

One BRMC Small Group Study

For the Glory of God

Leader's Guide

Please note that this study guide accompanies the pulpit sermon. The suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study.

Scripture Passage:

John 11:1-44

Context:

In challenging circumstances, especially when faced with sickness or death, the perspective and attitude we adopt, as well as our response reveals where we place our trust. As believers and followers of Jesus Christ we have certain assurances and promises that should compel us to show love and care towards others.

Lesson Objectives:

In this lesson, we will attempt to understand the following:

- God's delay in answering our prayers does not mean disregard for us.
- Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and in Him we have life even though we will die.
- Christians are called to do good in the midst of difficult times.

Introductory

1. What are the 3 occasions that Jesus showed emotions in the passage? What does this reveal about Jesus and the love for His friends?
 - In verse 33, Jesus was deeply moved in the Spirit and troubled.
 - In verse 35, Jesus wept.
 - In verse 38, He was deeply troubled once more.
 - Jesus approached the situation not just to demonstrate His power or His glory but He approached it with an acute sense of emotion and empathy for His friend. During their time of need, Jesus showed love and compassion for the sick and hurting.
 - Verse 35 is a very poignant verse. The shortest verse in the Bible of two words succinctly highlights to us Jesus' sadness towards the loss of a friend, reminding us of His humanity. This serves as an excellent reminder that Jesus too knows our pain and can feel the emotions that we go through.
2. In verse 4, how did Lazarus' sickness come to glorify God's son?
 - Lazarus' death and resurrection were a sign of Jesus' divine power to conduct miracles that the Jews had never seen before.
 - The book of John contains many signs that point to Jesus being the Son of God and thus, appeal to readers to believe in Him.

- Lazarus' death and resurrection are placed at the centre of the Gospel of John as the climax of these signs. While Jesus healed people in the past, raising someone from the dead was something no man could have done and this would have surely quelled all doubts of Jesus being the Son of God.
3. In verses 25-26, Jesus says that He is the resurrection and the life. What do you think these 2 terms mean?
- When Jesus said these words, He was claiming to be both: the resurrection, and the life. He did not claim to come to give resurrection or to give life, but that He is the very source of both the resurrection and the life, itself.
 - Through believing and placing our faith in Jesus, we can have eternal life. When He returns to Earth, all who believed in Him but have perished will be resurrected and united with Him in Eternity.
 - Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)
 - The Bible also makes quite clear that "... this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:11-12)
 - In John 6:40, 44 and 51, Jesus states that those who believe in Him, are drawn to Him and partake of Him, He will raise up in the last day and give eternal life.

Reflection

4. When was a time you felt God did not answer your prayers? When was a time when God did answer your prayers? How did you feel? What were your thoughts?
- You may wish to prepare examples of when God did answer prayers and testimonies of situations where it was obvious that God heard our prayers, although the answer was not as we had originally imagined.
 - There will also be times when it seems that God is silent, such as in the situation we are currently going through.
 - When it feels like God does not answer prayers/delays in answering prayers, it usually causes disappointment and thoughts that "God has forgotten about me".
 - Though it felt like Jesus had forgotten Lazarus, yet Jesus loved Lazarus and ultimately, He had a greater plan for Lazarus in the grand scheme of things.
 - Likewise, God's plan for our lives is out of love and for His glory.
 - God calls us to trust in His timing and to remember that He is sovereign. We can be encouraged that delay does not mean disregard.
 - This is an opportunity for your group to share and affirm each other.
 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths" (Proverbs 3: 5-6)
 - When we let go of our lives and learn to trust in Jesus to direct it based on His timing, we come to discover His good plans and will for our lives, just as Mary, Martha and Lazarus did.

5. How can we respond in times of sickness and death, especially those of our loved ones?
- Singapore has just had its first 2 deaths from the COVID-19 virus. How does your group respond to this? Perhaps there is a sense of decreasing hope in this season.
 - As we look back at times of pain and loss of loved ones, this may bring back painful memories of people we miss.
 - However, in these times, may our response emulate Jesus' response to Lazarus' death. As we grieve just as He grieved for Lazarus, we should also remember that God's glory still shines and that He is still our Father whom we can look to.
 - We can follow Jesus' example and grieve together with our family and friends in times of bereavement and offer comfort and prayers for healing in times of sickness.
 - In verses 40 to 41, Jesus said that if we believe, we will see the glory of God revealed and He prayed to God His Father before He raised Lazarus.
 - As believers of Jesus, we put our hope and trust that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. We hope that when we are resurrected, we will be reunited with our loved ones. This may raise questions as to whether our loved ones who died before believing in Jesus will be resurrected to eternal life with Jesus. In truth, we do not know for certain what would happen in the last day, yet we should also focus on those who are alive today. We can offer comfort and hope in Jesus. That death does not mean despair because Jesus offers eternal life for those who believe in Him.

Application

6. Think of people you know who have been affected due to the COVID-19 crisis – What steps can you take to show care to them?
- This question aims to get people to think about ways to reach out to others who have been affected by the crisis.
 - There is a range of possibilities from providing direct assistance and help, such as providing financial support, to actions that show care to others like praying for them or catching up with them online.
 - Amidst the news of rising COVID-19 cases and deaths around the world, hidden among the news are pockets of people going out of their way to show love to people who are suffering.
 - There are stories of people giving out bottles of hand sanitiser and masks to less fortunate families, people buying groceries for families stuck in a Quarantine Order.
 - Two BRMC small groups joined hands to purchase "thank you" packs with vitamins and energy bars for the campus security officers, and BRMC's cleaners and custodians.
 - The Zoom CEO has recently offered free Zoom Pro accounts for schools across the US and he even took time to personally contact schools and sign them up.
 - During our Holy Spirit Series, we have explored Spiritual Gifts and the ways we can use them to bless others and use it for the common good. This is the perfect season for us to utilise these gifts.
 - Despite a reduction in physical contact, may God reveal new and creative ways to us to bless the needy in our communities. What can you or your group do?

Prayer

7. Write out a prayer for yourself based on what you have heard and learned from this session.

(a) What is in your heart for yourself?

- Perhaps you are in despair and feeling like God has forgotten you:

“Loving Father, I am struggling in my situation and you feel so far away. Grant me the grace to believe that You love me and have not forgotten about me. Help me to trust in You with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

(b) What is in your heart for others?

- Perhaps you feel led to pray for someone who is in despair and suffering:

“Merciful Father, please grant (*name/s of family and/or friend/s*) comfort and peace amidst the troubles they are facing. Give me wisdom as to how to minister to them and show them how much You love them. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

- It is always useful to collate these prayers and to refer to them for thanksgiving and sharing next week.