

JESUS IS THE LIFE

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

In the raising of Lazarus, Jesus revealed that He has power over life and death, both physically and spiritually.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

John 11

+ **SETTING:**

The Gospel of John is often considered the most evangelistic Gospel in the New Testament. John explicitly stated the evangelistic nature of his Gospel toward the end of the book, stating how Jesus did many other signs unmentioned in his writing, but that the signs written were to help people believe Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God that they might have life (John 20:30-31).

John 11:1-46 records the final, climactic sign that Jesus performs—the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

DAY 1

READ:

John 11:1-16

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 11:14

NOTES

Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* book series, written by Daniel Handler (whose pen name is Lemony Snicket), recounts the unfortunate lives of three orphan children: Violet, Klaus, and Sunny Baudelaire. The series is comprised of thirteen books, and each book is full of misfortune and bad luck. Throughout the series, the Baudelaire children experience few moments of happiness while constantly trying to escape the clutches of Count Olaf, the villain who is determined to steal their fortune.

Like the Baudelaire children, Christians live in a broken world. Sin and evil exist, and the consequences of sin and evil are real and tangible. We can see them and feel them all around us.

One of the consequences of sin is death. Death entered the world through man's first sin and has spread to all humanity (Romans 5:12).

In John 11:1-16, we read about the death of Lazarus. Mary and Martha, his surviving sisters, sent Jesus news of Lazarus's sickness (vv. 1-3), but Jesus waited until after Lazarus died to go visit (vv. 4-16). Jesus would ultimately raise Lazarus from the dead, but his death still reminds us of the reality of sin and the devastating consequences of sin.

How can you remind yourself of the consequences of sin and the need to look to Christ regularly?

DAY 2

READ:

John 11:17-27

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 11:20-27

NOTES

In Aladdin, poor and homeless Aladdin falls in love with a princess but is unable to pursue her due to his social status. After finding a magic lamp and receiving three wishes from the genie inside it, Aladdin wishes to be a prince. As Prince Ali, Aladdin visits the palace to woo Princess Jasmine but is rebuffed for failing to consider Jasmine's feelings. To apologize, Prince Ali invites Jasmine on a magic carpet ride with him. When she initially refuses, Aladdin sticks out his hand and asks if she trusts him. Jasmine decides to trust him, so she takes his hand.

Jesus asked a similar question of Martha in John 11:25. Martha knew Jesus could have prevented Lazarus's death if He had been there (v. 21), but He did not arrive in time. Jesus reminded her that Lazarus would rise again, which Martha thought was a reference to the end times (vv. 23-24). Then Jesus responded that He is "the resurrection and the life" and asked Martha if she believed (vv. 25-26). She replied that she did believe He is the Messiah, the Son of God (v. 27). Despite her sorrow, she still believed in who Jesus claimed to be. Her faith should serve as a model for us. In the middle of pain and loss, we can cling to Christ in faith.

In what areas of your life right now do you need to trust God?

DAY 3

READ:

John 11:28-44

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 11:28-37

NOTES

C. S. Lewis wrote *A Grief Observed* after the death of his wife, Joy Davidman. The book is broken into four parts, but each major part reveals the deep grief and inner struggles of Lewis. The raw honesty of Lewis might make some readers uncomfortable, but he manages to communicate his spiritual, emotional, and mental anguish in a clear and profound way. Readers who are familiar with grief will find points of commonality in his work, even if their grief is different in many ways.

Like Lewis, Martha and Mary experienced intense grief and sorrow over the death of Lazarus, their brother. Martha lamented that Jesus could have saved Lazarus if He had been there (John 11:21). Mary fell at His feet, crying, and said the same thing (v. 32). The Jews with Mary cried as well. When Jesus saw their tears, He was moved emotionally and wept (vv. 33-35).

Thankfully, Jesus did not let death or grief have the last word. He raised Lazarus from the dead, turning their grief into an exhibition of God's glory, and He promises to transform our grief into glory as well. We find comfort in the fact that those in Christ will one day be raised and reunited with all believers in the presence of the Lord, together forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

How can Christians display compassion and help others who are struggling with grief?

DAY 4

READ:

John 11:20-44

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 11:38-44

NOTES

In the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Thor is a god from the planet Asgard and an Avenger devoted to saving his planet and Earth. Known as the god of thunder and wielding the mighty hammer Mjölnir, Thor is portrayed as a prideful hero with a chiseled physique. However, in *Avengers: Endgame*, Thor is portrayed as an overweight alcoholic who is depressed after failing to stop Thanos and save Asgard in *Avengers: Infinity War*. In many ways, Thor is a “god” who has all the negative tendencies of a human but all the strength and power of a god. The instability of Thor—while humorous in the movies—serves as a stark contrast to the one true God who never changes and perpetually displays His glory.

Twice in John 11, Jesus stated the resurrection of Lazarus was intended to glorify God (vv. 4,40). All of the signs in the Gospel of John—including the resurrection of Lazarus—prove that Jesus was sent by the Father, who is eternally glorious and possesses all power. Unlike Thor, who fails in his mission and changes for the worse, God always accomplishes His will and continually displays His glory through His creation and His Son. The unchanging glory and character of God is good news for Christians because we know God will always keep His promises, He will always accomplish His purposes, and He will never stop loving us.

Why would it be bad news for us if God could change or fail in His purposes?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“On the whole, I think it is pretty manifest that Jesus Christ sought the glory of God as his highest and last end.”¹

—Jonathan Edwards
(1703–1758)

DAY 5

READ:

John 11:38-53

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 11:45-53

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #60: CHRIST AS SUBSTITUTE

At the heart of the atonement is Jesus Christ substituting Himself for sinners as He died on the cross. This truth is seen against the backdrop of the Old Testament sacrificial system, which provided a picture of humanity's need for sin to be covered and guilt to be removed by an innocent sacrifice. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with humankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross, He made provision for the redemption of humanity from sin.

A *Tale of Two Cities*, a famous novel by Charles Dickens, is set during the period of the French Revolution and focuses on Doctor Manette and his daughter, Lucy. Manette spent eighteen years in the Bastille, a fortress in Paris used as a prison, before being released to live with Lucy. Lucy falls in love with and marries Charles Darnay, a French aristocrat who has renounced his family and moved to London. When Darnay receives a message that one of his uncle's former servants has been imprisoned in France, Darnay returns to rescue him but is imprisoned himself. Darnay is sentenced to die by guillotine, but his friend, Sydney Carton, bears a strong resemblance to Darnay and swaps places with him in prison. Darnay is able to escape from Paris with his family due to Carton's sacrifice.

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, some of the Jews believed Jesus was the Messiah, but many other Jews rejected Jesus and reported the miracle to the Pharisees (John 11:45-46). The Pharisees were worried that people would see Jesus's signs and begin to follow Him, which would lead to increased Roman hostility (vv. 47-48). Caiaphas responded by saying it was better for one man (Jesus) to die than for the entire nation to die (vv. 49-50). Caiaphas was willing to sacrifice Jesus to spare the nation, but he actually spoke truer than he knew. Jesus was going to die for the nation but also for the world (vv. 51-53)! On the cross, Jesus died as the substitute for sinners, and through faith in Him, those who are dead in sin can be made alive.

When was the last time you paused to thank God the Father for sending His Son to be your substitute?

Do so now.

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“There is no spiritual life of which he is not the author, and there never will be. When you and I come to deal with men for their salvation, we discover our inability; for we perceive that the creation of life is out of our power, since it remains the sole prerogative of the Son of God.”²

—Charles Spurgeon
(1834–1892)

POINT 1: The Messiah brings life from death (John 11:20-27).

Amid sorrow, Martha clings to her _____ in Jesus and remains _____ of His power.

? How can Christians cling to Jesus Christ in the midst of difficult circumstances and situations?

Jesus is the resurrection and the _____—those who trust in Him will _____ death and live forever.

? What are some reasons Christians should trust Christ to give them eternal life?

POINT 2: The Messiah brings glory from grief (John 11:38-44).

Jesus was moved by the grief of Martha, Mary, and the crowd, which reveals His _____ and _____.

? From Day 3: How can Christians display compassion and help others who are struggling with grief?

The resurrection of Lazarus was intended to display God’s _____ and to inspire _____ in the hearts of those who witnessed it and read about it.

? What are some other ways God has made His glory known?

POINT 3: The Messiah brings salvation from rejection (John 11:45-53).

Many Jews _____ in Jesus, but the Pharisees rejected Him and plotted to _____ Him.



Why might someone reject Jesus as the resurrection and the life?

KEY DOCTRINE #60: CHRIST AS SUBSTITUTE

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MY RESPONSE

Because we have been given eternal life in Christ, we glorify God always, even in sickness and in death, trusting in His power to raise us from the dead.

- **HEAD:** Why must we as Christians affirm the historical nature of the resurrection? (See 1 Corinthians 15, especially verses 12-19.)
- **HEART:** When facing difficult circumstances, how can we continue to praise God?
- **HANDS:** With whom can we share this message of hope this week?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Christ assumed our identity, as it were, and endured the retributive judgment due to us . . . as our substitute, in our place, with the damning record of our transgressions nailed by God to his cross as the tally of crimes for which he was now dying."³

—J. I. Packer (1926–2020)