



Week Six: John 11:1-27

“Jesus and Expectations”

Study Guide for the week of
October 17, 2021

Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. When has someone you’ve known died unexpectedly?
2. Why did Jesus say Lazarus was sick? ([11:4](#))
3. How did the disciples misunderstand Jesus? ([11:12](#))
4. Why did Jesus say that He was glad He wasn’t with Lazarus? ([11:15](#))
5. When have you thought you had a better plan for your life than the one God was working out?
6. How would you respond differently from the way Jesus did if you heard that a good friend had died?
7. What shortcomings or weaknesses in your life will you give to God in prayer, that He may use them to bring glory to Himself?
8. What is one of your greatest disappointments in life?
9. What did Martha say to Jesus about His having come after Lazarus had died? ([11:21-22](#))
10. What did Jesus say would happen to those who believed in Him? ([11:26](#))
11. When do we tend to second-guess God?
12. How should we respond to disappointment?
13. What attitude of disappointment do you need to confess to God and change to trust in His sovereign control?

Going deeper: More questions for discussion and reflection:

1. Share a time in your life where Jesus showed up in a powerful way and exceeded your expectations.
2. Where are you currently putting expectations on Jesus that may not actually line up with God’s best for you? How can we help one another to think in light of God’s eternal plans for us?
3. What does it mean that Lazarus’ illness was “for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it”? How does that help you think about your hardships?
4. When you think about the non-Christians in your life, what expectations might they have about Jesus that are keeping them away from him? How can you help share truth with them in a loving way?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that you would grow in your ability to trust in Jesus, and that your expectations would line up with the true promises of Jesus.
2. Pray for those who are far away from Jesus, particularly those who may have walked away because of unmet expectations.

Life Application Bible Notes

11:1 The village of Bethany was located about two miles east of Jerusalem on the road to Jericho. It was near enough to Jerusalem for Jesus and the disciples to be in danger, but far enough away so as not to attract attention prematurely.

11:3 As their brother grew very sick, Mary and Martha turned to Jesus for help. They believed in his ability to help because they had seen his miracles. We, too, know of Jesus' miracles, both from Scripture and through changed lives we have seen. When we need extraordinary help, Jesus offers extraordinary resources. We should not hesitate to ask him for assistance.

11:4 Any trial a believer faces can ultimately bring glory to God because God can bring good out of any bad situation ([Genesis 50:20](#); [Romans 8:28](#)). When trouble comes, do you grumble, complain, and blame God, or do you see your problems as opportunities to honor him?

11:5-7 Jesus loved this family and often stayed with them. He knew their pain but did not respond immediately. His delay had a specific purpose. God's timing, especially his delays, may make us think he is not answering or is not answering the way we want. But he will meet all our needs according to his perfect schedule and purpose ([Philippians 4:19](#)). Patiently await his timing.

11:9, 10 "Daylight" symbolizes the knowledge of God's will and reliance on his guidance, and "night," the absence of this knowledge combined with self-reliance. When we move ahead in darkness, we will be likely to stumble.

11:14, 15 If Jesus had been with Lazarus during the final moments of Lazarus's sickness, he might have healed him rather than let him die. But Lazarus died so that Jesus' power over death could be shown to his disciples and others. The raising of Lazarus was an essential display of his power, and the resurrection from the dead is a crucial belief of the Christian faith. Jesus not only raised himself from the dead ([10:18](#)), but he has the power to raise others.

Jesus Raises Lazarus

Jesus had been preaching in the villages beyond the Jordan, probably in Perea, when he received the news of Lazarus's sickness. Jesus did not leave immediately, but waited two days before returning to Judea. He knew Lazarus would be dead when he arrived in Bethany, but he was going to do a great miracle.

11:16 We often remember Thomas as "the doubter," because he doubted Jesus' resurrection ([John 20:25](#)). But here he demonstrated love and courage. The disciples knew the dangers of going with Jesus to Jerusalem, and they tried to talk him out of it. Thomas merely expressed what all of them felt. When their objections failed, they were willing to go, even though it appeared they might have to die with Jesus. They may not have understood why Jesus would be killed, but they were loyal. There are unknown dangers in doing God's work. It is wise to consider the high cost of being Jesus' disciple.

11:25, 26 Jesus has power over life and death as well as power to forgive sins. This is because he is the Creator of life (see [14:6](#)). He who *is* life can surely restore life. Whoever believes in Christ has a spiritual life that death cannot conquer or diminish in any way. When we realize his power and how wonderful his offer to us really is, how can we not commit our lives to him? To those of us who believe, what wonderful assurance and certainty we have: "Since I live, you too will live" ([14:19](#)).

11:27 Martha is best known for being too busy to sit down and talk with Jesus ([Luke 10:38-42](#)). But here we see her as a woman of deep faith. Her statement of faith is exactly the response that Jesus wants from us.

Profile: Lazarus

The details surrounding death may vary, but the reality is universal. Scenes like Lazarus's funeral in Bethany are repeated many times around the world each day. A grieving family gathers at a graveside. Friends agonize over what to say. Their helpless silence, downcast eyes, and shuffling feet provide more distraction than comfort. When death is unexpected, the whys hang in the air like choking smog.

Drawn by grief and duty, people came from Jerusalem and the surrounding area to pay their last respects to a citizen of Bethany. Jesus' friend Lazarus was dead. His brief sickness proved stronger than any available medicine. Jesus had been sent for, but had failed to arrive in time. Death didn't wait. Following the wisdom of hot countries, the body was soon wrapped and buried. Four days later, Jesus arrived.

Lazarus's sisters Mary and Martha reacted in shock. Grief-stricken, they struggled to understand why Jesus had delayed in coming. We have no idea how Lazarus reacted to his own death. In fact, we don't have a record of a single word he said. We do know that he listened to Jesus. Even when the curtain of death was between them, Lazarus responded to Jesus' voice. He came hobbling out of his cave-tomb, still wrapped in the grave clothes. Jesus raised him from the dead!

When all is said and done, only what God accomplished through us will really matter. We will take little credit. Jesus worked in and around Lazarus just as he does with us. We have Christ's invitation to participate in his work, but we must not forget that he will do much more than we will know. Meanwhile, we delight in what Christ does with the little we have to offer him. Lazarus's resurrection poses an important question: When you die, do you fully expect that your next conscious experience will be hearing the voice of Jesus call you by name?

Strengths and accomplishments

- Regularly hosted Jesus in his home
- Raised from the dead by Jesus after four days in the grave

Lessons from his life

- Once we have given God ownership of our lives, we can't predict what he will do with them
- Jesus' circle of relationships went beyond the 12 disciples
- Jesus declared that the events surrounding Lazarus's sickness and death would glorify God

Vital statistics

- Where: Bethany
- Relatives: Sisters: Mary and Martha

Key verse

"But when Jesus heard about it he said, 'Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this'" ([John 11:4](#)). Lazarus's role as an "active spectator" is recorded in [John 11:1-12:11](#).

Gospel of John Study Guide questions and notes are from