

ADULT LESSON GUIDE
FALL 2024

JESUS, OUR SAVIOR

Miracles Preceding Passion
Week (John 11-13)

SALVATION IN ACTS

From Jerusalem to
the Ends of the Earth

**TREASURES
IN ROMANS**

Exploring Themes
from Paul's Epistle

**GOD'S
WORD**
FOR LIFE



GOD'S WORD



FOR LIFE

ADULT LESSON GUIDE
FALL 2024



GOD'S WORD




FOR LIFE

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*AN indicates All Nations Sunday.

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LESSON GUIDE

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GETTING STARTED

The first page of each lesson gives pertinent information that will be foundational for teaching the lesson. Here you will find the Lesson Title, the Truth about God, the Truth for My Life, and both the Focus Verses and Lesson Text. In addition, a callout box will either give an overview of the series (the first lesson of each series contains this information) or will connect students with their daily devotional activity from the previous week.

JANUARY 12, 2025

SERIES 2: MIRACLES

2.2

ANYONE ANYWHERE

FOCUS VERSES

Acts 8:36-38
 "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water; what dost thou bid me to do?' He said, 'I bid thee to be baptized.' And they went down both into the water, and the eunuch, and he baptized him."
John 4:46-54
 "And he commended the chariot to stand still: and they were down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

LESSON TEXT

Acts 8:26-39

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

The miracle of short salvation is for

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I believe and wait to receive the miracle of salvation.



Thinking about Last Week:

- Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:
1. What most affected you as you read through the lesson text and the biblical insights?
 2. How did it shape your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
 3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

LESSON 11

SG TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: Tell about a time when something happened in your life with perfect timing.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

- If you were Martha or Mary, what would you do when you heard Jesus was coming? What emotions would you feel? Would you feel anger? Disappointment? Hope? Despair?

I. FOR GOD'S GLORY

- A. Jesus Loved His Friends
- B. Jesus Waited
- C. In His Love, Jesus Sometimes Waits to Respond to Our Needs
 • Has God ever made you wait for an answer to prayer? Describe how the timing worked out when He finally came through for you.

II. THE DETOUR

- A. Jesus Traveled through Judea
- B. The Disciples Were Confused, Possibly Even Cynical
- C. I Will Remain Faithful, Even When Jesus Does Not Do What I Want
 • What would you be willing to give up in your life if it meant seeing great miracles?

III. JESUS' COMPASSION

- A. Jesus Reasoned with Martha
- B. Jesus Waited with Mary
 • Who do you identify with more, Martha or Mary? Can you share a time when Jesus either opened new truths in answer to your questions or simply wrapped His arms around you and comforted you?
- C. Jesus Raised Lazarus
- D. I Will Trust Jesus to Meet My Needs However He Sees Best
 • What stone is Jesus asking you to roll aside today in order to get your miracle? What are you going to do?

Internalizing the Message

Prayer Focus

- Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:
- For God to build our faith in the waiting
 - For God to give us the courage to do whatever He asks of us to demonstrate our faith

SG TEACHING OUTLINE

The SG (Small Group) Teaching Outline is the lesson content in outline form. Each lesson main point is listed along with suggested discussion questions. Although the outline can be used to teach the lesson in a large group setting, the "SG" indicates the content is also designed to be used in a Small Group. Because of this, an icebreaker question has been provided to help jump-start interaction in the Small Group meeting.

FALL LESSON 11

LESSON CONNECTION

Jesus was late. Imagine you are Martha or Mary pacing the sickroom. Your brother Lazarus lies in the bed. You have done all you can to nurse him back to health, but he is fading fast. You alternate between your brother's bedside and the open window, where you stare off down the road—the road Jesus will take to reach you. But He'd better hurry. You strain your eyes for movement. Surely He will come.

You rush back to Lazarus, wring out a cloth for his fevered brow, and tell him, "Don't worry, Jesus will be here soon. We sent Him a message days ago. He will walk right through that door, lay His hand on you, and you will be healed as good as new." Then you lay your head on your brother's chest and pray that the words you just spoke were not a lie. But you can feel his heartbeat fading. His breath is a shallow rattle. Your sister pins you, and you pray harder.

Surely Jesus is running to you down the road. Surely He is just outside the door. He will burst in just in time. Wasn't He just on time to turn the water into wine? Wasn't He at the well at Sychar just in time to meet the woman of Samaria? Wasn't He in just the right place at the right time to heal the lepers, the paralyzed man, and the blind man? You wait, hope, and pray. And then your brother dies.

Even at the funeral, you hold onto a thread of hope. You remember the miracle from Nain where Jesus stopped the whole procession, touched the funeral bier, and raised the widow's son back to life. Surely that is His plan—a more dramatic miracle. Tearfully you watch for Him, but still He does not come. He doesn't even show up to pay His respects at the graveside service. Your brother's body, wrapped head to toe in grave clothes, is laid in the rock-hewn tomb. A stone is rolled across the entrance; it drops into place with a thud and lies in the hole in the wall. And you stand in front of that cold, unmovable stone and weep.

Four days your brother has been entombed. And then someone comes and tells you Jesus is finally coming. He is just down the road. Lazarus is long dead, and it feels like Jesus let it happen. He could have done something, you know. He could have. So why didn't He? Martha gets up and rushes out to meet Jesus on the road. She is going to say her piece to Him. Mary cannot even bring herself to face Him. She just stays in the house with the mourners.

But Martha did not know and Mary could not yet tell that Jesus is never early, and He is never late. Our God is an on-time God.

If you were Martha or Mary, what would you do when you heard Jesus was coming? Would you feel anger? Disappointment? Hope?

LESSON CONNECTION

Most often the Lesson Connection will be a story or illustration designed to give students a glimpse of the overall theme of the lesson. Since stories often appeal to the heart and emotions, this portion of the lesson seeks to engage the heart to receive the truth that will be taught. You are encouraged to personalize this section and include your own testimony to help students connect to the lesson.

BIBLE LESSON

The Bible Lesson is a manuscript of the entire lesson. The lessons are written by various Apostolic authors who not only skillfully explain the truths of Scripture but also share ways we can apply these truths to our lives. The lesson contains discussion questions to stimulate thought and media callouts (videos and images available in the Adult Resource Kit) to connect with students of all learning styles.

BIBLE LESSON

I. FOR GOD'S GLORY

John 11 sets the scene. Lazarus was sick, and his sisters sent a distress call to Jesus. They lived in Bethany, a town in the province of Judea not far from Jerusalem. Jesus had left Judea to avoid arrest, and it seems he was a long journey from Bethany. No one but Jesus knew that Lazarus's sickness was not a tragedy; it was a catalyst for God's glory.

A. Jesus Loved His Friends

John 11:5 specifically notes: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." We are left with no doubt that Jesus loved each one of them individually—Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. From this story and others, we understand just because Jesus does not answer our prayer when we think He should does not mean He doesn't love us. Even when tragedy strikes and we feel like our world is ending, it does not mean He doesn't love us. Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, and He loves you too.

B. Jesus Waited

Even though Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, He waited. In fact, because Jesus loved them, He waited. Look at verses 5 and 6 together: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (John 11:5-6). The key word is therefore, which points back to the last statement made. Put another way, it could be written: "Jesus loved them; therefore, He abode two days still."

Sometimes Jesus loves us enough to make us wait. Sometimes He says the timing is not quite right yet, but Jesus always shows up right on time. Although we do not have Jesus' full itinerary, it is likely He would have reached Lazarus in time to stave off death if Jesus left immediately. He could have arrived, worked a miracle, and pulled Lazarus back from death's door. But that was not God's plan.

C. In His Love, Jesus Sometimes Waits to Respond to Our Needs

Jesus knows that some things can only be learned in the waiting. Some strength can only be developed by bearing a burden for a while and praying until something happens. Strong faith is built in the waiting. Perseverance and patience are developed in the waiting. Jesus had a plan for His friends whom He loved—Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. His plan could only be accomplished by waiting. And He has a plan for you too.

Teacher Option:
A supplemental video is available in the Resource Kit. 

Has God ever made you wait for an answer to prayer? Describe how the timing worked out when He finally came through for you.

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INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Imagine you are there that day with Jesus in front of your brother's tomb. You summon up all your courage and faith and throw your weight into rolling back the stone. Your sister helps and so do the other mourners. Then you stand back. You have done what you can do.

Jesus prays a short prayer. Then He cries with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth." You see and hear movement inside the tomb. A human cocooned in grave clothes stumbles toward the entrance. Your heart is in your throat, torn between fear and excitement. Is it possible?

But Jesus is smiling. "Loose him, and let him go." You rush to obey. Your brother's smile emerges from the wrappings. His arms are free, and he is hugging you and your sister. You are all joyfully crying and laughing and thanking Jesus at the same time. When you are willing to act on your faith and do what Jesus has told you to do, Jesus always comes through with His part of the miracle.

But the impact of Lazarus's resurrection did not end there. Many of the Jews who looked on that day believed on Jesus; for them it was a witness that led to their salvation. But other witnesses left and reported this astounding miracle to the chief priests and Pharisees. We would expect them to be thrilled to hear about such a miracle, but instead they asked: "What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:47-48).

In response, the high priest Caiaphas spoke prophetically, even though he was far from a holy man. He stated: "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:50). The resurrection of Lazarus became a catalyst that led to the cross. God's timing was perfect. Jesus had told His disciples this miracle would be for the glory of God that the Son of Man might be glorified.

They did not realize Jesus' road to glory would lead through the cross to another tomb with another stone. Only this time an angel would roll the stone away to show the empty grave. This time no one would need to loose Jesus; the grave clothes would be laying abandoned. Because as Jesus told Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25).

"That same message of Jesus still echoes down the centuries to us today. Hear Jesus now as He says: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). Do you want to be alive today? Are you still waiting on a miracle? Keep pushing for it. God is the on-time God.

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to build our faith in the waiting
- For God to give us the courage to do whatever He asks of us to demonstrate our faith

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INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

The end of each lesson will offer a final call to action to apply the lesson's content. The goal of each lesson is not just to share biblical information, but also to show what must be done with the information, challenging students to apply God's Word to their lives. You are encouraged to use the Prayer Focus to end the lesson with a time of consecration.

LEGEND

The following icons and boxes are used throughout to aid leaders in navigating the content.

Contains a suggested discussion question

Gives direction regarding a media callout that is available



Signals the information can be used in a Small Group setting.



Shows a video component is available to help illustrate the lesson information.



Indicates an image is available to help illustrate the lesson information.

LEARNING AND LIVING OUT GOD'S WORD FOR LIFE



Your disciple making toolbox has another tool. Each Friday at noon (Eastern), God's Word for Life airs a new podcast episode. Listen as LJ Harry, our podcast host, walks through the upcoming Bible story and discussion questions to help you to prepare for Sunday before Sunday. Each episode complements the God's Word for Life Lesson Guide, Daily Devotional Guide, and the Small Group Guide as we think deeply about how God's Word impacts our lives. Like the guides, each episode features discussion questions to help us apply what we are hearing and start holy conversations.

Together, let's learn and live out God's Word for Life.

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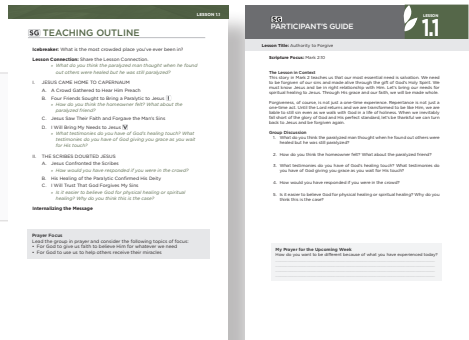
DIGITAL RESOURCE KIT

The Adult Resource Kit offers a wide array of materials to help expand the impact of each lesson. From videos that inspire discussion to social media tools to help encourage adults to join your group or class, this kit provides tools to help leaders grow their group and make teaching time more effective. Some resources include:



A Video to Accompany Each Lesson to Prompt Discussion or Further Thought

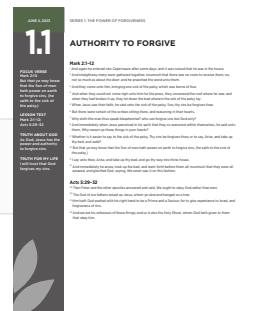
Small Group Teaching Outlines and Participant Guides



A Powerpoint to Accompany Each Lesson



Lesson Leaves and a Printable Version of the Scripture Text



Social Media Graphics, Tips, and Sample Posting Calendar

11

THE ON-TIME GOD

FOCUS VERSE

John 11:40

Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?

LESSON TEXT

John 11:32-44

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God knows exactly what we need.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will trust God to meet my needs however He sees best.



Series Overview:

From John 11-13, follow Jesus' Spirit-led footsteps as He set His face toward Calvary during His final week. He raised the dead, welcomed worship, and rode into Jerusalem to the cheers of Hosanna. He was clearly not just Jesus the carpenter or even the prophet: He was and is Jesus, our Savior.

SG TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: Tell about a time when something happened in your life with perfect timing.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

» *If you were Martha or Mary, what would you do when you heard Jesus was coming? What emotions would you feel? Would you feel anger? disappointment? hope?*

I. FOR GOD'S GLORY

A. Jesus Loved His Friends

B. Jesus Waited **V**

C. In His Love, Jesus Sometimes Waits to Respond to Our Needs

» *Has God ever made you wait for an answer to prayer? Describe how the timing worked out when He finally came through for you.*

II. THE DETOUR

A. Jesus Traveled through Judea **I**

B. The Disciples Were Confused, Possibly Even Cynical

C. I Will Remain Faithful, Even When Jesus Does Not Do What I Want

» *What would you be willing to give up in your life if it meant seeing great miracles?*

III. JESUS' COMPASSION

A. Jesus Reasoned with Martha

B. Jesus Wept with Mary

» *Who do you identify with more, Martha or Mary? Can you share a time when Jesus either opened new truths in answer to your questions or simply wrapped His arms around you and comforted you?*

C. Jesus Raised Lazarus

D. I Will Trust Jesus to Meet My Needs However He Sees Best

» *What "stone" is Jesus asking you to roll aside today in order to get your miracle? What are you going to do?*

Internalizing the Message

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

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LESSON CONNECTION

Jesus was late. Imagine you are Martha or Mary pacing the sickroom. Your brother Lazarus lies in the bed. You have done all you can to nurse him back to health, but he is fading fast. You alternate between your brother's bedside and the open window, where you stare off down the road—the road Jesus will take to reach you. But He'd better hurry. You strain your eyes for movement. Surely He will come.

You rush back to Lazarus, wring out a cloth for his fevered brow, and tell him, "Don't worry. Jesus will be here soon. We sent Him a message days ago. He will walk right through that door, lay His hand on you, and you will be healed as good as new." Then you lay your head on your brother's chest and pray that the words you just spoke were not a lie. But you can feel his heartbeat fading. His breath is a shallow rattle. Your sister joins you, and you pray harder.

Surely Jesus is running to you down the road. Surely He is just outside the door. He will burst in just in time. Wasn't He just on time to turn the water into wine? Wasn't He at the well at Sychar just in time to meet the woman of Samaria? Wasn't He in just the right place at the right time to heal the lepers, the paralyzed man, and the blind man? You wait, hope, and pray. And then—your brother dies.

Even at the funeral, you hold onto a thread of hope. You remember the miracle from Nain where Jesus stopped the whole procession, touched the funeral bier, and raised the widow's son back to life. Surely that is His plan—a more dramatic miracle. Tearfully you watch for Him, but still He does not come. He doesn't even show up to pay His respects at the graveside service. Your brother's body, wrapped head to toe in grave clothes, is laid in the rock-hewn tomb. A stone is rolled across the entrance; it drops into place with a thud as final as the end of the world. And you stand in front of that cold, unmoving stone and weep.

Four days your brother has been entombed. And then someone comes and tells you Jesus is finally coming. He is just down the road. Lazarus is long dead, and it feels like Jesus let it happen. He could have done something; you know He could have. So why didn't He? Martha gets up and rushes out to meet Jesus on the road. She is going to say her piece to Him. Mary cannot even bring herself to face Him. She just stays in the house with the mourners.

But Martha did not know and Mary could not yet tell that Jesus is never early, and He is never late. Our God is an on-time God.

If you were Martha or Mary, what would you do when you heard Jesus was coming? Would you feel anger? disappointment? hope?

BIBLE LESSON

I. FOR GOD'S GLORY

John 11 sets the scene. Lazarus was sick, and his sisters sent a distress call to Jesus. They lived in Bethany, a town in the province of Judea not far from Jerusalem. Jesus had left Judea to avoid arrest, and it seems He was a long journey from Bethany. No one but Jesus knew that Lazarus's sickness was not a tragedy; it was a catalyst for God's glory.

A. Jesus Loved His Friends

John 11:5 specifically notes: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." We are left with no doubt that Jesus loved each one of them individually: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. From this story and others, we understand just because Jesus does not answer our prayer when we think He should does not mean He doesn't love us. Even when tragedy strikes and we feel like our world is ending, it does not mean He doesn't love us. Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, and He loves you too.

B. Jesus Waited


Even though Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, He waited. In fact, *because* Jesus loved them, He waited. Look at verses 5 and 6 together. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (John 11:5-6). The key word is *therefore*, which points back to the last statement made. Put another way, it could be written: "Jesus loved them; *therefore*, He abode two days still."

Sometimes Jesus loves us enough to make us wait. Sometimes He says the timing is not quite right yet, but Jesus always shows up right on time. Although we do not have Jesus' full itinerary, it is likely He would have reached Lazarus in time to stave off death if Jesus left immediately. He could have arrived, worked a miracle, and pulled Lazarus back from death's door. But that was not God's plan.

C. In His Love, Jesus Sometimes Waits to Respond to Our Needs

Jesus knows that some things can only be learned in the waiting. Some strength can only be developed by bearing a burden for a while and praying until something happens. Strong faith is built in the waiting. Perseverance and patience are developed in the waiting. Jesus had a plan for His friends whom He loved—Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. His plan could only be accomplished by waiting. And He has a plan for you too.

Teacher Option:

A supplemental video is available in the Resource Kit. 

Has God ever made you wait for an answer to prayer? Describe how the timing worked out when He finally came through for you.

II. THE DETOUR

A. Jesus Traveled through Judea

Jesus had left Judea after His claims to deity led the Jews to attempt to arrest Him for blasphemy. He crossed the Jordan River to Bethabara, where John first had baptized and Jesus Himself was baptized. Whether Jesus was still there ministering when He received the news of Lazarus's sickness or He had moved on from there, it is clear He was far away from Bethany and would have to traffic through the hostile territory of Judea.

Teacher Option:

A supplemental image is available in the Resource Kit. I

B. The Disciples Were Confused, Possibly Even Cynical

Jesus' decision to return to the province of Judea was not popular with His disciples. They asked Him: "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" (John 11:8).

Jesus told His disciples: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11:11). As usual, the disciples did not get it, so Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead" (John 11:14). Jesus made it clear that His purpose in going to Bethany outweighed the danger to His life. He was going there to perform a miracle and wake Lazarus from the dead.

C. I Will Remain Faithful, Even When Jesus Does Not Do What I Want

Thomas blurted out, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). Given the recent attempt on Jesus' life, Thomas's statement was no exaggeration. He truly expected Jesus would die if He returned to Judea, and so would they, yet he was willing to go with Jesus. What about us? Are we willing to follow Him when it might cost us dearly? our life, or at least our quality of life, or the lifestyle we are used to? Sometimes we walk through dangerous territory, but following Jesus means we will never walk where He has not already first walked.

When Jesus does not do what we want when we want Him to, will we still follow Him? When He tells us to wait, will we still follow Him? When He charts a dangerous path for our lives, will we have the courage to walk it with Him? If not, we may never see the miracles and marvels He has in store for us. But if we do remain faithful and follow, we will see greater miracles than we have ever seen.

III. JESUS' COMPASSION

Jesus and His disciples finally arrived near Bethany. Martha was on her way out to meet Him. Mary was still weeping in the house. And Lazarus was lying dead in the grave that had entombed his body for four long days. By all appearances there was no hope. Even the Jewish traditions in the Talmud said the soul of the dead floated above the body for three days, wanting to return,

What would you be willing to give up in your life if it meant seeing great miracles?

but after those three days, the person was gone forever. But in His compassion, Jesus met each of these beloved friends exactly where they were and gave them exactly what they needed.

A. Jesus Reasoned with Martha

Martha was the hardworking one, busy and concerned about getting everything done. She confronted Jesus face to face. At first she seemed to be heaping on recrimination as she said, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:21). Was she playing the blame game? It might seem so, except for her next statement. “But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee” (John 11:22).

“But I know.” What faith! Faith is not about what we feel; faith is about what we know to be true. Lazarus was dead and buried, but Martha knew Jesus could do anything. She said, “Even now,” knowing that by now Lazarus was stinking, but she also knew Jesus could step into her stinking situation and change it. Faith is not wishful thinking or “pie-in-the-sky” power of positive thinking. Faith is about holding onto what we know is true when all evidence seems to point to the contrary.

With Martha, Jesus launched into deep theological waters. He reasoned with her. He promised her Lazarus would rise again. He revealed Himself to her in another of His amazing I AM statements sown throughout the Book of John. “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25). Jesus met this clear-eyed, faith-filled woman with the same frankness as she spoke to Him and met Martha where she was, spoke her language, and gave her what she needed: a clear and logical hope that her brother would rise again because the resurrection and the life—God in human flesh—was standing in front of her.

B. Jesus Wept with Mary

Then Jesus looked around and asked for Mary. She was too devastated to even come out to meet Him, but Martha hurried back to the house, found Mary, and told her secretly, “The Master is come, and calleth for thee” (John 11:28). That call was too much for Mary to ignore. She fell at Jesus’ feet, crying, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:32). Unlike Martha, she didn’t add any faith-filled statement about resurrection. She was grieving and broken. She felt lost and bereaved and hopeless in that moment.

Then we read the shortest verse in all 31,102 verses in the Bible: “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). He did not lecture Mary or launch into a theological discussion like He had with Martha. No, Jesus wept with her. He groaned with her. He was troubled by what troubled her. We have a High Priest who is deeply moved by the feelings of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15). He weeps with those who weep, and He mourns with those who mourn. If all you can do today is fall at Jesus’ feet and ask, “Why weren’t You here on time?” that

is OK. He will sit down in the dust with you like He sat with Mary and weep with you.

C. Jesus Raised Lazarus

Jesus is not just the Lamb of God; He is also the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Family and friends led Jesus to Lazarus's tomb where Jesus demanded, "Take away the stone." Practical Martha protested, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." Jesus let her know this was a test of her faith she had spoken of before. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" (John 11:40).

We would expect Him to say, "If you roll away the stone, you will see the glory of God," but action is inextricably linked with faith. In other words, it was time for Martha to put legs on her faith.

D. I Will Trust Jesus to Meet My Needs However He Sees Best

Jesus has His own ways of meeting our needs. He knows right where we are, what we are going through, and what we need. At some time, all of us will have to get up and roll a stone out of the way. We will need to take some specific action that demonstrates our faith. For someone in financial straits, God might call you to trust Him by giving money to missions you were going to spend for a remodel. For those who have faith that God can make you a witness, the stone you need to move might be simply sharing your faith with the person beside you at the store or the server serving you at lunch when God nudges you to talk to them.

For those who want freedom from addiction, it might mean ridding yourself and your home of anything that would drag you back into addiction and asking God for freedom. For those who want to receive the Holy Ghost, it might mean you coming to the altar with your hands raised in surrender. For those who need healing, that stone might be stepping forward in faith to be anointed with oil and prayed over. Jesus simply asked His audience to do what they could do: roll away the stone. Then Jesus did what they could not do: raise Lazarus from the grave.

Who do you identify with more, Martha or Mary? Can you share a time when Jesus either answered your tough questions or simply wrapped His arms around you and comforted you?

What "stone" is Jesus asking you to roll aside today in order to get your miracle? What are you going to do?

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Imagine you are there that day with Jesus in front of your brother's tomb. You summon up all your courage and faith and throw your weight into rolling back the stone. Your sister helps and so do the other mourners. Then you stand back. You have done what you can do.

Jesus prays a short prayer. Then He cries with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth." You see and hear movement inside the tomb. A human cocooned in grave clothes stumbles toward the entrance. Your heart is in your throat, torn between fear and excitement. Is it possible?

But Jesus is smiling. "Loose him, and let him go." You rush to obey. Your brother's smile emerges from the wrappings. His arms are free, and he is hugging you and your sister. You are all joyfully crying and laughing and thanking Jesus at the same time. When you are willing to act on your faith and do what Jesus has told you to do, Jesus always comes through with His part of the miracle.

But the impact of Lazarus's resurrection did not end there. Many of the Jews who looked on that day believed on Jesus; for them it was a witness that led to their salvation. But other witnesses left and reported this astounding miracle to the chief priests and Pharisees. We would expect them to be thrilled to hear about such a miracle, but instead they asked: "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:47-48).

In response, the high priest Caiaphas spoke prophetically, even though he was far from a holy man. He stated: "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:50). The resurrection of Lazarus became a catalyst that led to the cross. God's timing was perfect. Jesus had told His disciples this miracle would be for the glory of God that the Son of Man might be glorified.

They did not realize Jesus' road to glory would lead through the cross to another tomb with another stone. Only this time an angel would roll the stone away to show the empty grave. This time no one would need to loose Jesus; the grave clothes would be laying abandoned. Because as Jesus told Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25).

That same message of Jesus still echoes down the centuries to us today. Hear Jesus now as He says: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). Do you want to be alive today? Are you still waiting on a miracle? Keep pushing for it. God is the on-time God.

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to build our faith in the waiting
- For God to give us the courage to do whatever He asks of us to demonstrate our faith