

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John chapter 11. We will use “the five steps” method of Bible study. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. You may join our Bible study every week by preparing for the next Bible study. You may also gather a few people around you and use this method of studying the Bible together. Doing Bible study together with a few other Christians is one of the best ways to grow to maturity as a Christian.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read John 11:1-57 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John chapter 11 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John 11:1-57. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in John 11:9-10 about 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. 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 circumstance.

(T) An important truth for me is in John 11:33-35 about the way Jesus was moved in the 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*. These words together express sympathy rather than anger and therefore the expression means “*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* and he was also *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, but sympathetic with those who suffer the consequences of sin!

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 11:1-57 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (11:12-13) What does Jesus mean when he says, “Lazarus has fallen asleep”?

(T) One. 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. Philippians 1:23 teaches that the death of a Christian is a departure from this world in order to be with Christ.

Two. 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 means “Lazarus has died, but his body will be raised from the dead!”

2nd Question. (11:12-13) In what way are the souls of dead people conscious or unconscious?

(S) One. The soul of a dead person is unconscious of this present world.

While the body of the dead person is ‘sleeping’ in the grave, the soul or spirit of the dead person is not in a state of total unconsciousness. The soul or spirit of the dead person is unconscious only with respect to this present world, which it has left. Isaiah 63:16 says that the soul of the dead person cannot see or know any people on earth. Ecclesiastes 9:6-10 says that dead people “know nothing” and they will “never again have a part in anything that happens on this present earth”. Luke 16:23-31 says that the rich man could remember that he had five brothers on earth, but he could not know how they were doing on earth and he could not communicate with them at all. The souls or spirits of dead people are not conscious of anything that happens on this present 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 that are still alive on this present earth. The event described in 1 Samuel 28 is a counterfeit imitation of an evil spirit.

Two. The soul of a dead person is very conscious of either heaven or hell.

In Luke 16:23-31, we read that the souls or spirits of the dead Lazarus and the dead rich man were not asleep, but fully awake and conscious with respect to the eternal state. The soul or spirit of the rich man was very much aware that he was burning in hell. And the soul or spirit of Lazarus was very much aware that he was comforted in heaven. The souls or spirits of dead Christians are very conscious with respect to God, Jesus Christ, millions of angels and the other believers in heaven like Abraham. They live in the presence of God, speak with God and worship and serve God.

3rd Question. (11:25-26) 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”. What does Jesus mean when he says that he is the resurrection and the life?

(T) When Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life”, he means that the resurrection of the dead body 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 of the body and the eternal 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 the Source of immortal life. The resurrection is mentioned first, because it opens the gate to immortal life. Only after Jesus was resurrected, he begins his own immortal life with respect to his human body. Only after Jesus was resurrected from the dead, can Christians also share in his immortal life.

4th Question. What does Jesus mean when he says that a Christian will live, even though he dies?

(S) Jesus says, “He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.” He is speaking of *spiritual life* even though there is *physical death*. 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. 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. But because of what Jesus had said to the messenger, she hoped that a miracle might take place. The darkness of her grief and the light of her hope were engaged in deadly combat.

Now Jesus said to her, “He who believes in me will live, even though he dies”. Jesus said something much more than what Martha believed or hoped! *Here the Christian who continually believes in Christ is pictured at the moment of death. Although he dies physically, he will live spiritually! Although his body must die and return to the dust, his spirit will never, never die!* His soul or spirit will share the risen life of Jesus Christ and experience that the possession of eternal life is indeed a life that knows no death and experiences no death in heaven! At the moment of his physical death, a Christian’s body returns to the dust, but his soul or spirit immediately enters the presence of Jesus Christ in heaven. His dead body experiences nothing, but his living soul or spirit experiences eternal life in the presence of Christ

in heaven! The Christian's mortal life in the body must come to an end, but his eternal life in the soul or spirit endures for ever!

5th Question. What does Jesus mean when he says that a Christian will never die?

(T) Jesus says, "Whoever lives and believes in me will never die." He is speaking of eternal death. *Here the Christian is pictured before his physical death.* He is pictured as he lives here on earth before he dies. Everyone who lives spiritually and believes continually in Christ will never taste everlasting death. He will never go to hell! According to 2 Thessalonians 1:9, *everlasting death* is a state in which the spirit and body of a wicked person is forever separated from the loving and caring presence of God. A Christian will never, never experience this. The soul or spirit of a Christian and his resurrected body will never be separated from the presence, love and care of God! As long as the Christian still lives on this earth, he knows that his soul or spirit has eternal life. And he knows that his mortal body must die and will die, unless the second coming takes place before that. But the Christian also knows that when his mortal body dies, his soul or spirit will immediately go into the presence of Jesus Christ in heaven. He knows now that although his body will lie in the dust of the grave, his body will never be abandoned by God. In John 5:25-29 Jesus promised that at his second coming, he would resurrect our dead bodies. Philippians 3:21 teaches that Jesus will transform our mortal and imperfect bodies so that they will be like his glorious resurrected body! 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 says that the resurrected bodies of Christians will possess glorious immortality and power and will be completely controlled by the Holy Spirit. *In John 11:25, Jesus promises that the spirit of the Christian will never, never experience the spiritual death and physical death of this earth or the eternal death at the final judgement. And in John 11:26, he promises that even the physical body of Christians will never, never experience abandonment by God.* Although the Christian must die physically, not only will his spirit never, never die, but also his body that lies in the dust will never, never be separated from God's care!

6th Question. (11:47-53) How can an evil person like Caiaphas prophesy?

(S) 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 will come and destroy the Jewish nation. But if Jesus is 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. 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 had intended.

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 permission and control. *God sovereignly overruled the words of Caiaphas so that his words had a deeper meaning than he himself realised.* Caiaphas prophesied involuntarily by virtue of his office as high priest. 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 (Num 27:21). 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 the death of Jesus as a means to save many people in the world and throughout history! While Caiaphas intended something evil and is responsible for the wicked meaning of his words, God sovereignly 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 becoming aware of it, the wicked Caiaphas became a prophet. Just like in the Old Testament, God had spoken through the wicked prophet Balaam (Num 23), so he now spoke through the wicked high priest Caiaphas.

7th Question. (11:51-52). Did Jesus Christ die only for the Jewish nation?

(T) 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 national and political unit*. However, the apostle John used the phrase as *a spiritual concept*, because it is used parallel with the concept "the children of God". John 1:12-13 teaches that "the children of God" are those who believe in Jesus Christ. They are the children of the new birth. Jesus died for two groups of people: first for "the children of God that belong to the Jewish nation", and second for "the children of God who are scattered abroad", that is, "the children of God that belong to the Gentile nations". 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 again in John 12:32, "When I am lifted from the earth, I will draw *all men* to myself".

(S) **STEP 4 and 5. APPLY and PRAY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*. Then take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John 11:1-57.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Make a commitment to do Bible study every week. Prepare next week's Bible study. Use "the five steps" method to prepare John chapter 12.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".