Introduction

Welcome to “The Case of the Empty Tomb—Escape Room.” *Optional: You are in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ room (if your room has a theme like the Garden of Gethsemane).*

Raise your hand if you have been to an escape room before.

For those who are new, an Escape Room is a puzzle challenge where participants are “locked” in a room for 1 hour and must solve a series of clues in order to successfully “escape” within the time frame.

The theme of this Escape Room is the Jesus’ empty tomb.

The writers of the New Testament claim that the reason that Jesus’ tomb was empty is because he rose from the dead. But skeptics and critics throughout the centuries have argued that there must be another reason for the empty tomb.

**There are 6 different theories or possibilities that you are going to investigate for Jesus’ empty tomb**. Here is a paper to remind you what they are. *(Pass out “Detective’s Bookmark”.)*

 The six theories are: *(You could have various participants read each theory out loud to the group.)*

* Theory #1—Fainted: Jesus only fainted on the cross and merely walked out of the tomb after regaining consciousness.
* Theory #2—Stolen Body and Lying: The disciples stole Jesus’ body and then lied about the resurrection.
* Theory #3:—Hallucination: The disciples hallucinated seeing a risen Jesus but he was really still dead.
* Theory #4—Added Later: The resurrection was something added to Jesus’ story much later in history.
* Theory #5—Wrong Tomb: The disciples went to the wrong tomb on “resurrection” Sunday, which was empty, but Jesus’ real tomb still had his body.
* Theory #6—Resurrection: The disciples were simply telling the truth that Jesus was alive.

Your job is to solve puzzles and clues surrounding the evidence of the empty tomb **to see where the evidence leads.** Does it lead to Jesus’ resurrection or to one of these other possibilities? Use the evidence you discover in the Escape Room to determine whether each theory is TRUE or FALSE.

Here are the rules for the Escape Room:

* You will have 1 hour to solve the mystery and escape from the room.
* All of the clues in the game are labeled to tell you what theory they go with. You will see the theory number somewhere on the clue with the # sign and then the number. (*Optional:* Each of the clue theory sets are printed on different colored paper to make it easier to follow; for instance all of the clues for theory #1 are on \_\_\_\_ (red) paper and all of theory #2 clues are on \_\_\_\_\_ (orange) paper.) I suggest that you always READ the whole clue, including ALL the instructions so that you have a big picture of what you are looking for and what you are trying to solve. I also suggest that you use this Clue Board *(point or hold up the board)* to display all your clues, evidence, and directions so that everyone can see it and so that it will all be in one place.
* There are also six briefcases, each with a lock, hidden in the room. Each briefcase has a number that correlates to the six theories you are investigating. Each time you complete a clue set there will be an answer for a combination code for that briefcase’s lock. Once the lock is opened you will see two envelopes inside the briefcase, one labeled “TRUE” and the other “FALSE”. As a team, you must vote on which one is the correct answer that addresses the theory you have been working on before opening the envelope. A clue for the next theory will be found inside the envelope that correctly answers the theory that you have been investigating.
	+ *Demonstrate how the locks work if needed.*
* You are not allowed to use your cell phone during the game to look up answers but you may ask me for help. You can receive a total of 5 helps. The first help is free but each additional help will cost you time. The second help will cost you two minutes off your time, the third help will cost you three minutes, and so forth until you hit your five help limit. If you open the wrong “TRUE or FALSE” envelope, that will cost you 2 minutes of your time as well.
* If there is a sign telling you not to open a door or not to take something off the wall, etc. *(point to the sign if needed)* then please follow the direction of that sign. These are put here so that you do not waste time investigating something that is not important.
* An escape room is a puzzle challenge. That means that the clues and locks are not in plain sight nor are the answers in plain English. You will have to use your mind and critical thinking to look for and solve the clues to unlock each of the boxes. Remember to work together as a team and to share responsibilities. I suggest that you assign someone to the following jobs:
	+ **Detective Sergeant** – To be your team leader.
	+ **Investigative Recorder** – To record and share the official results for each theory on the "Detective's Report" during the Concluding Discussion.
	+ **Lock Smith** – To apply the combination to the locks.
	+ **Clue Board Organizer** – To put the theory directions and clues you find on the board.
	+ **Clue Reader** – To read the clues and directions.

Here are some badges for each job. Now, even if you don’t get an official title that doesn’t mean you aren’t important. Each person here is an important detective for looking for clues and using their mind to put the evidence together.

* You will be done with you find the piece of paper that says “Hallelujah, you’re finished” and the attached key to escape from this room.

After you escape or when the time runs out, you will talk with a Captain to report your findings and conclusion. Are there any questions? Here is your first clue. Your time will begin after the first clue has been read out loud with your team.