

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Part 3: The Gospel Come To Life Lesson 35: The Raising of Lazarus



Session Snapshot

Narrative Passage: John 11:1-44

Gospel Focus: John 14:1-6

Student Takeaways:

- Students will understand that Jesus has power over death and the physical laws of our world.
- Students will grasp that Jesus is the only way to salvation and life.
- Students will discuss ways teenagers pursue salvation/fulfillment apart from Christ.



Overview

Believe it or not, you're not too far away from rounding the last corner and heading down the home stretch of your year-long look at the big-picture story of the Bible. You're closing in on the heart of the Gospel, namely, the arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. But before you get to all that, you'll spend this week studying an amazing encounter, one of the most fascinating stories in Scripture. You're going to see how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, and in the process, discover how Jesus Himself is the only source of true life. Your students will be challenged to re-focus their devotion on Christ, trusting Him for a meaningful life. It's an amazing passage. Enjoy!



Teacher Prep Video

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Thread* lesson 35 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 35, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.



Bible Background

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson we encourage teachers to help students know who wrote a particular book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **Why teach context?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

John

Author: The Gospel of John was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee. A fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus, John also penned the Book of Revelation, as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.

Time frame: The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.

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Purpose: John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John's goal seems to have been to clearly communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.



Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- An introductory activity called Getting Started designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- A section entitled The Story featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- A special emphasis entitled The Thread where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- An application-focused segment called Wrapping Up helping teenagers ask the question, "How am I impacted by what I learned today"?

Getting Started

- **Goal:** To get students talking about what happens when a superstar athlete doesn't save the day when you expect him to.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need have a way to show the group a YouTube video of NBA player Brandon Knight missing a game-winning layup; just Google "Brandon Knight misses game-winning layup" or use this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Bo1C_cCkYk

FIRST, start the conversation by asking:

- **If an NBA basketball player has a wide-open layup to win a game, would you expect that he should make that layup just about every time?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Let's watch an example of that scenario.**

THEN, show the group the YouTube video and ask:

- **So, Brandon Knight is a pretty good basketball player, and he makes over ten million dollars a year to play. He has a chance to win the game by making a layup, something he's practiced thousands of times since he was a kid. Do you think his team and fans expected him to make it?**
 - Answer: Most likely.
- **What is just about every Milwaukee Bucks (his team) fan thinking when he misses the layup?**
 - Answers will vary; allow your group to have some fun with this and maybe give Brandon Knight a (good natured) hard time.

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FINALLY, let your students know that you'll be talking about a time when some of Jesus' closest friends hoped He'd come through for them. But then things didn't work out the way they wanted. Say something like:

- **It's clear that Knight feels pretty bad after missing the shot. But don't feel too bad for the guy; his team eventually won this game in triple-overtime, so it all worked out. Today, as we continue our big-picture look at the story of the Bible, we're going to hear about a time when some people hoped that Jesus would come through at the last minute, and Jesus didn't do quite what they hoped He would do.**

Transition to The Story.

The Story

- **Goal:** Students will understand that Jesus has power over death and the physical laws of our world.
- **Setup:** Students will need a Bible or a Bible app.

FIRST explain that in this lesson you'll be looking at the Raising of Lazarus from the dead. If you'd like, use the "Connecting The Dots" section below to do a little review and/or fill in the gaps from your last lesson and this one.

Connecting The Dots

As you teach The Thread, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it as a way to review and/or to connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- **As we pick up this lesson, Jesus is nearing the end of His ministry, and life, on this earth.**
- **It's difficult to construct a timeline with much accuracy between the events of last week's lesson, the telling of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and this week's lesson. But, it's safe to say that Jesus was teaching and healing as He made His way to Jerusalem for what would become His last week on this earth.**

NEXT, set up the passage you're going to walk through. Say something like:

- **One of the hardest things about following Jesus is when tragedies tear someone's life apart. I mean, if God really loves us, and if He really has the power to do—or prevent—anything, then why is life so tragic sometimes? Why can it feel to us that God is sometimes absent during those times? And when miracles do happen, why does it seem they happen in one instance but not in another? It's one thing to ask these questions in theory, but today, we're going to hear an account of some people who wrestled with these very same questions—people who also happened to be close friends of Jesus during His time here on Earth.**

THEN, instruct students to turn to John 11. While they are finding it, give the context for the book using the Bible Background section of the Lesson Plan. Then, have a student read John 11:1-16. Ask:

- **Before we really get into what's happening in this passage, tell me: what do you notice about Jesus' relationship with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha?**

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- o Answer: They seem to be pretty close friends. We know from other passages in the Gospels that Jesus spent some time at their house and in their town. In addition, John tells us in 11:5 that Jesus loved these three people, and when Mary and Martha send a message to Jesus about Lazarus, all they say is, "Lord, the one you love is sick."
- **So given their friendship with Jesus, what do you think their expectations are when they send a message to Jesus that Lazarus is sick?**
 - o Answers will vary. They seem to expect that Jesus will be able to intervene with a miracle as He has in other people's lives. If He's done it for perfect strangers, why wouldn't He do it for a friend? Allow students to begin to understand what Mary and Martha are experiencing emotionally.

NEXT, help students wrestle through the fact that Jesus does not go to help Mary and Martha right away. Say:

- **That seems reasonable. I mean, if you've got a buddy or a BFF who can work miracles and heal people, surely they'd come through for you if someone you really loved were sick, right? But does Jesus go to see them right away?**
 - o Answer: He stays where He is for a couple of more days.
- **This seems like a weird response, but Jesus gives His followers a clue about what He's up to when He talks with them about Lazarus. What does He say about Lazarus' illness and eventual death?**
 - o Point students to verses 4 and 14-15 if they need some direction. Jesus says that the end result of Lazarus' illness and death is that God (and His Son, Jesus) will be glorified, and that Jesus' disciples will believe.

THEN, have a student read 11:17-37. Say:

- **This is an incredibly tense scene. Both Mary and Martha say to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." Have you ever wanted to say something like that to God?**
 - o It may take students a bit to grasp the question and open up with an honest answer. Silence at this point is okay, the goal is that students would put themselves in Martha and Mary's shoes and feel a little bit of what they was feeling.
- **In Jesus' conversation with Martha, Jesus tells her that those who believe in Him will have eternal life. Do you think that was comforting to Martha, or do you think it didn't really help her grief in that moment?**
 - o Answers will vary.
- **What do you think in that moment it would have taken for Martha to believe 100% what Jesus was saying?**
 - o Answers will vary; some may say it would have taken a miracle.
- **Jesus becomes very emotional as He is taken to where Lazarus is buried. If you don't know how this story ends, spoiler alert: Jesus brings Lazarus back to life. If Jesus knew that's what was going to happen, why do you think He cried?**
 - o Answers will vary. But point out that it most likely points to Jesus caring deeply for this family; their grief, and His, moved Him to tears.

NEXT, have a student read 11:38-44. Ask:

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- **If you've been around church for any period of time, chances are you already knew at the beginning of this story how it would end. But the people who were there with Jesus didn't know how it would end. What do you think Martha was feeling at this point?**
 - Allow students to think of a variety of possibilities. It could be that she was getting really annoyed at this point and was still mad at Jesus.
- **It's interesting that in verse 40, Jesus says that if Martha believes, she'll see the glory of God. Basically, Jesus is saying that she'll see how amazing God is. Why do you think he put it that way instead of saying something along the lines of "If you believe, everything will work out"?**
 - This is a pretty high-level question, so help your group walk through it if necessary.

THEN, help your students wrestle with the concept that God doesn't primarily perform miracles for our comfort, but rather for His glory. Say something like:

- **At the beginning of our conversation, we talked about the fact that one of the hardest things Christians wrestle with is the question of why God—who is all powerful and loves us unconditionally—seems to intervene in some situations and tragedies with miracles but not in others. What do you think this story about Lazarus has to do with that issue?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **No matter what we do with this passage, one thing is clear: Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead wasn't just about raising Lazarus from the dead. I mean, think about it: Lazarus one day would just die again anyway. Jesus was making a bigger point: that He is the source of life—eternal life. Do you think that Mary and Martha began to grasp that through this experience?**
 - This is a yes or no question, so make sure you ask students to give reasons for their answers.
- **So if someone randomly asked you at school this week, "Why did Jesus bring Lazarus back to life?" what would you say?**
 - The goal here is to help students land on the fact that Jesus brought Lazarus back to life to show Jesus' glory as the Son of God, who is the source of eternal life.

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FIRST Have your group turn to John 14. Before you dive into the passage, provide a little background information on John 14:1-6 for your group. Say something like:

- **What we're about to read happened during what's known as the Last Supper. It was Jesus' last night as a free man before He would be arrested, tried, and executed. During the evening, Jesus tries to help His followers understand what is about to happen and what He has planned for him after. However, most of them are upset at His revealing that one of them will betray Him and that His time on Earth is almost done.**

THEN, have a student read John 14:1-6. Ask:

- **Because we get to read this after Jesus died and rose again, we understand that what He's talking**

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about at the beginning of this passage isn't just a trip to another town, but rather that He is returning to Heaven. But what does Thomas think Jesus is talking about in verse 5?

- o Answer: That Jesus is planning on taking a physical trip to another town. They knew that the religious leaders wanted to kill Him after He raised Lazarus from the dead, so it's possible Thomas thought Jesus was going to flee to protect His life.

FINALLY, connect the dots between Jesus' conversations with Mary and Martha in John 11 with Jesus' conversations with His disciples here. Say,

- **In a way, this conversation has a lot in common with what happened between Jesus, Mary, and Martha when Lazarus died. Mary and Martha had a very real, difficult, and immediate concern: their brother had died. But though Jesus cared about what they were going through—remember, Jesus cried when they took Him to Lazarus' tomb—Jesus was pointing to an even greater need: eternal life. How does that relate to Thomas' question and Jesus' answer?**
 - o This is a pretty high level question, so help your group work through the answer. Thomas was concerned about what would happen to Jesus in the short-term. This was a very real concern, because Jesus' life really was in danger. But while Jesus' disciples were concerned about whether He would continue to be with them physically, Jesus was pointing to a greater need, just like He did with Mary and Martha: eternal life.
- **Jesus told Martha that whoever believes in Him will never die. However, He doesn't really explain what that means during the conversation. Here, just a few chapters later in this conversation with Thomas and the other disciples, what does Jesus say about eternal life and a relationship with Him?**
 - o Answer: That Jesus is the only way to eternal life.
- **When you really think about it, that's a really weird way to put it. I mean, usually when we describe how to do something or how to get somewhere, we talk about steps we need to take. But Jesus doesn't just say that there is a way to be reconciled to God and give steps for how to do it; He says that He is the way. What do you think that means?**
 - o Allow room for some conversation, but help students land here: Trusting in Jesus and His sacrifice is the only way to be reconciled to God, because it's something we are powerless to do ourselves.

If your students don't have any more questions, transition into the "Wrapping Up" section.

Wrapping Up

- **Goal:** Students will discuss ways teenagers pursue salvation/fulfillment apart from Christ.
- **Set-Up:** None needed.

FIRST, help your students connect what happened to Mary and Martha to some of the things their friends are going through. Ask:

- **Before Jesus brought Lazarus back to life, Mary and Martha were upset with Him because they thought He should have been there to prevent Lazarus' death. Without using names, can you think of anything your friends are going through that might cause them to wonder why God is absent or not there to help them?**

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- o Provide enough time and space for them to tell stories. Some students might share a bit how this is true in their own lives. That's OK, too.
- **Have you ever felt like there was nothing you could do to help friends going through that kind of thing?**
 - o Again, give space for students to have a discussion. The idea is to help them connect with the story emotionally.

NEXT, lead a discussion about how it's easy to try to find fulfillment apart from Jesus. Say:

- **During those times when our friends are hurting, it affects us, right? We saw that Jesus hurt for His friends who were grieving. What Mary and Martha wanted most in that moment was to have their brother Lazarus back. And we know Jesus was more than capable to do that, because He eventually brought Lazarus back to life. Losing a brother is a very real tragedy, but what did Mary and Martha need even more than to have their brother back?**
 - o If your group needs a reminder, point them back to John 11:25-26 when Jesus talks about Martha's need for eternal life.
- **Think about the friends you have who are hurting, what are some of the things they hope will happen in their life?**
 - o Answers will vary; help them refer back to the friends they mentioned a few minutes ago who are hurting right now.
- **Those are very real needs, and God cares about your friends and their needs. But if we take seriously what we've heard Jesus say to Martha and Thomas today, what do your friends need even more than that?**
 - o Answer: To understand that Jesus is the only way, and to come to Him for eternal life.

FINALLY, help your students understand how they can love their friends and pray for them. Say something like,

- **Of course, this can be hard to talk about with our friends, right? There is no formula for how to help friends who don't yet know Jesus or understand their need for Him, but we can take a cue from Jesus: He doesn't just start preaching at Martha and Mary; He's a friend to them and cares for them in their tragic loss. Have you ever been able to share about God's love when a friend was going through a tough time?**
 - o Encourage your group to share their experiences, but don't force students to share if they don't want to.

Close your Bible study in prayer, perhaps praying for friends who don't yet have a saving relationship with Jesus.

- **If you've purchased the *Tracing The Thread* devotional journal, remind students that they'll be working through Week 35 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions, and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.**
- **If you'll be utilizing the digital devotions included in the *Thread* curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.**
- **Use the Social Media guide to stay in touch with students via text or Twitter, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.**

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We Want To Hear From You . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.