

Bringing Life to Something that Seems Dead

by Lara Hochstetler

FAITH STORY:

Acts 20: 7-12

FAITH FOCUS:

Paul is on his way to Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost. Before leaving, he stops at most of the churches in Asia Minor. This story takes place in Troas and is a farewell gathering for Paul before he goes to Jerusalem. The believers meet to 'break bread' and Paul talks until midnight. A young man named Eutychus falls asleep and tumbles out of a window, falling to his death. Paul goes down to him and Eutychus is raised from the dead.

SESSION GOAL:

To encourage students to believe that when someone dies or when something "dies" (an important dream or goal), God can bring new life.

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- Lamps
- Pillows or blankets or something to sit on
- Small amount of clay for each person, paper towels

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS:

Welcome students as they arrive. Instead of having the overhead lights on, use a number of lamps to light the room. If you usually sit on chairs, use floor pillows instead.

To begin your time together, do the trust fall exercise. This is a group activity in which one by one your kids will get up on a chair or a table and then fall backwards into the human brace that is made by the rest of the group. You make this brace by making two lines across from each other, 3 persons on each side, and holding the hands of the person across from you.

After you are done with the exercise, have your students have a seat and say:

Today we're going to talk about a guy in the Bible—he could have been about your age or a little older—who had a “fall experience.” Anybody know who it might be and what happened?

EXPLORE THE BIBLE STORY:

Say: The context for our story today is when Paul is on his way to Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost. Before going, he stops at most of the churches in Asia Minor. This story takes place in Troas and is a farewell for Paul before he goes back. It was important to Paul to be able to have time to teach before he left. This gathering happened in an upper room that was lit with lamps.

Have a volunteer read the passage out loud.

Say:

- How many of you have ever fallen asleep—or almost—during a church service?
- Why do you think Eutychus was sitting in the window?
- Do you think Paul felt guilty about preaching so long that Eutychus fell asleep?
- So ... Eutychus fell out of the window and died on impact. What a horrible thing to have happen! Then Paul embraces him and says he's alive after all! Wow! Can you imagine the roller coaster of emotions going on! Have you ever had such strong emotions in a short amount of time? Maybe you lost something, then found it. Or heard bad news that turned out to be not so bad? Does anybody have a story to tell?
- Eutychus isn't the only person who was thought to be dead but came back to life. Can you think of other stories in the Bible?
- Divide students into 4 groups and assign each group one of the following passages: John 11, 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:8-37; Luke 8:40-56. After students have read the passage, ask them to share their story with the group and discuss the similarities and differences between the stories and how they compare to Eutychus' story.

APPLY:

Say:

Most of us won't experience someone coming back to life from death, but all of us have aspects in our lives that feel “dead” at times—whether it is a relationship, a dream or hope, your connection with God, etc. What part of your life feels kind of dead right now?

I'd like for you to take a piece of clay and shape something that represents that lack of life. You won't have to share this with the class, so feel free to shape whatever you want to.

Allow time for students to shape their clay.

Then say:

Now take the clay and let the Holy Spirit guide you to form a shape that represents the new life God wants to give you. Imagine the Spirit breathing in you and standing over you and holding you like Paul did with Eutychus. Form a shape that represents the love and new life from God.

RESPOND:

When students have their newly shaped clay, gather in a close circle with students holding their clay objects. Pray this prayer:

May God surround you and lift you up. May you feel the new life that God gives you every day through Christ Jesus. When something good in your life feels dead, may God give you renewed hope. May you have the courage and strength to let go, knowing that God is there for you and will breathe new life into you every day. May the peace of Christ be evident in your life this week. Amen.