

JESUS RESURRECTS

CORE PASSAGE: JOHN 11:17-27,38-44

CONTEXT

The book of John is unique among the four Gospels. John's Gospel highlighted seven signs Jesus performed that pointed to His identity as not only the promised Messiah but God Himself. John also included seven "I am" statements that intentionally connected Jesus's identity to the God who revealed Himself to Moses as "I AM" at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14). In John 11, Jesus performed both a miraculous sign and declared an "I am" statement to show His power over life and death.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus has the power to resurrect the dead and give eternal life to those who believe.

As you examine John 11:17-27,38-44:

- Notice that Martha understood that Jesus could do whatever He wanted, including resurrect her brother.
- Affirm that Jesus's desire was for people to believe in Him and His mission.



TIMELINE

Jesus Teaches with Many Parables
(Mark 4:1-34)

Jesus Walks on Water
(Mark 6:45-52)

SESSION STUDY: Jesus Raises Lazarus
from the Dead (John 11:1-44)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand
(Mark 6:30-44)

Jesus Heals in Gentile Regions
(Mark 7:24-37)

Daily Readings

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| ☐ Day 1: John 11:1-16 | ☐ Day 4: John 11:38-57 |
| ☐ Day 2: John 11:17-27 | ☐ Day 5: John 12:1-11 |
| ☐ Day 3: John 11:28-37 | ☐ Day 6: Psalm 21 |



Scan this QR code to access
this session's Scripture passages.

ANYONE WHO BELIEVES IN JESUS WILL LIVE FOREVER WITH HIM (JOHN 11:17-27).

Circle Jesus's "I am" statement. Then underline Martha's response.

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. **18** Bethany was near Jerusalem (less than two miles away). **19** Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. **20** As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary remained seated in the house. **21** Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. **22** Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." **23** "Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her. **24** Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." **25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. **26** Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" **27** "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world."

The siblings Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were no strangers to Jesus. These were some of Jesus's closest friends. Jesus Himself was grieved to know Lazarus had died and his sisters were mourning. Nevertheless, Jesus understood Lazarus's death was an opportunity for revelation. In ancient Judaism, a belief persisted that a dead person's soul hovered over his body hoping to reunite, but the soul only stayed for three days. Lazarus had been dead for four days, which meant his soul was gone and it was too late for hope.¹

Mary and Martha responded to Jesus uniquely in a previous encounter (Luke 10:38-42), and they did so here as well. This time Mary remained in the house, possibly angry at Jesus, but Martha came to Him on the road, grieving but hopeful. Martha believed Jesus could have healed Lazarus, and though her brother was now dead, she still had faith in Jesus, saying: "Whatever you ask from God, God will give you" (John 11:22).

How are you prone to respond to Jesus when circumstances don't work out how you think they should?

Jesus's response to Martha, promising her brother's resurrection, was not a surprise to her. Like most Jews in the first century, Martha believed in a future resurrection. But what Jesus said and Martha heard were two different points. Martha was thinking about the future—"the last day" (v. 24)—while Jesus was planning to act in the present.

LEADER NOTE: While most Jews believed in a final resurrection of all people, no one in Jesus's day was expecting the Messiah to die, let alone resurrect. Jesus's resurrection transformed the way His followers understood the future resurrection. Jesus's rising from the dead was the first stage—the firstfruits that would come at the beginning of the harvest (1 Cor. 15:20). The second stage will be the final resurrection of all people at the end of the age.

Next, Jesus uttered perhaps His most popular “I am” statement: “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). Notice what Jesus was and wasn't saying. He was not saying He can provide resurrection and life but that He is the resurrection and the life. These are not gifts Jesus provides but qualities of His divine identity (see 1:1-4). Resurrection and life are experienced by those who are in Christ.

Of course, to experience resurrection and life requires faith, specifically faith in who Jesus is. Martha believed in Jesus, saying: “I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God” (11:27). But it does seem Martha was confused about what Jesus was intending to do next, bringing the future into the present.

LEADER NOTE: Belief in Jesus is the goal of John's Gospel. While examples of belief are featured throughout his writings (for example, see 1:6-7; 4:39-42), John stated the purpose of his Gospel in his conclusion: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:30-31).

What does it mean to be united with Christ and share in His resurrection?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

RESURRECTION: Both the Old and New Testaments teach that one day believers will experience a resurrection of the body from the dead (Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-14; John 11). The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and it will take place at the future return of Christ. Because Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be similar in nature, meaning it will be both bodily and glorious (Phil. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:22-23). The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians confidence that death has been defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

BY RESURRECTING THE DEAD, JESUS POINTED TO HIS MISSION FOR THE FATHER'S GLORY (JOHN 11:38-44).

Highlight Jesus's purpose for this resurrection miracle.

38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. **39** "Remove the stone," Jesus said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told him, "Lord, there is already a stench because he has been dead four days." **40** Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" **41** So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. **42** I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me." **43** After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" **44** The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

John wanted his readers to know that Lazarus was really dead. A stench of rot was in the air. Nonetheless, Jesus said, "Remove the stone" (v. 39). Unlike our burial customs, ancient Jews often placed their dead in above-ground tombs. These tombs often were caves with a slab to lay the body upon. After one year, the body would have decayed and the deceased's bones would be placed in a small ornamental box called an ossuary.²

Jesus was undeterred by the stench of death. Again He referenced belief as He told Martha that with faith she "would see the glory of God" (v. 40). Each of the seven signs Jesus performed in John were meant to reveal the glory of God in Jesus to the witnesses of Jesus's works. But the active ingredient of such sight and recognition was faith. Without faith, the people missed the meaning of the miracle.

LEADER NOTE: In John's Gospel, Jesus performed seven signs: turning water into wine (2:1-11), healing the official's son (4:46-54), healing the paralytic at Bethesda (5:1-16), feeding the multitude (6:1-14), walking on water (6:16-21), healing the man born blind (9:1-41), and resurrecting Lazarus (11:1-45). The seven signs, including Lazarus's resurrection, pointed to the glory of God revealed in Jesus. John wanted his readers to understand that Jesus reveals the glory of God because He is in fact God the Son.

What are some ways we can witness the glory of God today?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“Death reigns everywhere, for the death of the soul is alienation from God. So people who believe in Christ, although they had been once dead, begin to live; for faith is a spiritual resurrection of the soul and, as it were, brings the soul alive, that it may live for God.”³

–John Calvin (1509–1564)

Next, John gave us a glimpse into Jesus’s prayer life. A couple of features of Jesus’s prayer are worth noting. First, Jesus prayed to God. By looking up and addressing God as Father, we get a glimpse into the intimate relationship between Father and Son. Second, Jesus wanted the crowd to hear Him pray to the Father. He wanted them to get a picture of the Son’s relationship with the Father. Jesus wanted the crowd, including Martha and Mary, to know the Father sent the Son to do His will.

LEADER NOTE: Through John’s Gospel, we learn much about the Trinity. John taught us that the Persons of the Trinity are unified and yet distinct. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Persons in one God, each equal in essence and power. Yet a distinction of Persons is most clearly seen through the “mission” of Jesus: The Father sent the Son. The Persons of the Trinity have to be distinct for one to send another. Just as the Father sent the Son, the Father and Son sent the Spirit (14:16). These truths teach us that all three Persons of the Trinity are actively involved in our salvation.

As God the Son, Jesus exercised His divine authority and commanded Lazarus to come out of the grave. With words, Lazarus was resurrected back to life. This final sign revealed the glory of God in Jesus. As Creator, God is life itself and therefore the source of life. In an instant, Jesus was able to extend life back to Lazarus. No one else could do this but God!

What hope do you find in Jesus’s power to resurrect Lazarus from the dead?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus’s power to resurrect the dead means He was also able to resurrect Himself, through which He secured victory over sin, death, and the powers of darkness. He did this also to give eternal life to those who believe.

Notes

SIGN	WHERE	WHEN	HOW	WHY
1. Turning water into wine	Cana of Galilee	At a wedding	Jesus took six stone water jars and turned the water into wine.	To show His glory and that the Messiah had come.
2. Healing the official's son	Capernaum	When the official's son was dying	Jesus spoke words of faith to the official.	To show His power over life and death.
3. Healing the man born blind	Jerusalem	One day	Jesus made mud with His spit and anointed the man's eyes.	To show His power to give sight to the blind.
4. Raising Lazarus from the dead	Bethany	When Lazarus was dead for four days	Jesus called Lazarus by name and said, 'Lazarus, get up.'	To show His power over the grave and to give life to all who believe.
5. Healing the man with the withered arm	Synagogue	One day	Jesus said to the man, 'Stand up! Take your mat and walk.'	To show His power to restore wholeness to the broken.
6. Healing the lame man	Jerusalem	One day	Jesus said to the man, 'Stand up! Pick up your mat and walk.'	To show His power to give life to the lame.
7. Raising the dead	Bethany	When Lazarus was dead for four days	Jesus called Lazarus by name and said, 'Lazarus, get up.'	To show His power over the grave and to give life to all who believe.

ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As your group arrives, ask: “Have you ever seen something restored or revived that you thought was beyond repair? Please share your experience.”

TRANSITION: We have probably seen videos of home renovations or restorations that defy reality. But in our Bible passage today, Jesus did not just resuscitate or revive someone who was dead for a few heartbeats. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb.

CONTEXT

REVIEW: Pass out copies of **Pack Item 8: John’s Seven Signs**, and briefly review the signs John highlighted to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Say: “In the Gospel of John, Jesus revealed His identity through miracles and teachings, and the religious leaders’ opposition to Him grew in response. At the end of John 10, their hostility intensified to the point that Jesus withdrew across the Jordan River to keep from being stoned to death. While He was there, His close friend Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, became gravely ill. But rather than leaving immediately to go heal His friend, Jesus waited two days, telling His disciples that this illness would reveal God’s glory and deepen their faith (John 11:1-7).”

RECAP

OUTLINE: On a board, write, “Jesus arrives in Bethany.” Lead the group to draw on their personal preparation for the week and to create a simple outline of the story with the next key moments from the narrative: Martha’s confession of faith, Mary’s tears, Jesus’s weeping, and finally Jesus’s call for Lazarus to come out of the tomb.

TRANSITION: In your reading this week, Jesus met Martha and Mary in their grief, spoke hope into their sorrow, and revealed His identity before demonstrating His power. Let’s explore today’s passage and consider how Jesus’s power to raise the dead strengthens our faith and offers life to all who believe in Him.



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Key Concept: Jesus has the power to resurrect the dead and give eternal life to those who believe.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 80 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “From Grief to Glory.” Recreate this chart on a board so you can record the group’s findings as they work through the Scriptures.

Notes

From Grief to Glory

Read John 11:17-27,38-44. Write down how the people in the narrative experienced grief, confession, compassion, and then Jesus’s glory.

GRIEF

CONFESSION

COMPASSION

GLORY

READ: Invite two volunteers to read aloud John 11:17-27 and 38-44.

PAIR UP: Instruct your group to form pairs. Direct them to assign details, along with the verse reference, from each Scripture section to the four categories in the chart: grief (expressions of sorrow and loss), confession (statements of belief in Jesus), compassion (Jesus’s response to human suffering), and glory (actions that reveal God’s power). Allow time for pairs to discuss and form their ideas. After a few minutes, invite volunteers to share their findings. Record these in the chart and encourage your group to jot down any thoughts shared in their PSG.

DISCUSS: Considering Jesus’s and people’s actions in the four categories, how should we understand Jesus’s care toward us in our suffering? *(grief: Jesus cares deeply about us as His people in our suffering and death // confession: regardless of our circumstances and suffering, Jesus wants us to trust in Him and believe He has our best in mind // compassion: Jesus is with His people in their suffering, desiring their best, which is faith in Him as the resurrection and*

Notes

the life // glory: Jesus revealed Himself as the Son of God and the Messiah, our King and Savior from our sin and its consequences; Jesus is the resurrection and the life, the source of our hope in a world presently marked by sin, suffering, and death; Jesus revealed that those who trust in Him do not need to fear death since He has the power to overcome it)

APPLY: Both Martha and Mary met Jesus with the same statement: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died” (John 11:21,32). Their words expressed real grief yet also a deep confidence in Jesus’s power. Jesus responded by pointing them to a greater truth. He was not merely someone who could ask God for a miracle—He is the source of life. When we get a troubling medical diagnosis, when we fear violence and persecution for our belief in Christ, what comfort does this passage give us?

DEBRIEF

How does seeing Jesus turn grief to glory challenge your fears and assumptions in your own sufferings?

SUMMARIZE

Display **Pack Item 9: The Resurrection and the Life** and read the verse. Say: “Jesus has the power to resurrect the dead and give eternal life to those who believe in Him. John 11 shows this power not only in the miracle itself but also in the way Jesus met people in their grief, strengthened their faith, and revealed His identity. Each moment—from grief to confession to compassion to glory—points us toward the greater resurrection Jesus offers all who trust in Him. So, along with Martha, we must consider Jesus’s question: ‘Do you believe this?’”

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 81). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: Belief requires truth. We cannot have faith in someone we do not know anything about. Martha had faith in Jesus because she believed Him to be the Messiah, the Son of God. While her understanding, like ours, was no doubt incomplete, she trusted in the Jesus she knew, the Jesus she believed God had sent into the world, the Jesus who is the truth.

How can you grow in your knowledge of and faith in Jesus?



HEART: Faith always requires more than mere details. We can know a lot about something but not trust it. How many people have safely jumped out of a plane? Many with parachutes. Yet that fact wouldn’t necessarily change your fear of skydiving. What we know to be true about Jesus must penetrate our hearts to the point we’re willing to stake our lives on Him.



What doubts, fears, and sins might you need to confess to grow in your faith?



HANDS: Our trust in Jesus is meant to lead to changed lives. What we believe about Jesus should change what we do and don't do. Because the resurrection is true, we do not need to fear death. We can trust that death does not have the final say because Jesus will call us out of our graves. This truth not only gives us confidence to face death, it should give us confidence in life.

How will your life look different because you believe Jesus will resurrect you?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Spend time this week meditating on Jesus's description of Himself as the resurrection and the life. Reflect on what this means for your fears about death or loss.
- Look for someone who is grieving or struggling and offer a simple act of compassion, just as Jesus entered into Mary and Martha's sorrow.
- Identify one area of your life that feels "hopeless" and intentionally entrust it to Jesus in prayer, believing He brings life where death once ruled.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 81 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 21:1-4 with your group. Thank the Lord that He is the resurrection and the life and He has already defeated sin and death for our gift of eternal life in Him and with Him.

References

1. Gerald L. Borchert, John 1-11, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 354.
2. Byron R. McCane, "Ossuary," in The Eerdmans Encyclopedia of Early Christian Art and Archaeology, ed. Paul Corby Finney (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 267.
3. John Calvin, John, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), Jn 11:25.

Notes



MARY AND MARTHA

By Leslie Hudson



The Gospel narrators focus on Jesus's closest circle of His disciples, the twelve apostles. But those weren't Jesus's only close friends. We know He was also tight with a trio of siblings in Bethany: Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Though Lazarus takes the spotlight in John 11—being raised from the dead tends to do that—we should take a few minutes to get to know Lazarus's sisters a little better. Their story is an integral part of Lazarus's story and walks Jesus right up to the cross.

A STRONG FRIENDSHIP

The first time we come across this family as we consider the Gospels chronologically, Lazarus wasn't even mentioned. In Luke 10, Jesus sent out His disciples in groups of two (vv. 1-12) and celebrated their victories (vv. 21-24), preached rejection to towns that were unrepentant (vv. 13-16), and shared the story of the good Samaritan (vv. 25-37). Then we read a story of Jesus entering a village, where "a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home" (v. 38). Martha was caught up in entertaining Jesus's entire entourage, but even though "they" were traveling, Martha welcomed "him," meaning Jesus.

Often the story is told that Martha was too busy entertaining, but we're not sure that was the case. Luke reported that she was "distracted by her many tasks" (v. 40), and considering that it was Martha's house (v. 38), any homeowner can understand. Hear her question again, not with a nagging tone but with the sound of an exhausted woman: "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand" (v. 40). Maybe Martha truly wanted to sit at Jesus's feet as Mary did, but she carried the burden of a household. (And all the Type A people shouted "Amen!")

Jesus's gentle answer (v. 41), acknowledging her stress and high emotions, revealed He wasn't mad at her, and neither should we be. Rather, we, like Martha, should see that more than any responsibility, we need to sit at Jesus's feet and hear His Word, giving us the soul-care we desperately need.

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A FAMILY TRAGEDY

Lazarus's name appears in Scripture only when it's practically too late. In John 11:1, we read: "Now a man was sick—Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha." Naturally, the sisters sent a message to Jesus: "Lord, the one you love is sick" (v. 3). Jesus explained to His disciples that the sickness "would not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (v. 4). At Jesus's instruction, they waited two more days before heading to Bethany. By the time they arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days.

*Jesus's prophecy that Lazarus's death would end in glory
was fulfilled in a way no one could have predicted—
in Jesus's death so that we might have everlasting life.*

The sisters heard separately that Jesus had arrived, and both approached Him with the same statement: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died” (vv. 21,32). We hear the faith of these sisters burning through their tears of grief. Yes, they believed, but they wondered, “Why didn’t Jesus come sooner?”

MARTHA'S FAITH

Though Martha’s grief was certainly overwhelming at the time of Lazarus’s death, she kept her faith grounded by saying aloud what she knew to be certain: “I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you . . . I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. . . . I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world” (John 11:22,24,27). We can find comfort in our own lives by also choosing to believe and therefore speak (2 Cor. 4:13) what we know to be true of Jesus.

MARY'S LOVE

In Mary’s final mention in Scripture, she demonstrated her love for the Lord and her understanding of what He had done. She “took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus’s feet, and wiped his feet with her hair” (John 12:3). Though Matthew and Mark also recounted this story, only John revealed Mary’s identity. He also pointed out that this happened “six days before the Passover” (v. 1). Passover would have been Jesus’s last supper on the night He was betrayed. John connected the dots for us: In raising Lazarus, Jesus risked His safety by returning to the Jerusalem area. Through that miracle, the Jews had been pushed to the breaking point; raising Lazarus from the dead was the final straw to make them decide

that Jesus must die (11:45-57). Jesus’s prophecy that Lazarus’s death would end in glory (v. 4) was fulfilled in a way no one could have predicted—in Jesus’s death so that we might have everlasting life (3:16).

We can’t identify Mary’s thoughts, but in sitting at Jesus’s feet (Luke 10:39), she had captured His worthiness and His passion. She heard Him say He would die when the disciples missed it, and she didn’t waste the opportunity to honor Him.

As you reflect on these sisters from Bethany, open your heart to their hospitality, grief, compassion, and faith. They knew Jesus, loved Him, believed Him, knew His Word, and devoted their lives to Him. Invite the Holy Spirit to give you a heart like theirs even today.

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