

THE **crossing** **small groups**

The Strange Love of God | John 11 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To help each other learn to trust more in the love and good plan of God for our lives especially when our circumstances look and feel like God isn't loving or trustworthy.

Sermon Reminder: Keith continued in our "Jesus is More" sermon series by preaching about the death and resurrection of Lazarus in John 11. We learned that Jesus' love and plan for our lives is often different than we want or expect. Sometimes he doesn't give us what we want because he wants to give us something much better.

Icebreaker: Keith opened his sermon by telling the story of the pastor who was sleeping in the back of the hearse. At the gas station, the attendant got quite a scare when the "dead" pastor sat up and banged on the window of the hearse. Share a funny memory of a time that someone or something really scared you (e.g. a prank, a scary movie, a haunted house, etc.).

Discussion:

1. Read John 11:1-6 out loud together.

John 11:1-6

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.) ³So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

⁴When 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." ⁵Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days ...

2. Put yourself in Mary and Martha's shoes. How do you think they reacted when they heard that Jesus stayed where he was for two more days? What kinds of things did they likely think and feel?
3. What clue does Jesus give in v.4 about why he didn't come right away?

4. Read John 11:17-37. Compare how Jesus responded to Martha (v.21-27) and to Mary (v.33-36).

John 11:17-37

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 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?"

5. When we go through a scary or hard time, why do we need both of these responses from Jesus?
6. As followers of Jesus, we also need to learn how to give these two responses to each other as we walk with each other through fearful, hard times. We will never do it perfectly like Jesus does, but we do want to grow in being able to both "weep with those who weep" and "speak the truth in love." Which one of these is more difficult? Which is harder for you?

7. What other thoughts or truths from today's sermon encouraged you to trust Jesus' plan, timing, and love for your life?

Sharing and Prayer:

Consider splitting up men and women or into 2 smaller groups for this time.

What's an area of your life where you have been praying and waiting for Jesus to do something, but it just seems like he isn't answering or is taking too long?

Share those with each other and then pray for Jesus to work in those situations and for Jesus to remind each person of his love, better plan, and perfect timing.