

JOHN 11 SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

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Hello, and welcome all group leaders! We're so glad to have you as a part of what God's going to do this week. We can't wait to see how your group grows through these small group times. In this packet you'll find three sessions, all of which are based out of John chapter 11. These sessions may prompt some tough feelings and questions, so be prepared! We're confident you can handle it though. In preparation for these moments though, pray for your group and ask the Lord to speak through you in these sessions. Take an hour or two to read through the passages in John, jot some notes down. Look through some character studies, some commentaries, and be ready to answer questions that may come up from your students. You're going to do great, we just know it.

Reading: John 11:1-16

More than likely, you've had a time in your life where you felt like you were waiting on God. Maybe you were waiting to take the next step, or waiting for an answer. We can all agree that we've had one of these moments, and that it can be pretty tough at times. Getting to a place where you feel like God isn't listening or paying attention anymore is normal in those scenarios. But it's not exactly the best way to go about this waiting period, as you likely already guessed. God is has a lot on His plate, but surely He hasn't forgotten about you and your hardships! Right? Right. With that in mind, let's dive into this passage to get a closer look as Jesus plays one of the most famous waiting games in history. Lazarus' death-to-life story is a pretty well-known one within the bible, and over this weekend we'll get a chance to check it out, and really look closely into some of the details. But to begin with, we can already see Jesus giving us a clue as to what we should do in a period of waiting. He says: "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." (John 11:4) We understand that while we should do *all* things for the glory of the Lord, it is especially important to glorify Him in times where you're at a low point. It's easy to praise the Lord when you're on a high, but it can be extremely difficult to praise Him while you're not at your best. It can be hard to have an attitude of thankfulness while you're in a hardship, but it is something that needs to become habit throughout your life.

Another thing to remember while you're in a time of waiting is that there is always *something* happening, even when it seems *nothing* is happening. By verse 11, we can see that God has a plan for this situation, but no one around Him has seems to have figured it out. What He is about to do will not only help Martha and Mary out, but His disciples as well. As you can see in the last few verses, Jesus is using this as a teaching moment about believing by explaining His reasoning to His disciples. Being in a time of confusion is all about trusting the Lord's way even when you feel that there is a better option. When God tells us to wait, we often don't trust Him. So we go ahead and find our own ways of accomplishing what we want. Abraham and Sarah's is a story that reminds us why these human natures of ours aren't always best. (Genesis 18) They both wanted to have a child of their own, which God had promised them. But it eventually got to a point where they became impatient, and took matters into their own hands.

Abraham and had a child with another woman (not his wife), and they named him Ishmael. This ended up complicating and hurting all of their family relationships. God has a plan for you. Don't try to fit what He can do into your fast version narrative. Trust God with your *whole* heart and life. That means your dreams, plans, and goals. (Yes, that is an *extremely* difficult task, but it'll work out so much better in the end!) What God can do goes beyond our understanding. So don't you think His plans for us might be better than what we can come up with on our own? Wait and hold fast to God. He has big things in store.

Questions:

How can you begin trusting God with each area of your life?

If we know now that God works while we wait, what can we do to make the waiting easier?

How can you prevent yourself from trying to rush God?

What can you actively do now to help your future self who may be in a period of waiting?

Application:

Ask a few of your students to share a time where they thought the waiting was never going to end for them, and how it eventually ended. Talk about how to handle it next time!

Reading: John 11:17-27

This has been an incredibly odd year, we can all agree there. Many things happened that were out of our control, and it was almost like we had to take a step back and watch it happen all around us. This was the same kind of feeling that Martha and Mary had while watching their brother die. As you will see in the reading for this session, both sisters waited for what felt like an eternity for Jesus to show up and help them. By the time He arrived, they had lost all hope. It's safe to say that we all had a moment or two in this past year where we felt incredibly lost and shocked at what was going on around us. But this was God's plan. Jesus has a tendency to put those He loves in some pretty uncomfortable situations. But He knows that we grow because of them. Just like we had a hard time believing we'd see the end of this pandemic, at the time of Lazarus's death, people had a hard time believing he could come back.

No one would have thought it was possible to see Lazarus walk out of his tomb the way he did. (Spoiler alert!) As we can see in verse 24, Martha is fully aware that Jesus saves, and that He will take Lazarus home with Him. But this is not the kind of "life" Jesus is talking about here. Martha is an extremely *literal* person. She's a type A, who is obsessed with details. Waiting for Jesus to come was extremely difficult for her. But Jesus had a plan. Martha had to believe in Him despite the circumstances, even when she wasn't in the best condition to. This is something extremely important to remember in our day and age even now. Even when there is a lot going on around us, we can't allow that to tear down our foundation of what we know as the truth. Just as Jesus was intentional to teach important lessons that that time, today He tailors His approach to reach each generation. Martha was an anxious woman, with no time to wait. Jesus met her where she was, and tailored His words to comfort her and help her understand. Knowing that Jesus will meet us where we are should encourage us to believe despite everything that's constantly moving around us.

Questions:

Do you think you would have had the same fear as Mary and Martha? How can we combat those feelings in our own lives?

If you have a tendency to worry, what about Jesus' truth can be comforting to you? In what ways do you relate to Martha in this situation?

What can you do to share Jesus with those around you, even while the world continues to change around us?

Application: Session 2

Application:
Take a moment to pray with your students and ask the Lord to reveal to them what a life lived fully committed to God's truth looks like. Ask Him to help incorporate that into their lives. After this, share with each other some ways you can start incorporating that lifestyle, and give glory to God in every situation you go through.

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Session 3: Answering God's Call

Reading: John 11:38-44
Leader note: With events like these, the last small group time may be a time for the group to decompress. Feel out where the Holy Spirit may be leading the conversation in your group.

In this last session, we're going to see Jesus bring Lazarus back to life. Just as Martha shows in this passage, we have a tendency to create excuses and push God away. We'll say, "I can always accept Christ next week" or "there will be other opportunities, I don't have to do this right now." If salvation was just up to us, we'd never reach it by a mile. In this passage, we see Martha giving excuses as to why Jesus shouldn't do what He's about to do. This is when Jesus responds with: "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" You've gotta love to see it. Believe, that's it. Simply believe in God, and you shall see His glory prevail. However, Jesus bringing Lazarus back to life is just the pre-show. In the days coming, Jesus dies for the sins of all generations. He took on all of our suffering, pain, and hardships. But then, He rose. This is the time to answer God's call. Whether it be salvation, baptism, rededication, or a call to ministry, listen to what Jesus is trying to tell you. The God of the Universe is reaching out to you, it's time to answer His call.

Questions: Session 3

Questions:
Did God speak to you in any specific ways this week? If so, share with the group.

How do you think Jesus may have felt in this moment, knowing that His death was approaching soon after this? Why might it be important to remember this as we discuss this passage?

The last words from Jesus in this passage are "Unbind him and let him go." It's easy sometimes to move through life and ignore what you feel God calling you to. What can you do to be fully unbound for Christ?

Application:
Have your students share what was going on in their hearts tonight. Share ways they can move forward with those convictions even after the weekend is over.