

# Face to Face With Jesus

## Mourn

*John 11:1-46*

### Leaders Guide

N. T. Wright states that “this story is all about the ways in which Jesus surprises people and overturns their expectation.” While you are studying this lesson, focus on the expectations of people who are suffering because of a loss. How did Jesus surprise not only Martha and Mary, but also their friends who were mourning with them? What expectations were overturned? How does believing in Jesus influence our expectations for the future?

### God’s Timing

Bethany was a tiny town two miles west of Jerusalem over the Mount of Olives. The name, Bethany, means “the house of the poor” so scholars suggest that it was a very humble town. Three siblings resided here—two sisters, Martha and Mary, and their younger brother, Lazarus (Lazarus means *God has helped*). The women are mentioned several times in the gospels and were apparently close followers of Jesus. MacArthur says that “Bethany was apparently a regular stop for him [Jesus] in his travels, and this family’s home seems to have become a welcome hub for Jesus during his visits to Judea.” At the beginning of the story, Jesus was west across the Jordan River. It would have taken Martha’s messenger a full day to reach Jesus with the news.

In verse 11:3, the word used for **love** in Greek is *phileo* implying a very close friendship. It comes from the same root as Philadelphia, city of brotherly love.

Read John 11:1-16

### Answer the following questions:

- How did Jesus respond to the news that Lazarus was very ill? What were the sisters expecting him to do?
- Why would Jesus wait 2 days before leaving? What do you think he was doing during that time?
- Why did the disciples not want Jesus to go at all? How did Thomas react?
- Why was Jesus glad they were not there (verse 15)?
- “...Jesus controls his activities and timetable...” (Bickel and Jantz) Examples of this include John 4:3-4, 7:1-10, 7:53-8:2, and 11:6-8. How does Jesus choose the timing of his activities?
- Who controls your activities and timetable? What can the example of Jesus teach you about the myth of controlling time?

### Expectations

Jesus arrived four days after Martha sent for him. The funeral was over, the burial was completed, and mourners had gathered to comfort the family. Before Jesus reached the house, Martha ran out to meet him.

Read John 11:17-27

### Answer the following questions:

- What did Martha expect would have happened if Jesus had come before Lazarus died? What did she expect now?
- How did Martha react when Jesus said, “your brother will rise again?” What did she think he meant?
- In verses 25 and 26, Jesus makes a very significant declaration. N. T. Wright says, “‘Resurrection’ isn’t just a doctrine. It isn’t just a fact. It’s a *person*, and here he is standing in front of Martha...” What does it take for us to believe, like Martha, that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? What does that declaration mean to you?
- Jesus put himself in jeopardy to return to Bethany and help Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Give an example of a story you have heard or witnessed where someone put themselves in jeopardy to help another person. How might this story be a foreshadowing of Jesus giving his life for the resurrection of all of us.

## The Humanity of Jesus

It is sometimes difficult to see Jesus as a human being, with all the weaknesses, needs, and emotions that we face every day. In these verses we come face to face with Jesus' humanity. These were friends that he loved. He was hurt when they were hurting. He wanted to alleviate their suffering, but he also had a mission to fulfill.

Read John 11:28-37.

Complete the following:

Look at verse 11:33. Here Jesus was reacting to Mary's and Martha's pain in a very human way. The phrase "moved in spirit" translates from the Greek words that mean to groan with your breath (spirit). The word "troubled" translates as stir or agitate or boil over like a pot of water. These were not gentle emotions, they were strong, overwhelming feelings.

Jesus, too, experienced strong emotions. Jesus is God and Jesus is human just like us. Jesus' humanity is referred to in other places in the Bible. Read the following verses and list what human characteristics are attributed to Jesus.

Luke 2:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 8:24 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 11:12 \_\_\_\_\_

John 4:6 \_\_\_\_\_

John 11:35 \_\_\_\_\_

John 19:28 \_\_\_\_\_

Philippians 2:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 2:9 \_\_\_\_\_

1 John 4:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Now read John 1:14 and discuss what is meant by that verse.

## Raising the Dead

So Mary, Martha, Jesus and the crowd of mourners walked to the tomb. As was typical in that region, it was a cave with a stone covering the entrance. Jesus told them to take away the stone and everyone was aghast because the smell of decomposing flesh would be very strong and unpleasant. But Jesus responded, “If you believe, you will see the Glory of God.”

Read John 11:38-46.

Answer the following questions:

- Describe what Jesus did in verses 41-42. What did John explain as Jesus’ motive for this action?
- If you had been present, how would you have reacted to witnessing Lazarus walking out of the tomb? What reaction did the people that were in the crowd have to this miracle?
- Lazarus walked from the darkness of the tomb into the light of the day. Have you ever been restored to the light after a time of darkness in your life? Share your story with your group.
- Jesus thanked God for “listening” to him. Sometimes we forget that God is listening even though we don’t get the answer we are hoping for. Think of a prayer you have that God has not answered yet. Take a minute to sincerely thank him for listening and let him know that you trust his will for you.
- MacArthur says, “that one dramatic and very public miracle [raising Lazarus] was what finally sealed the Jewish leaders’ determination to put him [Jesus] to death...” If you continue to read beyond our lesson until the end of Chapter 11, you will see how this event triggered the Pharisees’ actions. Why do you think God chose for this miracle to occur at this time and this place? Explain.

*Note to leaders: The following section is not for discussion at this meeting. It is a suggested activity for private use of your members next week.*

## Meditation for Holy Week

Since Holy Week is jam packed with activities, your growth group will probably not be meeting between Palm Sunday and Easter. Instead of a meeting, use this week to reflect on what you have discovered about your relationship with Jesus as you studied these stories of people who have come face to face with Jesus.

- Are you **seeking** to become his disciple? Think about how following Jesus has changed your priorities. How do you share your excitement with others?

- Are you **doubting** your faith? What questions do you have for Jesus? What long held assumptions and traditions have changed as you have gotten to know Jesus better?
- Have you felt the sting of **rejection** or the embarrassment of shame? How has Jesus' forgiveness and love changed your life? How have you used his redemption to reach out to others?
- Have you been spiritually **blind**? What has changed in your life to awaken you spiritually? How has the Holy Spirit opened your eyes to the world around you?
- Has your **grief** over loss, injustice, or pain been healed by Jesus? How has following him been a comfort for you? How do you reach out with his love to comfort others?
- **Palm Sunday**—As you wave the palms examine the changes Jesus has made in your life. As you shout “Hosanna” thank Jesus for his presence as Lord of your life.
- **Maundy Thursday**—As you sit at the Seder table with other Christians in the Vineyard, reflect on the joy and comfort of sharing fellowship with other disciples even though there is still pain and loss in life.
- **Good Friday**—As you experience the light of Jesus extinguished at the service on Friday, thank Jesus for taking upon himself the punishment for your sin.
- **Easter Sunday**—As you shout “He is Risen” on Easter morning, proclaim with joy and thanksgiving his gracious and merciful gift to you of eternal life through his suffering, death, and resurrection.

## Resources

### Books

- Bailey, Kenneth E., *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008)
- Bickel, Bruce & Jantz, Stan, *John: Encountering Christ in a Life-Changing Way* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2003)
- Brand, Draper, England, ed., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003)
- MacArthur, John, *Twelve Extraordinary Women* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc. 2005)
- Strong, James, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996)
- Wright, N.T., *John for Everyone* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2004)

### Online

- [www.busyblessedwomen.com](http://www.busyblessedwomen.com)
- [www.enduringword.com](http://www.enduringword.com)
- [www.bible-history.com](http://www.bible-history.com)

