

Series: Born Among Us

Lesson 6: Back from Beyond (The Dead)

Learning Objectives:

As a result of this lesson students will be able to...

- Articulate their feelings and thoughts about death.
- Identify what the stories of the people that Jesus revived say about Jesus' identity
- Continue to build a biblical image of Jesus

Materials Needed:

- ☐ DVD copy of *Friends*, Season One
- ☐ DVD copy of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (see Lead In)
- ☐ Black bag or similar object
- ☐ White bag or similar object, larger than the black one
- ☐ Cut out pictures relating to death
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Scrap paper
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Board and markers
- ☐ Black cubes or black slips of paper

Note: This lesson deals directly with death and our feelings about it. Although this is a hard topic and can make people uncomfortable, it can be very helpful for students to talk about their fears and concerns about death. Death is often on the minds of teenagers and

we hope that this lesson will guide them to discover how Jesus can change our fear of death.

If you or one of your students has recently experienced the death of someone, you may want to either reschedule the lesson or be prepared to handle the emotions related to this loss. It may be wise to warn students ahead of time about the topic and be clear that if anyone feels uncomfortable during the lesson that he or she is free to leave or comment as appropriately. You could even begin by asking students what you could do to create a safe environment for talking about death.

Lead In:

For this Lead In you have a choice to use either a clip from the television show *Friends*, or a clip from the movie *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, or both. You or your church may not be comfortable showing a clip from a Harry Potter movie. Please feel free to use only the other clip or to find a substitute clip. Also, keep in mind that showing the Harry Potter clip is not meant to condone magic, the occult, or the movie. Instead, the clip is used here to illustrate the unrealistic nature of such practices and may in fact provide a useful opportunity to talk about these topics. As for the *Friends* clip, the series is available for rent, for sale, and may even be sitting on the shelf of someone you know. Check first and save some money.

Tell students that you are going to show one/two clips. Tell them to watch and identify whether they think that these clips show a realistic portrayal of death and why or why not. The two clips are as follows:

1. *Friends*, Season One, Disc 2, Show 2, Scene 4, “The One Where Nana Dies Twice”

The scene begins with a nightscape of New York City followed by a scene in a hospital. The first line is “Those fuzzy little mints she kept at the bottom of her purse.” In this scene, Ross and Monica’s grandmother is dead but comes back to life briefly.

2. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Chapter 24

This clip is the whole of chapter 24, beginning at 118:47 and ending at 121:56. In this scene, Harry finds himself watching a ritual in which his arch enemy “comes back to life” in a new body. The scene may be frightening for some viewers.

When the scenes have played, solicit some answers from the students. The scenes do not depict a very realistic portrayal of death. The idea of someone coming back to life is far fetched. The first clip was just a gag to make people laugh and the second took place in

an imaginary and magical world. In both cases the “resurrection” was met with fear and horror. Tell the students that in this lesson they are going to look at three stories of people coming back to life that are very different from the clips.

Task One:

Take a black bag or similar object and in the bag place a variety of pictures or objects that are related to death. Examples include a picture of a coffin, a headstone, someone crying, an obituary, someone wearing black standing at a funeral, funerals from other cultures, and so on. Explain to the students that the black bag represents death and that in the bag you have placed items that often make us think of death. Pass the bag around and one by one ask the students to draw out one item and choose one word for how that makes them feel (could be sad, angry, numb, or whatever word they want).

When they have finished ask them to summarize how death makes people feel and why. When students have agreed, transition by saying something like, *It is normal to have feelings of fear and sadness around death. The reason is that death, in this world, is final. When we die or lose someone we love to death, we feel a sense of something ending, often before we want it to. There can also be fear because we don't know what life after death might look like. Let's look at some stories from the Bible where Jesus encountered death.*

Task Two:

Divide the students into three groups. They can stay where they are but each group is going to receive different instructions for listening to the Scripture stories that will be read. Also, ask for three volunteers to look up the Scripture passages listed below. Have them look these up while you give the others the instructions and the materials. Here are the references:

1. Mark 5: 21-24, 35-43
2. Luke 7:11-17
3. John 11:1-27, 38-44

Ask the first group to imagine that they are the crowd or people watching the event. Ask them to record how the crowd responded in terms of actions, words, thoughts, or feelings, whether explicit in the text or what they imagine would be true. Ask the second group to imagine that they are the mourners in the story, that they were close to the one who died. Ask them to record how the mourners would have responded in terms of actions, words, thoughts, or feelings. Lastly, ask the third group to imagine that they are the dead person and to record how they would have felt if they knew what was going on around them. Give the students scrap paper and a pen to keep track of their responses. Instruct the readers to read, giving some time for the listeners to think and record their thoughts. They may need to read more than once, at the request of the listeners, and the listeners may need to work hard to imagine themselves in the story.

When this is finished, have the three groups (the crowd, the mourners, the dead people) confer. Did they have similar answers or different? When they have conferred, invite one representative from each group to put the group's answers on the board. Have the board prepared in three columns. Label them "crowd", "mourners", and "the dead". Tell the students that they can use pictures, words, phrases, sentences, point form or anything else to share their answers. Have the other students watch and decide if they agree with the answers on the board. Allow them to make comments and have some discussion until all are reasonably agreed as to the answers (which are mostly subjective).

Task Three:

When they are finished, ask each group to decide what their character(s) would have thought about Jesus. Solicit some answers.

Ask also, what this experience would have made them think about death. Solicit some answers.

And finally ask them to imagine that they are one of the people that Jesus raised from the dead and many years have passed. They are now old and facing death. How would they feel about dying this time?

Some points to consider as you guide these discussions:

- Jesus taught us that *because* of his resurrection we can also expect to be resurrected to new life. Note: you may need to explain that our resurrection will not look like the first stories we read, which were revivifications. The difference is that if you are revived you can die again, whereas if you are resurrected you cannot die again. We anticipate our own resurrection in the future but these stories are about miraculous revivifications.
- The people who were raised from the dead had first hand experience of Jesus' power over death. They likely wouldn't fear death a second time. Their experience gives us hope in the same power.
- Rather than fear, sadness, and anger (or the words chosen in Task One), we can have hope, peace, and comfort because of our belief in Jesus.

Task Four:

Have a volunteer look up 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 and be ready to read it at your cue.

Give each student a black cube or black slip of paper. Explain that the item represents

something that they fear about death. Give them a moment to think about what this is and then one by one ask them to place their cube or slip of paper in the black bag or cloth you used at the beginning. Hold up the bag as well as the white bag. Say something like, *This black bag represents death and all that scares us about it. This white bag represents the hope we have that Jesus has beaten death. So-and-so is going to read 1 Corinthians 15: 51-57 for us. Listen carefully and tell me what you think the next action should be.* Instruct the student to read the passage. Hopefully the other students will instruct you to place the black bag in the white bag, a symbolic act of clothing the perishable in the imperishable. You may need to ask the student to re-read the passage; the language can be tough.

Task Five:

Once again, revisit the image of Jesus that you started in the first lesson of this series. Ask the students what new things they want to add or change about Jesus as a result of this lesson and allow them to adapt the image as appropriate. This is the last lesson. Ask each student to identify the one thing that they learned or even re-learned that stands out to them most from the past six weeks of exploration.

Closing:

Close in prayer, thanking Jesus for who he is and asking God to reveal to each of the students a fresh understanding of his character.