

BRMC Small Group Study: John 11:28-57

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:

This study is a continuation from the previous one where we are about to see Jesus performing his final major miracle in the book of John: a resurrection. The overarching theme of these studies is that God is glorified through this miracle. Previously, we explored the events leading up to the miracle, noting that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days when Jesus arrived at his household. Today's study explores the act itself and its repercussions.

Lesson Objectives:

- To observe how God is glorified through our faith.
- To see how the Jewish leaders in their self-interest attempted to deny God's glory.
- To see how this passage kicks off the events that led up to the crucifixion.

Observation

1. What emotions are observed when Jesus reached Lazarus' household?
 - *Anger, fear, grief, and regret were all observed.*
 - *Imagine you were Mary or Martha, how would you have felt knowing that Jesus could have saved Lazarus but didn't.*
 - *Ask different members to share.*
2. Describe how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead? (*John 11:39-44*)
 - *Jesus told the people to take away the stone.*
 - *He then prayed to the Father so that the people may hear him*
 - *Jesus called Lazarus to "come out" and Lazarus came out.*
3. What were the various immediate reactions after the resurrection of Lazarus?
 - *Some saw what Jesus did and put their faith in him*
 - *Some told the Pharisees what Jesus had done which led the chief priests and the Pharisees to call a meeting of the Sanhedrin.*
 - *The Sanhedrin is a Jewish Council composed of both laymen (the Pharisees) and religious professionals (the scribes and Sadducees). It had great authority, especially in religious matters. As the high priest, Caiaphas (John 11:49) was the presiding officer of the Sanhedrin during the time in which this passage was set in.*

Interpretation

4. Why did Jesus weep (John 11:33-35)?

- *The Greek word ἐμβριμάομαι (embrimaomai) has been translated to ‘deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled’ (ESV), ‘deeply moved in spirit and troubled’ (NIV), ‘groaned in his spirit and was troubled (NKJV). However, in Greek outside the Bible, it can refer to the snorting of horses. When applied to human beings, it suggests anger, outrage or emotional indignation. Note that the phrase ‘in spirit’ does not refer to the Holy Spirit but is roughly equivalent to ‘in himself’. His inward reaction was anger or outrage or indignation.*
- *Also, the verb ‘wept’ (dakryō) is different from that describing the weeping of Mary and the Jews (klaiō): it means ‘to shed tears’, but usually in lament before some calamity.*
- *Jesus was angry at their grief. His anger was directed at their unbelief. He was grieving at their lack of faith that Lazarus would be resurrected. When they grieved as though Lazarus was gone forever, they implicitly denied that there would be a resurrection.*
- *An additional interpretation is that Jesus was moved by their grief, and was consequently angry with the sin, sickness and death in this fallen world that wreaks so much havoc and generates so much sorrow.*

5. What is the purpose of this miracle?

- *Observe the reactions of the various parties from John 11:1-37 and whether they believed that Lazarus could be resurrected*
- *To demonstrate the need for belief in observing the glory of God*
- *To reveal the glory of God and also Christ’s divine identity*

6. How does faith allow one to see God’s glory? Read John 11:40 and Deuteronomy 1:32-35.

- *In John 11:40, Martha was told that if she believed that Jesus would resurrect Lazarus, she would see the glory of God. In Deuteronomy 1:32-35, the Israelites were told that since they didn’t believe that God will take care of them, they would not see the promised land.*
- *Faith to believe in God and his miracles is one of the ways which reveals the glory of God to us.*

7. Why do you think the Jewish leaders reacted as they did in John 11:48?

- *They were afraid of Roman control over “our place and nation”. If Jesus caused public disturbances that threatened the Roman rule, Jewish self-governance under the Roman Prefecture could be abolished. They were afraid of losing their power to govern the Jews, and the privileges that came with it.*

8. Explain Caiaphas’ words in John 11:50, “Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” (John 11:48-52)

- *At the political level it refers to the execution of Jesus to protect the nation and its leaders from the Romans. This was the mindset of those present at the Sanhedrin.*
- *However, Caiaphas inadvertently stumbled onto a profound theological truth. At the spiritual level, it foretells the sacrifice that Jesus would soon make on the cross to bear the sins of the world thus preserving the Jewish nation, and also for the scattered children of God to be brought together and made one.*

9. What is the significance of the Passover here (John 11:55)?

- *This is the third and last Passover mentioned by John. The first was mentioned in John 2:13 while the second was mentioned in John 6:4.*

- *With reference to Exodus 12:17, 27-28, the Passover served as a reminder of God's rescue of His people from slavery in Egypt and typically marked the start of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.*
- *Jerusalem would be crowded with pilgrims during this season and the people were looking for Jesus but Jesus did not walk openly among the Jews.*
- *For John, the significance of bringing up the Passover here is to mark that Jesus will soon be delivering humanity from slavery to sin and death.*

Application

10. When was a time you had great faith and saw God reveal his glory? Was there an occasion where, looking back, you wished you had more faith to trust in God's work?

11. What are some situations (at home, at work, in church, or in your relationships) where your desire to preserve the status quo may have caused you to be blind to God's glory?

- *E.g. Refusing to share the gospel with a friend, because you want to "preserve" the friendship.*
- *E.g. We sometimes ignore or condemn people who speak truth into our lives.*