

Week Nine: Martha, Mary, and Lazarus

Friends of Jesus experience the miracle of God's victory over death on the "fourth day" when all hope is gone and it appears that Jesus is too late.

Primary Texts for this Week

1. John 11: 1-44
2. John 12: 1-11

Background Information to Assist You in Your Study

Bethany was a village about one and a half miles just East of Jerusalem over the Mount of Olives. Jesus used Bethany as his headquarters when He was in Jerusalem.

"Throughout the story we have learned of the growing tensions surrounding Jesus' contact with the religious leadership. During the previous autumn celebration at the Feast of Tabernacles the authorities tried to arrest him (8:44) and the rumor was out that they wanted to kill him (7:25). At one point a crowd tried to stone Jesus (8:59). A few months later at Hanukkah they Tried to arrest him (10:39), and again there was the threat of stoning (10:31). The events of John 11 are set sometime between the winter Hanukkah Feast and the upcoming spring when Jesus is crucified—and the tension must have been palpable. The threat is not simply to Jesus but to his disciples as well." The NIV Application Commentary by Gary M. Burge

Preparation for Study and Meeting Jesus at the Well

In preparation of your study and meeting Jesus at the well this week, I encourage you once again to daily follow these practical Biblical steps:

Holy Ground—Find a place where you will meet Jesus

Find a quiet place where you can go each day and meet Jesus. This is a place where you can go and will not be disturbed or distracted. I know this is difficult for many of us, but I encourage you to find a place where you can go in anticipation of spending time with the Lord. You need to look at this quiet place as your Holy Ground. This is where God will come and speak to you through the power of His Word, prayer, and Holy Spirit that is at work in your life. Enter into His presence with a sense of awe and anticipation.

Pray—Talk to God

Distraction is one of the biggest obstacles in our prayer life and encountering Jesus in the midst of our day. Our mind wanders and we begin to focus on our lives, worries, and needs instead of focusing on God and hearing His voice. It is difficult to switch gears, slow down, and enter into the presence of God. **It takes practice and patience.** It is a spiritual discipline.

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Keep a journal or pad of paper with you when you pray. Whenever you feel distracted, write it down. This way you can let it go and come back to it after you pray. This will help you to focus on the Lord.

1. Begin with a few minutes of praising God. Praise Him for His grace, goodness, faithfulness, holiness, and presence in your life. Praise Him for the gift of life today. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad!!
2. Confess any struggles, pain, and sin that are hindering you in your relationship with Him and others.
3. Talk to God about specific needs in your life today.
4. Talk to God about the specific needs of others today.
5. Ask God to speak to you. Be silent and listen. What is He saying to you through His word, prayer, and the working of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Meditate on the Passage of Scripture for the Week

Slowly read through the passage two to five times. Read it silently and then read it out loud. Slowly meditate on key words or phrases that speak to you.

1. Don't speed read or "microwave" your meditation on the passage. Thoughtfully "slow cook" God's Word and let it seep into your soul. Once again, this is a Spiritual Discipline that will take practice and patience. This is difficult in the midst of the busyness and fast pace of our lives!!
2. Take a few minutes and jot down your initial responses to meditating on the Word.
3. How is God speaking to you through this time of meditating on His Word today? How are you being encouraged, convicted, and in need of truth? Where are you struggling to hear God speak?
4. What is He trying to say to you today through this passage of His Word?
5. What Biblical truths in this passage are speaking to you regarding your relationship with God and others?

Initial Observations

1. After **meditating** and **reflecting** on the passages, begin to write down the **key themes** and **significant words** that you begin to observe in these passages about **Jesus** and the **people** He encounters “at the Well” this week.
2. List any **new questions** that surface for you as you begin your study of **Martha, Mary, Lazarus**, and their **relationship** with **Jesus** in these passages.

The Death of Lazarus

3. **Meditate and Reflect on John 11:1-5.** What **insights** and **observations** can you make about **Lazarus** and **his sisters**? What **conclusions** can be made about their **relationships with Jesus**?
4. **Meditate and reflect on John 11:6-16.** What **insights** and **observations** can you make about the **disciples** and **Jesus’ purpose** in returning to **Bethany**?
5. What is the **significance** of Jesus **delaying** His return to Bethany for **two days** and keeping Martha and Mary **waiting**?
6. How do you find yourself **relating** to the **experience** and **feelings** of Martha and Mary in this story? Are there times in your life when you **keep praying** and **waiting** and feel as if **Jesus is too late**?

Jesus Comforts Martha and Mary

7. **Meditate and reflect on John 11:17.** **Dig deeper** on the significance of **Lazarus** being in the tomb for **four days** before Jesus raised him from the dead. What were the **Jewish beliefs** about **death** and a **person’s soul** after death?
8. **Meditate and reflect on John 11:20-28, 39.** What additional **insights** and **understanding** do you gain about **Martha**, her relationship with Jesus, and **her faith** as His **follower** and disciple?
9. **Meditate and reflect on John 11:25.** What is the **significance** of Jesus saying to Martha, “**I am the resurrection and the life**”?
10. What does **Jesus mean** when he says, “He who **believes** in me **will live**, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me **will never die.**”? **Do you believe this**?
11. **Meditate and reflect on John 11:29-32.** What additional **insights** and **understanding** do you gain about **Mary**, her relationship with Jesus, and her **faith** as His **follower** and **disciple**?
12. **Meditate and reflect on John 11:33-37.** What do you **learn** about our **Lord** and **Savior** by His **response** to **Mary** and the **Jews** who were **mourning** the death of Lazarus?

Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead

13. **Meditate and reflect on John 11:38-44.** What **insights** and **understanding** do you gain about **Jesus** and **His relationship to the Father** in these verses?

Additional Study in Chapter 11 for Those Who Want to Go Deeper:

14. **Meditate and reflect on John 11:45-57.** What is the **correlation** between **Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead** and the **Jewish leaders plotting to kill Him**?

Mary Anoints Jesus before the Passover

15. **Meditate and reflect on John 12:1-11.** What further insights and understanding do you gain about **Mary**, her **faith**, and her **devotion** to Jesus from this passage?
16. **Reflect on John 11:3.** **Go deeper** in your **study** of this **expensive perfume**, nard. How much did it **cost**? What was it **used** for in that culture?
17. What is the **significance** of **Mary anointing Jesus** with a pint of **pure nard**?
18. What is the **significance** of **Mary** using her **hair** to **wipe Jesus' feet**? How was this **gesture** another **expression** of her **radical devotion** to Jesus?
19. What **factors** and **feelings** keep **you** from making **radical expressions** of **devotion** and **commitment** to Jesus?
20. **Meditate and reflect on John 12:9-11.** What **insights** and **observations** do you make about **Jesus** in this passage?
21. What is the **significance** of **Jesus' response** to **Judas Iscariot's objection** to **Mary's actions** of **devotion** and **love**?

Applications for You Meeting Jesus at the Well

What applications can you make in your faith journey this week after studying Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and Mary anointing Jesus with the expensive perfume? How does Jesus want to encounter you in new and deeper ways in your journey to be his follower?