

STUDY GUIDE

NEW VISION
THE MIDDLE
HEALING OF
LAZARUS
JOHN 11:1-44
10/08/2017



NEW VISION

MAIN POINT

Jesus alone has the power over life and death.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

If you only had two weeks left to live, what is the one “bucket list” item you would be sure to complete?

Think about the opposite way. If you only had two weeks left to live, what is something you would wish you did more of?

We tend to ignore the fact that our days are numbered. But just because we don't know when our lives will end doesn't change the fact that we have a limited amount of time on this earth. Jesus, however, knew the circumstances of His death and because of this, He lived with a focused intensity. As He neared the end of His life, He proved that He alone has the power over life and death.

READ AND REBUILD THE STORY READ JOHN 11:1-44

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER TELL THE STORY (JOHN 11:1-44) DO AS BEST YOU CAN, DO NOT STOP AND TEACH, TRY NOT TO MAKE POINTS (COMMENTARY), JUST TELL THE STORY.

REBUILD THE STORY AS A GROUP: CHRONOLOGICALLY REBUILD THE STORY FROM MEMORY. ASK QUESTIONS IF NECESSARY. LIKE – “WHAT HAPPENED FIRST?”, “WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?”, “DID WE LEAVE OUT ANYTHING?” FINALLY, HAVE PARTICIPANTS LOOK AT THEIR BIBLES AND SEE IF ANYTHING WAS ADDED OR LEFT OUT OF THE STORY AS THEY GO THROUGH IT ONE MORE TIME

Why is it important for us to recognize that Jesus was fully aware that He was about to die? How does knowing that change the way we look at the last two weeks of His life?

Even though most of us would turn and run if we knew we were about to die, Jesus instead chose to walk right into His execution. That's because He knew the why behind His death. When we realize this, we can see the great intentionality behind what Jesus said and did during His last days on earth, beginning with His trip to Bethany.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 11:1-16.

What did Jesus do after He received the message? Does that surprise you? Why or why not?

Have you ever felt like Mary and Martha? Like you were waiting on Jesus to do something during a time of pain? How did you deal with those feelings?

Maybe you have found yourself in situations so bleak and dark that you fell into despair. Your faith not only faltered but also fell flat on its face. You were unable to pray more than a desperate "Help me!" and were not sure your cry was heard. We can know, though, that Jesus hears us just as He heard the message from the sisters.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 11:17-37.

Do you think Martha's first words to Jesus conveyed disappointment, criticism, or recognition of fact? How did Martha misunderstand Jesus' response?

Even though we know that eventually God is going to make all things right, it often doesn't help us in the moment of pain. In the moment of pain, good and right theological statements can often feel like trite cliches.

During a season of suffering for you, did anyone ever tell you something that was true, but that wasn't helpful at the moment? Why do you think Christians sometimes have the tendency to do that?

Why do you think Jesus asked Martha to believe in Him before He gave her a miraculous physical reason to believe?

What does Jesus' reaction to Mary reveal about the heart of God?

Jesus knows better than any of us just how broken the world is. When He is confronted with the suffering of the world, He isn't passive; He's angry. In fact, Jesus feels the pain of a broken world more deeply than we do.

What is the most powerful part of thinking about the weeping of Jesus?

Amazingly, Jesus, the Son of God, wept at the tomb. Though He knew that He was going to turn this funeral into a party, Jesus still weeps with His people. Wonderfully, we can know that Jesus offers us something more than trite cliches; He offers us His tears and emotional investment.

HAVE A FINAL VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 11:38-44.

What shows Lazarus was really dead? Why was it important for everyone there to know that Lazarus was truly dead?

How does this miracle show us the greater coming miracle of the cross and resurrection?

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

General Questions to ask after each story. These questions may lead to follow up questions that you ask as you dig deeper into the groups/individuals response to the initial questions.

Where do you see yourself in this story?

What do we learn about Jesus/God in this story?

What do we learn about man in this story?

What is Jesus teaching you personally through this story?

What application/adjustment do you need to make in your life due to the truth discovered in this story?

Extra Questions:

What is one way you can follow the example of Jesus and be fully present in the moment with those you encounter? What kinds of things keep you from being present in the moment?

How does this passage change the way you view grief?

How does it change the way you view death?

How does it affect the way you would comfort someone in their loss?

PRAY

Thank God that He is purposeful, present, and powerful in the world and in our lives. Ask Him for the wisdom to number your days, so that you might follow His example and approach life with similar intensity.

COMMENTARY

JOHN 11:1-44

11:1-6. In the Gospel of John, we see how John chose to record at least seven miracles that prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. In the first six, we have seen His power over the physical aspects of life, including the human body, the natural elements, time and space, and even food and drink. But in each case Jesus also demonstrated that His purposes went beyond the physical to the spiritual. The perfume-anointing described in verse 2 is further developed in Matthew 26 and Mark 14, although John mentions it just to identify the relationship among these two sisters, their brother, and Jesus. Even as we read this passage, we wonder about God being glorified through sickness, the strong point of verse 4. Of course, God was glorified through Jesus' resurrection, but He was also glorified through His death. Any crisis that brings glory to God is good. If God is glorified in illness, it is good, as difficult as this is for our human minds to grasp. The Lord's words, this sickness will not end in death, show us how much more deeply He was thinking than the disciples. They could never have imagined that Lazarus' physical death would end and he would actually walk out of the grave after several days.

11:7-10. The Lord and His disciples had probably been in Perea and had some distance to walk back to Bethany in the northeastern part of Judea. Death threats awaited there, and the disciples had serious reservations about the trip. Verses 9 and 10 represent the Lord's answer, though it does not seem to fit the context. Perhaps it was a proverb of the time, meaning duty is more important than haste. For Jews, the twelve hours of daylight would have been from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and perhaps Jesus emphasized that we have a full twelve hours, but no more. Each valuable hour should be used to glorify God.

11:17-24. Their arrival in Bethany occurred at least four days later. In the cultural ostentation of Jewish funerals, the mourners, the spices, and the procession still lingered. This was a popular family in the small town of Bethany, so Lazarus's funeral was a major event. But none of the Lord's followers—not the disciples and not the sisters—yet

understood how Jesus is our life, as He was to Martha. Here we have one of the great conversations of the Bible. We already know the personalities of these women, so we are not surprised that Martha charged out to meet Jesus while Mary stayed at home. Her words to the Lord almost take the form of a mild rebuke: if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Yet she hinted at resurrection by adding, God will give you whatever you ask. Knowing her faith, Jesus responded, Your brother will rise again.

11:25-27. Jesus said, He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. Does that mean spiritual life beyond the grave as many interpreters have suggested? The context seems to demand an emphasis on physical death and physical life—in other words, bodily resurrection. Verse 26 seems to indicate that whoever is still alive and believing at the time of the Lord's return will never die. The key to the chapter and a foundation stone of the doctrine of resurrection and the afterlife appears in these beloved verses. This is one of the Lord's seven "I Am" statements in this Gospel. Jesus said future resurrection was impossible without Him. Martha (as well as Lazarus) had no hope without Him in the picture. He also said that real life (life that extends beyond death) is possible only through Him. A person attains it no other way. This life is both spiritual (will live, even though He dies) and eternal (will never die), and it comes only to those who believe in Jesus.

11:33-40. Jesus was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. This suggests anger over sin and death which could cause such agony in Mary, Martha, and their friends in Bethany. The word troubled seems to emphasize agitation, perhaps over the grief of the sisters. When Jesus approached the tomb, He could no longer control himself and wept. John used a different word than the word he chose to describe the weeping of Mary and the Jews. Perhaps the intent was to show that Jesus' tears emerged for a different reason—not grief over Lazarus; He had that situation well in hand. Surely the same unbelief and theological ignorance that prompted His anger also produced His grief. The emotional intensity deepened as Jesus approached the tomb, deeply moved. Since Martha had raised the protest, the response of verse 40 may be directed primarily at her, though it certainly established a general principle—one that we have repeatedly observed throughout this Gospel: Believing is seeing. To the sisters in their grief, the disciples in their bewilderment, and to all who seek faith for life at any age since this dramatic event, Jesus calls for faith first and sight later.