



# Sermon Discussion Guide

## Have I Got a Surprise for You!

### Jesus Makes Headlines – Part 3

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*Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if you believe?” So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.” Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!”*

John 11:40-43 (NLT)

Have you ever had a desperate need, a heart’s cry to God that he seemed not to hear? Every one of us experiences this at some time or other. Like Jesus at Gethsemane, we hold out that cup of desperation, asking for God’s help. But where is he? From the story we read in John 11:1-44, we discover that Jesus’ timing is unique. Martha is distraught over the death of her brother Lazarus. Where was Jesus when she needed him? Oh sure, now he was coming. But it was too late! Lazarus had already died. But Jesus wanted Martha to learn about a bigger life, an eternal life that begins right now. When it came to her brother Lazarus, Jesus had a big surprise in store for Martha. Read John 11:1-44 and let’s Talk It Over.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

1. Why is it hard for us to believe Jesus empathizes with our weaknesses, pains, and difficulties?

*Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.”* John 11:41-42

2. What does Jesus thank the Father for in John 11:41? According to verse 42, what can you always count on and why?
3. Describe a difficult time in your life when God didn’t answer your prayer the way you thought he should. How did you feel? In what way did God show you he cared for you, even though his response seemed late in coming?
4. How do we build trust in God when we are experiencing fear, worry, pain, or doubt?

*“Jesus told them, “Unwrap him and let him go!”* John 11:44b (NLT)

5. Following Jesus means we don’t have to walk alone; he’s called us to community—to walk through life together. Jesus told the Lazarus crowd to “.. unwrap him ..” Why do you think Jesus make such a request? How might individuals in the crowd have felt? How do you think you would have responded?

### Diving Deeper (optional)

*I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.* Ephesians 3:16-17a

1. How would you describe Paul’s prayer for believers from Ephesians 3:16-17a? What happens when Christ empowers us?

*I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead.* Ephesians 1:19-20a

2. According to Ephesians 1:19-20a, how great is the power God has for those who believe?
3. From these two Ephesians passages, when would you say that kingdom living begins? What difference should it make for us to know that answer?
4. What happens when we walk together as the body of Christ? Is there anyone in your small group who needs “community” now?

**REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.**

### Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes



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## Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- When you were a child, what usually happened when you bugged your mom for something you “really” wanted?
- Recognize that while Jesus’ timing is almost never the same as ours, he is never late.
- Ask God to help you recognize the bigger life he has for you and determine to begin kingdom living today. Who can you or your small group come alongside to “unwrap,” in the sense of cheering them on and reminding them they are not alone? Share some ideas and next steps.

## Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

## Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.