

## John 11:21-27, 32-44

<sup>21</sup>"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup>Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup>and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup>"Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." <sup>32</sup>When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. <sup>34</sup>"Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. <sup>35</sup>Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup>Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" <sup>38</sup>Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. <sup>39</sup>"Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." <sup>40</sup>Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup>So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup>I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup>When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup>The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped

with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."



*This is a passage from the Gospel of John ("John" for short). The Gospels are four books at the beginning of the New Testament that combine ancient historical biography with persuasion to write eye witness accounts of Jesus. The first half of John is organized around seven signs that Jesus performs to show that he is sent from God. These signs all have deep connection to the Old Testament. In the OT, God met his people in profound ways. For example, when he rescued them from slavery in Egypt and they were in the desert, he fed them with mana, bread from heaven. So, it's really significant that Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." It's not just that he wants to feed his people and provide, he is helping those listening to see that his very life is what the manna miracle was pointing towards—he himself provides them with life.*

*Just like Jesus tying the manna miracle to himself when he says he's the bread of life, Jesus is about to tie another promise of God—God's biggest promise—to himself. The Jews believed that one day God would restore his good and perfect reign and bring the world to justice. This was called, "The Resurrection" and is at the heart of psalms like Psalm 16:9-10: "Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay." The trust in God's justice and faithfulness extended even to God's power over the grave. Just like the manna miracle, though, the Jews couldn't see the full scope of what God was up to, it was like they were looking through a dirty window, seeing some things, but missing the bigger thing.*

## Discuss

- 1) Where do you see Martha taking what she knows about the OT and applying it to Jesus in verses 21-27?
- 2) How does Jesus expand what Martha knows into something even bigger?
- 3) Jesus has come to heal Lazarus, yet in front of his tomb, he weeps. Why do you think Jesus cries?

*Jesus knows the pain of the world. He knows that fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and children die too soon. That even though God is good, evil, sin and death wreak havoc in the world and the right response is lament (Jesus laments on the cross through Psalm 22). This passage isn't about Jesus showing up and fixing everything that goes wrong when we or those we love get sick. Jesus heals Lazarus at great peril: it's the last miracle that cinches the religious leader's desire to kill him.*

*This passage is about Jesus standing in the great tension of human life with us. He stands with us and looks, as we do, at our broken world and sees those we love who are sick and even dying. He sees eyes meant for laughter, feet meant for running and dancing, arms meant for hugging loved ones; fingers meant for painting and basketball and guitar strings. He sees what we were meant for and he weeps that death and brokenness try to steal this. He then also does something profound: he embodies the hope that is so powerful it turns death from being the end to the gateway to a new kind of life.*

## Apply

- 1) How is your current suffering affecting you right now? Where are you seeing pain, sickness and even death? What would it be like to picture Jesus standing with you and weeping at this even as he stood with Mary and Martha and wept at Lazarus' tomb?
- 2) Hardships remind all of us that life is very fragile and none of us are safe: the following is an invitation to respond.

## Call To Faith

Just like Jesus says he's the bread of life and the water that quenches our deepest thirst, he also embodies one of God's biggest promises: that he can bring our human bodies, frail, broken and ravaged by sickness and disease to full healing and to a new kind of life, one that is free of sickness, pain and disease forever—the very body Jesus received after he rose from the dead. The word for this is resurrection. It's not coming back from the dead to die again. It's not becoming a wispy spirit that floats around in the clouds. It's becoming even more physical, more real and more fully human than we ever thought possible—our bodies free of all that's wrong in us and in the world.

So, when Jesus calls Lazarus out of the tomb, the sign he is giving is that God has the power to do what he promised: raise us from the dead to resurrection life. Martha and Mary receive their brother back from the dead and all who watched see the power of God through Jesus. However, Lazarus will die again. What Jesus has given is a down payment on a much bigger miracle that God will do when Jesus dies on a Roman cross and three days later is not simply brought back from the dead, but is resurrected. He is given his redeemed body that eats fish, walks through walls, appears and disappears and is free of all brokenness. Seeing this and being around him is so incredible, so awe-inspiring and so good that it starts the spread of Christianity to the whole world. The spread has never stopped for over 2,000 years and it has survived empires, plagues, wars and all other kinds of persecution because Christians for centuries have believed the witness to Lazarus pointed to what God can and did do in Jesus. "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?" (I Cor. 15:54-55).

DEATH, WHERE  
IS YOUR  
VICTORY?

# Small Group Invitation to Faith

## Prepare the group for a next step

*"We don't just want to talk about the Bible, we want to live it out. If you have been following Jesus for a while, I would like us to consider responding by joining the mission and sharing Jesus' good news. More on that in a minute. If you are considering following Jesus, I would like to give you an opportunity to take a step. First, let me share what it means to be a Christian and follow Jesus, and then see how we each may want to respond."*

## Read the Big Story



### Designed for Good

In Genesis we see that God created the world to be a perfect place. He created us for right relationship with him, with each other, and with creation. Things were perfect!



### Damaged by Evil

We all long for that kind of right relationship with each other. But we thought we could run our lives better than God. Instead of placing God at the center, we put our own selfish desires at the center. And as a result, everything fell apart. We broke our relationship with God, with each other, and with all creation. Today we live in a broken, messed-up world. We have war, depression, child abuse, suicide, drug addiction, school shootings, etc. Fortunately, God didn't leave us in this mess.



### Restored for Better

God relocated into our world in the person of Jesus. Jesus took all our brokenness onto himself. By dying on the cross and rising again, he broke the power of our broken world. If we're willing to let God take his place at the center again, and if we are willing to trust Jesus with our lives, we can be restored to a right relationship with God. But that's not the end of the story.



### Sent to Heal

Once we choose to follow Jesus, he sends us into the world to bring his love, power, and justice wherever we go. We get to live and declare this good news.

## Who's at the Center?



But, we have to make a decision. Will we live with ourselves at the center of the story or will we let God become the center of our story? In order to be sent to heal, we must turn from our selfishness and trust Jesus with our lives. This is what the Bible means when it says, "Repent of your sins." If we are at the center of the story, our attempts to heal will be warped by our brokenness, which is not very effective. What would it take for you to trust Jesus with your life?

**First**, this means accepting that through the cross and resurrection, we can be different people and receive a change of heart both now and for eternity. And that means making him the center of your life and following his leadership for you. Are you ready to do that?

**Second**, we join in his mission on campus and in the world to live and share his good news. That might mean telling a friend about Jesus. Are you ready to do that? How do you anticipate that following Jesus will shape your life?

### PONDER YOUR RESPONSE

It's important for you to interact with God about this. Let's take a moment of silence. Ask God if he is inviting you to follow him. (20 seconds of silence) Let's each share how we are feeling or how we want to respond today. [Thank you.](#) [Let's get a follow up conversation.](#)

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