



Week 17 Discussion Questions

Text: John 11:1-57

Icebreaker: Where have you recently noticed God's presence most clearly in your everyday life?

1. Read this week's passage. What stands out from the text or sermon?
2. The account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is a well-known Biblical story to most people, both within and outside of Christian circles. Upon reading the story again, was there anything new, surprising, or different than how you remembered it?
3. A pattern found throughout the book of John is seen once again in this passage: Jesus waits or delays acting in the way expected of Him. In John 2, Mary asks Jesus to help with the wine dilemma, and he initially declines, only to eventually solve the problem. In John 6, Jesus delays arriving with the disciples in Capernaum and in John 7, Jesus says He will not go to Judea, but eventually makes His way there for the Feast of Booths. What is Jesus' purpose in the waiting and delay in each of these stories, including John 11?

Jesus has a purpose for his observed delay. The purpose is the glory of God. It can be hard for us to recognize how the suffering in our life can produce glory for God.

4. Mary and Martha separately say the same thing to Jesus about Lazarus. How does He respond to each of them and what significance does His differing answers to each of them tell us about His character?
Jesus meets both of the sisters in a personal way. One he responds with a theological truth, the other with a compassionate presence. Jesus exhibits comfort and grace while speaking truth to Martha and compassion and empathy in his presence with Mary.
5. Have you ever found yourself asking, "If God...loved me (cared for me, was able to..., is good) he would...." Fill in the blank? What does this statement assume about

God's character and how does Jesus' responses to Mary and Martha help us reframe our impulse to pose such a statement?

Statements like these assume God is impersonal and mechanical—removed from the situation like a "vending machine in the sky" who produces what you asked for every time. This assumes a god who bends to our will and follows some kind of algorithm of response to us. In this story we witness a personal God who knows each sister and responds in the ways that they need.

6. What causes Jesus to weep in this story?

Jesus' weeping is not just sadness because Lazarus has passed. Jesus' knows what he is going to do, so it would not make sense that Lazarus death alone would be the cause of the sadness. Instead it's a weeping over the whole situation of death and sorrow and disbelief.

7. Lazarus being raised from life to death signals to us a theme of "New Life" in Christ. Reflect together on other stories in Scripture that come to mind when you think of "New Life" and how they relate and give insight to the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead. (Adam—Genesis 2:7; Jonah 2:1-10; Daniel 3:19-28; Daniel 6:19-23; Jairus' daughter—Mark 5:35-42; widow of Nain's son—Luke 7:11-16).

Each of these accounts includes a figure who endures a period of time "in death" or trial, but emerges with "new life" on the other side. Each one is an example of God's presence, power, salvation, and protection and all are a precursor to the one who would come and descend into death Himself and overcome the death, bringing "New Life" for all.

8. The power Jesus has over death is something that has great implications for how we view life. What does it mean to live as though we will never die and what does a life of resurrection hope look like, even in the face of tragedy?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 as more evidence for the hope we have in Christ amidst suffering.

9. When we are in the midst of suffering, it is difficult to feel God's presence or see how God's glory might be produced through it. If you can, share a time in your life when you were unsure of the future or struggled to see God's presence in a situation, but now looking back you can clearly see His hand at work and His Glory revealed in you or in it.

10. John 2-11 is a compilation of "signs" that point to one truth: Jesus is God, the long awaited Messiah, the Christ. What keeps people from recognizing these signs as truth and believing in Jesus? How do you relate to them?

Like the Pharisee's, we have specific expectations for how God can or should act, and we expect Him to act according to our will instead of His.

11. What sticks out to you about those who recognize Jesus as the Christ and how that is demonstrated in their actions?

12. What difference does belief in Jesus make in your everyday life?