

PREPARATION

Spend the week studying John 11:1-50. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

DETERMINE | which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

PRAY | for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members and their openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT | To live the supernatural life, you need to understand God's love and live for His purposes.

◦ Remember the 4 Rules for Small Group Discussion

- 1. Confidentiality.** What's said in the group stays in the group.
- 2. No cross-talk.** Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
- 3. No fixing.** We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
- 4. Sharing.** Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

This week your group will discuss the seventh and last sign in John's Gospel: the raising of Lazarus from the dead. From our viewpoint, each of Jesus' miraculous signs have gotten more difficult. But from God's viewpoint, there is no degree of difficulty. The same God that can turn water into wine has the power to raise the dead. God gives you supernatural power over your greatest enemies, even death.

To live the supernatural life, you need to understand God's love and live for His purposes. Doing this gives you a role to play in God's greater story of His glory.

What has been the biggest lesson you've learned from the Supernatural series?

What does it mean that from God's viewpoint nothing is too difficult for Him?

LEARN

Select 2-3 questions to discuss as a group.

◦ In Bethany

Word got to Jesus that one of his friends, Lazarus was ill and near death. But Jesus' response to the news was interesting. He said, "This illness will not lead to death. This happened for a reason – to bring God glory." Even more interesting, Jesus decided to stay where He was two days longer. The disciples were perplexed by this and questioned Jesus. They couldn't understand Jesus' motives and what He meant by His words. So, Jesus makes it clear to them that Lazarus was dead and that they must go to him.

Read John 11:1-50 as a group. What stands out to you in this story?

◦ Jesus and Martha

Jesus and His disciples had to travel to Bethany, which was about two miles outside Jerusalem. Upon their arrival, Jesus met Martha who told Him, "Lord, if you had been here my brother would have lived! But I know God will give you whatever you ask." How did Jesus respond to this woman's grief? He told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, not die. Do you believe this, Martha?" "Yes, Lord. You're the Son of God, who came to us," she responded.

How does Jesus show care for Martha in His response?

◦ Jesus weeps and responds

Jesus saw the grief surrounding Lazarus' death. It moved him deeply; so much so that He wept. The bystanders saw this and wondered, "How could a man who healed the blind not do something here?" But Jesus wasn't finished. Already the stench of Lazarus' decaying body was in the air. Jesus told Martha, "Didn't I say that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" He gave instruction for the stone in front of Lazarus' grave to be moved away and called out, "Lazarus rise!" A man wrapped in burial cloth emerged out of the darkness of the tomb alive and well. Many saw this and believed, but others went to the Pharisees and reported what happened.

Have you ever wanted God to show up in a situation in your life? What happened and what did God do in response?

How was the glory of God demonstrated through the raising of Lazarus?

 LIVE**o Extraordinary love**

What do we learn from this story about Jesus? What does it tell us about living the supernatural life? Overall, this story shows God's extraordinary love. First, we see how Jesus loved Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. They were His followers and we see how their pain brought Jesus pain. The text tells us He was "troubled in spirit." Jesus understands our hurts and sorrows. He knows what we're going through because He experienced those same emotions when He walked among us. Second, we see how God's love is incomparable. The Bible says God is love. The proof of His love is that He sent His Son to die for us. While the enemy wants you to doubt God's love, Jesus proves His love for you. Third, we see how God loves with compassion. Sometimes we think that hardship and suffering are forms of God's discipline. But that's not true. He never stops loving us, because He is love. His love flows to us with the same intensity at all times through Christ.

What difference does it make in your life that Jesus hurts when you hurt?

We see that God loves with compassion. How would you explain this to someone who doesn't yet know Christ?

o Extraordinary purpose

Jesus explained to his followers the reason he performed this miracle: to bring God glory. While He walked this earth Christ did everything to point others to the Father. Your greatest purpose in life is to live for God and glorify Him. That's more important than your comfort. God's love for you doesn't mean He will always take away the pain or the sorrows of life. Often God shows His love for you by building up your faith through hardship. This actually makes you stronger, wiser, and moves you to glorify Him even more.

In what ways do people see God's glory in your life?

Where is God building up your faith now? What are you learning about Him?

 LEAD

Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

o Extraordinary power

Did you know God has power over our worst fears? This story demonstrates how God has power even over death, which for many is their greatest fear. However, because of the great truth that Jesus

LEAD [CONT'D]

conquered death, we will never experience the sting of death. If you trust Jesus' sacrifice in your place, you have no reason for fear. Living the supernatural life is about seeing what power is available to you. Nothing can stop you from living for Him and His purposes. That means fear and doubt have no power over you.

Respond to the following statement: "If you trust that Jesus has died for you, you have no reason to fear anything, even death."

• Lose your life

Jesus once told His followers, "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." To live the supernatural life, you must lose your life in order to find it. That includes three things. First, you must lose your desire to earn God's love. God loves you and there is nothing you can do to make God love you more or less. Accept that you are loved more deeply than you realize by God and live in this love. Second, reject your purposes for His instead. Living for God's purposes allows you to play a part in a much greater story than your own. This is what you were made for. Third, find supernatural power by living for God's purposes. Understanding God's love + living for His purposes = the most fulfilled life.

What is currently keeping you from living the supernatural life? What's one change you can make to put you on the path of living the supernatural life?

PRAY

Praise God for His perfect plans. Thank Him that, even in suffering, He is present and teaching you something about His love. Ask for wisdom to understand your purpose on this earth and how you can bring Him glory among your family, friends, co-workers and neighbors.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read 1 John 4:7-12 and reflect on what this passage says about God's love.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their life.

COMMENTARY

◦ What is God's glory?

What exactly is 'God's glory'? Many find the concept of God's glory difficult to understand. However, God's desire to be glorified is the most fundamental truth in the Bible. Everything He does has in mind the end of His glory. So, what is God's glory? John Piper writes that the glory of God is "the radiance of his holiness, the radiance of his manifold, infinitely worthy and valuable perfections."¹ As believers, our goal is to make the glory of God shine in our lives.

◦ What the sign reveals.

The story of Lazarus' resurrection is what happens to everyone who trusts in the death of Christ for him or her. It's a picture to remind us that we have been brought from death to life. In his commentary on John, Warren Wiersbe writes:

The experience of Lazarus is a good illustration of what happens to a sinner when he trusts the Saviour (Eph. 2:1–10). Lazarus was dead, and all sinners are dead. He was decayed, because death and decay go together. All lost people are spiritually dead, but some are more "decayed" than others. No one can be "more dead" than another.

Lazarus was raised from the dead by the power of God, and all who trust Christ have been given new life and lifted out of the graveyard of sin (see John 5:24). Lazarus was set free from [death] (see Col. 3:1ff) and given new liberty.²

1. John Piper, "What is God's Glory?," *Desiring God*, July 6, 2009, <http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory> (accessed February 16, 2017).

2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996], 337.