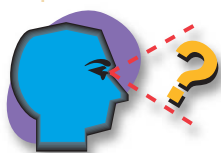


# John



## Responses to the Questions

NOTE: BE SURE TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS YOURSELF BEFORE READING THE ANSWERS IN ORDER TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS STUDY.

### Read John 11:1-57

1. John refers to Mary, Martha and Lazarus as if we, his audience, already know them. Thus, in mentioning them in his gospel, John assumes his readers have met these friends of Jesus in the other gospels, particularly the Gospel of Luke. Luke 10:38-41 tells of Jesus' visit to the home of Mary and Martha. John 12:1-11 also details more of the story of Jesus' interaction with Mary, Martha and Lazarus.
2. If you recall from Lesson 12, we learned from John's gospel and from the prophet Isaiah that not all suffering is punishment, nor does it entail guilt. Isaiah helped us to understand that God's sending us suffering does not mean he is punishing us. In verse 3 of today's reading, Jesus tells us that "This illness [of Lazarus] is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it." Further, in verse 6, we are told, "So when he heard that he was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was." Jesus' staying put instead of going to Lazarus while he was still alive *seems to imply* that Jesus permitted Lazarus to die. This is, at least in part, the claim of Lazarus' sisters who both say to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" in verses 21 and 32. As *Catechism* no. 1521 explains, and as we learned in Lesson 12, suffering can be a gift from God, an honor bestowed by Christ through the Holy Spirit that allows us to share in "the passion of Christ." As Jesus himself notes in verse 3, suffering can be used—and is often used—as a means to bring about "the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it." While it is our human temptation to believe that the suffering which befalls us is always a curse or punishment, we ought to try to humbly heed the loving message of the Gospels—God permits those he especially loves to suffer so as to bring about the glory of his Father. Suffering with Christ and in Christ is an honor, a favor, a gift given us by our loving Father. In this sense, Jesus gave Lazarus and Mary and Martha a gift in not preventing Lazarus' death.
3. As noted in verses 21 and 32, Mary and Martha are surprised that Jesus does not come to them sooner than he does. The disciples, however, in verse 8, express surprise at the fact that Jesus is actually going to go to the town of Bethany in Judea. "Are you going there again?" the disciples ask Jesus after reminding him that the Jews "were but now seeking to stone [Him]." The disciples knew Jesus loved Lazarus, Mary and Martha very much, yet they expressed surprise when Jesus stated he wanted to go and be with the family. To understand why Jesus responds to the disciples the way he does, we must try to remember what we've already learned about light and darkness through John's gospel. If we recall, Lesson 1 (John 1:1-18) revealed to us that Jesus is "the true light that enlivens every man" (v. 9), that darkness is an image of sin, death, ignorance, corruption and the devil (v. 5) and that night is an image of oppression and evil (Lesson 4; John 3:1-36; verses



## Responses to the Questions (cont.)

19-21 in particular). The disciples' minds are clouded by ignorance as they ask Jesus about his wanting to go to Bethany. They cannot see according to the "Light." They cannot see what marvels Jesus can work through Lazarus' death and how much glory it will bring to God. Jesus knew this was an opportunity to enlighten and enliven the souls of many. The heightened political tensions and threat of death could not keep Jesus from being the true "Light" of the world. To refrain from going to Judea would allow oppression to triumph over freedom and would keep Jesus from saving many souls. Sometimes iniquity may come upon us for doing good, but this does not mean we ought not go and perform the good works of the Lord.

4. In verses 22 and 24-27, we learn that Martha has great faith. She believes God will give Jesus whatever he asks for. She truly believes that Jesus could've kept Lazarus from dying. She believes in the resurrection on the last day and she believes that Jesus is the Son of God—God revealed in the flesh in this the world. She states all of these things without hesitation. But did she believe Jesus would/could raise Lazarus from the dead? By her response in verse 24, we see that Martha did not, at least at first, totally understand the meaning behind, "Your brother will rise again" (v. 23). Yet, when Jesus asks her if she believes that he is the resurrection and the life and that whoever believes in him shall live and never die, she says yes. Even if she could not completely understand the implications of what Jesus was saying, she had a deep-seated belief in Jesus in her heart. In verse 40, we see that it is this belief in him that helps to bring about the glory of God—the raising of Lazarus from the dead.
5. In verse 33, we read that Jesus was "deeply moved in spirit" and "troubled." In verse 35, we read that he "wept." Through these verses, John brings home the fact that in his humanity Jesus experienced the full range of human emotions. (See the section in *Points to Ponder* titled, "The Raising of Lazarus" for a more in-depth discussion of Jesus' reactions in these three verses.) Jesus is also troubled by their lack of faith in the face of death. Likewise, it is in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus is deeply distressed and troubled, and even sorrowful unto the point of death (cf. Matthew 26:46; Mark 14:32-41; Luke 22:39-46).
6. Jesus is always in touch with his Father. In other words, he and God the Father are in perpetual communication with one another. This fact is revealed to us in Jesus' statement in verse 42. God knew that Jesus was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, and Jesus did not need to ask him in order to do so. But that those standing by (and those of us reading the account) might believe that Jesus does nothing by his own accord, he thanks God publicly for hearing his prayer to raise Lazarus from the dead. He says these words aloud so that all might believe he is the Son of God, a Son sent forth from God himself.
7. Following the account of Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead, John says nothing about the sisters' reaction or Lazarus' reaction to having been resurrected. There must be more important things to note. (See next question.)



## Responses to the Questions (cont.)

8. Many of the Jews began to believe in Jesus as a result of his raising Lazarus from the dead. Yet, some of the Jews did not. Not only did some Jews simply not believe in him, they used the miracle he performed as a catalyst to gather a council to figure out how to keep Jesus from performing signs and converting people. The solution the Sanhedrin came up with was to have Jesus put to death. The resurrection of Lazarus is viewed as such a threat because the act so visibly symbolizes the life Jesus gives every person who believes in him. As the Jews note in verse 48, "If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." Jesus had become—more than ever—a threat to them; a threat that they believed had to be eliminated.
9. No, Lazarus is not the only person Jesus raised from the dead. In Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:41-42 and Luke 8:40-56, we read about Jesus bringing back from the dead Jairus' daughter, and the widow's son in Luke 7:11-15.
10. Jesus knew raising Lazarus from the dead was going to bring about the plot to kill him, yet he still went to the home of Mary and Martha and he still brought Lazarus back from the dead. At the time he did so, however, there was not an organized plot to kill him, but only a real and present threat. Plus, Jesus is in charge of the events of his death—even to the last breath (cf. John 19:28-30). Since it was not yet his time to die, Jesus laid low for a while after the resurrection of Lazarus to allow time for certain events to transpire.