

CHURCH.

LESSON 26

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray and commit your group and this course on building Christ's Church to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes)	[QUIET TIMES] LUKE 4:31 -7:50
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Take turns and *share* (or *read* from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Luke 4:31 – 7:50).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes)	[CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE] (2) EPHESIANS 5:23,25
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Review two by two.

(2) Love and lead. Ephesians 5:23,25. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the Church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes)	[THE GOSPEL OF JOHN] JOHN 11:1-57
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Introduce. John chapter 11 (John 10:40 – 11:57) describes the ministry of Jesus Christ in Perea (Luke 13:22 – 19:27) and Bethany from December A.D. 29 to about February A.D. 30 (3 months).

In John 11:1-44 Jesus makes a journey from the other side of the Jordan to Bethany, which is close to Jerusalem, to raise Lazarus from the dead. The raising of Lazarus from the dead was a greater miracle-sign than all the other miracle-signs and proved that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah. Just as the miracle of multiplying the bread was a sign of Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life (6:35), and the miracle of healing the man born blind was a sign of Jesus Christ as the Light of the world (8:12), so the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was a sign of Jesus Christ as the Resurrection and the Life (11:25). This miracle led directly to the formal decision of the Jewish Council to kill Jesus Christ (11:47-55).

STEP 1. READ.	GOD'S WORD
<i>Read.</i> LET US READ John 11:1-57 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

STEP 2. DISCOVER.	OBSERVATIONS
<i>Consider.</i> WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? <i>Record.</i> Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. <i>Share.</i> (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)	

11:9-10

Discovery 1. The time God gives to complete my God-given task.

The disciples looked at the situation and warned Jesus not to return to Judah, because there were Jews who wanted to kill him. Jesus, however, answered that *every day has a fixed amount of time during which there is light*. A man must walk while there is light. Jesus meant that God has given him a definite allotted time to do his work on earth and to finish his work. That time cannot be lengthened by any measure the disciples like to take, nor can it be shortened by any plot of his enemies. God is sovereign and the time he allots to every person cannot be changed by the circumstances of that person on earth! God the Father has also given me a definite allotted time to live on earth and do my God-given task and to complete my task. As long as I walk in the light of God's plan, I don't have to fear anybody or any circumstance. I will not suffer any real injury and I will not fail! What a wonderful assurance that God is on the throne of the universe and that he controls every person and every circumstance (read Matthew 10:28-31).

11:33-35

Discovery 2. The way Jesus was moved in his spirit.

When Jesus saw Mary and the Jews weeping for Lazarus, who had died, he was “deeply moved in spirit and troubled”.

The meaning of the first word “to be deeply moved” is “to snort like a horse” or “to be angry or displeased”. When Jesus saw other people suffer, he was filled with indignation! Why? He was filled with indignation against sin, because sin is the underlying cause of all suffering and death, grief and sorrow. But Jesus was deeply moved *in his spirit* and not in his face. The word expresses *sympathy* rather than anger. Therefore the meaning is rather “to be deeply moved with sympathy”, with the suffering people.

The meaning of the second word “to be troubled” is “to shake himself” and in John 12:27 suggests inward disturbance. It means, “to be visibly agitated because of inward disturbance”. When Jesus saw other people suffer, he was also visibly agitated.

Together these two words express the fact that Jesus was indignant with sin as the root of all suffering and sorrow, but that he also was deeply moved with sympathy for the suffering people. Jesus finally burst out into tears. His tears were an expression of genuine sympathy and love for the suffering people. I would like to express the same kind of feelings as Jesus. I want to be indignant with sin and I want to be sympathetic with those who suffer the consequences of sin!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 11:1-57 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

11:12-13

Question 1. How do Christians regard death and resurrection?

Notes.

(1) The souls of dead people do not roam around the house or grave.

The Bible teaches that the souls of dead people do not roam around the house where they lived. They also do not roam around their grave. That is why Christians do NOT fear or worship any spirits of dead people in their homes, at the graves, in temples or anywhere else. The Bible teaches that after death, the souls of dead people immediately go to heaven or to hell. According to Philippians 1:23, death of a Christian is “a departure from this world in order *to be with Christ*”.

(2) In the Bible “death” is often compared with “sleeping”.

For example, in Matthew 27:52 is written, “*The bodies* of many holy people who had fallen asleep were raised to life”. This comparison implies that there will be a glorious awakening on the other side of sleeping. This awakening from the sleep of death is called the resurrection of the body in the Bible. When Jesus said, “Our friend, Lazarus, has fallen asleep”, he meant “Lazarus has died, but his body will be raised from the dead!”

(3) The soul of a dead person is unconscious of events on earth.

Although death is compared to sleeping, the Bible does not teach that the soul of the dead person is sleeping in the sense that he is in a state of total unconsciousness. The soul is unconscious only with respect to this world, which it has left. The soul of dead people, like Abraham and Jacob, cannot see or know any people on earth (Isaiah 63:16). The dead “know nothing” and they will “never again have parts in anything that happens on this present earth” (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6). Although the rich man, who had died, thought of his five brothers who were still on earth, he did not know how they were doing and he could not communicate with them at all (Luke 16:23-31). The souls of dead people are not conscious of anything that happens on earth and cannot have any contact with the people still living on earth. They cannot plan or work or have any influence on the people still on this present earth. The event described in 1 Samuel 28 is a counterfeit imitation of an evil spirit.

(4) The soul of a dead person is very conscious of either heaven or hell.

In Luke 16:23-31, we read that the departed dead people are not asleep, but fully awake. They are well aware of their eternal condition of suffering in hell or of comfort in heaven. The souls of dead Christians are very conscious with respect to the world, to which they have departed! They are awake with respect to God and Christ and the people in heaven, like Abraham. They live in the presence of God, speak with him, worship and serve him.

11:25-26

Question 2. What does Jesus mean when he says that a Christian will never die?

Notes.

In verse 25-26, Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die”.

(1) Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life”.

It means that the resurrection from the dead is indissolubly connected to Jesus Christ. The sentence may also be translated with “The resurrection and the life is Christ”, and means that the resurrection from the dead and immortal life are rooted in Christ. Only because Christ himself was resurrected from the dead and lives forever, Christians will also be resurrected from the dead and live forever! Jesus is the Source of resurrection from the dead and of immortal life. Until the present time Jesus Christ is “the fruits” from death (1 Corinthians 15:23), that is, the First and the Only One who has been resurrected from the dead! Christians will only be resurrected from the dead at the second coming of Christ and then gain a share in his immortal life.

(2) Jesus says, “He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.”

When Lazarus became very sick, his sisters sent a messenger to Jesus. In verse 4, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it”. But Jesus did not rush back to heal Lazarus. He delayed his return, so that by the time he arrived in Bethany, Lazarus was already dead for four days and his body was decaying in the tomb. In verse 21-22 Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask”. This was not an expression of reproach or resentment, but an expression of painful grief. She realised that Jesus had arrived too late to heal Lazarus. Yet because the messenger had probably told her what Jesus had said, that this sickness would not end in death, in her heart she had a faint hope that Jesus might even bring Lazarus back to life. In her mind, Martha did not exclude the possibility that Lazarus may be raised from the dead. Now that a close member of her family had died, there was a big struggle raging in her heart. On the one hand, although she believed that Lazarus would be raised from the dead in the future on the last day, she grieved about the fact that he was now dead. On the other hand, because of what Jesus had said to the messenger, she hoped that a miracle might take place. The darkness of grief and the light of hope were engaged in deadly combat.

Then Jesus said, “He who believes in me will live, even though he dies”. Jesus said something much more than what Martha believed!

This statement refers to the moment of death. Although the Christian who continually believes in Christ dies physically, he will live spiritually! Although his body must die and return to the dust, his spirit will never die! His spirit will share Christ’s risen life and experience that the possession of eternal life is indeed a life that knows no death. At the moment of his death, a Christian’s body returns to the dust, but his spirit immediately enters the presence of Jesus Christ in heaven. In Philippians 1:23 Paul says that he longs to die and be with Christ. His dead body experiences nothing, but his living spirit experiences eternal life in the presence of Christ! The Christian’s mortal life in the body must come to an end, but his eternal life in the spirit endures forever.

(3) Jesus says, “Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

This statement refers to the time before death. The Christian is pictured as he lives here on earth before he dies. Everyone who lives spiritually and believes continually in Jesus Christ will never taste everlasting death. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:9, “everlasting death” is to be separated in spirit and in body from the loving and caring presence of God. But a Christian will never experience that. His spirit and his body will never be separated from the presence, love and care of God. As long as he still lives on earth, his spirit may experience eternal life and his mortal body may experience the love and care of God.

When his body dies, then his spirit immediately goes to be in the visible presence of God in heaven. And although his body will lie in the dust of the grave, God will never abandon his body. According to John 5:25-29, at the second coming of Christ, he will resurrect the body. According to Philippians 3:21, he will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body! According to 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, the bodies of Christians will possess glorious immortality!

Summary. In verse 25, Jesus promises that the spirit or soul of the Christian will never experience death. And in verse 26, he promises that even the body of Christians will never be abandoned by God, also in the grave! Although the Christian must die physically, not only will his spirit never die, but also his body lying in the dust will never be separated from God’s care.

11:47

Question 3. What was the Sanhedrin?

Notes.

The Sanhedrin was the highest court in Israel (Matthew 5:22) and the highest governing body of the Jews within the Roman Empire. It came into existence during the period of the Maccabees (about 150 B.C.) and was situated in

Jerusalem. It consisted of 71 members: the high priests, who were members of the most important priestly families, the heads of families, called elders, the scribes, who were experts in interpreting the Jewish Holy Scriptures and the teachers of the law, who continually elaborated the verbal tradition that was based on the written law. The sitting high priest was the chairman. The Sanhedrin had supervision over all religious matters, even of the Jews that lived in foreign countries.

11:49-52

Question 4. Who was Caiaphas?

Notes.

He was high priest and thus also the chairman of the Sanhedrin from A.D. 18 to 36. Without realising it himself, he uttered a very important prophecy concerning Jesus Christ. Jesus would die for the people of God, that is, the believers within the Jewish nation, and he would bring the scattered children of God, the believers of the Gentile nations, together and make them into one nation (cf. John 10:16; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

11:47-53

Question 5. How can an evil person like Caiaphas prophesy?

Notes.

(1) The intention of Caiaphas.

Caiaphas said, “You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish”. The intention of this scoundrel was not noble. Caiaphas meant to say that if the people of Israel follow Jesus, then the Romans would come and destroy the Jewish nation. But if Jesus were put to death, then the Jewish nation would be saved. Under the guise of noble patriotism the unscrupulous Caiaphas was trying to get rid of Jesus who was an obstacle to his own popularity and glory! However, by the irony of history the exact opposite happened. When the Jews murdered Jesus, they sealed their own doom personally and as a nation. The Romans came in A.D. 70 and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and the Jewish nation! The plot of Caiaphas to kill Jesus succeeded, but the results were exactly the opposite of what he intended!

(2) The prophecy of Caiaphas.

But why does John in verse 51-52 say that Caiaphas did not say this on his own, but as high priest he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation? John teaches that God is sovereign in history. Nothing in history happens without God’s decision, permission and control (cf. Isaiah 14:24,27). God overruled the words of Caiaphas in a sovereign way so that his words had a deeper meaning than even Caiaphas himself realised. Caiaphas prophesied involuntarily by virtue of his office. In the early days of the Old Testament, the high priest of Israel declared the will of God by means of the Urim and Thummim (Exodus 28:30). Now God allowed him to prophesy, even though he did not understand what he was saying. Caiaphas poured one meaning into his words, while God poured another meaning into his words!

While Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin of the Jews plotted to murder Jesus, God planned to use his death as a means to save many people in the world! While Caiaphas intended something evil and is responsible for the wicked meaning of his words, God intended something glorious. This passage gives us a glimpse into the mystery of the relationship between God’s sovereignty on the one hand and man’s responsibility on the other hand. Caiaphas was completely free to say what his wicked heart urged him to say. Nevertheless, God’s sovereign will and power directed the choice of Caiaphas’ words so that the words of this cold-blooded murderer exactly expressed God’s wonderful plan of salvation! Without realizing it himself, the wicked Caiaphas became a prophet. Just like in the Old Testament, God had spoken through the wicked prophet Balaam (Numbers 23), so he now spoke through the wicked high priest Caiaphas.

11:51-52

Question 6. Did Jesus Christ only die for the Jewish nation?

Notes.

No, it says, “Jesus would die *not only* for the Jewish nation, *but also* for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one”. Caiaphas used the phrase “the nation of Israel” in the sense of *a political unit*. However, John used it as *a spiritual concept*, because it is used parallel with the concept “the children of God”. The children of God are those who believe in Jesus Christ, the children of the new birth. Jesus died for two groups of people:

- first for “the believing children of God belonging to the Jews”
- and secondly for “the believing children of God who are scattered abroad”, that is, “the children of God belonging to the Gentiles”.

John repeats here what Jesus said in John 10:16. Besides *his sheep* belonging to the Jewish fold, Jesus was going to bring *his other sheep* belonging to the Gentile folds and join them together into one flock under one Shepherd!

Jesus repeats this same idea in John 12:32, “When I am lifted from the earth, I will draw all men to myself”. All knees will eventually bow, willingly or unwillingly, before Jesus Christ. And all tongues, whether of believers or unbelievers, will confess that Jesus Christ truly is “the Lord” (Philippians 2:9-11; cf. Ephesians 1:10).

11:55

Question 7. To which Jewish Passover was John referring?

Notes.

The Jewish Passover commemorated the exodus of the Jews under Moses from Egypt in 1447 B.C. John refers to three Jewish Passovers during the earthly ministry of Jesus:

- the first Passover in April 28 AD (John 2:13,23)
- the second Passover in April 29 AD (John 6:4)
- and the third Passover in April 30 AD (John 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; cf. 19:31).

The other three Gospels only mention the last Passover.

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from John 11:1-57.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from John 11:1-57.

- 11:4. Realise that although sickness has its roots in the sin of the world, some sickness may serve to glorify God!
- 11:6. Know that real trust in God can sometimes cause you to wait to act instead of rushing away to act.
- 11:20-27. While in Luke 10:38-42 Martha rushed around instead of sitting at the feet of Jesus to listen to his words, here in John 11:20-27 she went out to meet Jesus and listen to his words. Martha changed and so can you.
- 11:25. Although the physical body of a believer will die, his spirit or soul will never die, but will live in the presence of Jesus Christ. At the resurrection also his mortal physical body will be raised to life and receive immortal life.
- 11:26. Although the physical body of a believer will die, his spirit and his future resurrected body will never die, that is, will never be thrown into hell.
- 11:33-35. Like Jesus Christ, Christians too should be indignant with sin as the root of all suffering and sorrow, but deeply moved with sympathy for the suffering people.
- 11:47-48. Realise that certain religious people are more concerned with political power and gain than with the righteousness of God’s kingdom.

2. Examples of personal applications from John 11:1-57.

I want to be more like Jesus. When Jesus saw other people suffer, he was deeply moved in his spirit and also visibly agitated. He was indignant with sin as the root of all suffering and sorrow, but he was also deeply moved with sympathy for the suffering people. I would like to express the same kind of feelings as Jesus: I want to be indignant with sin and I want to be sympathetic with those who suffer the consequences of sin!

I want to make the best use of every day. God has given me a definite allotted time to live on earth and do my God-given task. As long as I walk in the light of God’s plan, I don’t have to fear anybody or any circumstance. I will not suffer any real injury and I will not fail! With this wonderful assurance that God controls every person and every circumstance (read Matthew 10:28-31), I want to finish my assigned task here on earth!

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in John 11:1-57.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

**[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS**

Continue to pray in groups of two’s or three’s. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the Bible study of John 11 together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of **Luke 8:1 – 11:28** each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (3) Love and submit: **Titus 2:4-5**. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. Update your notebook on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.