

*Jacob's Well*

**Lesson Title:** Loss and Grief—Grieving With Hope



**Key Concept:** In a broken world, loss and grief are inevitable. As Christians we experience loss and grief; yet we grieve with hope.



**Scriptures:**

But some said, “This man healed a blind man. Couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying?”

(John 11:37 *New Living Translation*)

And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13 *New Living Translation*)

**Context Scriptures:** John 11:1–40; John 4; John 14; 2 Corinthians 4:18; 1 Peter 1:3–6; Psalm 116:15



**Lesson Thoughts:**

The death of Lazarus is a story about loss and grief. A God-fearing family and community were grief-stricken by an unexpected loss. Lazarus, a beloved brother of Mary and Martha, and a friend of Jesus, became sick and died. When Lazarus fell gravely ill, word was sent to Jesus—who was in another town—to quickly attend to his friend and heal him. The two sisters had faith that Jesus would heal their brother. But that didn’t happen. Jesus showed up “too late,” and their brother died. As Jesus arrived to a sorrowful and mourning household, many people had gathered to share in their grief with Mary and Martha.

Grief is a normal response to loss, but there are two responses to grief in this story. Martha provides an example of a Christian’s response to loss: though she grieved her brother’s death, she grieved with hope. Martha’s words to Jesus, “Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:21), was an honest expression of

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her grief, not an expression of doubt and unbelief. Even in grief, her confidence in Jesus was rooted in her belief that the power of God was in him. Although she may not have expected that he would raise Lazarus from the dead that day, her response demonstrated her hope in Jesus. She understood that through him—the Resurrection and the Life—Lazarus would rise “at the last day.” But she didn’t have to wait that long!

The others who had gathered responded differently from Martha. Their grief was distorted by sorrow and suffering. When Jesus didn’t do what was expected of him, it created unbelief and doubt in his power. “Jesus wept,” and he was present with them in their grief. But he was also troubled and angered at what loss without hope looked like (John 11:33–35).

There’s a saying, “a crisis in life causes a crisis of faith.” For Martha, her brother’s death was not a crisis of faith. She held onto hope amid grief. Christians are allowed to—and should—grieve. Grief is not a sign of doubt, although it can cause us to lose sight of hope. As believers we can share in both our grief *and* our hope. While death creates a temporary separation from our loved ones, Jesus conquered hell, death, and the grave. Through the Resurrection and the Life, all believers will share in the hope of being reunited at the last day!

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Which of the responses to grief in this story do you relate to? Why?
- 2) How do you respond when God’s timing seems wrong? What can you learn about God’s timing from this story?
- 3) Do you think grieving shows doubt and unbelief? Why? Why not?
- 4) How does normalizing grief create a healthy response to loss?
- 5) What does grieving with hope look like?

**Next Lesson:** Children

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**Notes and Reflections**

- 1) Read the story of Lazarus in John 11:1–44 with particular attention to how Jesus responded to the sorrow of the people (Mary, Martha, the disciples, and the community). What does it tell us about how God views grief and suffering? How does it challenge our own personal and/or cultural beliefs about grief?
- 2) Listen to the song, “Help Is On The Way (Maybe Midnight)” by Toby Mac. In what ways does this song encourage you to have hope in the midst of grief?

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**Notes and Reflections, cont.**