

Building Faith Brick by Brick

An Imaginative Way to Explore the Bible with Children

Emily Slichter Given



Morehouse Education Resources
NEW YORK

© Copyright 2014 Emily Slichter Given.

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. *Building Faith Brick by Brick* is copyrighted material. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Morehouse Education Resources,
a division of Church Publishing Incorporated
Editorial Offices: 600 Grant Street, Suite 630, Denver, CO 80203

For catalogs and orders call:
1-800-672-1789
www.Cokesbury.com

Illustrations by Tom Lybeck.
Photos provided by the author.

ISBN-13: 978-1-60674-192-4

The Building Faith Brick by Brick Method

General Guidelines

Age Range

- *Building Faith Brick by Brick* is ideal for children kindergarten through fifth grade.

Group Size

- *Building Faith Brick by Brick* groups can effectively range from three to 20 children.
- The adult to child ratio should be at least one adult to every eight children.

Note: Groups can span into adulthood, but pre-kindergarten (age 5) or kindergarten is the youngest age range I have found to be successful and meaningful.

Potential Settings

Building Faith Brick by Brick is appropriate for use in a variety of settings, including, but not limited to:

- Sunday school curriculum (30 minutes or more)
- alternative to lesson options found in other curricula (15 minutes or more)
- after school program (1 hour or more)
- weekday club (1 hour or more)
- family or cross-generational event (1 hour or more)
- retro youth group activity (20 minutes or more)
- VBS curriculum or supplement (1 hour or more)
- childcare room option (open ended)
- home and family devotional (open ended)

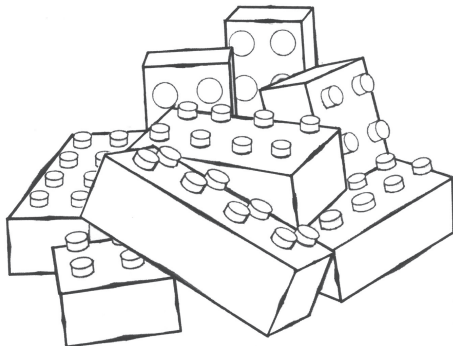
Preparation

Story Selection

- The best stories tend to include action, adventure, battles, drama, wonder, mystery, and/or suspense.
- Ask for suggestions from the children during the first session. You may be wonderfully surprised by what is suggested.
- Provide a mix of well-known and obscure stories to provide intrigue as well as to build biblical literacy.
- Explore only one story each session.
- Remember to think about the context of the story.
- Select a child-friendly translation of the Bible—picture or chapter/verse.
- Use the same Bible for the entire span of sessions. This helps to reinforce that all of the stories can be found in Scripture.

Preparing the Space and Setting the Tone

- Pray over the space.
- Clear the room to maximize floor space. “LEGO®ing” is best done on the floor.
- Place a Christ candle in the room. (It can be a good quality battery powered candle if you are concerned about safety.)
- Create a place of prayer—akin to “circle time.”
- Place the Bible and samples of story artwork (completed LEGO® structures) in the circle where the leader will sit.
- Establish a display and discussion space. A table or counter works best.
- Set up a snack area. Eating family style promotes conversation.
- Prepare participant supplies. See What Do I Really Need? on page 16 for more details.



Basic Lesson Plan

Welcome the Group

- Shoes may be removed and lined up along the wall in the hallway. Some children with sensory issues may not wish to remove their shoes, so make shoe removal optional.
- Welcome each child into the room by an adult volunteer or leader.
- Provide nametags if you do not know all the participants. The use of names is so important. It also helps children to learn one another's names.
- Give a bowl/bucket, building mat, and a few figures to each child.
- Invite each child to fill his/her bowl/bucket with LEGO® bricks and encourage each to create freely while others arrive.
- Give a 2-minute notice before the focused group time begins.

Note: To avoid mix-ups with bowls, use a dry erase marker to label each bowl/bucket with the group member's name. After trying a number of different styles and shapes, the large, square popcorn buckets available at dollar stores seem to work the best.

Lay the Foundation

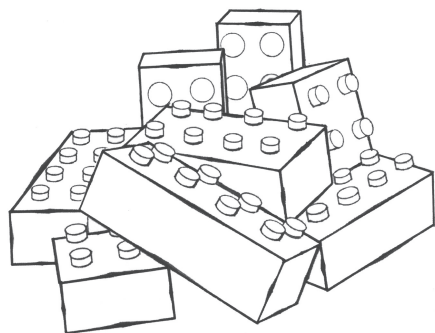
- Each lesson provides background information for both the leader and the group. Details about that lesson's story include authorship, placement in scripture, main characters, and modern day parallels.

Did You Know?

- This section offers additional background information to spark interest and provide a wider base of knowledge and context before sharing the story. As necessary, tailor the information to the particular age.

Pray

- Light the Christ candle and pocket the matches.
- Invite each person voluntarily into some form of prayer:
 - Write or draw prayers on brightly colored paper rectangles to build a brick prayer wall session by session.
 - Write or draw prayers on Etch-a-Sketches®.
 - Write or draw prayers on white boards.
 - Toss a LEGO® brick into a central bucket for each prayer offered during the circle gathering. These prayers can be guided or spontaneous.
 - Write prayers using magnetic letters placed on metal sheeting or baking trays.
 - Offer popcorn prayers: Children pop up to offer a short prayer when so moved.
 - Offer Post-It® prayers: Colorful self-adhesive notes can be stuck to the wall to build an ongoing prayer corner.



The Resurrection

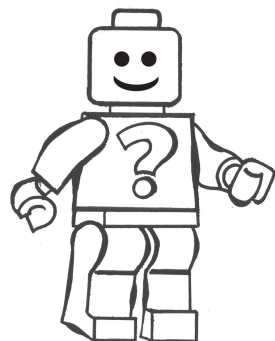
**Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-12;
Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10**

Welcome the Group

Lay the Foundation

- *Where is this story found in the Bible?*
New Testament
- *What is its place in the Bible story?*
after Jesus' crucifixion and burial; before Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene
- *Who is the author?*
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
- *Who are the main characters?*
Jesus, Mary Magdalene, other female followers, some of the disciples, and God
- *Where in the biblical world did it happen?*
Jerusalem
- *Where is this in today's world?*
Jerusalem

Find the full description of *Lay the Foundation* on page 15.



Did You Know?

- ✓ The resurrection is the story of how Jesus returned to live after being dead in the tomb for three days.
- ✓ Each account by the gospel writers name different people as being present at the tomb. They also all describe the angel(s) who shared the news of Jesus' resurrection differently.
- ✓ John is the only gospel writer who does not mention an angel at the tomb.
- ✓ The resurrection is the part of the Jesus story we hear about on Easter Sunday.
- ✓ Islam considers Jesus a prophet.
- ✓ Jesus' tomb was actually similar to a small cave.

Pray

*O God, who gives life to all living things,
we thank you for the resurrection of
Jesus. Help it be a sign and symbol of
your love for us and the whole world.
Show us how to look for new life each
and every day. Amen.*

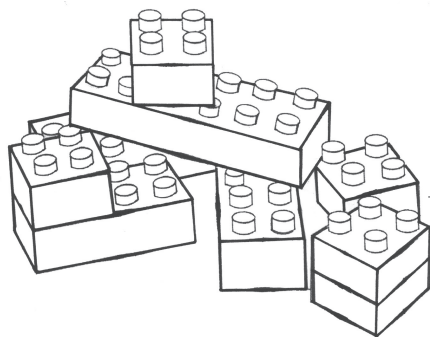
Suggested prayer methods are outlined on page 15.

Share the Story

Suggestions for storytelling are detailed on page 16.

Respond to the Story

Invite each member of the group to use bricks and figures to respond to the story. This can be done individually or in small groups. Suggestions for how to support this form of theological reflection can be found on page 16.



Ask Building Questions

- I wonder what the friends and followers were doing during the three days Jesus was in the tomb?
- I wonder what God was doing and thinking during the three days Jesus was in the tomb?
- I wonder how it felt for Jesus' friends to see the empty tomb?
- I wonder what angels really look like?
- I wonder why angels always tell people, "Don't be afraid"?
- I wonder if you have ever lost a friend?
- I wonder if you have ever witnessed anything so surprising that you wanted to run away?
- I wonder what it was like for the women to meet Jesus along the path?
- I wonder if Jesus has ever come close to you?
- I wonder what would have happened if Jesus stayed dead?
- I wonder what it means to you that Jesus was raised from the dead?
- I wonder what you might be wondering about in this story?
- I wonder if you have heard this story before?

Continue the Story

One way to deepen the learning experience and create a link between group learning and faith formation in the home is to have builders show their creations to the adults who pick them up after class.

For additional study and conversation at home, consider different ways to share the Bible verses as well as some of the *Building Questions*. Possible methods of communication are texts, social media, e-blasts, website posts, or take-home sheets.

- I wonder who was the first person to tell you about Jesus?
- I wonder whom you want to tell about Jesus?
- I wonder what Jesus wants to tell you?

Suggest Blueprints *(if needed)*

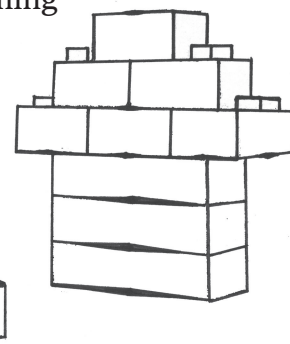
- empty tomb
- angels
- Jesus alive
- God
- stone, rolled away
- friends and followers of Jesus

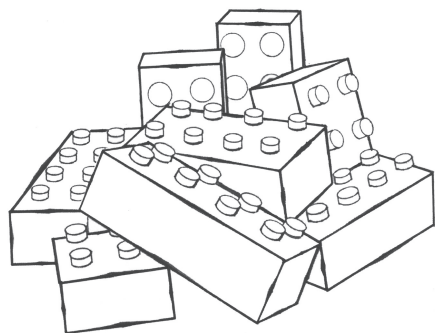
Share Responses to the Story

Encourage each group member to share the creations they have made in response to the story. More details about sharing can be found on page 17.

Share a Snack

- tomb buns (Wrap crescent rolls wrapped around a marshmallow; when baked, the center melts away to leave an empty, sweet space.)
- hummus and pita pocket "empty tombs"
- easter eggs
- party food





The Road to Emmaus

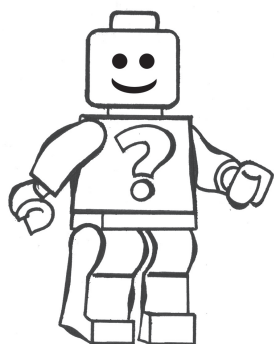
Luke 24:13-35

Welcome the Group

Lay the Foundation

- *Where is this story found in the Bible?*
New Testament
- *What is its place in the Bible story?*
after Jesus appeared to the women at the tomb; before Jesus appeared to the 11 disciples
- *Who is the author?*
Luke
- *Who are the main characters?*
Jesus, Cleopas, another follower, and God
- *Where in the biblical world did it happen?*
road to Emmaus
- *Where is this in today's world?*
approximately 7 miles north of Jerusalem

Find the full description of *Lay the Foundation* on page 15.



Did You Know?

- ✓ This story is believed to have taken place on the evening after Jesus' resurrection.
- ✓ The word *Emmaus* means "warm springs" in Hebrew.

Pray

Dear God, you put the warmth of Jesus in our hearts. Let us celebrate that Jesus is always with us, even when we don't realize it. Amen.

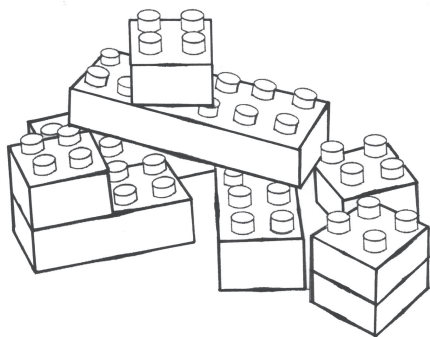
Suggested prayer methods are outlined on page 15.

Share the Story

Suggestions for storytelling are detailed on page 16.

Respond to the Story

Invite each member of the group to use bricks and figures to respond to the story. This can be done individually or in small groups. Suggestions for how to support this form of theological reflection can be found on page 16.



New Testament

Ask Building Questions

- ☐ I wonder if you have ever lost a friend?
- ☐ I wonder if you have taken a long walk with a friend?
- ☐ I wonder if you have ever felt like the last person to know something important?
- ☐ I wonder what the disciples felt like after the death of Jesus?
- ☐ I wonder if you have ever felt warm and happy when you were near someone?
- ☐ I wonder why you felt that way?
- ☐ I wonder if you ever felt Jesus close to you?
- ☐ I wonder if you ever remember Jesus when bread is broken?
- ☐ I wonder what it feels like to see someone you miss?

Suggest Blueprints *(if needed)*

- ☐ Jesus
- ☐ Simon
- ☐ unnamed follower
- ☐ the road to Emmaus
- ☐ God
- ☐ bread and wine

Share Responses to the Story

Encourage each group member to share the creations they have made in response to the story. More details about sharing can be found on page 17.

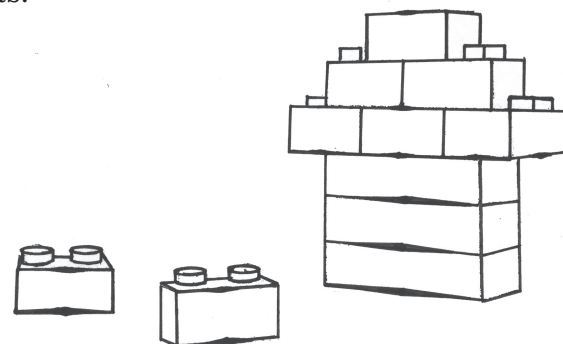
Share a Snack

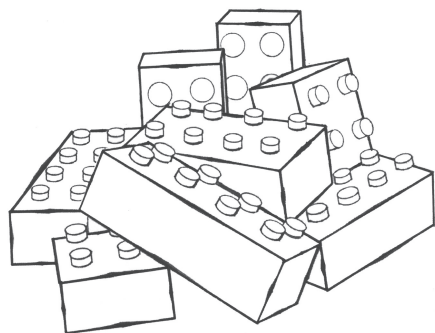
- ☐ pita bread and hummus
- ☐ matzo
- ☐ grape juice
- ☐ long “road” fruit leathers

Continue the Story

One way to deepen the learning experience and create a link between group learning and faith formation in the home is to have builders show their creations to the adults who pick them up after class.

For additional study and conversation at home, consider different ways to share the Bible verses as well as some of the *Building Questions*. Possible methods of communication are texts, social media, e-blasts, website posts, or take-home sheets.





The Ascension

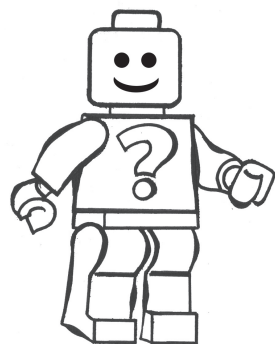
Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11

Welcome the Group

Lay the Foundation

- Where is this story found in the Bible?
New Testament
- What is its place in the Bible story?
after Jesus appeared to the disciples; before Matthias was chosen to replace Judas as a disciple
- Who is the author?
Mark and Luke
- Who are the main characters?
Jesus, disciples, and God
- Where in the biblical world did it happen?
Bethany
- Where is this in today's world?
West Bank city of al-Lizariya

Find the full description of *Lay the Foundation* on page 15.



Did You Know?

- ✓ Saint Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.
- ✓ The ascension was Jesus' return to heaven 40 days after his death and resurrection.
- ✓ To "ascend" means to "go up."
- ✓ The mountain where Jesus was standing was called Mount Olivet (Mount of Olives).

Pray

God, we thank you for sending Jesus to be with us on earth. We also give you thanks for promising to never leave us. Even though Jesus returned to heaven, help us to remember that Jesus' love surrounds us each day. Amen.

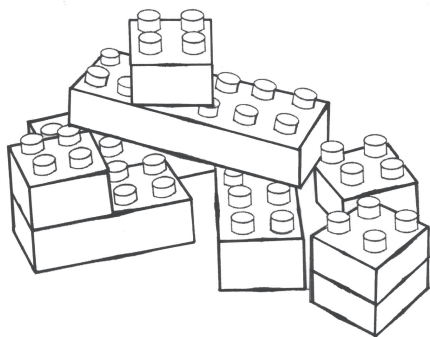
Suggested prayer methods are outlined on page 15.

Share the Story

Suggestions for storytelling are detailed on page 16.

Respond to the Story

Invite each member of the group to use bricks and figures to respond to the story. This can be done individually or in small groups. Suggestions for how to support this form of theological reflection can be found on page 16.



New Testament

Ask Building Questions

- I wonder if something has ever happened where you couldn't believe what you were seeing?
- I wonder if you have ever been blessed?
- I wonder if you have ever blessed anyone?
- I wonder what a blessing from Jesus might sound like?
- I wonder why Jesus couldn't stay on earth forever?
- I wonder how the disciples felt when Jesus returned to heaven?
- I wonder when Jesus might return?
- I wonder what the power of the Holy Spirit feels like?
- I wonder what stories the disciples told about Jesus after he went back to heaven?
- I wonder what stories you will tell about Jesus?

Suggest Blueprints *(if needed)*

- heaven
- Jesus
- disciples
- Bethany
- Jesus ascending
- clouds

Share Responses to the Story

Encourage each group member to share the creations they have made in response to the story. More details about sharing can be found on page 17.

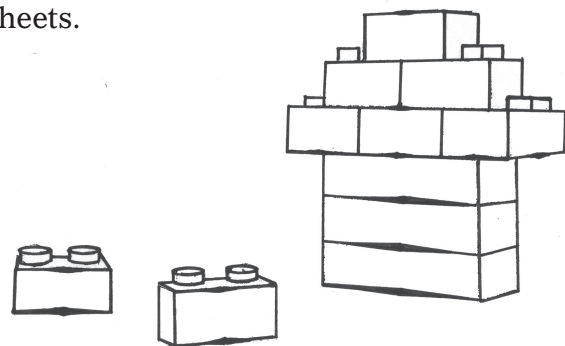
Share a Snack

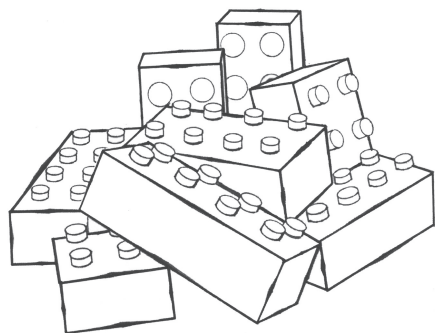
- cotton candy or marshmallow "clouds"
- olives
- pita bread and hummus
- vegetables and fruit
- cut fruit with yogurt "clouds"

Continue the Story

One way to deepen the learning experience and create a link between group learning and faith formation in the home is to have builders show their creations to the adults who pick them up after class.

For additional study and conversation at home, consider different ways to share the Bible verses as well as some of the *Building Questions*. Possible methods of communication are texts, social media, e-blasts, website posts, or take-home sheets.





Pentecost

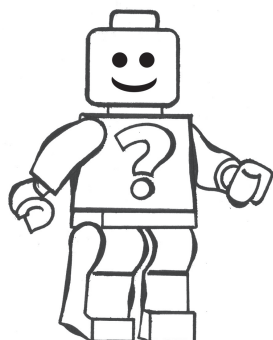
Acts 2

Welcome the Group

Lay the Foundation

- *Where is this story found in the Bible?*
New Testament
- *What is its place in the Bible story?*
**after Matthias was chosen to replace Judas;
before Peter healed a crippled man**
- *Who is the author?*
Luke
- *Who are the main characters?*
Disciples, Holy Spirit, and God
- *Where in the biblical world did it happen?*
Jerusalem
- *Where is this in today's world?*
Jerusalem

Find the full description of *Lay the Foundation* on page 15.



Did You Know?

- ✓ The root word for “Pentecost” means “fiftieth” in both Greek and Latin.
- ✓ In Old Testament times, Pentecost was the Jewish Festival of Weeks, a celebration of the harvest and the celebration of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments.
- ✓ In New Testament times, Pentecost is the observance of when the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples.
- ✓ Pentecost is often called “birthday of the church.”

Pray

*Holy Spirit of God, come into our hearts
with love and light. Help us to burn with
your love and shine in the world. Amen.*

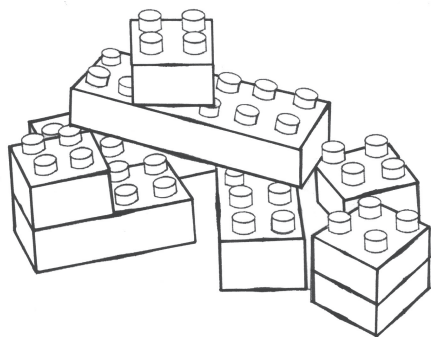
Suggested prayer methods are outlined on page 15.

Share the Story

Suggestions for storytelling are detailed on page 16.

Respond to the Story

Invite each member of the group to use bricks and figures to respond to the story. This can be done individually or in small groups. Suggestions for how to support this form of theological reflection can be found on page 16.



Ask Building Questions

- ☐ I wonder what it feels like to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ I wonder what a “tongue of fire” looks like?
- ☐ I wonder how you would feel if the Holy Spirit rested on you?
- ☐ I wonder how the Holy Spirit came into a closed room?
- ☐ I wonder if you have ever been in a place that felt confusing?
- ☐ I wonder what you know about the Holy Spirit?
- ☐ I wonder what dreams you dream?
- ☐ I wonder if it was hard to remember Jesus after he returned to heaven?
- ☐ I wonder who was the first person to tell you about Jesus?
- ☐ I wonder if you know someone who doesn’t know about Jesus?
- ☐ I wonder if you know anything about the day you were baptized?
- ☐ I wonder what it means to commit your life to God?
- ☐ I wonder in what ways you praise God?

Suggest Blueprints *(if needed)*

- ☐ closed room
- ☐ Disciples
- ☐ Peter
- ☐ dreams and visions
- ☐ Holy Spirit as wind
- ☐ Holy Spirit as tongues of fire
- ☐ Jesus
- ☐ King David
- ☐ baptism
- ☐ God

Share Responses to the Story

Encourage each group member to share the creations they have made in response to the story. More details about sharing can be found on page 17.

Share a Snack

- ☐ red-gelatin “flames”
- ☐ watermelon
- ☐ bread and grape juice
- ☐ pita bread
- ☐ red fruit leather
- ☐ fondue

Continue the Story

One way to deepen the learning experience and create a link between group learning and faith formation in the home is to have builders show their creations to the adults who pick them up after class.

For additional study and conversation at home, consider different ways to share the Bible verses as well as some of the *Building Questions*. Possible methods of communication are texts, social media, e-blasts, website posts, or take-home sheets.

