Community Group Study – John 11:17-37 (Study Guide)

The main goal of this week's study is to reflect on what we should do when God lets the worst-case scenario happen.

Introduction

As an opening icebreaker or discussion, answer one or both of the following questions:

1. **How do you generally react when you're waiting on someone who is delayed, when you don't know why? For example, do you get anxious, angry, annoyed, etc.?**
2. **Share an example of how someone cared for you in a particularly meaningful way in a hard time. For example, a phone call, a card, a meal, just showing up, etc.**

Bible Study

The sermon was on John 11:17-37. We preached from this text at Zoe on 10/18/26 in a sermon called "Where Do I Go When I'm Grieving?"

John 11:17 Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. 20 So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

John 11:28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. 34 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."

35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

This passage continues the Lazarus narrative. It covers Martha and Mary's reactions to their grief and to Jesus, and it shows how God meets us in our suffering.

Note: If your group is large, consider splitting into smaller groups to go through the discussion questions below.

Word: Studying the Text

The sermon had three points:

I. The profession, which was about learning to believe what you already know (Martha) (17-27)
II. The posture, which was about where to go when you don't know what to do (Mary) (28-32)
III. The passion, which was about how God meets us in our suffering (Jesus) (33-37)

3. **How do Martha's first words to Jesus show that she still has faith, despite her confusion and struggle over her brother's death (verses 21-24)?**
4. **Jesus turns Martha's gaze from the future resurrection to himself, saying, "I am the resurrection and the life" (verse 25). What specifically does this "I am" statement say about Jesus, beyond the fact that it reveals his divine identity?**
5. **Martha has right knowledge, but Jesus wants to take her from knowing to believing. He asks her "Do you believe this?" (verse 26). What is the difference between knowing and believing? How does Martha respond?**
6. **Mary's response differs from Martha's. She does not affirm her orthodox doctrine, and she questions Jesus in words similar to Martha's. However, what does Mary do that demonstrates her faith? How does this instruct us in our times of grief?**

Optional follow-up: Why is it often not our first instinct to go to God in the midst of grief?

7. **Pastor Jesse explained that when Jesus was "deeply moved" (verse 33) it means he was angry. Who or what was Jesus angry at, and why did he weep?**

Worship: Getting to the Heart

8. **Pastor Jesse recommended three applications of the sermon. The first was to stockpile truth for the future day of suffering – that is, learn and internalize biblical truth before it's relevant to your situation. What is the wisdom in doing this? Have you ever been able to draw on biblical truth when you have suffered?**
9. **Pastor Jesse also recommended "practicing surrender" – that is, growing in trust of Jesus now, before the time of trial. How can this be beneficial?**

10. **Pastor Jesse also instructed us to remember Jesus's sorrow, to remember that he wept for his friend. Why is this important for us to remember?**

Work: Being Doers of the Word

11. **In light of the sermon, how can you prepare *now* to suffer well in the future?**

Prayer Time

Break up into single-gender prayer groups. Spend time in prayer lifting one another up. Feel free to share any personal prayer requests as well and pray for those.