

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

questions

Read **John 11:1-6**.

1. What kind of relationship did Jesus have with Mary, Martha and Lazarus (**11:1-3**)? What does this reveal about Jesus?

Obviously, Jesus was very close to this family of siblings. (Luke 10:38-42 give us more information about this family). The sisters were close enough to Jesus to send word for him to come because their brother Lazarus was seriously ill. They knew that if Jesus came, he would be returning to dangerous territory. (In John 10:39-40 we are told that Jesus went back to a place across the Jordon because the religious leaders were trying to seize him.) Yet, because of their mutual love, they summoned him.

John also mentions an incident that we will read about in John 12, but we know that Mary was very close to Jesus because of her loving act of devotion of pouring out perfume on Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair.

All this reveals to us the humanness of Jesus in his need and desire for close relationships along with all the emotional feelings and responses that are normal to close relationships.

Bible scholar John Stott says this about Jesus' humanity:

The Son of God did not stay in the safe immunity of his heaven, remote from human sin and tragedy. He actually entered our world. He emptied himself of his glory and humbled himself to serve. He took our nature, lived our life, endured our temptations, experienced our sorrows, felt our hurts, bore our sins and died our death. He penetrated deeply into our humanness. He never stayed aloof from the people he might have been expected to avoid. He made friends with the dropouts of society. He even touched untouchables. He could not have become more one with us than he did. It was the total identification of love ... Yet when Christ identified with us, he did not surrender or in any way alter his own identity. For in becoming one of us, he yet remained himself. He became human, but without ceasing to be God.

♥ What similarities do you see between the opening of this story and the blind man's story **in John 9:1-5**? In both accounts Jesus says that the event happened so that God would get glory. He also says two very similar things on both occasions: John 9:4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." AND John 11:9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. 10 It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light."

♥ Why do you think John stresses Jesus' love for this family in this story?

2. The sisters saw the situation with their brother as a desperate emergency. How did Jesus view it (**11:4**)? He saw it as a way to bring glory to God and to show His own glory. What they saw as an disadvantage and suffering, Jesus saw as an advantage and an opportunity to relieve suffering.

When we are in hard times, we need to remember that our difficulty is an opportunity for God to work and show his glory. Our natural response is to rebel against difficulties and see them as intruders that must be expelled from our lives as quickly and painlessly as possible by every

means available, including God's miraculous intervention. However, another perspective is possible. We can offer our trials to God for him either to remove or retain as **he** pleases, thereby bringing glory to his name and deepening our faith, and possibly that of others too.

- ♥ In what ways, if any, can God be glorified through sickness? Through death?
 - ♥ What difficulty or hard time are you currently experiencing? Could you tell God that you are willing to patiently continue in this trial if it brought glory to God and grew your faith? Why or why not?
3. Do you see Jesus' two day delay (**11:5-6**) as a contradiction to his love for Mary, Martha and Lazarus? Why or why not? What can you learn from this?

Isaiah 55:8-9 says "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

We don't always get exactly what we ask for because God has different and better plans for us. We should not see God's delays as denials. Timing is everything and God knows the best time. Jesus had something even better planned for his friends than just healing Lazarus. We need to remember this story when we think God is not answering our prayer or not listening to our requests. In faith we believe that he will answer at the right time and in the right way.

God's delays do not contradict his love and they are not final. God will come, in his own time and way. His coming will probably be later than we would have chosen. From his divine perspective, however, it will be the right time. God is the best of time-keepers. He created time; he is never late for his appointments!

- ♥ When have you felt that God was late in responding to your needs?
- ♥ What does **11:5-6** imply about the way Jesus scheduled his work? What can you learn from his example (**John 8:28-29**)?

Jesus is not driven by the needs he sees or hears around him. Just because someone makes a request and just because he is able to fulfill their request, doesn't mean he does it. Jesus says and does what the Father tells him to do. It is God who knows the right time, the right way and if a need is ours to fulfill. We are to live as Jesus did – letting our Father take the lead as we follow.

Read **John 11:7-16**.

4. Why wasn't Jesus afraid to return to Judea (**11:7-10**)?

Jesus was following the Father's lead, so he was not afraid to go where the Father was leading him. Jesus knew it was the right time to go (daylight) and knew God would provide the what he needed for the journey. If we follow our own lead and do what we think is right, we walk in darkness and will stumble and fall.

Jesus was also teaching his disciples that he was the Light of the world and if the disciples would keep close to him, they will have light to walk by also.

- ♥ Jesus mentions a *proverb* or *wise saying* in **11:9-10**. What do you think the "day" represents? The "night?" What was Jesus trying to communicate to his disciples?

It seems that the day means obedience and following God's lead. This is when we walk in the light. To digress from God's purpose is to walk in darkness or night. God's presence is illumination; when we go our own way, we lose our sense of spiritual direction and it's like walking in the night.

♥ If you are being obedient by doing God's will in your life, do you think God will protect you from danger and harm? Why or why not? Does **Mark 8:34-35** change your answer at all? How so?

God never promises that we won't have hard times or come to any harm in this life. But this life is not all there is and it is not the end and it is not what will last forever. No matter what happens, we are in the Father's care and he is always with us, even in the "valley of the shadow of death." Mark 8:34-35 tells us that the invitation to follow Jesus always involves the cross and death. We, however live for the life that comes after death.

5. Why do you think Jesus used sleep as a figure of speech to mean death in **11:11**? What did he want his disciples to understand?

For a Christ-follower, one who has given their life to Jesus, death is never the end. Sleep is a good metaphor, because there is life after death just as there is a waking after one sleeps. After this incident and the one in Mark 5:39, it became common for a Christian to refer to death as sleep.

♥ How will Lazarus' death help the disciples (**11:15**)?

Why should Jesus be glad that he was not present to save Lazarus from death, or to comfort the sister, and how can Lazarus' death bring any benefit to the disciples? Jesus considered this an opportunity for a supreme demonstration of power that show he was truly the Son of God and also confirm the faith of the sisters and the disciples. Jesus was certain of the outcome. He knew that positive belief and joy would be the result. Faith is more important than death. Death does not last forever, but faith in Jesus does. (1Corinthians 13:13 There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.) Our faith affects our eternity.

Do you think helping others believe in Jesus was worth Lazarus' death? Why or why not?

♥ The disciple Thomas is usually known for his *doubt* (**John 20:24-25**), but in this story he shows his *devotion* and *courage* (**11:16**). If you had to choose between your personal safety and comfort and obeying and following Jesus, which one would you most likely choose? Why?

Read **John 11:17-27**.

6. How were Martha's words of greeting to Jesus an expression of both her disappointment and her faith (**11:21-22**)? Do you think Jesus was offended?

Martha expressed her disappointment by saying, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." She expresses her faith by saying, "But I know that even now, God will give you whatever you ask." She was not expecting Jesus to raise Lazarus from the grave, but she was saying that somehow, God would make sense of it all. She also wanted Jesus to know that even though he didn't come in time, she did not doubt who he was.

Jesus was probably not offended or disappointed. He knows what is going to happen and he sees this as a "teachable moment."

♥ Would you feel comfortable talking to God this way? Why or why not?

Sometimes are afraid to let God know we are disappointed or even angry with what he seemed to let happen. But, there is not sense in hiding our feelings from God. He knows them anyway and when we are honest about how we feel, he is better able to meet us and give us what we need.

7. What does Jesus mean when he says, *I am the resurrection* (**11:25-26**)? *I am the life*?

Jesus is the resurrection because he, himself will defeat death and will rise again – and will never die again. Lazarus was raised from the dead, but at some point he died another physical death. Not so with Jesus. His physical body ascended into heaven. The one who believes in Christ has eternal life that transcends physical death. If we are living and believing, we will never die, but will make an instant transition from the old life to the new life. And, if we do experience physical death, we will still have eternal life – the life that never ends.

We have seen that Jesus is the give of life all through the Gospel of John. He gave life to water, making it wine. He offered new spiritual life of the kingdom of God to Nicodemus, and the life which springs up within a person satisfying all thirst, to the woman at the well. Jesus imparted life to a dying boy, a paralytic, and a man born blind. He is the good shepherd who gives life to the full. The life Jesus gives is eternal life, the very life of the deathless God himself. This life is a gift here and now. We don't have to wait until we die physically to participate in it. To believe in Jesus means that death is forever defeated and the life Jesus gives is a present, everyday reality.

What difference does this make in your life? In your death?

- ♥ Why do you think John mentions the detail that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days? He wants to make sure his readers know that Lazarus was really dead. This was not a case of mistaken death and a revival from a coma or unconsciousness.
- ♥ Did Martha give a good answer to Jesus' question (11:26-27)? How would you answer Jesus' question?
- ♥ On a **scale of 1 to 10**, how confident are you that you will live even though you will physically die (11:25) and that you will never die or perish (11:26)?

Read John 11:28-37.

8. How is Mary's greeting of Jesus (11:32-33) like, yet unlike, Martha's (11:20-22)? What does this say about each woman's relationship with Jesus?

Both Mary and Martha said the same thing to Jesus when they saw him – "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (They probably had been saying this to each other before Jesus arrived.) Martha then has a rational discussion with Jesus, but Mary falls at his feet and is weeping so much so that it causes Jesus to be "deeply moved in spirit and troubled" and then he, too, weeps.

Both women love and believe in Jesus, but Mary seems to have a more intimate relationship with Jesus.

- ♥ Which woman, Mary or Martha, best reflects your relationship with Jesus? How so?
9. Since Jesus knew he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead (11:11), why do you think he wept (11:35)? (*Wept* can be literally translated, *burst into tears*.)
- Jesus probably wept out of compassion for those he loved who were grieving. He could have also wept out of deep sorrow, knowing that this is not how God created life to be. The Bible calls death an enemy and it is the result of sin. The enemy kills, steals and destroys. Death was never in God's original plan.
- ♥ How does Jesus' reaction in 11:33 shape your view of Him?
 - ♥ Do you think Jesus is the same today as he was in this story? Does he still cry with you when you grieve or suffer? How would you know?

10. Jesus' reaction in 11:33 and 38 is not so much grief, but anger. What, in this situation, do you think could be the cause of Jesus' anger and indignation?

In Mary's grief, Jesus sees and feels the misery of the whole human race and burns with rage against the oppressor of men. It is death that is the object of his wrath, and behind death is the enemy who has the power of death. Jesus came into the world to destroy the devil and his works and here he is a champion ready for the conflict, angry at what the enemy has done. He is ready to set things right and raise Lazarus from the dead.

Read **John 11:38-44**.

11. What two different attitudes did Martha reveal in **11:22** and **39**. What do these statements disclose about her faith? Can you relate? How so?

Martha's faith is much like ours. We believe in our head and we say the right words, but when it comes right down to it, we don't really believe that anything will change. Martha says that she believes Jesus is the Son of God and that "God will give you whatever you ask for," but she shows that her belief is limited because she doesn't understand why Jesus would want to remove the stone that was the door to the cave. She was not believing that Jesus would or could do anything about the death of her brother.

♥ What connection do you see between *believing* and *seeing the glory of God* (**11:40**)?

There is a direct ratio between our faith and what God can do for us. That is why faith is so important. If we believe God (who he is) and his promises even when our circumstances or feelings say it's impossible, God is able to then do what he desires to do in the situation. In this verse, Jesus directly links believing and seeing the glory of God.

12. What are some things you can learn about prayer from Jesus' example of prayer in **11:41-42**?

There is a lot we can learn here if we take the time to examine and think about what Jesus did. Some things we learn are:

- Jesus looked up and addressed his prayer to Father God
- Jesus thanks God before he ever asks for anything
- Jesus confirms that God hears our prayers
- Sometimes our prayer can benefit those who hear us pray; not all prayer is private
- Jesus did not ask God to raise Lazarus from the dead; he thanked him for having already answered
- God answers prayer and our faith is stronger as a result

♥ What might have happened if Jesus had shouted, "Come out!" instead of "Lazarus, come out?"

All the dead in other graves may have risen!

♥ In what ways has God raised you from the dead? What are some old "grave clothes" that must be shed for you to feel truly free in Christ?

♥ What miracle do you need to believe God for in your life right now? How will prayer play a part?

Read **John 11:45-57**.

13. What price did Jesus pay when he worked this wonderful miracle so that others would believe (**11:53**)? **After this, the religious leaders plotted to take Jesus' life**

♥ How much are you willing to risk so that others might believe in Jesus and receive eternal life?

14. Why do you think people had such opposite reactions to the same event (**11:45-46**)? What are some reasons why people believe and reject Jesus today?

With the same experiences and evidence, some chose to believe and others rejected Jesus. It is the same today. Those that chose to believe knew they would have to give up control, there would be changes in their lives, their relationships could be affected, they may not be accepted by family and friends, they could get thrown out of the synagogue and they knew that to believe meant that they would be following Jesus from now on.

People today reject Jesus for the very same reasons. They don't want to change and they don't want to give up control of their lives.

15. What are the chief concerns of the religious leaders (11:48)? How do they misunderstand the role of Jesus the Messiah (11:51-52)?

The religious leaders were afraid of losing their place and influence and power. If they believed and followed Jesus, they might become a "nobody." What they did not understand was that Jesus was going to **save** them and their nation. Jesus makes things better, not worse. With Jesus, they would have experienced real freedom that had nothing to do with what the Romans might do or not do. Jesus would have made their nation, their people and their faith stronger, not weaker.

♥ Have you ever challenged "company policy" or the *status quo*? What happened? Why?

♥ How have you tried to keep Jesus in line with your religious traditions? Can you trust him now?

response

John 20:31 - But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. What *words, events* or *dialogue* in **John 11** would you point to in order to show someone that if they believe in Jesus, they will never die.

Encounter with Jesus

Take a few moments to be still and quiet in the presence of Jesus. Picture yourself with Jesus in a safe and comfortable place. Ask Jesus if he grieves when you grieve and cries with you when you cry? What do you see Jesus doing? What do you hear him saying? How does he want to comfort you in your sorrow?