



Comforting the Grieving John 11:17-44

What feelings did you experience when you lost something significant, experienced a change in a relationship, or lost someone close to you through death? What were some helpful and unhelpful responses from people as you grieved your loss?

In this story from John's Gospel, we see how Jesus not only comforted grieving friends, but took on death itself through a life-giving miracle.

Hearing the Word

1. [Read John 11:17-44](#). Compare the responses of Martha and Mary to the death of Lazarus. What did each of them do when Jesus arrived? What may this indicate about how they were feeling?
2. Why did Jesus respond differently to the same question by each sister? How did these conversations meet each of their unique needs for comfort and hope?

Think about people you know who are experiencing loss, or the potential loss of someone or something. Also think of grieving people in your healthcare setting. What are ways you can follow Jesus' example and care for them in their need?

3. Jesus has a unique perspective of death. What does he say about himself in vv. 25-26? What do you think he means by "resurrection" and "life?" How is death a contrast?

How does a person obtain the life that Jesus speaks about?

4. What does it look like to "believe" in the person of Jesus Christ?

How would you answer the question Jesus asks Martha in v. 26b? How does believing in Jesus affect your life now and eternally?

5. Review John 11:38-44 and describe what happened at the tomb of Lazarus in your own words. Why do you think that Jesus publicly talked with his Father? What may have gone through your mind if you had heard this prayer?
6. What may have been some of the thoughts and feelings people may have experienced when Jesus said, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Though we have not seen resurrections, Jesus is bringing new life (physical, emotional, spiritual) to people around us, and he involves us in his ministry. What are ways we can "unbind" people who are paralyzed and confined by fears and anxieties, doubts, spiritual darkness, or unhealthy perspectives about God or life?

What are factors that block us from being involved in Jesus's efforts to bring physical, emotional or spiritual life to others? Reflect on ways Jesus offers release and new life to you.

Responding to the Word

Prayerfully reflect on how God may be calling you to respond to this life-giving passage. Focus on one of these ideas and share with a friend who can pray for you:

- What are ways you can receive Jesus' comfort in a loss you are experiencing now?
- How you can care for others in their loss as a representative of Jesus?
- Review the resources on the next page for coping with grief and death. What words or ideas offer hope or understanding for you?
- How you can be involved in what Jesus is doing to bring life and freedom to people around you today?

Resources for Grief and Death

Some Perspectives About Death

In John 11:17-44 we see how Jesus Christ relates to people experiencing sorrow. Jesus was “deeply moved in spirit and troubled”—not only in response to these women, but also in response to the tragedy of death itself. Death comes to human beings because of our sin and rebellious response to God (Romans 6:23). In vv. 38-44, we see Christ’s power over death in raising Lazarus. This miracle shows the divinity of Jesus Christ and illustrates how Christ creates life in people who are spiritually dead. Christ came to set us free from the power that evil has over the world. Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins (Romans 6:6-11). Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and lives today to be involved in the lives of people he loves. He offers everlasting life to anyone who believes in him (John 3:16). For additional study about death and resurrection, see 1 Corinthians 15. Also see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 for a description of finding hope in the present of death.

Some Perspectives about Grief

Life is filled with a variety of losses – of relationships, health, jobs and position. Grief is the natural response to loss. We experience loss and grief in large and small and ways.

1. Grief includes many kinds of emotions:
 - shock and disbelief
 - bargaining (maybe if I did xxx, the situation would change)
 - anguish
 - irritability, anger
 - sadness, depression
 - emptiness
 - loneliness
 - acceptance and moving on with life, but the emotions described above may still return.
2. Everyone’s experience with grief is different, and there is not one way to grieve.
3. Some guidelines about grief:
 - Grief is work, and it can be exhausting.
 - Cry out your grief; express emotions, including anger.
 - Give grace to yourself
 - Pay attention to basic physical needs.
 - Ask for support – and accept it.
 - Say no to major stressors in other areas of your life.
 - Move beyond regret for what you could have/could not have done.
 - Take care of unfinished business in past relationships.
 - Refocus your memory with your favorite picture or image of the person. Reflect on the qualities you cherish, or ways the person’s values still live on.