

Outline: #1**Title: The Lazarus Life****Text: John 11:1-7; 32-44****Big Idea: The Lazarus Story is our Story****Theological Emphasis: God's Sovereignty**

- I. The Lazarus Story is MORE than a story.
 - A. The Power of a Story
 - i. A story offers us a lens through which we can understand life.
 1. Aesop's fables.
 2. Shakespeare
 3. Disney Stories such as Beauty and the Beast, The Lion King
 - ii. Stories offer us deep meaning and images to help us "get" the truth and the things we need to know in life.
 - B. The Lazarus Story is MORE than fiction. It is true and truth.
 - i. Only John of all the Gospel writers shares this incredible story.
 - ii. The story of Lazarus has drama, passion, tragedy and the unbelievable, unprecedented account of an ending that includes a resurrection.
 - iii. We hear this story more at funerals than we do in our everyday lives because of the often quoted Scripture, "I am the Resurrection" being quoted at gravesides.
 - iv. This story is not meant for the dead. It is meant for the living. It is meant for you and me.
- II. Our Story is told through Lazarus' story.
 - A. We see ourselves in the drama. It's not just about Lazarus, Mary and Martha. It's about us.
 - B. Where are you in the story?
 - i. Are you the sick and ailing, Lazarus?
 1. Lazarus means "God helps us." Who would not want to bear that name for we are all in need of God's help?
 - ii. Are you the anxious Mary?
 - iii. Are you the worried Martha?
 - iv. Are you the by-stander, standing on the side observing but not participating?
- III. We are all soul-sick and in need of transformation.
 - A. Lazarus' illness gives us pause to wonder about our own sense of illness and "dis-ease" in our own soul. It wasn't just Lazarus that is sick. All of us are and all of us are in need of transformation (Rom. 3:23).

- B. To understand your own soul-sickness, requires a look within your own heart and soul.
- i. This is hard because we are busy. Our lives are full. We sometimes resist looking in because we don't know what we might find there.
 - ii. The proverbial ice-berg only reveals 1/10th of its existence. 9/10 remains hidden with jagged edges and protruding surfaces that are rough and dangerous.
- C. Looking within is where we find the areas of life that often are in the most need of the touch of Jesus Christ.
- i. Lazarus had ample opportunity to wonder, speculate, pray, think and be confronted with his situation. Mary and Martha did as well. So do we.
- IV. Only Jesus can transform us.
- A. We think that more information can transform us. But in light of the fact that we are the most educated people that have ever lived, just look at our problems that we continue to face.
 - B. Transformation does not happen when we try to “self-help” our way along the journey. Even AA, one of the most remarkable movements in the world dedicated to help people with alcoholic addictions says that there is a “higher power” that is at work. Lazarus teaches us that this higher power has a Name and has a Voice through which he speaks: Jesus Christ.
 - C. Our study of Lazarus will be about God, about Jesus, about ourselves and about others in our lives who have deep and often unexpressed questions about life, God and our desperate situation.

Resource Ideas for this:

- Consider showing a clip of a Disney DVD that is a larger than life story and help the people “see” their own lives in the story. Then transition into Lazarus story.
- Go to www.lazaruslife.com to consider music recommendations for worship.

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Outline: #4**Title: Learning to Listen to Jesus****Text: John 10:1-21 and John 11:43****Big Idea: Listening to the Voice of Jesus/Love impacts our lives****Theological Emphasis: God is personal and demonstrates His love to us by communicating with us.**

- I. The Voice of Jesus is recognizable
 - A. Offer some personal story of your own about a time in your own life where you thought or actually did experience ‘hearing from God’ in a way that altered and impacted your life.
 - B. The Voice of the Shepherd
 - C. We are told that the sheep can recognize the voice of Jesus (John 10:4)
 - D. The Voice is identifiable, personal and is speaking then and now.
 - E. There are competing voices today: media, culture, personalities, etc.
 - F. One of the great challenges of the Christian life is to listen to the Voice today. Is it audible? Normal to hear it? Only people in the Bible could hear the Voice? What about today?
 - G. All good questions that Lazarus helps us understand.

- II. The Voice with which God speaks is the Voice of Love
 - A. In the Lazarus story and text, we learn about the three most important words that changed everything for Lazarus and which can and will change everything for us: “Lazarus, come forth!”
 - B. Jesus spoke in a loud voice—but what other qualities of his voice do we know about?

- III. The Voice of Jesus is a Voice of Love
 - A. John’s Gospel reveals the narrowing down and the focus of God’s love from the world (see John 3:16, Eph 1:3 in the Message).
 - B. What kind of voice do you imagine God to speak with? Many people would say: a voice of anger, a voice of disappointment, a voice of distant or complete silence. Mother Teresa is one example of a person who experienced complete silence for many years. See *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*.

- IV. God’s Love Transforms us
 - A. Love is what changes us, not power, coercion, more information or more effort.
 - B. When the heart is smitten, love makes us respond. See the author’s story about his son being “smitten” with love and what that did in Chapter 4, The Lazarus Life.
 - C. God spoke at Jesus’ baptism: “you are my Beloved Son and in you I am well pleased.”

- D. In the story of the Transfiguration in Luke 9:28-36, we are told to “Listen to him [Jesus] vs. 35. How do we learn to listen to Jesus?”
- V. Silence and Solitude are two ways to practice listening to the Voice of Love.
- A. Silence and being quiet helps us quiet all the voices around us.
 - B. The heart is noisy and needs quiet.
 - C. Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still and know that I am God.” It’s interesting to note that knowing comes by being still, NOT through activities and hurriedness.
 - D. Solitude is where we move to experience God’s love.
 - E. Henri Nouwen says that “solitude is the furnace of transformation.” It is THE place where we are most confronted with ourselves; have no place to hide and have to come to grips with deep things about ourselves and about God.
 - F. Lazarus had time, complete solitude and absolute silence in that cold, dark tomb. Of course, he was dead and we are not, but what the tomb teaches us is that when we enter the tombs of our lives and practice solitude, we can hear from God. We are not alone. God is still, “God with us.”

Resources:

1. Consider practicing silence for a few moments in the session/worship service. Is it awkward? Comfortable? Perhaps have people share their thoughts at random or a select few who you have previously asked to be prepared to do this.
2. Consider showing a clip from “Into Great Silence” a documentary about a famed Carthusian monastery in France. Great reviews on this documentary. Available online.
3. Check out the recommended songs on www.lazaruslife.com to use.

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Outline: # 6**Title: Stepping Toward Life****Text: John 11:43 and Acts 9:1-31****Big Idea: Transformation involves a step-by-step movement****Theological Emphasis: Perseverance**

1. Lazarus' journey out of the tomb involved slow, awkward steps towards Jesus.
 - a. We might imagine another scene altogether: Lazarus running, jumping up and down and screaming for joy at what had just happened to him.
 - b. The story in John and the image by Giotto show a whole other image that important to remember in the Christian life.
 - c. A step-by-step forward motion which is sometimes three steps forward and two back; sometimes wobbly and often awkward is more of the true picture of transformation.
 - d. Consider sharing a personal example of making progress in something which might have been new to you: sports, computer, cooking, etc. Your progress involved a few mishaps, perhaps mistakes, but by hanging in there and not abandoning the goal, you made significant progress.

2. Paul's Own Journey
 - a. Paul's story of his own conversion gives us permission to think about our own story in terms of time, seasons and perspective.
 - b. His reference in Galatians 1:17-18 opens the door for us to think through our own times and seasons of being in Arabia. Paul was there for 3 years. That's not exactly quick, rapid, progress-to be in the desert for a long period of time.
 - c. John Newton's story is unpackaged in the book, *The Lazarus Life*. Newton's own admission to his long, steady, forward movement reveals another important insight into how a person is really converted.
 - d. Some of us are quick learners; others us of are more slow. How do you see your own self in terms of step-by-step movement?
 - e. Consider sharing your own story here about time and experiences; teachable moments and your own understanding about how a person really grows—spiritually. Perhaps someone could share their story/testimony?

3. What myths do we need to debunk regarding spiritual growth?
 - a. Spiritual conversion is the most important thing/part. To become a Christian is one thing, but the journey of being a Christian is another and longer process.
 - b. In our microwaveable world and fast modems, the spiritual life runs on a whole different system and clock. Develop a way to explain this more.
 - c. Our perspective on life/faith and God changes as we grow and mature. How do you explain this?
 - d. Newton's verse says it well: "I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be. But by the grace of God, I am now what I was." Explain this more.

4. The Journey Metaphor
 - a. This is one of the most frequently used images of the Christian life.
 - b. The spiritual life is one involving a journey.
 - c. Even the Children of Israel experienced: captivity, wilderness and finally the Promised Land. Each part of their journey was significant and they learned things about God and self that only could be learned in the place where they were—when they learned it.
 - d. Lazarus teaches us the same. His movement out of the tomb was slow. You might want to reenact how it might have looked for Lazarus to emerge out of the tomb, wrapped in grave clothes; looking like a mummy; barely able to walk; but moving forward even as awkward as it was.

5. What permission does Lazarus, Paul, John Newton and others offer us in our Christian life today?
 - a. We can move step by step, not giant leaps.
 - b. It is OK to move slowly.
 - c. Being intentional about moving out and away from the tomb is the main thing.
 - d. You and I were not meant to live in the tomb. We were meant to be moving towards Jesus.

Resources:

1. Consider a skit involving people playing “Simon Says” where one person calls out to the other person to move forward or move backwards a few steps.
2. Look at the recommended music on www.lazaruslife.com for possible music you could use in this lesson.

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Outline: # 8**Title: Removing the Grave Clothes: Embracing the Help for a Loving Community****Text: John 11:43 and Hebrews 10:23-25****Big Idea: We need one another to live a transformed life. We can't do it alone.****Theological Emphasis: Community. Church. Relationships.**

1. We must embrace community to truly experience transformation.
 - a. Jesus could have unwrapped the grave clothes of Lazarus himself but he chose not to.
 - b. He told the people who were standing by to help Lazarus by unwrapping his grave clothes.
 - c. Community offers us something each of us really need. We can't live the transformed life/spiritual life alone. We were never intended to do this alone.

2. Looking for the hand to help you.
 - a. All of us need the hand that Giotto painted in his famous painting. Many of us have been looking for this hand all of our lives. We simply do not want to be alone.
 - b. Others of us have been deeply hurt and scared by hands that "thought" they were trying to help and only hurt more.
 - c. Consider telling a personal story of disappointment in a relationship and how this has made you suspicious or leery of getting involved with people. As a result of this, many people will only commit to "pseudo-community" which is a very shallow version of what the New Testament describes as Biblically functioning, healthy community.
 - d. Helping hands can do what teaching and even miracles of resurrection can't do... we need the touch of one another.
 - e. The "one anothers" (passages where one another, each other is used) occur over 50 times in the New Testament. Some of our greatest teachings that the church seems to major on occur only one or two times. While the "one anothers occur over 50 times. Thus, paying attention to community is obviously important.

3. Hebrews challenges us to be involved and move from the margin to the center.
 - a. We are told in Hebrews 10:24 that we are suppose to "consider how to spur each other on." This implies an active, engaging and intentional dynamic to Christian community. It does not just happen. We have to be intentional about it.
 - b. We are told to not give up on community—despite our hurts and possible bad experiences with community. In fact, we are encouraged to get involved MORE. (vs. 25).

4. Creating a Transformational Community (these points are directly from the book, The Lazarus Life).

- a. A transformational community builds a safe community. One where judging others is not allowed but accepting of other's differences is. Safety is fostered and nurtured. It does not just happen. People begin to feel safe when they are accepted and unconditionally loved.
- b. A transformational community is one where people share their stories. Each person has a story to tell and to engage the heart as well as the mind, stories become the link to help us feel connected. When we know each other's stories of soul-sickness, tombs and how we have dealt with the lingering Jesus, then we know the real heart of a person.
- c. A transformational community is one that majors on grace. In order for people to feel safe to talk about grave clothes and tomb times, grace needs to be present and judgment needs to be absent.
- d. A transformational community extends hospitality. The word 'hospitality' has its roots in our word, 'hospital.' This is a place where people can get better—can experience more and more transformation.
- e. A transformational community practices acceptance. For many of us, practicing "acceptance" might look like a spiritual discipline because we not familiar with it. Perhaps we are more used to judging, always being right, always being powerful, always being you name it. Practicing acceptance means embracing others as you believe Jesus would embrace them. The Gospels continually reveal Jesus involved with people who were not like him; did not share the same values; did not hold the same views of politics, religion and money.

Resources:

1. Consider a reading of all of the "one another" passages in the New Testament. See *The Lazarus Life Workbook* for a complete listing or use a Concordance to find as many as you can.
2. Explore music and songs about community on www.lazaruslife.com.
3. Have someone share their story of positive and negative community. A story of how community went south, then became a community of transformational is life giving and inspirational.

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Outline: #9**Title: Living in the light: The Power of Your Transformation****Text: John 12:1-19****Big Idea: A Transformed Life is MORE than we have imagined.****Theological Emphasis: The Christian Life, Witness and Evangelism**

1. There is more to the Story of Lazarus.
 - a. The story of Lazarus does not end in John 11. The drama continues to unfold in chapter 12 of John's gospel.
 - b. Here we see what a transformed life really looks like.
 - c. Many of us have hidden ideas, embedded deep within us about what it really means to live a life after we have been transformed or after the resurrection experience. Perhaps we could imagine becoming heroic in our efforts; tireless in our pursuits, courageous in all endeavors.
 - d. Lazarus shows us important dimensions to what it really "looks like" to live a transformed life. He has much still to teach and show us.

2. A Transformed Life is a life of intimacy with Jesus.
 - a. John 12 shows us an intimate dinner scene where Jesus is anointed in the home of Lazarus with expensive perfume by Mary.
 - b. Right after Lazarus' resurrection, we find him having dinner with Jesus. Not on a mission trip. Not evangelizing nations. Not trying to build and plant churches. He is enjoying the presence of Jesus.
 - c. What can this teach us about transformation? The more deeply we experience Jesus transforming our lives; our grave clothes coming off; the more deeply we seem to fall in love with Jesus. We're drawn to him more. We adore him more. This is the evidence of true transformation: a desire of intimacy with Jesus.

3. A Transformed Life is a life of gratitude and generosity.
 - a. A heart that has truly been transformed is not a hoarding heart.
 - b. A transformed heart is a heart filled with lavish gratitude and over-flowing generosity.
 - c. We give because we have been given to.
 - d. A generous heart pours out generosity.
 - e. A spiritual principle well worth remembering: generosity begets generosity.
 - f. Mary's actions show us this. She too was transformed by what happened to her brother, Lazarus.

4. A Transformed Life is a Life of Danger.
 - a. When a life that has been transformed is shared, danger often results.
 - b. People tried to kill Lazarus—all over again.
 - c. Lazarus became so identified with Jesus and his teaching and power that people tried to snuff his life out again (see 12:10 and 17).

- d. Transformational living is not a safe life. You want others to experience what you've experienced. See the list of "heroes" in Hebrews 11 for a glimpse of what they endured because of their transformed faith.
 - e. What makes a person do such a thing? Truth! A taste of transformation.
5. A Transformed Life is a Life of Influence
- a. Lazarus's life caused people to take notice. He was hard to ignore because something had honestly happened to him.
 - b. See 12:17. People "spread the word."
 - c. This is influence at its best. People shared what had happened. They gave witness to what they had experienced. Imagine what this would be like today for more and more people to share their powerful stories of transformation. Imagine would could happen. Why not? Why not now? Why not share your story?

Resources:

1. Explore the songs on www.lazaruslife.com for possibilities to use in class/worship or group setting.
2. Have someone share their story of transformation. This story should be motivational and powerful. How Jesus transformed my life—this is a great story heading to offer someone to share their story in 3-5 minutes.
3. Consider a skit of an intimate dinner setting where deep conversation can be enjoyed beyond the level of sports and weather.

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