

Small Group Guide

"Lord Over Death" | John 11 | Signs Series, Week 8

Before You Meet

Encourage group members to read John 11 in full before gathering. Consider having them journal one or two observations or questions that stood out to them as they read.

Opening Question

Think of a time when you had to wait on something that really mattered to you. What was that experience like, and how did it affect your trust in God or others?

Key Takeaways

These three truths from the sermon serve as the foundation for your discussion:

1. **Jesus is not absent in our delays.** God is at work even when we cannot see it. His timing is not indifference -- it is purpose.
2. **Jesus is not absent in our suffering.** Jesus wept. He was troubled and angry at the brokenness sin has caused. He suffers with us and, at the cross, for us.
3. **Jesus is Lord.** The raising of Lazarus is the pinnacle sign in John's gospel. It forces a decision: will we trust Jesus as Lord, or will we place our trust in something else?

Discussion Questions

Section One: Jesus Is Not Absent in Our Delays

1. In John 11:5-6, John tells us that although Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, he stayed where he was for two more days. What does it feel like when God seems to delay answering a prayer? What does this passage say about what that delay actually means?
2. The pastor pointed out that God sometimes waits not in spite of his love for us, but because of it. Has there ever been a time in your life when you later understood why God did not answer a prayer the way you expected or when you expected? What did you learn from that experience?

3. James 1:2-4 tells us to consider trials an opportunity for great joy because they develop endurance. Be honest -- how hard is it for you to actually approach difficulty that way? What would it look like practically to do so?
4. The pastor shared the story of his friend Rick, who said his cancer was a "win-win situation" because either God would heal him and he could testify to that, or he would go to be with Jesus. How does that kind of faith challenge or encourage you?

Section Two: Jesus Is Not Absent in Our Suffering

5. John 11:33-35 describes Jesus as deeply troubled, angry, and weeping -- even though he knew he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. What does it mean to you personally that Jesus responds to grief and suffering this way? How does that change the way you bring your pain to him?
6. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus understands our weaknesses because he faced the same testings we do. In what area of your life do you most need to be reminded that Jesus truly understands what you are going through?
7. The pastor made a distinction between God calming the storm around us and God calming the storm inside of us. Which of those do you find yourself praying for more often? Which do you find harder to receive?

Section Three: Jesus Is Lord

8. In John 11:25-26, Jesus asks Martha directly, "Do you believe this?" If Jesus asked you that same question today about your current circumstances, how would you honestly answer?
9. The Pharisees witnessed the raising of Lazarus and still refused to trust Jesus. Their fear of losing power and position drove them toward opposition rather than faith. What are the things in your own life that tempt you to trust in your own control rather than surrendering to Jesus as Lord?
10. The pastor described faith not as simply believing that the chair exists, but as actually resting your weight on it. Where in your life right now do you need to stop merely acknowledging Jesus and actually rest your full weight on him?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice this week:

- **Read and reflect.** Set aside time to read all of John 11 slowly. Write down what stands out to you about who Jesus is in this passage. Bring your notes back to share with the group next week.

- **Name your delay.** Identify one area of your life where you have been waiting on God. Write it down and pray specifically over it each day this week, asking God to help you trust his timing rather than demanding your own.
- **Sit with the weeping Jesus.** If you are in a season of grief or pain, spend time meditating on John 11:33-35. Let the truth that Jesus weeps with you sink into your heart. Consider sharing that pain with a trusted person in your group this week.
- **Examine what is on the throne.** Ask yourself honestly: what am I trusting in right now more than Jesus? Write it down. Confess it to God and, if appropriate, to a trusted friend or group member.
- **Share the story.** The pastor reminded us that John wrote these accounts so that we would be encouraged to continue believing. Think of one story of what God has done in your life and share it with someone this week -- a friend, a family member, or someone in your group.

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting group members to share one specific need or one area where they are struggling to trust God. Pray over each one together. You may want to use the following as a guide:

Lord, we confess that waiting is hard and that suffering is real. We thank you that you are not absent in either. You are not distant from our pain. You wept with those who wept, and you weep with us. You are Lord over every delay, every sorrow, and every fear. Help us to rest our full weight on you this week -- not just to acknowledge that you exist, but to truly trust you as Lord. In Jesus name, amen.

Memory Verse for the Week

John 11:25-26 -- Jesus tells Martha that he is the resurrection and the life, that anyone who believes in him will live even after dying, and that everyone who lives in him and believes in him will never ever die. Commit this promise to memory and return to it whenever fear or doubt rises up this week.