Choosing friendship with Jesus for the first time
* Still deciding

Making it clear that there are no wrong choices to make, ask the children to pick a response to the story. You may want to say something like:

*Jesus was a friend to Mary, Martha and Lazarus; he would like to be your friend too. Some of you decided already to let Jesus be your friend, some of you might want to decide that today, and some you might want a bit more time to get to know Jesus before you decide. Today we would like you to take a bookmark from one of the baskets* [or whatever your setup is] *up the front. There are three options to choose, and each one is just as important as the others. You might choose to keep being Jesus’ friend. You might choose to start being Jesus’ friend. Or you might choose to keep thinking about it. There are no wrong choices. After you have chosen, one of the leaders will pray with you about your decision.*

In order to avoid shy or anxious children feeling pressured, it can be a good idea to let all the children go forward at once, or as they are ready. In doing so, it reduces the risk of children feeling pressured or on display.

Be sure someone prays with each child (regardless of which response they choose), even if that means praying in groups of two or three, and give each child the opportunity to pray themselves.

#### Activity

You will need:

* Covenant renewal cards
* Cardstock cut into bookmarks
* Colouring pencils etc.
* Pens

The covenant renewal cards have been designed so the children can colour them in as they would like. On the blank bookmarks the children who are undecided are able to design their own bookmarks. If you have large numbers of children and fewer leaders, you may like to start this activity and make your way round the children to pray for them.