



# The Resurrection & Life

## John 11

### **John 11 – How does the story of Lazarus help us deal with our difficulties in life?**

People have difficulties whether they are close to the Lord or not. It is just a matter of time before we or someone we know goes through something that makes us wonder why God allowed it to happen. John 11 tells the story of Lazarus who died from illness. Lazarus was close to Jesus but this did not keep him from having difficulties in life. The fact that those following Christ suffer the same as anyone else shows that Christians do not have different experiences in life, they experience life differently. Hope in Jesus does not insulate us from difficulties but it does provide us a way through them. And God can use our difficulties to make us more compassionate servants for Him as we console others. So we should consider our difficulties as opportunities to see God at work!

### **John 11 – How can waiting on God help us?**

Our society which has proliferated fast food and news based on sound bites has made it tough to wait on anything. But it is often better to wait as Jesus demonstrated when He was told about the illness of His friend Lazarus in John chapter 11. Jesus delayed going to help so that Lazarus had died and was buried by the time He arrived. This delay served the purpose of bringing even more glory to God since there was no question that Lazarus was dead by the time Jesus made him alive again. It also served to help the sisters of Lazarus develop their patience. When we pray, circumstances often seem to actually worsen. God's enemy tempts us to doubt and despair but the delay in seeing the result of God's response builds up our trust in His timing.

### **John 11 – How does it benefit us when God doesn't answer our prayers?**

We are often tempted to think that certain situations are beyond God's help. But there is nothing God can not do and His apparent delay in responding to our prayers serves His purpose as well. John Chapter 11 tells the story of Jesus comforting Martha and Mary whose brother Lazarus had died. The sisters had been around Jesus enough to know that He would have prevented Lazarus dying if He had been there in time. But Jesus delayed His coming so that His followers could gain a deeper understanding of Him as the giver of life. There are good reasons for when Jesus delays answering our prayers. It usually means that He is going to do even more than we expect. So don't give up on Christ, there is always time for Him to act.

### **John 11 – How do we know Jesus cares about our daily struggles?**

Our God cares about our difficulties. John Chapter 11 tells the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. When Jesus arrived at where the family of Lazarus was morning, He wept with them. The Gospels reveal many of Jesus' emotions: compassion, indignation, sorrow, and even frustration. Since He expressed deep emotions, we should never fear opening up our true feelings to Him. We know that He understands them because He experienced them Himself. Knowing this about the Lord should help us with our daily troubles; Christ certainly cares about what concerns us. And getting the Lord involved in our life helps us to grow closer to Him as we see Him demonstrating that He cares. So we should pray about our daily concerns, no matter how small they are.

### **11:4 – Why should we have a positive attitude about our suffering?**

It is common for people to grumble about their difficulties. But those who follow Jesus should stand out from the crowd with a good attitude. In John 11:4, Jesus explained that his friend Lazarus had died so *“that God's Son may be glorified”* (NIV). This was an opportunity for Jesus to show people who He was by raising Lazarus from the dead. Any trial believers face can ultimately glorify God because He can bring good out of bad situations. God is in control of the universe He created and allows difficulties to come into our lives to serve His greater purpose. We may not know that purpose during the mortal phase of our life but can rest assured that it is in our best interest. Our difficulties are opportunities to honor God!

### **11:9-10 – How can we make better decisions?**

It is tempting to make decisions on the basis of circumstances alone. But Jesus said His followers have access to God who provides greater illumination to situations enabling better decisions. Jesus said in John 11:9-10, *“A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light”* (NIV). We can make better decisions when we consider the underlying spiritual aspects of our situation. Ignoring this can impact relationships between people and with God. When we need to make a decision, the first thing we should do is ask for God's wisdom and help. Considering the situation from God's perspective will help us be better at doing what Jesus would have us to do.

### **11:11-15 – How may we be a courageous leader?**

God gives us opportunities to lead even if we are not in a supervisory position. In John 11:11-15, Jesus announced His intention to raise Lazarus from the dead. But this meant going back to Judea where the religious leaders there wanted to kill Jesus. Thomas talked the other disciples into going with them saying in John 11:16, “*let us also go, that we may die with him*” (NIV). Thomas demonstrated courage, resigning himself to the worst that could happen by accompanying Jesus to Judea. Thomas’ step of faith motivated the other disciples to also step out in courage resulting in their better understanding who Jesus was as the giver of life. God blesses us when our trust in Him gives us courage. And He is especially pleased when our courage results in others trusting Him as well.

### **11:42 – How does it help us knowing that God hears our prayers?**

Our troubles in life are significantly easier to deal with knowing that God hears our prayers. In John 11:42, Jesus thanked God for hearing His prayer about raising Lazarus from the dead. He went on to say the reason He voiced His thanks so that we too may know that God hears our prayers. This doesn’t mean that God will answer our prayers in the manner we expect or want Him to. The Lord always acts in our best interest even when we don’t pray as we ought. But knowing that God hears us gives us confidence that He will help us. And it frees us from thinking that our prayers need to be elaborate, loud, or repetitious. Even a simple silent, workplace prayer echoes in the halls of heaven as loudly as a lofty composition voiced by thousands.

### **11:44 – Why do we need fellowship with other Christians?**

We often have wonderful opportunities to interact with fellow Christians. The Lord wants us to take advantage of these relationships to help each other grow closer to Him. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He told those present in John 11:44 to take off his grave clothes and let him go. Strips of linen were bound around him as a mummy. Even though the Lord as given us new life, we still have old bindings that we need others to help us to be free of. Old habits, sinful behaviors, and painful memories can keep us from experiencing the new life we have in Christ. Fellowship with our Christian associates helps us remove these bindings as we share our experiences with Jesus. The Lord created us to need Him and each other.

### **11:51-52 – How may we experience unity in Christ?**

God wants us to experience the unity followers of Christ have in Him today. John 11:51-52 “*prophesied that Jesus would die ... for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one*” (NIV). Today’s Christians are part of the “*the scattered Children of God.*” Unity in

Christ is not a sentimental feeling but a reality that we can experience even within the limitations of a sinful world. Getting together with Christian associates provides a type of fellowship that you can’t get any where else. Your associates can identify with your challenges in life and can better appreciate how Jesus has helped you. If you aren’t regularly meeting with fellow Christians, the Lord may be calling you to organize something.

### **11:53-54 – How should we approach pushing for change in society?**

God has called us to be agents of change in the world. But this doesn’t require us to maintain a high profile. Indeed the best way to bring about a change in society is one person at a time. Jesus shook up the religious community by His spectacular miracles. His fresh revelation of God threatened the power that the existing religious leaders had over people so in John 11:53, “*they plotted to take his life.*” Those who do things differently, making changes, and promoting progress are considered dangerous. Jesus responded to the plotting of the religious leaders by curtailing his public appearances per John 11:54. Change is difficult for people and it often takes more time than we would like. When we try to bring about a cultural change, we will be well served to follow the example of Jesus and back off periodically. And as Jesus did, pray for God’s help.

### **John 11 – What can we learn about the dangers of pride from the Jewish religious leaders?**

The danger with success is that pride in accomplishments can lead to enormous sin. At the end of John Chapter 11, Jewish religious leaders were directly confronted with the deity of Jesus in the news of His raising Lazarus from the dead. Only God has power over life and death; Jesus demonstrated that He had that power. Yet the pride the religious leaders had in their positions of authority lead them to deny the truth of Christ in order to hold on to the power they had over people. The same thing can happen to us when we have authority. We need to remember that, per Romans 13:1, all authority comes from God. Any authority we have is from the Lord who grants it and takes it away to serve His purposes.