

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) One of the great opportunities of having close friendships is being able to walk through the “tough times” with one another. The Bible says that there are some friends who stick closer than our own family (Proverbs 18:24). Do you have that kind of a friend in your life? Share with your group about your friend and a time when you desperately needed their friendship to get through a tough time.
- B) Have the problems of your friends ever been so remarkable that they actually distracted you from your walk with God? It’s easy to get so wrapped up in our own “stuff” that we neglect to keep God at the center of our friendships. Do you have some friendships that need a “re-fresher” in keeping Jesus as #1 -- no matter what the circumstances?
- C) Jesus had a relationship with God His Father which was so intimate and central, He always kept His priorities straight. Even when His close friend, Lazarus, whom He loved, was dying -- Jesus kept His mind and heart on God. Are there circumstances in your life right now that threaten to steal your focus from the Father?
- D) “Doubting” Thomas showed a great deal of courage when He was willing to go to the death on Jesus’ behalf in John 11:16. Later (in John 20:24-29) he doesn’t even believe that Jesus has been resurrected from the dead! What changed for Thomas?
- E) Jesus’ reason for not “rushing” into the Lazarus situation was so that God’s glory, and His own, could be revealed. Have you ever rushed into a situation to “fix” a problem without thinking, “what is God doing in this situation?” Jesus teaches us that every Christian can trust the timing of Christ because it reveals God’s glory. How can your group pray for this to become reality in each other’s lives? Pray for one another!

Telling Time With Jesus

Long Beach Alliance Church • April 3rd, 2005 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**SO JESUS THEN SAID TO THEM
PLAINLY, “LAZARUS IS DEAD, AND
I AM GLAD FOR YOUR SAKES THAT I
WAS NOT THERE, SO THAT YOU MAY
BELIEVE; BUT LET US GO TO HIM.”
~JOHN 11:14-15 (NASB)**

1) Close Friends, Close Problems...

- A) Jesus and His disciples have retreated to the place where John the Baptist “first baptized” (John 10:40) in an effort to avoid the Jewish authorities who want to kill Jesus (10:39).
- B) Jesus learns that His good friend Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary from Bethany, is very sick (John 11:1-3).
- C) Jesus’ response that Lazarus will not die, but that God and Jesus will be glorified is reassuring and deflates some of the intensity of Lazarus’ sickness (11:4).
- D) The personal nature of Jesus’ relationship with Lazarus and his sisters becomes more clear when we learn of Jesus’ love for the family from Bethany (11:5).

2) Didn't He Just Say...?

- A) Juxtaposed against Jesus' personal affection for Lazarus is His total lack of urgency to get to His friends to help (11:6).

- B) After a couple of days (11:6), Jesus tells His disciples they are headed to Judea (not Bethany). The reference is clearly with His ultimate purposes in mind, not His friends (11:7)

- C) The disciples, fearing "death by association," question Jesus' sanity in going back to the Judean region (11:8).

- D) Jesus, foreshadowing His impending death, emphasizes the difference between light and darkness (cf. John 3:19). His answer to the disciples prioritized their time, with ultimate personal safety being found in God's purposes (11:10).

3) By The Way, About Lazarus...

- A) Jesus tells the disciples that Lazarus has "fallen asleep" and that He needs to go "awaken him" (11:11). The confused disciples think Jesus is speaking of literal sleep (11:12-13).

- B) Jesus, rather abruptly, tells His disciples that Lazarus is dead and that He is rather happy (*χαίρω*/chairō - to rejoice) about how things are progressing (11:14-15).

- C) Thomas (better known for his "doubting" questions -- John 20:24-29), show great courage and resolve in calling the other disciples* to be willing to go to their death with Jesus Christ (11:16).

4) Jesus Nears The Scene In Bethany

- A) By the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been buried for "four days" (11:17). This was a significant time period for the Jews.

- B) Mary, Martha & Lazarus lived close to Jerusalem (1.72 miles away), close to those who wanted to kill Jesus (11:18).

- C) There were many mourners (11:19), indicating that Mary, Martha & Lazarus came from an affluent and influential family from the Jerusalem area. Word gets to Mary that Jesus has arrived, so she goes to meet Him (11:20).

* There is a great deal of scholarly debate as to why John (out of the four Gospel writers) is the only one who writes about such a significant miracle as the raising of Lazarus from the dead. In each Gospel, there is a pronounced gap (e.g. between John 6:68 - 13:6; Matthew 19:27-26:33; Luke 18:28-22:8) where Peter, the normally recognized leader of "the twelve," is missing completely from the text. Traditionally, Peter's reminiscences are the background for Mark (the backbone of the Synoptics), which also has an abbreviated gap between 10:28-11:21. Is it possible that some of the disciples (particularly Peter) were gone (in Galilee?) for periods of Christ's ministry? It would seem plausible from the text. If this is the case, there is more clear reason why the other Gospels did not have the story of Lazarus included... they were not present for the event. One small piece of evidence that Peter was absent from the Lazarus miracle is that Thomas (Didymus) is the spokesman for the Twelve in John 11:16. Normally, we would expect Peter to fill that role. Perhaps it wasn't until the Passover that Peter joined the rest of His fellow disciples. While this doesn't completely clear up the difficulties, it should be kept in mind so that the difficulties are not over-exaggerated. Compiled from various sources, esp. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According To John*, NICNT, Pages 475-476.