



Introduction

Christians believe that Jesus showed people what God is like. Whenever Jesus came across people who were sad or suffering in any way, they changed. On three occasions recorded in the Gospels this included raising people from the dead. Jesus' power and love transformed an end into a new beginning and he brought joy where there had been great sadness.

Christians see these particular miracles as signposts to what was going to happen to Jesus himself after his death on the cross. However, unlike the three 'back-to-life' stories, Jesus' resurrection would last forever.

The focus for the following session is the story of Jesus' meeting the widow in the village of Nain. She was grieving over the recent death of her only son - in fact, Jesus seems to have walked right into the funeral cortege - and, faced with such grief, he shows the compassion of God, turning her mourning into laughter (Luke 7:11-17). The crowds take this as a sign of how special Jesus is.

What follows are some ideas that can be used to explore this story with children in an assembly and then in the classroom. *However, as the subject matter is sensitive, it may well work best just as a classroom activity.*

N.B. As this topic deals with a death in a family, you will need to be particularly sensitive, if there is any similar situation at your school/ in your class.

Preparation

Use the retelling of this story from The Barnabas Children's Bible, pages 235 to 236, story 267.

You might also find it helpful to read the other stories about this sort of miracle - stories 271 and 285.

You will need: a large teardrop shape, cut out of card and similar smaller ones; Post-it notes or stickers; pens.

Development

1. Show a family photograph or a picture of a family that has both adults and children in. Now produce a version of the same photograph that has been cut up into jigsaw type pieces so all the people are individuals. Scatter them around. Invite some children to come up to collect all of the pieces and put the jigsaw back together.
2. Talk about family units. Emphasize that some families are very small, maybe just two adults or one adult and one child, or other examples you know of from your school. (N.B. Do emphasize that all these combinations are valid family groups.) Indeed, some may be very large family units. Christians in a church often talk about the people who belong to the church as being

part of a family, God's family.

(Again, take care to be sensitive to those in your group who may have specific family group situations.)

3. Take away one of the people (an adult) out of the reformed jigsaw picture.

What happens when one person is taken out of the picture? Does it change the family unit? Does it stop being a family? Be open to what the children may say.

4. Take a second person (a child) out of the picture.

What happens when a second person is taken out?

How do they think the others in the picture might feel if two of the family aren't there?

(Again, be sensitive, given any known situation of family bereavement at the school.)

5. Explain that the woman in today's Bible story was part of a family. She had a husband and one son. Her husband had died and now her only son had died, too. She was left alone.

Read the first part of the story from The Barnabas Children's Bible, page 235, story 267 'The widow's only son'.

Read until the part where Jesus goes to the widow to comfort her.

Stop and ask the children how the widow might be feeling.

How might the boy's friends be feeling?

How might the other people in his family be feeling?

Write down some of their replies on Post-it notes or stickers - sad, lonely, frightened and so on.

Stick the Post-it notes or stickers on a large teardrop shape made from card.

6. Continue with the rest of the story to the end.

Ask the children how the widow might be feeling now her son was brought back to life.

How might his friends be feeling?

How might his family be feeling?

Turn the teardrop over. Repeat the same activity as above, writing words on Post-it notes or stickers - joyful, happy, amazed and so on.



7. Talk about what it means to turn tears of sadness into tears of joy, turning the teardrop over from the 'sad' side to the 'happy side'. Jesus brought a new beginning for this woman. How could the children help to change sadness into joy for the people they meet today?
8. As a reflection, invite some children from each class to take some small tear-drop shaped cards and then ask everyone to focus on these as they think of someone who is sad or something that is a sad situation - maybe someone who is unwell or someone who is sad because someone they love has died.

After an appropriate time, invite the children to turn the teardrop over and invite everyone to be thankful for something that is good or happy - maybe someone who was ill and is better.