

“The Love of Jesus”

John 11: 1-6, 30-45 10/17/21

Discussion Guide

Read the passage from the perspective of one of the characters in the story: Lazarus, Mary, Martha, or one of the disciples and react to it from their point of view.

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) ³ So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

⁴ When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days,

³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

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Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

1. Does the reality of the love of Jesus and the experience of suffering contradict each other? How do you hold these two truths together: Jesus really does love you and you will experience illness, the death of a loved one, death, and deep grief?
2. Share a time when you went through something that was as painful as what Mary and Martha went through. How did you get through it?
3. Healing seemed to have been one of the easiest things for Jesus to do. The Gospels are filled with stories of Jesus healing multitudes of people. When asked, Jesus always went with the person immediately to go and pray. Sometimes Jesus wasn't even asked, he just prayed for sick people and they were healed. So why did Jesus delay going and praying for Lazarus? He said Lazarus' illness would result in the "glory of God." (vs. 4) How was God/Jesus gloried in this situation?
4. Looking back on your own life, share a time when God brought glory out of a tragic event in your life. At the time, could you see how God was going to redeem it? How long did it take for you to realize why God allowed you to go through what you went through?
5. What comfort does it give you knowing that God will not allow you to experience senseless suffering? Everything you go through God will use so that it becomes meaningful to you. Everything has a purpose.
6. Share ways God used hardships in your life to awaken you to something about yourself, himself, and/or life.
7. React to the statement: "Actually it is during hardships that God loves us the most."
8. Reflect on the two things Mary and Martha did to help them cope with Lazarus' illness and ultimate death. What did they do? Does that match what people typically do during painful times in their lives? How do you handle painful times?
9. Do you pray with power and in confidence on the basis of God's love for you or do you pray on the basis of your works and goodness? What's the difference? How would our prayer lives change if we actually prayed in light of the deep love Jesus has for us?
10. React to this statement: "As believers we need to judge our circumstance according to God's love and not God's love according to our circumstances."

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11. Mary and Martha’s view of Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God, and Lord never changed despite their circumstances. Their faith never wavered. They were clearly hurting and wished Jesus had been there on time but that did not change their faith or feelings towards him. I find that amazing. Does your view of Jesus change due to changing circumstances?

12. Are you absolutely confident in the love that God has for you? Read Psalm 27:10 and Hosea 11:8 and react to them.

13. Jesus didn’t have to raise Lazarus. Martha and Mary would have coped. Time would heal their wounds and Lazarus would be enjoying Paradise. So he would not have been upset with Jesus for not healing him. Yet, Jesus raised him, knowing that by doing he had signed his own death warrant. What does that say about the love, faithfulness and power of Jesus?