

BRMC Small Group Study: John 11:1-27

Leaders Guide

Please note that the suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study. Feel free to adapt the questions for your group.

Leader's Notes:

Context:

Jesus' ministry was known to have spanned 3 Passovers (John 2:13, 6:4, 11:55). In this chapter, we see an end to the narrative that began at John 5 with the healing of the crippled man at the pool during the Passover celebration. The end of John 11 presents us again with the Passover which means that a year had just passed.

Introduction:

In this study we will see Jesus' final major miracle in the book of John where he performs the most extraordinary thing: a resurrection. This study and the next cover the whole story of the resurrection of Lazarus. The overarching theme of these studies is that God is glorified through this miracle. Today's study explores the events that led up to the miracle. The next study will explore the miracle itself and its repercussions.

Lesson Objectives:

- To learn why we should have less fear in doing God's work. (To see that we should not be afraid of stumbling because Jesus is the Light of the World)
- To learn why we should have more faith. (To have more faith in Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life)

Observation

1. In your own words, retell the events John 11.
 - *Pick one or two persons to tell the story as they remember it.*
2. How did the disciples react when Jesus wanted to return to Judea? What was Jesus' reply?
 - *Refer to John 11:7-10.*
 - *The disciples were concerned that people were going to stone Jesus.*
 - *Jesus' reply was that one would not stumble in the day but would at night.*

Interpretation

Read John 11:1-16

3. What does it mean to see by the light of this world and why was Jesus unafraid to return to Judea (John 11:9-10)?
 - *Physically, it is the sun that gives light and allows people to do their work in ancient times. Once night falls, people needed to stop work.*
 - *Metaphorically, Jesus was implying that he will be safe as long as he performs his Father's will. The daylight period of his ministry was not up yet and he needed to fulfil all 12 hours of his work. This meant that he needed to do ministry till his time on the cross came. Darkness will come when Jesus is raised on the cross.*

- *Also, Jesus is the light of the world. As long as we have him, we can perform the works assigned to us as we live in the 'daylight'.*
- *Fun fact: In days before accurate timepieces existed, both the Romans and the Jews divided the daylight period into twelve 'hours', which actually varied in length with the changing seasons.*

4. Why did Jesus have to explain the metaphor of sleeping (John 11:14)?

- *It appears that the disciples were resistant to return to Judea for fear of being killed.*
- *Sleep is a metaphor for death which the disciples should have picked up.*
- *Instead, they hoped that Lazarus was only sleeping and would recover so that they wouldn't have to return to Judea.*

Read John 11:17-27

5. Why did Jesus meet Mary and Martha only 4 days after Lazarus' death?

- *Four days are mentioned to show the greatness of Jesus' miracle. Look back on previous miracles to see how Jesus' miracles were performed in impossible circumstances (no wine, no food, etc).*
- *There is a rabbinic belief that the soul lingers near the body for three days in hopes of re-entering it. After three days, the soul would leave and there would be no hope of healing. Death would then become irreversible. If this was applicable at that time, it would have meant that the only hope for Lazarus was a divine act of power.*

6. What did it mean for the Jews to hear that Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)? What does it mean to you?

- *You may wish to ask your Small Group what the words 'resurrection' and 'life' mean to them. Since Jesus is the resurrection and the life, there is a distinction to be made.*
 - *Resurrection: bringing someone back to life.*
 - *Life: the existence of an individual.*
- *Jesus, who is the same God who created the world, is life itself. He is also the person whose resurrection is the most important event in the whole of human history.*
- *Most of the Jews had a belief that they would be resurrected and returned to God on the last day at the end of all time when the messiah comes. They could not understand what Jesus was saying because they did not realise that Jesus was the messiah and that he had come to bring people back to God.*
- *In John 11:24, Martha had thought that Jesus was talking about this last day. However, Jesus was saying that he himself will be resurrected.*
- *Here, Jesus diverts Martha's focus from an abstract belief in what takes place on the last day, to a personalized belief in him who alone can provide it. Just as he not only gives the bread from heaven but is himself the bread of life, so also he not only raises the dead on the last day but is himself the resurrection and the life. There is neither resurrection nor eternal life outside of him.*

7. What was Martha's response to Jesus in John 11:27? Did her response correspond to Jesus' question?

- *Jesus said that those who believe in him shall never die. He asked if she believed him. Martha replied that she did believe him, but she also added that he is "the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."*
- *Martha has brought to light a significant theological truth. Jesus is more than a miracle man who can resurrect people. Martha saw that he is truly God who was prophesied to come into the world. She knew that the true Son of God would do all these things and more. Her faith brought her truth.*

Application

8. What are some of the fears that prevent you from doing God's work?

- *Fear stops people from engaging in God's work. Just as the disciples feared getting stoned at Judea before they returned, we too fear repercussions before we even do God's work. Share some fears to help the small group to identify what holds us back.*

9. How do we react when things don't go according to our own plans? How can we respond better in faith?

- *Guide the group to think about how they respond in thoughts and actions. Consider how having faith would change these responses.*