

# Dying and Rising

JOHN 11:17–44

3



## GOAL

Youth consider what it means to be baptized into the death *and* resurrection of Christ.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Holy One, quiet all in me that is anxious, and empower all in me that is compassionate. Amen.

## THIS SESSION

The session is about dying and rising—both in Christ and in the ways in which we live. Youth will recognize that death is sometimes necessary for new life and for growth. In Jesus’ own death, he shows us that death is not an ending but the beginning of something new. It is hard to wrestle with the finality of death and with the seemingly intangible promise of eternal life from Jesus.

## THE BIBLE STORY

As John 11:17–44 begins, Jesus’ friend Lazarus has died, and Jesus is returning to Bethany where Lazarus lived with his sisters, Mary and Martha. Martha scolds Jesus: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Jesus replies by articulating that those who believe in him, “though they die, will live.” Martha affirms his statement, but it offers little comfort. For her, it is a metaphysical truth but not a present reality.

Jesus goes on to make it both truth and reality when he raises Lazarus from the dead. Jesus does so to foreshadow his own resurrection and to demonstrate his divinity to those who had gathered.

## CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth have different experiences of death. Some have lost loved ones, so discussing death can be difficult and painful. Some youth do not have an experience with death, so the conversation is more theoretical.

Youth understand that some ideas and practices need to die: racism, classism, mistreatment of immigrants, and so forth. These need to be replaced with new life or new ways to treat one another. Most youth have personally endured or observed some mistreatment of themselves, their families, and their friends, and are passionate about creating systems and a world that is more equitable.

## SESSION PREPARATION

Examine your attitudes and feelings toward death, making sure you can lead this session without turning the conversations toward your own losses. Be prepared to hear a variety of experiences from participants today and be prepared to refer youth to mental health professionals if necessary.

- Depending on the options you choose:
- “Animal Transformation” (p. 22): Find animal capsules that transform in water. They may be found in most dollar stores or online.
  - “Rise Up” (p. 24): Print lyrics to the song at [bit.ly/FMRiseUpPrinted](https://bit.ly/FMRiseUpPrinted). Listen to the song “Rise Up” before the session.

# GETTING STARTED

- Animal capsules that transform in water
- Water
- Clear plastic cups

## ANIMAL TRANSFORMATION A C X

As youth enter, give them an animal capsule and a clear cup/glass of water. Invite them to drop their capsule in water and speculate about which animal will grow in the water. Most of these capsules take 10–15 minutes to fully transform into their animals, which can be fun to watch. While youth are watching, ask casual check-in questions to keep participants engaged. Tell youth that the theme of this session is *transformation*. Transformation is something that happens in baptism.

## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Baptize infographic poster (optional)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER CT C

Lead a guided conversation with youth using these questions for discussion:

- What are ways we use water?
- What are some positive and some negative things that can happen when we are in a body of water? (*We can get clean, be transported somewhere, surf, or swim. But we can drown or be in a flood.*)
- Why do you think water is used in baptism? What does it symbolize? (*Water is a powerful symbol that might represent death but also new life. Baptism by immersion captures the movement of dying and rising in Christ.*)

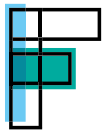
If you have the *Baptize* infographic poster, display it and talk together about water and how it's used in baptism.

- Internet-connected device

## HARRY POTTER AND THE PHOENIX T AT C

Show the YouTube clip “Phoenix Reborn” from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* ([bit.ly/FMPhoenixReborn](https://bit.ly/FMPhoenixReborn), 1:10). In this clip, Harry enters Dumbledore’s office, the phoenix burns up, and Dumbledore explains how a phoenix is reborn only after it burns to death. The phoenix is not a creature unique to the Harry Potter stories; it appears in several mythologies and stories. Discuss these questions:

- What is the good of a creature that has to die to be reborn?
- What else can you think of, fictional or otherwise, that has to die before it is reborn?
- Do you think Jesus had to die and be resurrected before people fully understood who he was? Why or why not?



# FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

## READERS' THEATER JOHN 11:17-24

**D** **AM** **C**

Hand out copies of Resource Page 1 and assign the roles of Narrator, Jesus, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Encourage the youth to act out the roles as they read them. After the reading, ask the following questions and tell youth there is no one correct answer:

- ➔ Why didn't Jesus come back to Bethany sooner so that Lazarus wouldn't die?
- ➔ What did Jesus mean when he said he was the resurrection and the life?
- ➔ Why did Jesus raise Lazarus from death?
- ➔ What do you think Lazarus's friends' reaction was to his resurrection?
- ➔ How did it feel for Lazarus to be unbound and let go?
- ➔ What does it mean that we are baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ?

Copies of Resource Page 1

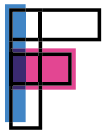
## HAMILTON STYLE

**M** **C** **T**

Hand out copies of Resource Page 1 and assign the roles of Narrator, Jesus, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Encourage the youth to act out the roles as they read them.

Form small groups and take about 10 minutes to create a spoken-word piece in the style of *Hamilton* that retells the story of Lazarus. They can write on the back of the resource page. The spoken-word piece does not have to be long but should contain some elements of rhyme and rhythm. If it is helpful, suggest that they look up the lyrics to "My Shot" from *Hamilton* on their smartphones and find inspiration there. When everyone has finished, invite each group to present their spoken-word pieces to the whole group.

Copies of Resource Page 1  
 Pens  
 Internet-connected device



# FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

## DYING AND RISING IN BAPTISMAL LITURGY


**C**

Display Resource Page 2 and allow participants a moment to look at the three pictures of baptisms. Explain that, whether we get sprinkled or dunked, Christians believe that we die and rise with Christ in baptism.


Hand out copies of Resource Page 3. Invite a volunteer to read the portion of the baptismal prayer and discuss reactions. Affirm that something changes in baptism and we remember that all our lives.

Resource Page 2  
 Copies of Resource Page 3

- 
- Internet-connected device
  - Copies of lyrics to “Rise Up”

 If youth are going through a particularly tough time or have just lost a loved one, this song could be very emotional. Be supportive of youth and let them share only if they want to.

- 
- Internet-connected device

 If youth choose to write to a church council, print the letters and have youth sign them and deliver them. Alert leaders in the church and encourage a meaningful dialogue.

## RISE UP

M X T

Distribute copies of the lyrics to “Rise Up” at [bit.ly/FMRiseUpPrinted](https://bit.ly/FMRiseUpPrinted) and show the YouTube video “Andra Day–Rise Up” ([bit.ly/FMRiseUp](https://bit.ly/FMRiseUp), 5:48) as youth read the printed lyrics.

Discuss these questions:

- ➔ What do you think the artist means when she says, “The silence isn’t quiet”?
- ➔ What might the artist have been going through to inspire her to write this song?
- ➔ Why does the artist want to “rise up”?
- ➔ Why does the artist choose this metaphor of being down and then rising up?
- ➔ Do any of these lyrics feel like they describe your life? When?
- ➔ What do you think this line means: “All we need is hope and for that we have each other”? Does this sound like any of the baptismal promises your church makes?

## PINECONE

AT T

Remind youth that we are talking about the idea that we are baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ. Ask the youth if they can think of anything in nature that needs to die in order to rise.

Show the YouTube video “Jack Pine—Ugly but Interesting” ([bit.ly/FMJackPine](https://bit.ly/FMJackPine), 6:00). Show just the first 5 minutes. Focus youth’s attention on the process by which the pinecones drop seeds and begin to grow new trees. Ask:

- ➔ What causes the pinecone seeds to open up?
- ➔ Why do the pinecones need to *die* in order to rise?
- ➔ How does fire promote growth in the forest?
- ➔ Why do you think God creates this pattern of death and resurrection?
- ➔ What things in your own lives need to die and then be resurrected into new life?



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

## WRITING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

C S

Ask the youth to think about something in their lives, their church, or their school that needs to *die*. Examples might be racism, bullying, or unjust treatments of a particular group of people. Have youth write a letter about this activity to their school or their church (or another group of people), describing the unjust behavior and suggesting ideas for “new life” or new ways to treat one another.

When finished, invite volunteers to read their letters to the whole group. Youth may or may not eventually deliver these letters, but stress to them that part of being baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ is recognizing their own agency in bringing about the death of unjust systems and situations and introducing a new way of life.

## GUIDED MEDITATION

A AT

- Paper, colored pencils
- Meditative music

Start playing soft, meditative music and invite youth to find a space in the room where they are comfortable drawing and distanced from the other participants. Distribute paper and colored pencils.

Tell the youth that you are going to lead them through a guided meditation. You'll give them instructions and then give them a few minutes to draw it. Youth will not have to share these drawings when they are finished unless they wish.

- Choose one part of your paper, perhaps a corner or the center, and draw in that space a symbol of something that needs to *die* in your life. This might be some injustice that directly affects you or your family or friends. The symbol doesn't have to mean anything to anyone except yourself. (Pause for two to three minutes.)
- Choose a different colored pencil to create a symbol of the Holy Spirit near that first symbol. Again, the symbol only has to mean something to you. The Holy Spirit in the Bible is often an agent of righteousness and change. (Pause for two to three minutes.)
- Finally, write a brief prayer that asks God to help end the injustice and bring about new life in the situation. (Pause for two to three minutes.)

Invite volunteers to share if they wish. Participants can take their drawings home and post them somewhere to remind them that they play an important part in replacing injustice with new life.



## FOLLOWING JESUS

Invite everyone to gather in a posture of prayer. Lead youth in this prayer (inspired by Romans 6:3–11):

Holy One, we know that, in baptism, we are baptized into the death of Christ so that all of those things that are sinful and harmful will also be buried with Christ. We also know that we are baptized into the resurrection of Christ. Your love frees us from death and leads us to life. We will challenge ourselves to be alive in Christ and to live the resurrected life of new hope. Amen.

## Readers' Theater John 11:17–24

**Narrator:** Jesus heard that his friend Lazarus had died four days ago, so he went where Lazarus lived, to Bethany. In Bethany, Jesus met with Lazarus's sister Martha.

**Martha:** Jesus, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died.

**Jesus:** Your brother will rise again.

**Martha:** I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

**Jesus:** I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me, even though they die, they will live and never die.

**Narrator:** Jesus and Martha went to Martha's and Lazarus's sister Mary.

**Mary:** Jesus, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died.

**Narrator:** Jesus saw Mary weeping. So he asked to be taken to Lazarus's tomb. When Jesus got there, Jesus began to weep. Some who saw Jesus crying were impressed with how moved he was. Others wondered why Jesus didn't stop Lazarus from dying.

**Jesus:** Take away the stone from this tomb.

**Martha:** Are you sure? He has been dead for four days and will smell terrible.

**Jesus:** I told you that if you believed you would see the glory of God.

**Narrator:** They took away the stone.

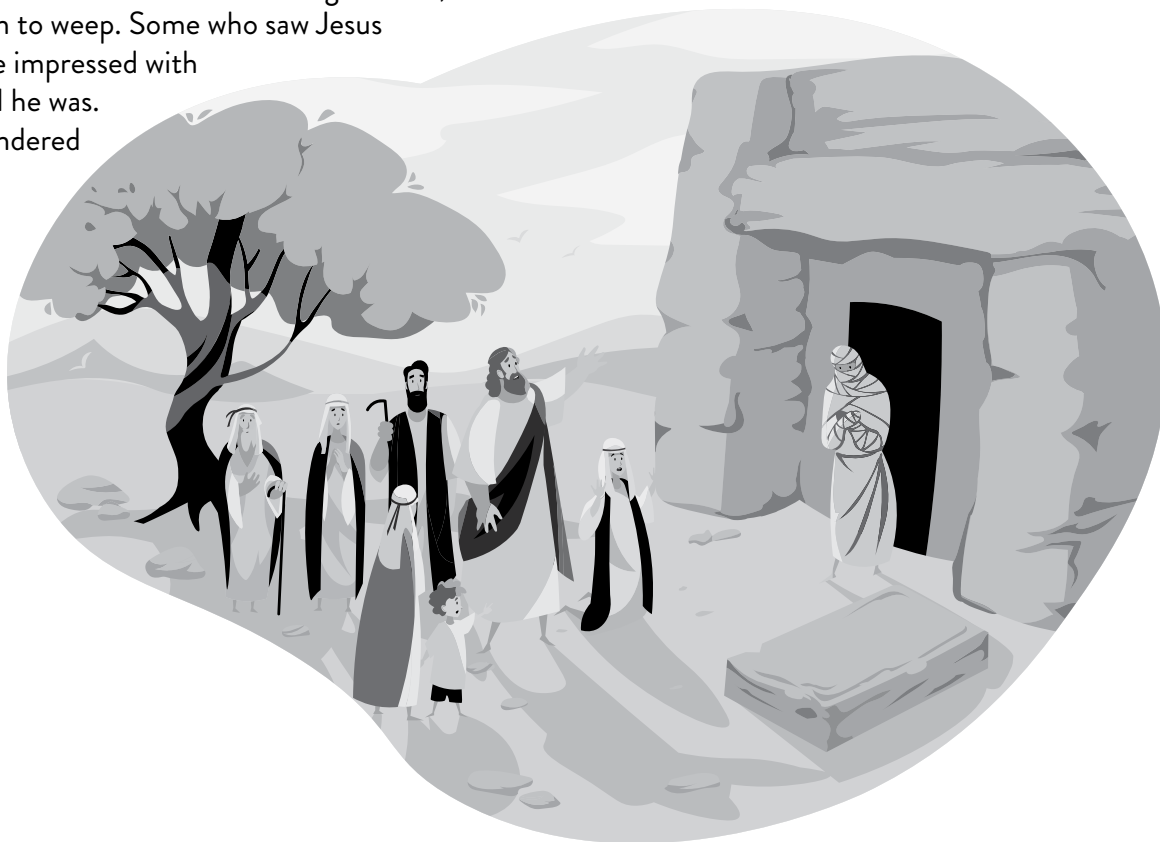
**Jesus:** Thank you, Father, for having heard me. I know you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they believe that you sent me.

**Narrator:** Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice.

**Jesus:** Lazarus, come out!

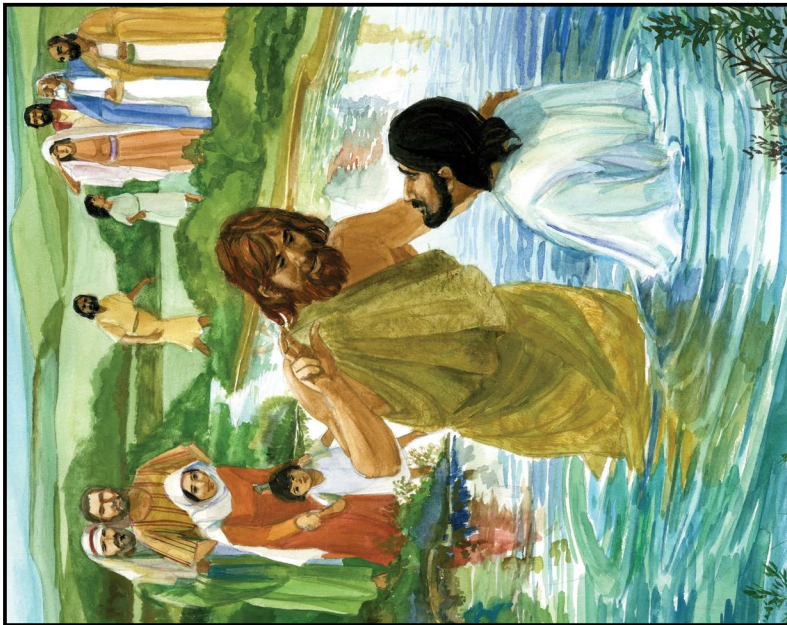
**Narrator:** And Lazarus came out.

**Jesus:** Unbind Lazarus. Let him go.





# In Baptism We Die and Rise with Christ



## Dying and Rising with Christ in Baptism

The following words are often included in a prayer before the baptism of an infant or adult. How do you understand that we die and rise with Christ in baptism?

In the waters of the Jordan  
Jesus was baptized by John  
and anointed with your Spirit.  
By the baptism of his own death and resurrection,  
Christ set us free from sin and death,  
and opened the way to eternal life.  
We thank you, O God, for the water of baptism.  
In it we are buried with Christ in his death.  
From it we are raised to share in his resurrection,  
Through it we are reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Send your Spirit to move over this water  
that it may be a fountain of deliverance and rebirth.  
Wash away the sin of all who are cleansed by it.  
Raise them to new life,  
and graft them to the body of Christ.  
Pour out your Holy Spirit upon N. [and N.],  
that *she/he/they* may have power to do your will,  
and continue forever in the risen life of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2018), 411.