

## THE GOSPEL OF

## JOHN

Jesus: Lord  
over Life  
and Grave

## INTRODUCTION

John 11:1-57

And now, perhaps, we are prepared to see and feel the main point. It was love that moved Jesus to let Lazarus die. It was the love of Jesus for this family and for his disciples — and for you, reading this text — that caused him to choose to let Lazarus die.

Look again at the connection between verse 5 and 6: “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Therefore [because of this love], when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.” He did not hurry to his side.

And in writing, John intends — and Jesus intends — for everyone seeing this to ask: How is that love? John has gone out of his way to set this up. Jesus loves them. He loves them. He loves them. Therefore, he does not heal him, but lets him die. Why is this love?

Jesus has given the answer loud and clear and will give it again in verse 15. He said in verse 4: “This illness does not lead to death [in other words, the point is not death]. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

This illness will turn out for the glory of God and the glory of the Son of God. This illness will put the glory of God on display. It will make Jesus look amazing.

Therefore (verse 6), love lets him die. Love lets him die because his death will help them see, in more ways than they know, the glory of God.

So what is love? What does it mean to be loved by Jesus? Love means giving us what we need most. And what we need most is not healing, but a full and endless experience of the glory of God. Love means giving us what will bring us the fullest and longest joy. And what is that? What will give you full and eternal joy? The answer of this text is clear: a revelation to your soul of the glory of God — seeing, admiring, and marveling at and savoring the glory of God in Jesus Christ. When someone is willing to die — or let your brother die — to give you (and your brother) that, he loves you.

**Love is doing whatever you have to do to help people see and treasure the glory of God as their supreme joy — to help people see and be satisfied with the glory of God.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon by John Piper. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/this-illness-is-for-the-glory-of-god>

## OPEN IT

1. What is your favorite activity to do in the spring as the weather gets nicer outside?

## READ IT

John 11:1-57

## EXPLORE IT

2. Who was sick and what was their connection to Jesus?
3. When Jesus heard of his friend's illness, what was his response?
4. What emotions did Jesus experience throughout this passage?
5. How long had Lazarus been in the tomb when Jesus called him out?
6. What responses were there to this miracle?

## APPLY IT

### “Goodbye May Seem Forever”

John is saying that Jesus’ special love for these three was His reason for letting them suffer. His love did what was best for them. But Jesus’ delay in coming didn’t feel like love to Mary and Martha, much less to Lazarus. (They hadn’t read this chapter yet!) We don’t know the cause of Lazarus’ death, but it probably involved pain and discomfort. The sisters helplessly watched their beloved brother go downhill. But their suffering did not mean that Jesus did not love them, but the reverse: He loved them, so He stayed two days longer where He was.<sup>2</sup>

7. **Like Mary and Martha, we don’t often see the full picture when it comes to our suffering in this life. How can this threaten the growth and development of our faith? In what ways does suffering serve as a blessing to us and cultivator of faith?**

8. **What dangers could we face if God’s loving us meant that He did not allow us to suffer?**

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<sup>2</sup> Sermon by Steven Cole. <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-59-loved-suffering-john-111-6>

## **“Good Company”**

Jesus said (11:4) that this miracle would result in “the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.” Jesus revealed His glory both by showing His power in calling Lazarus from the tomb and also by His words to Martha (11:25-26): “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” This is the fifth of Jesus’ “I am” statements in John. It is clearly a claim to deity; no one other than God in human flesh could say what Jesus says here. He does not merely say that He can impart resurrection and life, which would be amazing enough. He says that He is the resurrection and the life. Those qualities are part and parcel of His being.<sup>3</sup>

**9. What is the difference between Jesus “imparting resurrection and life” and “being the resurrection and life”?**

**10. How does Jesus’ claims about who he is bring greater significance to him miraculously raising Lazarus from the dead?**

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<sup>3</sup> Sermon by Steven Cole. <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-61-overcoming-faith-john-1117-27>

## **“So Dear to my Heart”**

The phrase "deeply moved" translates the Greek word *enebrimesato*. It invariably describes an angry, outraged, and indignant attitude (cf. John 11:38; Matthew 9:30; Mark 1:43; Mark 14:5). These emotions mingled in Jesus' spirit as He contemplated the situation before Him. John also described Jesus as "troubled" (Gr. *etaraxen*). This is another strong verb that describes emotional turmoil (cf. John 5:7; John 12:27; John 13:21; John 14:1; John 14:27). Jesus was angry, but at what? The context provides some help in identifying the cause of His anger.

Evidently as Jesus viewed the misery that death inflicts on humans and the loved ones of those who die He thought of its cause: sin.<sup>4</sup>

- 11. Hebrews 4:15 says that we have a great High Priest, Jesus, who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. What comfort and confidence does this give us as believers when we face temptations and trials in our lives?**

- 12. As Jesus interacts with the death of Lazarus (Rom. 6:23), we see that he is angry and troubled at the consequence of sin (Rom. 6:23). How does our perspective of sin shape our response to the evils and injustices of this world? How do we as a church hold in tension the lamenting of sin and the pains of physical suffering in our lives?**

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<sup>4</sup> Expository notes of Dr. Thomas Constable. <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/john-11.html>

### **“The World Will Know”**

Also, when Jesus prays aloud at the tomb of Lazarus (11:42), He states plainly that He did so in order that the people standing around the tomb would believe that the Father had sent Him. Thus one of His main aims in waiting before coming to raise Lazarus was to bring some to saving faith and to strengthen the faith of those who already believed in Him. That should be a factor in our decisions about how to use our time: will it increase our faith and the faith of other believers? And, will it help bring others who do not yet believe to saving faith?<sup>5</sup>

**13. How can our response as a church to difficult times have an effect on the faith of others? In what ways can our response create barriers to others believing in God?**

**14. What must we take into consideration as we respond to earthly tragedies if we wish to bring other people into belief in God?**

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<sup>5</sup> Sermon by Steven Cole. <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-60-using-time-rightly-john-117-16>

## **“The Age of not Believing”**

John continues his persistent theme – that the words and works of Jesus divide humanity between those who believe and those who reject. There were some who saw both the power and sympathy of Jesus yet responded by working against Him.

The religious leaders privately admitted that Jesus performed signs that authenticated His claim to be Messiah and God. Their opposition changed. First they opposed Jesus because they were not convinced He was the Messiah. Now they opposed Jesus because they were convinced that He was the Messiah.

They admitted the miracles, but look how they treated the Miracle-worker:

- They denied Him.
- They opposed Him.
- They were afraid of His influence over the people.

If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him: The religious leaders knew the logical response to the witness of the works of Jesus was to believe in Him. They feared more and more would do so.<sup>6</sup>

**15. Both Jesus’ disciples and the religious leaders were convinced of who Jesus was yet they had very different responses to this truth. What are some of the key differences between those who believed in Jesus and those who opposed him? How do we deal with these differences in people today?**

**16. What reasons did the religious leaders give for not following Jesus? How are those reasons similar and different to the reasons people may not want to follow Jesus today?**

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<sup>6</sup> Commentary by Dave Guzik. <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/john-11/>

17. What testimony does our unity as followers of Christ give to an unbelieving world looking in on our fellowship?