

**The Gospel of John**  
**Week Eighteen**  
**John 11:14-44**

**Day One**

14 So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." 17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

vs. 14&15 – This comment by Jesus takes us back to John 9 when Jesus said that the man was born blind so that God would be glorified. Here we see that Lazarus died for the sake of the disciples, so that what was about to transpire would encourage and build their faith. God orders our affairs after the counsel of His will. He seeks no other perspectives and He has His purpose in everything He does.

Yet when things happen that are beyond our understanding, too often we can believe the lie that somehow God is not good, or that He is mean or cruel. Many “give up on God” when tragedies occur. This story clearly shows that God is in control at all times. While the sisters were mourning in Bethany, Jesus was rejoicing in the TransJordan, knowing that God was about to be glorified.

v. 16 – This gives us an indication of how dangerous the situation was back in Jerusalem. Thomas assumed that Jesus would be found and killed when He returned to the area where He had narrowly escaped prison and death on several occasions. While Thomas was brave on that side of the Jordan River, he and all the disciples would be less than courageous in the days surrounding Jesus’ actual imprisonment and death. Yet they would all go on to give their lives in order to testify to the truth. Your failures are never your final destination unless you make them so.

v. 17 – When Jesus arrived in Bethany, He learned that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. This seemed like a final situation. Lazarus was dead and had been for some time. There was nothing anyone could do. How often have I thought that and it affected my prayers and attitude. I have prayed for the living like they were going to die, prayed for businesses that were open as if they were bankrupt. In other words, I had no faith that they could be healed and changed. Everyone “knew” that a man who was dead for four days was beyond help, everyone but Jesus that is.

vs. 18&19 – Many Jews had to come away from Jerusalem to visit the family. The Lord knew this and brought them away from the pressure-cooker atmosphere in the city so some could behold this great miracle. God is in control of all situations and knows how to achieve His purposes. **Are you trusting Him for the details of your life right now?**

v. 20 – **Why did Mary stay home? Was she not the one who had sat at Jesus’ feet while Martha busied herself with dinner preparations? Was Mary hurt that Jesus had not come? Was she mourning so intensely that she could not move?** John did not report the reason, but Martha left immediately to meet and greet Jesus. Though sisters, these two women were totally different personalities by God’s design. **Are you comfortable with whom God made you to be? As comfortable with whom God made others to be?**

### Day Two

21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

v. 21 – **Was this a statement of fact or of disappointment that Jesus had let the family down?** I would like to think it was a statement of fact. Martha knew Jesus had the power to prevent Lazarus’ death, and that is where many Christians are as well. You may know Jesus *has* the power but you aren’t sure Jesus wants to *use* the power. Possibly you aren’t sure how to access that power for your life and needs. When you aren’t sure, then your prayers are tentative and you are in danger of being double-minded:

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does (James 1:6-8).

v. 22 – Martha’s faith was logical and not based on feelings. She knew Jesus could have prevented the death and also knew Jesus could alter the situation after-the-fact. **What do you believe? What do you know about God, His character and His purpose? Can you say it with the same clarity and focus as Martha? Why not take a moment to write those things out in your journal and keep adding to it?**

v. 23 – Jesus made a simple statement that Lazarus would rise again. So Jesus was announcing there would be a resurrection of the dead, contrary to what the Sadducees believed. The resurrection is a cornerstone of any faith in God. Faith in this life is laying the foundation for the next life. What you do now matters then. When you think of it, no prophet in Israel had ever spoken so directly and clearly about a resurrection. Jesus spoke as One who knew exactly what would take place in the future and that certainty proved that He was and is God. You can put your trust in what He said.

v. 24 – Martha was cognizant that there was a resurrection on the “last day.” She was already stating Christian theology concerning the end, whether she learned it from Jesus or from the Jews. Martha was clearer than some Christians and she didn’t even own a Bible, nor was she allowed to study with others since she was a woman. **Are you doing**

**the most that you can to learn and teach the Word and doctrines of God? Do you know what you believe? If not, what are you going to do to improve?** You can read, take a class, or go back to school. You may want to sit down and write out a plan in your journal that outlines your commitment to improve and grow.

### Day Three

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." 28 And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you."

vs. 25&26 – Once again Jesus made a promise that only God can keep and did not make it on behalf of God. He made it in the first person as the One who would fulfill the promise. Moses and prophets had said what God would do; Jesus said what He would do. **Do you see the difference in authority here?**

Jesus was promising eternal life to all those who believed in Him, even though they died the first death. They would live with and through Him forever. After Jesus made these statements, He asked Martha if she believed this? It is one thing to know God can do something; it is another thing to believe that He will do it for you! For example, you can know that God has the power to heal. If you don't think He wants to heal or if there is some barrier to you receiving from the Lord, then you may never accept or seek His healing.

Your belief system where God is concerned must be personal; it must impact your life in a practical and meaningful way. As we started doing yesterday, you may want to write in your journal the things you believe about God, His goodness and His power and how all those impact your life and behavior.

v. 27 – Martha responded that she knew that Jesus was the Anointed One whom God sent to save the world. There was no doubt in her mind as evidenced by her response. I have constantly pointed out that the people in Israel sometimes knew more than the leaders. They were more spiritual and aware of what God was doing. Martha, though a woman and uneducated theologically, but familiar with the Scriptures as any good Jewish woman would be, recognized who Jesus was and what He had come to do. Even in her grief, she reasoned and spoke clearly.

**Has grief or disappointment dampened your enthusiasm for God? Has some life situation caused you to doubt God's faithfulness and love?** If so, you need to get back on track and not allow circumstances to undermine your faith.

v. 28 – We don't see from the text that Jesus called for Mary, but I don't think Martha would lie in this situation. Perhaps Martha intuitively knew that Jesus did want to see her and perhaps too Martha was trying to move Mary toward the Lord. My opinion is that

Mary was sitting at home a bit hurt and upset that Jesus had not made it back in time. But John's account does not indicate this one way or the other.

Notice that the sisters referred to Jesus as the Teacher. You don't get that title unless you are devoted to teaching on every and any occasion. **What would people call you if you gave yourself wholeheartedly to your passion and purpose?**

#### Day Four

29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. 32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

v. 29 – So Mary ran out to meet Jesus. That is how you respond to any invitation from God; you run to Him. Mary's heart was with the Lord, so she could not resist this call. **How about you? Are you running to or from the Lord? Are you eagerly seeking His will, purpose and presence or are you treating God and His presence casually and nonchalantly.** Proverbs tells us how to respond to God:

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:2-5).

**How would you hunt for buried treasure?** I would assume with gusto if you knew roughly where it was located. **So how much more should you seek the Lord with gusto if God is calling out to you as He did to Mary? Are you ready to go for God, as some youth would say?**

vs. 30&31 – Martha had run out from the home to meet Jesus, so He was closer to Lazarus' tomb than He was to their home. Mary must have been very distraught, for she bolted from the home and the mourners present assumed she was running to the tomb to mourn there. They did not know Jesus had summoned Mary through Martha. Assumptions are a funny thing. When you make judgments based on what you see, you often come to wrong conclusions. How often I have confronted someone about something I assumed they said or did, only to find out the real reason when I took time to listen and process.

**Are you regularly jumping to conclusions? What can you do to confront and change that bad habit?**

v. 32 – Mary fell at Jesus feet, but she was in pain. She said just what Martha had said: If you had been here, Lazarus would be alive. Their faith in Jesus’ ability to heal was unshakeable. Their faith in God’s goodness was perhaps being tested at this point in time. They knew Jesus could heal, but they assumed He was not willing to heal in this case. Of course, Jesus had another plan and was about to reveal His purpose for delaying.

**Are you questioning God’s goodness in any area of your life due to recent circumstances?** If so, I urge you to do what Mary did. Run to Him, throw yourself at His feet and pour your heart out to him.

### Day Five

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

v. 33 – Jesus was a man like us in every way but sin. Jesus became upset when He saw the scene of His friends and their friends mourning and weeping. I am so grateful that we have a God who is touched by the feeling of our infirmities and humanity. I am constantly reminded of the truths stated in Hebrews and use those reminders as an incentive to go to the Lord with my problems, just as I am:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:14-18).

I think too many don’t go to the Lord as they are but as they think He wants them to be. You don’t have to do that. You can go just as you are.

v. 34 – Jesus had to ask where Lazarus was entombed. This shows that Jesus did not operate in omniscience when He was a man, yet He was still God. I write this because I am reading a modern German theologian who is writing endless and incomprehensible material about who Jesus is and how His two natures meshed together. I may be wrong, but it’s not that difficult! Jesus was a man and operated in the fullness of the Spirit, providing us a model to follow. Jesus definitely limited Himself while on earth without diminishing Himself in any way.

Then this raises all kinds of intellectual questions such as: Does that mean that the second person of the Trinity was absent from the Trinity while on earth? The early church councils tried to address these questions, without being consumed by them. My position is that we must be careful not to try and answer questions that have no answer. There is an element of the unknowable, for we as finite beings cannot fathom the infinite God. I see here that Jesus did not know where Lazarus was buried. That does not trouble me in the least.

v. 35 – Here is the shortest verse in the Bible, but it is a poignant one. Jesus cried because He was so moved in His spirit. The scene was just too much for Him emotionally. **Does this scene impress you as it does me?** Jesus wept over the condition of His friends. Thank you, Jesus. I don't know or understand all there is to know about Jesus. I am sure finer minds can grasp deeper truths. Yet I know that He is real, that He loves me, that He is my elder brother and my Lord. It is enough for me to worship Him as He is, coming to Him just as I am. Thank You, Lord!

vs. 36&37 – Jesus was criticized for His absence, some correctly reasoning that if He had been present, He could have healed Lazarus. It is tough being a public figure, even in the Church. People question and second-guess your decisions and priorities. They murmur and criticize. It is part of being a leader. One must develop “tough skin” if you are going to lead. If they criticized Jesus, they will certainly criticize you and me.

The best I can do with that is not be part of the criticism toward others, something I have sometimes been all too ready to engage. When I am criticized, I try to remember this passage:

Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you- for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others (Ecclesiastes 7:21-22).

### Day Six

38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

v. 38 – This was the same kind of tomb that Jesus was about to be placed in as well, so here is the King of glory standing before the tomb of a dead man, himself soon to experience death as well. Jesus loved this family! And I would guess He knew His time was close as well. Jesus was obviously free with his emotions and wept openly for all to see. **How free are you with your emotions?** I am not talking about anger or selfish pouting. **Do you allow your joy and sorrow to manifest in public?** I went to a sad movie last night and cried at the touching message it presented. That's a breakthrough for me.

v. 39 – Jesus didn't suggest they take away the stone; He *ordered* them to do so. Jesus never hoped something would happen. He knew what He was going to do and here He knew He was going to raise Lazarus. He had faith and confidence the Father would hear Him so He ordered them to do their part – take away the stone – so God could do His part.

Martha had told the Lord she knew God would grant Jesus whatever He asked, but then she intervened, explaining the “facts” to Jesus. The body would have begun to decompose and smell badly, or so Martha thought. It is interesting how often I have explained the “facts” to God, like as if He didn't already know them! It was my fear, lack of faith and not wanting to look foolish that has caused me to do this. God does not need any information from you or me. If Jesus had them roll away the stone and was unable to raise Lazarus, He would be a laughingstock. Yet He proceeds, already knowing the outcome. God is so great!

v. 40 – Jesus spoke comforting words to Martha, reminding her of their past conversation. He had promised they would see God's glory if they believed in Him and they were about to do just that! **I want to see God's glory, don't you?** My faith will play a part in seeing it, for I must go with God to difficult situations to see and watch Him move for His glory.

**What difficult situation are you in where your presence can help usher in God's involvement and thus God's glory?**

### Day Seven

41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

v. 41 – The people obeyed Jesus and took away the stone, probably running back to escape the stench. Jesus then took the time to publicly pray. He was certainly positioning this miracle for maximum impact, not to “show off,” but to build and encourage the faith of those watching. Notice that Jesus said the Father had heard Him, not that the Father would hear Him. Jesus thanked God for the answer *before* He had it. **Can you do the same? Can you thank God for your purpose, before you know what it is? Can you thank Him for your healing before you are healed?** That requires faith that God has already done what you are asking Him to do.

We see in Daniel that he waited two weeks for an answer to prayer, yet the angels were dispatched the first day he prayed (see Daniel 10:12-14). **Can you thank God for your answer the first day your pray?** If not, keep on praying until you can thank Him.

v. 42 – Jesus was not an egomaniac or exhibitionist. He did not need a crowd to perform or admire His performance. Jesus knew He was in His last days, so He was willing to be public for the will and purpose of God. **Are you willing to be a public figure for God’s sake? Do you do what you do for the benefit of others as often as possible?**

v. 43 – Many have said Jesus had to be specific and call out Lazarus or else all the dead in the region would have come out of their tombs! (Well, maybe they would have been stuck in their tombs without someone to roll away their stones!) At any rate, Jesus called Lazarus by name and fully expected him to appear, even though he had been in the tomb for four days.

You cannot call this a resurrection, for Lazarus died again. It was more appropriately a resuscitation but a fantastic one at that! Were there other resuscitations in the Bible? I think of the young boy whom Elijah raised in 1 Kings 17:17-24 Plus there was also the strange story of someone who was brought back to life after contact with Elisha’s dead body in 2 Kings 13:21. The first, however, was not done in front of a crowd like this one was, nor had the boy been dead for as long as Lazarus. The second is just one of those strange stories that is hard to comprehend the meaning, but we accept that it happened.

v. 44 – Jesus is always in the business of calling forth the dead and then having others set them free from their grave clothes. **Whose grave clothes are you helping undo? How can I do that, you may ask?** You can disciple someone in their faith, be a source of encouragement, support those on the missions field. There are lots of ways to be involved in taking off grave clothes, if you have a heart to do so.