



Walking With the Savior

Through An Eyewitness Account of John

John, one of the sons of Zebedee, stood as an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. He began his journey as a fisherman, leaving behind his nets and the future he had planned for himself to follow a teacher, a prophet, and a miracle worker. At the outset, John did not fully understand who Jesus was or what lay ahead. In faith, he aligned himself with Jesus, drawn by His words and deeds. As John walked alongside Jesus, witnessing His teachings and miracles, he gradually realized that Jesus was far more than a prophet or a remarkable teacher. John came to understand that Jesus was God in the flesh. This revelation was not just a turning point for John personally, but a moment of eternal significance. By choosing to follow Jesus, John's future was forever changed, and his decision would go on to impact the world—not only in his own time but throughout every generation to come. ***Let's embark on an inspiring journey with John as we walk alongside Jesus.***

Background Matters

The great sign at Bethany (11:1–44)

This climactic miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was Jesus' public evidence of the truth of His great claim, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Death is the great horror which sin has produced (Rom. 5:12; James 1:15). Physical death is the divine object lesson of what sin does in the spiritual realm. As physical death ends life and separates people, so spiritual death is the separation of people from God and the loss of life which is in God (John 1:4). Jesus has come so that people may live full lives (10:10). Rejecting Jesus means that one will not see life (3:36) and that his final destiny is "the second death," the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14–15).

11:1–2. This **Lazarus** is mentioned in the New Testament only in this chapter and in chapter 12. **Bethany** (cf. 11:18) is on the east side of the Mount of Olives. Another Bethany is in Perea (cf. 1:28). Luke added some information on the two sisters **Mary** and **Martha** (Luke 10:38–42). **This Mary ...**



was the same one who later (see John 12:1–10) **poured perfume on the Lord and wiped His feet with her hair**. However, John may be assuming that the original readers of his Gospel already had some knowledge of Mary (cf. Mark 14:3–9).

11:3. **The sisters** assumed, because of the Lord's ability and His **love** for Lazarus, that He would immediately respond to their **word** about Lazarus' illness and come.

11:4. **Jesus** did not go immediately (see v. 6). But His delay was not from lack of love (cf. v. 5), or from fear of the Jews. He waited till the right moment in the Father's plan. Lazarus' **sickness** would **not end in death**, that is, in permanent death. Instead Jesus would **be glorified** in this incident (cf. 9:3). This statement is ironic. Jesus' power and obedience to the Father were displayed, but this event led to *His* death (cf. 11:50–53), which was His true **glory** (17:1).

11:5–6. In spite of Jesus' love for all three (**Martha and her sister and Lazarus**), **He waited two more days**. Apparently (vv. 11, 39) Lazarus was already dead when Jesus heard about him. Jesus' movements were under God's direction (cf. 7:8).

11:7–10. **His disciples** knew that His going to **Judea**, would be dangerous (10:31). So they tried to prevent Him from going. **Jesus** spoke in a veiled way to illustrate that it would not be too dangerous to go to Bethany. In one sense He was speaking of walking (living) in physical **light** or darkness. In the spiritual realm when one lives by the will of God he is safe. Living in the realm of evil is dangerous. As long as He followed God's plan, no harm would come till the appointed time. Applied to people then, they should have responded to Jesus while He was in the world as its Light (cf. 1:4–7; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5). Soon He would be gone and so would this unique opportunity.

11:11–12. Jesus then said, **Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep**. The word "friend" has special significance in Scripture (cf. 15:13–14; James 2:23). This "sleep" is the sleep of death. Since the coming of Christ the death of a believer is regularly called a sleep (cf. Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Thes. 4:13–18). Dead Christians are asleep not in the sense of an unconscious "soul sleep," but in the sense that their bodies appear to be sleeping. The **disciples** wrongly assumed that Jesus meant Lazarus had not died, but was sleeping physically (cf. John 11:13) and was on his way to recovery: **If he sleeps, he will get better**.

11:13–15. As was often the case in the Gospels, **Jesus** was **speaking** about one thing **but** the **disciples** were thinking about another. The words **Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there** seem shocking at first. But if Lazarus had not died, the disciples (and readers of all ages) would not have had this unique opportunity to have their faith quickened. Lazarus' death was **so that you may believe**.

11:16. **Didymus** means "twin." **Thomas** is often called "doubting Thomas" because of the incident recorded in 20:24–25. But here he took the leadership and showed his commitment to Christ, even to death. **That we may die with Him** is ironic. On one level it reveals Thomas' ignorance of the uniqueness of Christ's atoning death. On another level it is prophetic of many disciples' destinies (12:25).¹

¹ Edwin A. Blum, "John," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 312–313.



This week in "Walking With the Savior,"

This chapter tells how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead shortly before Jesus' own death. Only John records this miracle because the other Gospels focus mostly on Jesus' work in Galilee, while John often describes events in and near Jerusalem. Some believe the story was not written earlier because Lazarus was still alive, and recording it might have endangered him or drawn unwanted attention to him. John gives this miracle more detail than any other because its events teach important lessons, strongly show that Jesus was sent by God, and point ahead to Jesus' own resurrection. The chapter covers four parts: I. Jesus receives news that Lazarus is sick (vv. 1–16). II. Jesus visits Lazarus's family after his death. III. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. IV. The miracle affects the people who witness or hear about it.

Study Guide 34

This study guide presents daily assignments that are specifically crafted to enhance your growth in the Word. Embrace each moment to meditate and reflect, and watch as your spiritual maturity flourishes through your dedicated efforts.

Facing Loss, the Way Jesus Did

The Death of Lazarus

John 11:1–16

Topics:

Believe, Challenge, Circumstances, Darkness, Death, Glory, God, God's Will, Jesus Christ, Light, Mission, Mourning, Sickness, Sin

Open It, Mondays. Open your heart and mind to the truth of the Word.

1. *What polite phrases do we use to describe death?*



Explore It, Tuesdays, keep the rhythm of personal study moving.

2. *What was wrong with Lazarus? (11:1)*

3. *To whom was Lazarus related? (11:2)*

4. *How did Jesus get word about Lazarus? (11:3)*

5. **Why did Jesus say Lazarus was sick? (11:4)*

6. *What did Jesus do when He heard about Lazarus? (11:6)*

7. *Why did Jesus' disciples respond negatively to Jesus' plan to return to Judea? (11:7–8)*

8. *How did Jesus answer His disciples' hesitancy about returning to Judea? (11:9–10)*

9. *What did Jesus say had happened to Lazarus? (11:11)*



Push on Wednesdays; keep the rhythm of personal study moving.

10. **How did the disciples misunderstand Jesus? (11:12)*

11. *What did Jesus mean when he used the word “sleeping”? (11:13–14)*

12. **Why did Jesus say that He was glad He wasn’t with Lazarus? (11:15)*

13. *What melancholic suggestion did Thomas make? (11:16)*

14. *How would you respond if you heard that a good friend was very sick?*

15. **When have you thought you had a better plan for your life than the one God was working out?*

16. *In what way has God used sickness in your life or the life of another to bring someone to Himself?*

Get It Thursdays, keep the rhythm of personal study moving.

17. *Why would God choose to use sickness to bring someone to Himself?*



18. *What shortcoming or disability in your life has God chosen to use to draw others to Himself?*

19. **How would you respond differently from the way Jesus did if you heard that a good friend had died?*

20. *When have you felt that you had to perform a task regardless of the obstacles in your path?*

21. *What gave you the confidence to pursue a hard task that others strongly opposed?*

Drive it Home, Fridays, keep the rhythm of personal study moving.

22. *When have you felt misunderstood by your friends or family?*

23. **What shortcomings or weaknesses in your life will you give to God in prayer, that He may use them to bring glory to Himself?*

A Journey Through The Gospel of John **2026**

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