

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 4: The Resurrection and the Life: A disciple believes Jesus gives life.

Main Idea: Because Jesus is the resurrection and the life, death is not the final word for those who are in Christ.

John 11:17-27

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14)

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people and discuss the Observation and Interpretation sections.

Observation Exercise 1: The death of Lazarus

Read John 11:17-19. What details did John give about Lazarus’s death and the setting surrounding it?

Suggested Response: John said Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, and many people had come to comfort Martha and Mary. The scene is one of settled mourning with many witnesses present.

Observation Exercise 2: Martha’s words

Read John 11:20-22 and 27. What did Martha say to Jesus, and how did she describe her belief about Him?

Suggested Response: Martha told Jesus that if He had been there, her brother would not have died, and she said she knew God would give Jesus whatever He asked. She also said she believed Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.

Observation Exercise 3: Jesus is the resurrection and life

Read John 11:23-26. What did Jesus say about resurrection, life, belief, and death?

Suggested Response: Jesus said Lazarus would rise again and identified Himself as the resurrection and the life. He said those who believe in Him will

live even though they die, and those who live and believe in Him will never die. He then asked if Martha believed this.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Interpretation Exercise 1: The finality of death

Based on John 11:17–19, why did John emphasize how long Lazarus has been dead and how many people were present?

Suggested Response: John emphasized the length of time and the presence of mourners to make clear that Lazarus's death was settled and publicly accepted. There was no confusion about whether he were truly dead and no private space for reinterpretation. Whatever Jesus said or did must be understood in light of death's apparent finality.

Interpretation Exercise 2: Martha's beliefs and its limits

Considering John 11:20–22 and 27 together, what did Martha clearly believe about Jesus, and what did she not yet seem to expect?

Suggested Response: Martha believed Jesus had a unique relationship with God and confessed Him as the Messiah and Son of God. At the same time, she did not appear to expect the immediate reversal of Lazarus's death. Her faith affirmed who Jesus was without yet imagining what that might mean for her present situation.

Interpretation Exercise 3: What Jesus was claiming

In John 11:23–26, why did Jesus move from speaking about Lazarus rising to speaking about Himself? What claim was He making by doing so?

Suggested Response: Jesus moved from a statement about Lazarus to a statement about Himself to redirect Martha's understanding of resurrection. Rather than allowing resurrection to remain an abstract future event, He claimed that resurrection and life are found in Him personally. By speaking this way, Jesus presented Himself as the source and authority behind both present life and future resurrection, not merely a participant in God's plans but the one through whom they occur.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

Question 1: As you read John 11:17-27, what part of the conversation between Jesus and Martha did you find yourself lingering over? Was there a statement or exchange that felt especially significant or unexpected?

Suggested Response: Responses will vary. Encourage participants to name specific words, phrases, or moments in the conversation that caught their attention. Use follow-up questions to invite deeper reflection rather than quick answers.

Question 2: Martha believed in resurrection, but she placed it at the end, not in the present. Where in your life are you most tempted to believe God can act someday without expecting Him to meet you now?

Suggested Response: Some may name areas of grief, disappointment, or long-standing situations that feel settled. Others may recognize a pattern of lowering expectations as a way of avoiding further hurt. This question helps expose where hope has been delayed rather than denied.

Question 3: Jesus did not deny that death happens, but He challenged what death is allowed to decide. Where have you accepted an ending as final and stopped expecting anything more?

Suggested Response: This question helps us notice where death and loss have been allowed to close doors God has not said are closed and whether we are willing to trust Him with more than we can see or explain. We should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, but that isn't an invitation to cynical inaction.

Question 4: Jesus asked Martha, "Do you believe this?" not as a test of knowledge but as a personal question. Where does your faith tend to stay true but abstract, affirmed without shaping how you face loss or uncertainty?

Suggested Response: Some may recognize a gap between what they confess and what they expect. Others may see how faith can remain sincere while still keeping grief, fear, or disappointment insulated from it.

Question 5: This passage does not rush resolution. How can our group help one another acknowledge grief and loss while still holding onto Jesus's claim about life experienced in the present? How do we grieve as those who have hope?

Suggested Response: Group support may include listening without fixing, praying without pressure, and staying present over time. The focus is shared faithfulness rather than quick answers.