

date: **5/21/17**

Bible Passage: John 11

(Lazarus)

Jesus Is Life

REMEMBER VERSE

I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

John 11:25–26a

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

I once heard a podcast titled “Unconditional Love.” The podcast began with a man describing who Martin Luther King Jr. was to his three-year-old daughter. The father told her that Martin Luther King Jr. was a good man who had fought to free people from suffering—but that one day someone killed him because he did not like what Dr. King was saying and doing.

A few weeks later, the man was driving down the road with his daughter when she spied a cross on the roof of a church. “What’s that, Daddy?” she asked. The man told his daughter that the cross represented Jesus Christ. He told her who Jesus is and how He loves everyone on earth and came to save them.

“Did they kill Him, too?” she asked.

I have thought about this story many times since I heard it. The innocence of this child’s question highlights the incredibility of what Jesus did on the cross. Her logic connecting the two events points to what Christ came to save us from—human blindness to what is good and human refusal to accept God.

But unlike Martin Luther King Jr., Christ defeated death. He is life. He rose again to save us from the penalty of our sin. In fact, Christ defeated the very sin that killed Him. Though many people have refused to accept Him, we know that Christ has power over death in an all-consuming way. In fact, Philippians 2:10–11 says, “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Tori Funkhouser
ROCKHARBOR Church

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

In the narrative of the death of Lazarus, we see Jesus feel our pain and empathize with our sufferings in a unique way.

Jesus' emotions came in different forms in this situation. In John 11:33 we see that when Jesus arrived on the scene, He was "deeply moved." We can easily mistake that for empathy for His friends, but the Greek word used refers to more of a deep, indignant displeasure. The passage doesn't clearly state why Jesus was upset, but the focus of His anger seems to be the group of Jews who accompanied Mary while loudly and demonstrably weeping and wailing. Oftentimes funerals in the ancient Near East were accompanied by professional mourners who were paid to loudly weep. This hypocrisy evidently didn't sit well with Jesus, who was genuinely moved by the suffering and emotions of His friends. The hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders is what drew the anger of Jesus more than anything else.

This anger quickly gave way to empathy in the revelation of Jesus' heart for their sadness. If brevity is the soul of wit, then this, the shortest verse in the Bible, most aptly captures the pathos of the scene in two simple words: "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Through this brief utterance we can grasp the love Jesus has for us. Jesus knows our weaknesses and struggles, and that's because He has shared them.

Jesus knew how this would end because He has power over life and death. He knew Lazarus would be reunited with his family. And He knew the glory that would come to the Father. This was a necessary preview of Jesus' power over death that His friends would need to see as His own demise approached.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:14–16

In John 11, we see a clear picture of how Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses. He feels anger on our behalf, and He feels sadness along with us. Through His empathy, Jesus offers us a picture of what it means to care for others. Though He is God and we are merely human, He loves us enough to come and be one of us—to feel our pain, to be tempted, and to take away the bondage of sin and death.

Take a walk or find a quiet place and think about Jesus as the One who not only saves us from death but also empathizes with our weaknesses. Boldly ask Him to give you life and help in the places where you are struggling this week.

SMALL GROUP
SECTION**EXPLORE//** 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Tunnel Tag

Lead the kids in a fun EXPLORE during which they play tunnel tag and emerge alive like Lazarus.

SUPPLIES

- None

RELATE

In The Big God Story, Jesus told His friend Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die." (John 11:25–26). After that, when Jesus told a man named Lazarus to come out of the tomb, Lazarus got up and walked out alive! Let's play a game of tunnel tag and remember, every time someone crawls out, that Jesus brought Lazarus back to life.

Select one person to be "It." Encourage her to move around and tag the other children as they try to get away from her. Whenever someone is tagged, he has to stand still with his feet wide apart and cannot move until someone else crawls through his legs. Repeat with various people taking turns being It.

LARGE GROUP
SECTION**DISCOVER//** 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse**SUPPLIES**

- Remember Verse image (see Resources)
- Remember Verse animation (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a

structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Connect

Question

If you could hang out with one person who isn't alive anymore, who would it be? Why?

The Big God Story

Bible Passage: John 11

Storytelling Technique: Using Fabric as Prop
Jesus Is Life

SUPPLIES

- [Timeline image](#) (see Resources)
- [Timeline animation](#) (see Resources)
- [Images: Grave, Mummy](#) (see Resources)
- [Audio: John 11:43](#) (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Old tan sheet or tan fabric (cut to 3' x 6')
- Food container or take-out box

RELATE

Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. Enter wearing the tan sheet or fabric as a scarf and carrying the food container or take-out box. Hold up the food box as you talk. **Have you ever put food into a container and left it in the car for a few days? What happens to it?** Pause for responses. Lift a corner of the lid and peek into the container. Act as if you caught a whiff of something smelly. **Right—it starts to smell bad. Today during The Big God Story we are going to hear how Jesus has power over death. He is life! He showed that by going to a man who had been dead for four days—and the man didn't smell too great!** Set container aside. **His name was Lazarus.**

Lazarus got sick (wrap the fabric around your shoulders/arms and shiver as if you're sick) **while Jesus was in the midst of traveling around, teaching large crowds, and healing people—even restoring the sight of the blind, like we heard last week. The Bible says Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha** (John 11:5). **Jesus often stayed with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha when He was in their town.** Lay the fabric on the ground and sit near the edge of it, as if it's a tablecloth. Pantomime taking a drink or eating.

So when Lazarus became very sick, Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus. Invite kids to open Bibles to John 11:3–4 and follow along. Grab two sides of the fabric and hold it as if you're reading Mary and Martha's letter from a scroll. **"Lord, the one you love is sick"** (v. 3). Drape the fabric around your neck like a scarf with no loops. **Jesus told His disciples, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it"** (v. 4). **And Jesus and His disciples stayed where they were for two more days. But, during that time, Lazarus died.** Lay the fabric on ground and lie on it as if you're dead.

After two days, Jesus told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up” (v. 11). **Jesus knew Lazarus was dead, but Jesus also knew that He is life. He has power over death!** Invite kids to go to verse 21 and follow along. **When Jesus arrived** (place the fabric over the top of your head like a woman’s head covering), **Martha ran to Him and said, “Lord ... if you had been here, my brother would not have died”** (v. 21). **Martha probably felt hurt that Jesus hadn’t come in time to heal her brother. But God had a different plan.** Drape the fabric around your neck like a scarf with no loops. **Jesus reassured Martha her brother would “rise again”** (v. 23).

Martha didn’t completely understand what Jesus meant. By this time, Lazarus had already been dead for four days! What happens to a body after it dies? Pause for responses. **Right—it starts to decay.** Bunch up the fabric and cover your nose as if masking a smell. Then drape the fabric around your neck like a scarf with no loops. Invite kids to go to verse 25 and follow along. **Jesus told Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die”** (v. 25). **What does *resurrection* mean?** Invite responses. ***Resurrection* means rising from the dead.**

Martha’s sister Mary was weeping—crying very hard—and other people were with her and weeping too. Wipe your eyes with the fabric, as if with a handkerchief. **Jesus did something really amazing: He cried with them! Even though Jesus knew Lazarus would live, He cared for Mary and Martha by feeling the sadness they felt and crying along with them.** Drape the fabric around your neck like a scarf with no loops. **Then Jesus walked with the people to Lazarus’ tomb, a cave with a stone across the entrance.** *Tech: Cue Grave image.* **Jesus ordered them to remove the stone from the front of the cave. Martha told Jesus that the cave might smell bad, but Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”** (v. 40).

So while they went to take away the stone, Jesus looked up to heaven and thanked His Father for the miracle that was about to take place. He did this so that everyone else would know He came from God. Then He said in a loud voice: *Tech: Cue John 11:43 audio.* Then read verse 44 aloud. *Tech: Cue Mummy image.* **Everyone there was absolutely amazed! Jesus is life!**

Later (grab both ends of the fabric and spread your arms out wide), **Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins. He was placed in a tomb, and three days later He rose from the dead, proving once and for all that He has power over death. By doing this, Jesus made the way for us to live forever with Him.**

The Bible says, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins ... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ” (Ephesians 2:1, 4–5). **In Lazarus’ life and in our lives, God has power over death, and He uses that power in our lives because He loves us. He is life!** Tell about when you became a Christian and how God gave you life in Him.

SMALL GROUP

SECTION

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: Jesus Is Life

Encourage kids to look up the following passages in their Bibles.

Questions for Younger Kids

- **Why did Jesus bring Lazarus back to life?** John 11:4, 41–42
- **How would you have responded if you had seen Lazarus raised from the dead?** John 11:43–45
- **Why is it important to know Jesus has power over death?** Ephesians 2:1–5
- **What are some ways we need Jesus’ power in our lives?**
- **Have you decided to follow Jesus so you can live forever with Him? If not, would you like to?**

Pray with children who indicate that they want to follow Jesus.

Questions for Older Kids

- **Why did Jesus bring Lazarus back to life?** John 11:4, 41–42
- **How would you have responded if you had seen Lazarus raised from the dead?** John 11:43–45
- **Do you think seeing this would have changed your life? Why or why not?**
- **How does Jesus’ power over death affect our lives?** Ephesians 1:18–20; 2:1–5
- **Have you decided to follow Jesus so you can live forever with Him? If not, would you like to?**

Pray with children who indicate that they want to follow Jesus.

BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up. Open a Bible and read Isaiah 25:8–9:

He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

Ask the children to make fists and hold them up in “powerful” poses. Then bless the kids with the following words:

May you know God has power over death and that He alone gives life. May you know His love and feel the comfort of His Holy Spirit in your struggles.