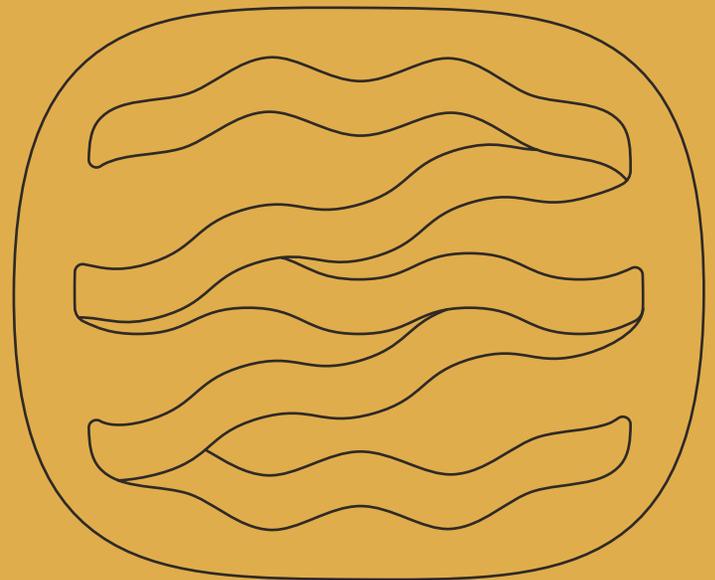
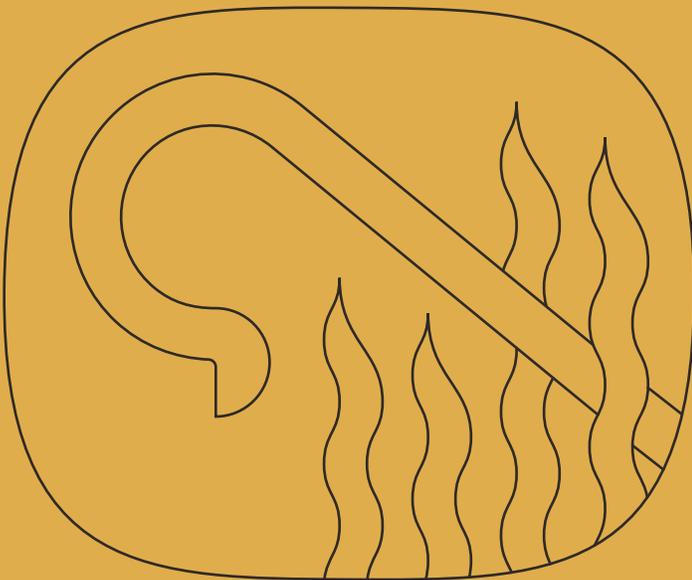


JOHN'S GOSPEL

THE TRUTH

Is Jesus God?

A Two-Week Study





Welcome to our
“Is Jesus God?” mini-study,
taken from our 30-week
course on John’s Gospel.

This mini-study is an opportunity for you to study BSF content for yourself. Whether you are intending to try a class or simply do the study on your own, we hope God speaks to you through His Word.



What is BSF?

Bible Study Fellowship is a global community of 450,000 men, women, students, and kids studying God's Word together. Each year, BSF groups study for 30 weeks, either in person or online.

How does the Bible study work?

This sample study includes two lessons. Each lesson takes one week to complete.

To get started:

1. Read and answer the questions for the assigned passage each day.
2. If completing the study in a BSF group, discuss your answers collectively each week.
3. Listen to the weekly teaching on the week's passage (with your group or via the recorded audio lecture).
4. Read the notes with the passage's historical background and life application.

Repeat for each lesson!

How do I join BSF?

If a friend has invited you to join their group, simply attend with them. Otherwise, to find a class in your local area, or to join a BSF Online group, go to join.bsfindernational.org.

We hope you enjoy using this four-fold approach to exploring God's Word in community with others. Thanks for choosing to study with Bible Study Fellowship!



8. What thoughts from John 10:7-21 or Psalm 23 encouraged you? Why?

Fourth Day: Read John 10:22-33.

Jesus's true sheep listen to His voice.

9. a. What did the curious Jews directly demand of Jesus in verse 24?

b. How did Jesus respond to their demand?

10. a. Describe the promises Jesus makes to His sheep—those who believe in and follow Him—in verses 27-28.

b. How do these words comfort or encourage you?

c. What encouragement might you share with someone you know?

11. a. What claim did Jesus make in verse 30? How did His opponents respond?

b. Why is this truth about Jesus of ultimate importance to you today?

Lesson 14 Notes

Dig deeper into this week's passage by reading the lesson notes with the passage's historical background and life application.

John 10

Focus Verse

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

Outline

- Jesus is the Good Shepherd – John 10:1-21
- Jesus is God's Son – John 10:22-42

Engage

What qualities do you look for in a leader? Our world often touts leaders with bold charisma, dynamic personalities, and a powerful presence. Strong leaders offer tangible protection and direction. They challenge our thinking and lead us forward. These qualities prove helpful, yet we also long for tender support and a sense of safety. **Good leaders understand the value of both strength and gentleness.** We need trailblazers and advocates. We need pioneers and protectors. Where are these leaders today? How do we lead like this?

Jesus opens His discourse in chapter 10 with the declaration of His fourth "I am" statement in John's Gospel: "I am the good shepherd." Jesus is God's Son, unlimited in His power and sovereign control. And yet, with boundless might at His command, Jesus tends His flock like a tender shepherd. **Jesus, the Good Shepherd, lovingly cares for those He leads.** He guides His sheep perfectly, powerfully, and personally. With Jesus as our leader, we rest in security and confidence. We can boldly follow Jesus because He will lead us where we need to go.

Jesus Is the Good Shepherd – John 10:1-21

Presenting a true picture of Jesus's character, John chronicles the continuing confrontation between the Pharisees and Jesus. Jesus's approach to leadership differed greatly from that of these self-serving religious leaders. Jesus compassionately cared for the man born blind. The Pharisees rejected this man and removed him from their domain.¹ Jesus's teaching immediately follows the religious leaders' flagrant mistreatment of the blind man. **Jesus, the Good Shepherd, sought out the man the false shepherds disdained.** The newly healed man believed in Jesus and worshiped Him.

The Old Testament helps us understand Jesus as our Good Shepherd. **The metaphor of leaders as shepherds, both good and bad, appears in many Old Testament passages.** Some

1. Rejected: John 9:22, 34

texts prophetically point to Jesus the Messiah, while others expose Israel's corrupt leaders.² This image would have been familiar to the Pharisees listening that day.

The Contrast of True and False Shepherds – 10:1-6

The Warning about False Shepherds – 10:1

Throughout this passage, Jesus describes Himself as the Shepherd of His sheep. **Jesus repeatedly contrasts His tender care with abusive, self-serving false shepherds.**

This profound teaching begins with a stark warning. **Jesus describes a false shepherd as “a thief and a robber” who enters the sheep pen but not through the gate.** Entering the sheep pen another way, the false shepherd intends to harm rather than to protect the sheep.

The Wonders of the True Shepherd – 10:2-6

The True Shepherd Rightly Comes to the Sheep – 10:2

Jesus is the True Shepherd who “enters by the gate”—the right way. He came as the promised Messiah, fulfilling Old Testament promises and prophecies.³ He was born through David's lineage as Scripture foretold.⁴ He is fully God and fully man.⁵ Jesus leads His sheep to the right kind of pasture. Not only does He show His sheep the way—Jesus is “the way.”⁶ **Jesus came as the true leader of His people, perfectly meeting the divine and human credentials God set forth.**

The True Shepherd Intimately Knows His Sheep – 10:3

Jesus knows each of His sheep by name. God's Son has an intimate, person-to-person relationship with every individual who belongs to Him.⁷ In Scripture, people's names often represent an understanding of their true nature or even a change in their character.⁸ Because Jesus knows each of His sheep by name, He leads His own with perfect knowledge of their deepest joys, fears, needs, and hopes.

The True Shepherd Purposefully Leads His Sheep – 10:4-6

Jesus Himself leads the sheep. Rather than driving them from behind, Jesus goes ahead of His children. Jesus has gone before His sheep in time—He existed in eternity past.⁹ Jesus came to earth to save sinners, secured their salvation, and will lead them to their eternal home. The writer of Hebrews called Jesus the “pioneer of their salvation.”¹⁰ As God's child, you will never go anywhere Christ has not gone before you. He will show you where to go. David captured this same thought in Psalm 23:2-3: “He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.”

An individual's voice is unique and distinctly recognizable to people who know him or her well.

Jesus's sheep recognize His voice—they will not follow a stranger. In fact, His sheep run away

2. **Shepherds in the Old Testament:** Psalm 23; Jeremiah 23:1-6; Ezekiel 34:10-12

3. **Old Testament prophecies:** Genesis 3:15; 12:2-3; Deuteronomy 18:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; 35:4-5; Micah 5:2

4. **David's lineage:** 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 89:34-37; Jeremiah 33:17; Matthew 1:1-17

5. **God in human flesh:** John 1:14

6. **Jesus is the way:** John 14:6

7. **Known by name:** Isaiah 43:1; 49:15-16; 1 Corinthians 8:3

8. **Names in Scripture:** Genesis 32:28; John 1:42; Revelation 2:17

9. **Eternity past:** John 1:1-2

10. **Pioneer of salvation:** Hebrews 2:10

when they hear a voice other than that of their trusted Shepherd. The bond between the True Shepherd and His sheep incorporates communication, relationship, and trust. At its simplest, life with Christ means knowing Him, listening for His voice, and following where He leads.

As if to illustrate by contrast what Jesus had just explained, John records that the Pharisees did not understand what Jesus was telling them. **The Pharisees did not recognize the True Shepherd's voice.** They refused to follow Him.

The Claims of Jesus – 10:7-18

I Am the Gate – 10:7-10

Those Who Enter by the Gate Choose the Right Way – 10:7-8

Since the religious leaders did not understand, Jesus explained further, changing His metaphor slightly. In verse 3, Jesus said, “The gatekeeper opens the gate.” Now, Jesus declared, “I am the gate.” Not only is Jesus the Shepherd who goes before us, He is the Gate through which the sheep enter—the way we enter eternal life. **The only way to God is through Jesus.**¹¹ No other way exists. Jesus’s exclusive claim reflects neither arrogance nor triumphalism. Jesus invites all to enter by His gate, trusting Him uniquely as Lord, Savior, Redeemer, and King.

Those Who Enter by the Gate Will Be Saved – 10:9a

Jesus said, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.” Those who come to God through personal trust in Christ find salvation—deliverance from sin and death. Salvation includes more than a future ultimate reality. Salvation impacts the totality of our personhood, encompassing not only who we were and who we are but also who we will become. **Jesus rescues sinners from sin’s past, present, and future destructive consequences.** In Christ, we escape sin’s penalty. We also find freedom from sin’s power as we long for the coming day when we will experience the complete obliteration of sin’s presence.

No matter what happens in this life, Jesus’s powerful presence abides with His children.

Those Who Enter by the Gate Will Be Safe – 10:9b

Jesus also promised, “Whoever enters through me ... will come in and go out, and find pasture.” To freely “come in and go out” signifies a safe and secure life, protected from ultimate spiritual danger. True salvation in Christ cannot be threatened by the enemy’s opposition. **Though danger remains constant in our fallen world, believers rest presently secure and ultimately safe in Jesus.** No matter what happens in this life, Jesus’s powerful presence abides with His children.¹² The Good Shepherd personally watches over His own.¹³ He will bring them safely home into His loving arms for all eternity.

Those Who Enter by the Gate Will Be Satisfied – 10:10

Jesus pronounced one final truth for those who enter by His gate. In contrast to the thief who “comes only to steal and kill and destroy,” Jesus came “that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Jesus continues to expand on the wonders of salvation. Believers are saved and safe. Christ did not come so that we might merely survive. Christ came that we may thrive in life with

11. **Only way to God:** John 14:6; Acts 4:12

12. **Powerfully present:** Isaiah 41:10; 43:1-2

13. **Watching over us:** Psalm 121

Him—both today and for eternity. **Those who come to God through faith in Christ find deep and lasting satisfaction in Christ.** Eternal life comes from the Eternal One and represents not just duration of life but quality of life.

What does “life to the full” look like for the believer? Jesus’s promise of abundant life in Him does not guarantee a long and prosperous life free from sorrow, sickness, or suffering. However, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leads His flock into green pastures and a place of flourishing. **Abundant life in Christ describes a contented life—resting with confidence in God’s willing and able provision.** No circumstance represents an emergency for God. He holds every needed resource in His almighty hands.¹⁴ God’s present power guides believers through life’s joys and challenges. Hope permeates situations that appear hopeless because God is always at work accomplishing greater purposes than we can imagine.¹⁵

I Am the Good Shepherd – 10:11-18

Jesus here offered the fourth of His seven “I am” statements in John’s Gospel: “I am the good shepherd.” **Jesus is not merely a shepherd; He is the Good Shepherd—uniquely good, true, righteous, and faithful.**

According to these verses, Jesus rightfully bears the Good Shepherd title for two reasons. First, Jesus is the Good Shepherd because He voluntarily lays down His life for His sheep. Unlike the hired hand who cares nothing for the sheep and runs away when danger threatens, the Good Shepherd sticks by His sheep. He defends them. He even willingly dies in their place. **Jesus leads His followers with self-sacrificial love.**

Second, Jesus is the Good Shepherd because He knows His sheep and His sheep know Him. This beautiful image describes the intimate relationship between Jesus and His children. We all long to fully know others and be fully known by them. Yet we also wince at the thought of our deepest sins or shortfalls being exposed for all to see. Jesus knows us fully, yet He is not ashamed or repulsed. Our sins and failings do not take Him by surprise. Our transgressions cannot diminish His love for us. **In Christ, we are fully known and truly loved.**¹⁶ We belong to Him, our Good Shepherd.

Jesus made one additional pronouncement before the Pharisees. He revealed, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.” For the first time in John’s Gospel, Jesus alludes to the mystery of the Church.¹⁷ Jesus came first to the Jews then to the Gentiles,¹⁸ the “other sheep.” **Jesus unites His followers as one, crossing all perceived boundary lines within humanity.** All who trust in Christ belong to the Good Shepherd.

Jesus concluded His remarks by reiterating His divine authority over life and death. He would lay down His life and take it up again when He rose from the grave.

14. **Needs met:** Philippians 4:19

15. **More than we imagine:** 1 Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 3:20

16. **Fully known:** 1 Corinthians 13:12

17. **Mystery of the Church:** Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:6

18. **Jews then Gentiles:** Romans 1:16

The Controversy of Jesus's Claims – 10:19-21

Jesus' emphasis on His death and resurrection provoked a mixed reaction among Jesus's hearers. Some wrote Him off as "demon-possessed and raving mad." Others pondered His declarations and the unmistakable power He demonstrated when He healed the man born blind. **Jesus's claim of divinity demands a response that divides the believing and unbelieving.**

✦ Jesus Is God's Son – John 10:22-42

Unbelief Surges – 10:22-39

The Dispute – 10:22-24

John introduces a change in setting but continues to explore the topic of Jesus's divinity. During the Festival of Dedication in Jerusalem, the Jews approached Jesus, inquiring, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." **Their demand for clarity seems to indicate that they blamed Jesus for their own lack of belief.**

The Declaration – 10:25-30

Jesus responded to the Jews' confrontational demand. He declared that His works authenticate and substantiate His Messianic claim. Then He informed them very plainly: "But you do not believe because you are not my sheep." Jesus candidly revealed the truth about their spiritual state. **The persistent unbelief of the Jewish leaders confirmed that they did not belong to Jesus's flock.**

Jesus offered even greater detail as He contrasted true and false sheep. True sheep not only know, listen to, and follow Jesus, they also rest eternally secure in the grip of His strong hand. Jesus declared, "I give [my sheep] eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." **The same hands that created the universe and formed humanity from the dust of the ground¹⁹ shield, protect, and keep forever those who trust in Jesus.**

With unabashed clarity, Jesus left no doubt about His deity as He declared, "I and the Father are one." The truth about Jesus—His divine origin, redemptive mission, and ultimate victory—does not allow neutrality. Scripture does not allow ambiguity about the fact that Jesus is fully God.²⁰ The Father and the Son are two separate persons of the Godhead but are united in nature, will, purpose, and actions.

The Death Threat – 10:31-39

In response to Jesus's claim that He and the Father are one, the Jews prepared to stone Him. Dismissing Jesus as a mere man who was asserting Himself to be God, they accused Him of blasphemy. Jesus met their accusations with two arguments. First, He looked to Scripture as a reliable witness. He referenced Psalm 82:6, which declared Israel's judges "gods." Considered a divine appointment, the role of a judge mirrored God's role as the one true Judge. God set

19. Created from dust: Genesis 2:7

20. Jesus is fully God: John 1:1, 14, 18; 17:21; Philippians 2:5-6; Colossians 2:9-10

Safe in the Good Shepherd's Fold

The Doctrine of Eternal Security

Jesus's teaching in John 10 describes the safety and security believers experience as sheep who follow the Good Shepherd. **Those who put their faith in Christ's finished work do not have to speculate about their eternal future.** Salvation cannot be obtained through human works, nor can it be forfeited when we falter. This is true because right standing in God's sight rests solely on Christ's perfection, not ours. The Holy Spirit "seals" or guarantees the eternal salvation of all people who put their faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice.¹ When God initiates the good work of salvation and redeems a sinner, He continues perfectly unhindered until salvation's glorious consummation.²

How do we explain people who first profess Christ as Savior, then later walk away from Him? While we cannot accurately assess anyone's relationship with Christ, God can. Scripture teaches that God holds fast those who genuinely trust Him for salvation. In this life, believers continue to struggle with sin and doubt. However, God's grip on the true believer is stronger than sin's pull, feelings of doubt, or the enemy's opposition.³ When doubts arise, our best focus is to passionately seek the Lord. The promises of Scripture stand firm as an anchor for the soul. **Salvation is God's work from start to glorious finish.**⁴

Many people believe their salvation can be lost. Some walk away for a time and then return. Others who walk away may never have had real trust. We cannot know—only God knows. However, if salvation depends on our wavering obedience, we live life facing eternity without certainty. We do not adequately grasp Christ's unconditional love and sustaining grace. Struggles that come when we sin cause doubts. **Christ's righteousness, not our own, secures salvation.**

What a relief to understand that our soul's security rests in Christ, not ourselves! We regularly experience the darkness lingering within our hearts. We recognize that we often love our sin more than our Savior. But we also recognize that we are sheep who hear our Shepherd's voice. When we stray, Jesus comes after us. When we falter, He holds us up. Jesus carries us through. We will persevere in faith, not because we are strong, but because Jesus is mighty.

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1. **Christ's sacrifice:** Ephesians 1:13-14
 2. **Secure until salvation's consummation:** Romans 8:29-30
 3. **No separation:** Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:6
 4. **God's work in salvation:** Romans 8:30; Philippians 1:6

Israel's judges apart for a specific, holy task. They served to exercise authority over His people. Likewise, God uniquely commissioned and set apart His Son with His preordained purpose. **Since Scripture appropriately referred to Israel's judges as "gods," certainly Jesus could accurately declare Himself as God.**

Secondly, Jesus argued if they refused to believe His words, they should at least believe His works. Jesus's miracles, including the healing of the blind man, displayed His divine authority and power. Jesus performed miraculous works as signs so that people "may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." Only the God who created life could open blind eyes and instill spiritual life within dead hearts. **Christ's words and works should lead to faith in Him.**

Belief Surfaces – 10:40-42

After the proud Pharisees rejected Jesus and sought His death, Jesus relocated across the Jordan. He went to the region where John the Baptist had formerly served, preparing the way for Jesus. John the Baptist baptized those who responded to his warnings. **In contrast to Jesus's enemies, people in this region recognized that everything John the Baptist said about Jesus was true and many believed.**

Jesus's compassion involved more than healing broken bodies. He also showed His infinite love by declaring eternal truth, confronting false shepherds, and exposing wrong thinking. Jesus's true sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd. They experience security enfolded in His true promises. **Jesus, the Good Shepherd, lovingly cares for those He leads.** The truth about Jesus demands a response. Some will resist Jesus, rejecting His claims. Others will find in Jesus a place of rescue, restoration, refreshment, and hope for all eternity. He leads with strength and gentleness; He guides perfectly, powerfully, and personally. Why would we flee from Jesus when He lovingly calls us to run to Him?

✦ Take to Heart

Hold Fast

The Pharisees mistreated the blind man Jesus had compassionately healed. In response, Jesus contrasted true and false shepherds. True shepherds lead sheep well. They know and care for their sheep. Sheep recognize the voice of their true shepherd. False shepherds seek to kill, steal, and destroy. Sheep do not recognize the voice of a false shepherd; they run away. **Jesus revealed He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep.** Jesus tenderly guides, protects, and cares for His sheep in this life and for eternity.

Jesus's words sparked intense opposition. The Pharisees directly asked Him if He was the Messiah. Jesus continued to expose their unbelief. In contrast, Jesus's sheep believe in Him. They know Him as their Good Shepherd and follow Him. Jesus's followers cannot be snatched from His strong grip. **Jesus confirmed His unity of purpose and love with the Father for His children.** The Pharisees, recognizing Jesus's claim to deity, sought to stone Him. Jesus ended His conversation with the Pharisees by challenging them to believe what He had just revealed. Jesus left and crossed the Jordan, where many people came to faith.

Apply It

A desire to be truly known rises within every human being. When we learn that God knows everything about us, we can feel equally daunted and delighted.²¹ There are realities that we might simply prefer to hide, even from God. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep. Jesus knows you intimately and has known you forever. He knows your strongest talents and greatest failures. He knows your every thought. He knows the anxieties you carry with you from childhood, your fulfilled and unfulfilled desires, your happiest times, and your most profound grief. Jesus not only knows you, He loves you. He longs to lead you to life's highest possible joy and greatest satisfaction, found in Him alone. What insecurity or fear should you confess to the Lord? What is your response to Jesus's loving care and intimate knowledge of you? How might you willingly follow God's leading? **The Good Shepherd who knows you completely loves you perfectly.** He alone can hold you eternally safe and secure.

Jesus spoke words of deep encouragement. He also offered warnings. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who guards and guides His people. He warned of false shepherds who try to gain followers while seeking to deceive and harm people. We live in a world where lies parade as truth. People with self-serving motives pretend to care about us. How do we discern between good leaders and false ones? Certainly we cannot be so wary that we trust no one! True shepherds bring clarity, not confusion. True shepherds put the welfare of those they lead over their own popularity or perceived success. True shepherds demonstrate self-sacrifice for the sake of others. True shepherds rest in God's truth. They point to Jesus. How will you depend on the Holy Spirit and God's Word to discern who to believe and follow? Everyone leads someone. What kind of a leader are you? How is God working in you to become a leader who shepherds others well? How is He equipping and enabling you to serve those entrusted to your care?

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who guards and guides His people.

Jesus the Good Shepherd raises up spiritual leaders who lead others to know and follow Him.

We often overcomplicate the Christian life. **Jesus simplified the essence of true faith: He leads and we follow.** Jesus goes ahead of us, and we walk behind Him. We train our ears to listen for His voice while we embrace His truth. We surrender our agendas or plans to His better way. We trust that He knows more than we do. We can securely rest in His loving care. When the Good Shepherd leads us to green pastures and quiet waters, we relish His refreshment and provision.²² We can trust that our Shepherd will lead us down the right paths for His name's sake.²³ When He leads us into the darkest valley, we rest in His presence and under the protection of His rod and staff.²⁴ When the Good Shepherd leads us into the very presence of our enemies, we know that He will provide everything we need at His table.²⁵ In the loving care of our Shepherd, we find goodness and love that follow us every step of our lives and into eternity.²⁶ What does following the Good Shepherd look like in your life this week? How will you trust God with the roughest challenge or deepest fear you face today? Will you choose today to follow where your Good Shepherd leads?

21. **God knows everything:** Psalm 139:13-18; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 10:29-30

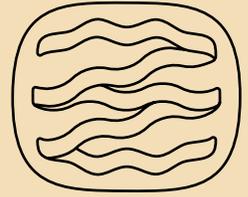
22. **Times of refreshment:** Psalm 23:2

23. **Right paths:** Psalm 23:3

24. **Dark valleys:** Psalm 23:4

25. **Presence of enemies:** Psalm 23:5a

26. **Goodness and love:** Psalm 23:6



The Raising of Lazarus

LESSON
SCRIPTURE
JOHN 11

Lesson Questions

First Day: Read Lesson 14 Notes.

The notes and lecture fortify the truth of the passage for understanding and application to daily life.

1. How did the notes help you better understand or appreciate Jesus as your Good Shepherd?

2. What teaching from the lecture helped clarify the unity of God the Father and God the Son?

Second Day: Read John 11:1-16.

Jesus learned that His friend Lazarus was seriously ill.

3. a. From verses 1-5, give details about Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and their relationship with Jesus.

b. How has God worked in your life to fortify your faith in Christ?

8. a. What did Jesus mean in verses 25-26? (Use other Scripture passages you may know.)

b. How are Jesus's words significant for you today?

Fourth Day: Read John 11:28-44.

After consoling Mary, Jesus called Lazarus to rise from the dead.

9. a. Why was Jesus "deeply moved in spirit and troubled" as He spoke with Mary and arrived at Lazarus's tomb?

b. How does Jesus's reaction impact your personal relationship with Him?

c. What is meaningful to you about verse 35?

10. Why was it important for Jesus to pray to His Father before raising Lazarus?

11. a. What two commands did Jesus give concerning Lazarus before he could live a new life?

- b. How does Jesus's miraculous gift of physical life to Lazarus compare with the miraculous gift of spiritual life to believers? (See also John 3:5, 8; 8:32; Romans 6:5-7, 11-14; Ephesians 2:1, 4-5; and any other Scriptures to support your answer.)

Fifth Day: Read John 11:45-57.

After this amazing miracle, Jesus left Bethany, awaiting Passover.

12. What were the different reactions and responses to Jesus's miracle among those who witnessed or heard of it?
13. a. What phrases expressed the frustrations and fears of the Sanhedrin regarding Jesus?
- b. What was their primary focus and motivation, and what warning does this give you?
14. What was the significance of the words of the high priest in verses 49-50? What do you learn about God from these words? (See also John 3:16.)

Sixth Day: Review John 11.

Jesus's resurrection power overcomes death.

15. How has learning about Jesus's resurrection power strengthened your faith and trust in Him?

Passage Discovery (homiletics, word study, etc.) for Group and Administrative Leaders: John 11

Next step: Listen to the lecture.

Lesson 15 Notes

John 11

Focus Verse

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?’” (John 11:25-26)

Outline

- The Delay of Love – John 11:1-16
- The Defeat of Death – John 11:17-44
- The Deliberation of Enemies – John 11:45-57

Engage

Death. This word and its reality, unlike any other, introduce humanity to deep grief, piercing trauma, unimaginable loss, and shattered hopes. **Death runs directly counter to God's design for life.** God wants us to experience flourishing, abundant, glorious, and eternal life. He created people with a unique capacity to know and relate to Him. However, sin's entrance into the world brought death,¹ and death brings separation—from life, from loved ones, and from God. As much as we desire to avoid death, we can expect it as a natural consequence of living in a fallen world.²

By God's grace, death is not the end of the story. Immediately after Adam and Eve's original sin, God promised a Redeemer.³ Our Father fulfilled that promise by giving us a “last Adam”—His own Son.⁴ **Jesus's resurrection power overcomes death.** Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, foreshadowing His redeeming triumph to come. God's Son defeated death on the cross, rose victoriously from the grave, and gives new, eternal life to all who put their faith in Him.

1. **Sin's entrance:** Genesis 3:19

2. **Dead in sin:** Romans 1:32; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13

3. **Promised Redeemer:** Genesis 3:15

4. **Last Adam:** 1 Corinthians 15:42-49

✦ The Delay of Love – John 11:1-16

From this point in John's Gospel, Jesus's ministry gains momentum toward the cross. Jesus stopped for an emotion-packed reunion with cherished friends and a stunning demonstration of victory over death. Like all miracles in John's Gospel, this purposefully recorded sign of Lazarus's miraculous resurrection calls people to believe in Jesus.

The Urgent Message – 11:1-3

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were siblings, and all three were close friends of Jesus. They lived in the town of Bethany, nearly 2 miles (3.2 km) southeast of Jerusalem on the road to Jericho. John identifies Mary as the woman who poured perfume on Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair, an incident chronicled in the next chapter.¹ John's first readers would likely have been familiar with this event.

Lazarus was gravely ill. In urgent despair, his sisters sought the immediate help of their friend and Lord, Jesus Christ. They stated their need directly to Jesus but did not dictate a solution. Their message, "Lord, the one you love is sick," indicates a deep affection between Jesus and Lazarus.

Jesus's Glory – 11:4-6

Jesus's Encouraging Response – 11:4

Upon hearing the serious news about His dear friend, Jesus replied, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." Jesus did not mean that Lazarus would recover naturally from his illness. Rather, Jesus indicated that death would not win the ultimate victory. **Lazarus's death would offer an opportunity to glorify both the Father and the Son.** God is glorified when His true nature is made known.² This miracle would also glorify Jesus by revealing His divine identity, authority, and power.³ Blessings would come through the Father's perfect will, plan, and timing. Like the sun's slow rise that paints the sky at dawn, our emerging grasp of God's glory often requires time.

Often, God works more slowly or differently than we desire or expect. The frustrating delays we experience call us to trust God's higher purposes but never indicate a lack of love or concern for us.

Jesus's Surprising Delay – 11:5-6

Jesus did not rush to Lazarus's bedside; He deliberately delayed for two days. This unexpected delay should be seen against the backdrop of Jesus's love for Lazarus and his sisters. Often, God works more slowly or differently than we desire or expect. The frustrating delays we experience call us to trust God's higher purposes but never indicate a lack of love or concern for us. Every hour of every day, in every place, and in each situation, Jesus trusted His Father's timing for the work He was sent to do. Jesus experienced every emotion we do but remained committed to His Father's plan.

While Jesus intentionally waited, Lazarus died. **Jesus's patient obedience would result in greater joy and a far greater miracle than healing a sick man.** Jesus's sensitivity to the Father's perfect timing would reveal His divine power, grow Mary's and Martha's faith despite their pain, and lead many to believe in Him.

1. **Jesus's anointing:** John 12:1-8

2. **God's glory:** Psalms 19:1-4; 108:5; Isaiah 6:3; Romans 1:20

3. **Christ's glory:** John 1:14; 17:5; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Hebrews 1:3

Light over Darkness – 11:7-10

The Right Time to Go to Judea – 11:7-8

When Jesus announced, “Let us go back to Judea,” His alarmed disciples reminded Him of the danger posed by His enemies there.⁴ **God’s purposes, not people’s perceptions, governed Jesus’s plans.** He delayed traveling to Bethany in Judea when He received the urgent plea of Mary and Martha. Two days later, Jesus proceeded against His disciples’ objections yet in alignment with His Father’s timeline.

The Light that Led Them to Judea – 11:9-10

Jesus came into the world to shine His light into the world’s darkness. “Are there not twelve hours of daylight?” Jesus asked. “Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”

Typically, people work during daytime hours. The 12 hours of daylight Jesus mentioned refer to His divinely appointed life span and mission on earth. **Jesus would not stumble as He unrelentingly walked in the daylight of God’s appointed plan.** Jesus’s path of obedience led to suffering but also revealed God’s glory. God’s light would not diminish, even when darkness descended upon Jesus as He died on the cross. Jesus’s work of redemption remained His steadfast goal.

Jesus and those who follow Him walk in His light and will not stumble eternally. Jesus’s light continues to shine today through the lives of believers. God sustains His light from generation to generation until Jesus’s return, when He will bring in the new heavens and new earth.⁵ Those who reject Jesus stumble and remain in darkness. They suffer spiritual blindness and deception by Satan, the prince of this world.⁶ They await a second death—eternal separation from God.⁷

A Great Awakening – 11:11-15

Jesus prepared His disciples for the coming miracle. He spoke metaphorically by saying, “Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” The confused disciples understood the recuperative qualities of rest but failed to comprehend what Jesus meant. **Seeing his disciples’ confusion, Jesus clearly stated, “Lazarus is dead,” setting the stage for a greater sign that revealed His eternal purpose.**

Most scholars believe Lazarus likely died the day Jesus received the message. When Jesus got there, Lazarus had already been dead for four days. Jesus knew Lazarus’s death would bring glory to God. **Lazarus’s resurrection would reveal an unprecedented display of Jesus’s power as well as a powerful call to faith.**

4. **Threats against Jesus:** John 10:31-39

5. **No more night:** Revelation 22:5

6. **Blindness and deception:** John 12:31; 1 Corinthians 1:20; 2 Corinthians 4:4

7. **Second death:** Revelation 2:11; 21:8

Courageous Commitment – 11:16

John records Thomas's rather despairing words. As he considered Jesus's announcement that they were headed to Judea, Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." **His words may appear as a fatalistic surrender to certain death, yet Thomas's statement was more likely an expression of bold and brave commitment.** No disciple challenged Thomas's declaration. All the disciples accompanied Jesus to Bethany.

In some ways, Thomas's blend of loyalty and fear mirrors our internal battle as we desire to follow God while counting the cost. His words also foreshadowed the future awaiting Jesus's band of disciples. Jesus would eventually die. Each of the disciples would be persecuted, and most would die as martyrs. **Even in the face of physical death, the disciples chose not to be separated from Jesus.** They desired to be in no other place than in the light of their Lord.⁸

✦ The Defeat of Death – John 11:17-44

As humans, we tend to approach death with hesitation, fear, and trembling. Whether contemplating our own death or paying respects to a loved one, we reluctantly face the inevitable end of human life. **Jesus did not fear death—He defeated it.** In Bethany and on His way to the cross, Jesus approached death head-on. The resurrection He was about to perform foreshadowed His own resurrection and the future resurrection awaiting believers. Jesus meets us in our deepest grief and offers hope beyond the grave.

Encountering Martha – 11:17-27

Death in the Air – 11:17-20

When Jesus neared Bethany, He encountered the sights and sounds of mourning. By this time, Lazarus had been in the grave for four days. Crowds of people who loved the family walked from Jerusalem to comfort them. **When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went to meet Him.** Jesus's presence would provide comfort to His hurting friends.

Martha's Lament – 11:21-22

Martha greeted Jesus while Mary stayed behind. Martha's honest opening words to Jesus reflect faith blended with disappointment: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." This "if only" statement should not be seen as a rebuke of her Lord. **Martha expressed deep sorrow entwined with confidence that Jesus could have prevented her brother's death.**

Jewish tradition in that day held that a person's soul hovered over its corpse for three days, desiring to reenter the body. According to that belief, on the fourth day, when the face of the dead began to decompose, the soul would leave, and any hope was gone. **At this point, Lazarus's death was indisputable.**

8. Life of faith: John 6:68; 10:10

Even in her pain, Martha went on to express sincere faith in her Lord, saying, “But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” We cannot be sure what Martha meant as she moved from “if only” to “I know.” However, she did not expect an immediate resurrection.

Martha trusted Jesus with faith poised to grow.

The Promise of Resurrection – 11:23-24

Jesus met Martha’s words with an amazing promise: “Your brother will rise again.” Martha’s response reflected Jewish theology and her certainty that Lazarus would be resurrected at the last day.⁹ With faith-stretching purposefulness, Jesus would move Martha’s faith beyond knowing what He could have done in the past and into believing what He would do in the future. She did not yet grasp the full and present impact of Jesus’s words.

The Power of Resurrection – 11:25-27

Jesus’s next words to Martha contain both eternal truth and a personal challenge. **First, Jesus stated that He alone is the source and giver of life.** Jesus declared, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”

John intentionally recorded a series of statements that reveal Jesus’s divine identity and eternal power. Jesus had previously revealed Himself as the source of living water,¹⁰ the Bread of Life,¹¹ and the Light of the World.¹² He would later refer to Himself as the way, the truth, and the life.¹³ **Christ alone has the authority to give life.**¹⁴ Those who believe in Jesus receive eternal life beyond the earthly grave and in God’s presence forever.¹⁵

Next, Jesus asked Martha the most important question anyone can ever be asked: “Do you believe this?” **Jesus lovingly took Martha from an intellectual grip on eternal truth to a personal affirmation of her faith.** With concrete words, Martha stated her personal conviction about Jesus: “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” To believe Jesus is to accept the gift of eternal life.

Encountering Mary – 11:28-37

Martha hurried to her sister. Still crushed by grief, Mary immediately went to Jesus, her Comforter, who had asked to see her. **Completely helpless, Mary fell at Jesus’s feet.** She repeated Martha’s lament, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Perhaps the sisters had previously discussed this thought.

Jesus revealed His compassionate heart as He shared the pain of His loved one.¹⁶ Surrounded by bitter grief and the stark reality of death, Jesus joined His friends in sorrow over their loss. Verse 35 captures the magnitude of this moment in two strikingly simple and poignant words, “Jesus wept.” The tears Jesus shed at Lazarus’s tomb reveal His compassion for humanity’s

9. **Prophecy of resurrection:** Daniel 12:2-3

10. **Living water:** John 4:10-14

11. **Bread of Life:** John 6:35-41

12. **Light of the World:** John 8:12

13. **Way, truth, life:** John 14:6-7

14. **Giver of life:** John 1:4; 10:10; 17:1-2; Ephesians 2:1-5; Colossians 3:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16

15. **Resurrection:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57

16. **Jesus’s compassion:** Isaiah 53:3-4; Matthew 8:17; Hebrews 2:17; 4:14-16; 5:7

plight and His identification with our emotions and struggles. The people watching noted Jesus's love for His friend. Today, we continue to marvel at Jesus's heart of compassion for the pain we experience in this world.

Encountering Lazarus – 11:38-44

The Stench of Death – 11:38-40

Still gripped by grief, Jesus commanded that the stone be removed. Martha recognized the audacity of this request and correctly expressed that death not only stings—death also stinks. Also, contact with a dead body would result in being declared ceremonially unclean. But Jesus had a greater purpose: He would deepen their faith, display His resurrection power, and glorify God.

Unity with the Father – 11:41-42

Throughout His life and ministry, Jesus turned to His Father in trust and surrender.¹⁷ As the stone was removed, Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." **God the Father and God the Son remain united in purpose to display and deploy resurrection power.**¹⁸

Into the Light of Life – 11:43-44

With a loud shout, Jesus commanded, "Lazarus, come out!" Imagine the silent, dramatic pause of that moment with so much at stake: a beloved man dead four days; a crowd consumed by curiosity—many on the brink of belief; and Jesus's exposure of His righteous reputation, Messianic claims, and divine authority.

A bandaged body emerged from the dank darkness of death into the light of life. **Lazarus was alive!** Freed from death's grip, Lazarus, Jesus's friend, received new life. "Take off the grave clothes," Jesus said, "and let him go." The garments of death no longer suited the resurrected Lazarus. This miraculous display of Jesus's power and authority became deeply vivid and personal.

✦ The Deliberation of Enemies – John 11:45-57

Division Increases – 11:45-53

Eternity-Impacting Faith – 11:45

Jesus's pivotal miracle at Bethany demanded a response. People saw or heard of Jesus's undeniable power over death. **Many came to faith in Jesus, which changed the trajectory of their lives for eternity.** Their newfound belief in Jesus as Messiah sealed them as eternal residents of God's kingdom, saving them from eternal death and separation from God.¹⁹

17. **Jesus and the Father:** John 8:29

18. **Resurrection power:** John 5:19-21

19. **Eternal life:** John 3:16-21

Murderous Conspiracy – 11:46-53

Jesus's undeniable miracle also ignited fierce unbelief and opposition. Some who witnessed this miracle went to the Pharisees, who called a meeting of the elite religious counsel, the Sanhedrin.

Upon hearing the undeniable news of Lazarus's resurrection, the religious leaders conspired. They neither rejoiced nor turned to faith in Jesus. **Instead of accepting Jesus as Savior, they considered Him a threat to their power and influence.** Their concerns were:

- What were they accomplishing by doing nothing?
- Jesus was performing many miraculous signs.
- If they allowed Jesus to continue, everyone would believe in Him.
- As a result, the Romans would intervene to hold onto their control of the nation.

With cold-blooded calculation, Caiaphas, the high priest, suggested a plan: remove the troublemaker and, therefore, remove the trouble. Caiaphas unconsciously and providentially uttered Messianic prophecy as he stated, "You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." Caiaphas unknowingly and ironically stated profound truth—Jesus would die so whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.²⁰ **God sovereignly causes even the wrath of evil men to accomplish His purposes.** Caiaphas's words stoked the plot to kill Jesus.

Withdrawal but Not Retreat – 11:54-57

With Passover on the horizon, the Lord's crucifixion drew ever nearer. God's timing, not the Sanhedrin's plot, dictated when God's Son would offer His atoning sacrifice. With death plots brewing, Jesus and the disciples withdrew to the desert until six days before Passover. The raising of Lazarus clearly proved Jesus's divine authority and identity. In due time, Jesus, God's Passover Lamb, would accomplish His mission to save His people through His death and glorious resurrection. **Jesus's resurrection power overcomes death.**

✦ Take to Heart

Hold Fast

Jesus heard about the serious illness of His dear friend Lazarus and intentionally waited two days before going to Bethany. Lazarus died during this delay. Jesus arrived to meet Martha, Mary, and their fellow mourners, who were consumed by grief. **The Lord transformed Lazarus's painful death into a glorious and transcendent moment.** Through this heartbreaking situation, Jesus revealed His character, power, and love for His people. In God's good time, everyone who believes in Him will ultimately be blessed.

Jesus built up the faith of Martha and Mary as He raised Lazarus back to life. This spectacular miracle demonstrated Jesus's divine resurrection power in undeniable ways.

²⁰. Whoever believes: John 3:16

Deliverance from Death

The Doctrine of Resurrection

John records Jesus's miracles as "signs" that purposefully reveal truth about Him. The miracle of Lazarus's resurrection is John's seventh example of Jesus's power and authority. Jesus's sign of raising Lazarus foreshadowed His own death-shattering and hell-defeating resurrection. This miracle also points toward the glorious resurrection of all who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Jesus's death on the cross paid sin's price in full, redeeming all God's children. **Jesus's resurrection claimed victory over death for all who trust Him for salvation.** Jesus's resurrection stands as a foundational pillar of the Christian faith.¹ Lazarus was raised up only to face death again later, but every believer anticipates a future resurrection to a glorified body with no death on the other side. The raising of Lazarus points to this future reality.

While we await our resurrection after death, Jesus's resurrection power works within God's children today. Redeemed believers, indwelt and sealed by His Holy Spirit, die to their old ways of living—freed from sin's bondage and reborn to live in joyful obedience to God's will and ways.² **Jesus Christ brings new resurrection life to dead hearts.**³ God calls believers to be salt and light on earth. He commissions His people as witnesses to Jesus Christ and His kingdom.⁴ Just as Jesus was raised, all believers will be resurrected in glorious bodies prepared for eternity.⁵ Jesus's resurrection promises that all who believe in Him will be raised again to life eternal.

Without understanding Jesus's victory over death, people live without hope—gripped by the fear of death.⁶ Death's shadow looms large for everyone, despite efforts to ignore or postpone the unavoidable approach of mortality. To see Jesus's resurrection as a myth means forsaking humanity's only hope for recovering everything that death steals away.

Job expressed well the hope that upholds every believer: "I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God."⁷ **Jesus's resurrection made Him the firstfruits of those who die and are raised to eternal life.**⁸ God's resurrected children will enjoy freedom from all darkness, pain, suffering, sin, and death. They will dwell in the eternal presence of God in the new heaven and new earth to come.⁹ Because of Jesus's resurrection power, death does not speak the final word.

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1. **Resurrection:** 1 Corinthians 15
 2. **New ways:** Ephesians 4:22-24
 3. **New life:** John 3:3-8; Romans 8:11
 4. **Salt and light:** Matthew 5:13-16
 5. **Future resurrection:** Philippians 3:20-21
 6. **Fear of death:** Hebrews 2:14-15
 7. **Redeemer lives:** Job 19:25-26
 8. **Firstfruits:** 1 Corinthians 15:20-23
 9. **Eternal joy:** Revelation 21:3-5

It pointed to Jesus's coming resurrection and the resurrected life He would bring His people by dying Himself. Death has no hold on Jesus. He reigns victoriously over sin's power and death's devastation.

Not everyone believed in Jesus, despite the awesome display of His resurrection power. However, even those who opposed Jesus ultimately served God's purpose. **Though people stumble in darkness, God's light prevails, extinguishing all darkness, suffering, pain, and death forever.** Until then, believers await Jesus's return and serve joyfully as His witnesses. Come, Lord Jesus!

Apply It

Our walk through this fallen world inevitably brings trouble and grief. How blessed we are to know that we do not face our distress alone! Jesus came to Martha and Mary amid their pain. He does not merely acknowledge our grief from a safe, sterile distance. Jesus experienced the incredible loss and separation imposed by death and sin firsthand. **The things that make us sad move Jesus's heart.**²¹ What deep hurt or painful loss are you facing today? How will you find strength by acknowledging Jesus's genuine compassion for you? Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb, sharing His friends' grief while anticipating a victory they could not fathom. Whatever you face today, Jesus knows, cares, and will accomplish more than you can conceive through His power. What might it look like for you to trust God with your deepest burden today?

Jesus tenderly moved Martha from "if only" to "I know" to "I believe." **Life's hardships provide an opportunity to seek God, see Him work, and trust His greater purposes.** Our faith often stumbles when we lament the past or enumerate what did not happen. "If only I had been a better parent, wife, husband..." "If only I had handled that situation differently or made a better decision..." Like Martha, we can mourn the past and feel paralyzed in the present, even when we cognitively believe God's promises for the future. What do you know about God that grants stabilizing perspective to today's trauma? What promise is God calling you to believe, not just to provide distant future hope but to find strength for today? How will God move you from "if only" to "I know" to "I believe"? God uses even the fallen condition of this world for the good of His people and for His glory.

Death continues to steal our loved ones. We long for hope as we attend funerals. Facing this world's evil and our own sinfulness causes us great pain. God loves sinners so much that He does not leave us stuck in sin or paralyzed by death's reverberating siren. Because of Jesus, we can weep, mourn, and rejoice simultaneously. God specializes in turning grief into joy, tears into triumph, despair into hope, and death into life.²² This world's troubles awaken within us a desire for what only God can provide. The divine power that raised Lazarus and Jesus from the dead brings spiritual life to our sin-deadened hearts. Through faith in Christ, sinners are rescued from wasted life as well as death's curse.²³ Have you declared your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? If not, will you receive His gift of new life, shed your grave clothes, and follow Him? If you do believe, how does your life reflect appreciation, awe, and wonder over what Christ accomplished for you and all sinners? What struggle in your life needs Jesus's transformational resurrection power to live according to His will and ways? **Because of Jesus, sin and death do not win.**

21. **Jesus's heart:** Matthew 11:28-30

22. **Grief to joy:** Isaiah 61:1-3; Revelation 21:4

23. **Wasted life:** 1 Peter 1:18-19

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