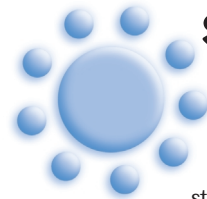




## LAZARUS, COME OUT!



## SET THE SCENE



## BIBLE NOTES

**The Gospel** John 11.1-45

The raising of Lazarus is the last of a series of 'signs' performed by Jesus during his earthly ministry ('signs' being John's term for the miracles). In telling the story, John is not primarily interested in the fate of Lazarus, who would have to die again. Rather, his raising is a sign of that deeper, more satisfying life that Jesus comes to bring.

The dramatic telling of this story has several scenes and highlights the varied responses of Mary, Martha, Jesus and the Jews. The story raises a number of issues:

- Jesus the all-knowing Lord may seem a somewhat heartless friend in delaying his visit to Bethany. But he knows what is to happen, and uses the event to point to the eternal life which is found in him.
- The faith of Martha and Mary seems more satisfying than that of the male disciples.

- Jesus' tears are ambiguous. Does he cry, as the Jews suggest, because of his love for Lazarus, or is he grieving at the power of the enemy, death, or the unbelief of those around?
- The fact that Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days accentuates the miracle. He is well and truly dead, beyond the stage when the spirit might linger near the body. As Martha says, 'already there is a stench'.
- Though Lazarus' raising points to Jesus' resurrection, it is only a sign, and falls far short of it.

**The Old Testament** Ezekiel 37.1-14

**The Epistle** Romans 8.6-11

*(A full version of these notes can be found on the web site at [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com))*

Today, we explore the amazing story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. We hope that leaders and children alike will gain a deeper understanding of Jesus' authority and power.

- Write out words of surprise, such as 'Amazing!', 'Wow!', 'Incredible!', 'Stunning!', 'Hooray!', 'Hallelujah!' and so on in large letters. Invite the children to colour in the letters in bright colours as they come in – then display them on the wall for the session.
- Make a cave-like structure, large enough for a person to lie down inside, with upturned chairs or a table and dark sheets or blankets. The 'door' of the cave can be made from a large piece of cardboard, covering the entrance. Tell the children you will be using this later in the Bible story and ask them to be thinking about what may happen.
- If you are using the Lent display, set it out again. It consists of a purple cloth draped on a table with a cross placed centrally on it. The number 40 is written in pebbles or on a piece of card on the table.



## GET STARTED

**Come to me**

Play this very simply with the youngest children. Call out abilities or items, as below, and anyone who has or does those things runs to you. Older children can be in teams, and only send one team member up each time. The first person to arrive gets a point for their team.

Items could include things like:

- has a brother and a sister,
- is in a swimming club,
- has green socks on,
- ate toast for breakfast,
- can play the recorder,
- likes to read,
- has brown eyes.

In today's story, Jesus calls someone to come to him.

**Family moments**

In groups, role-play the ways that families and friends care for each other. Give each group a scenario – happy or sad – to practise then perform. Ideas could include:

- One person has just passed a driving test or exam.
- One member is ill in hospital.
- There is a new baby in the family.
- One person is worried about going to a new school.

Today's story is about a very small family who are very sad when one of them dies.

**Place race**

Label five different places in the room – as far apart as possible – as follows: 'Mary, Martha and Lazarus' house,' 'Judea,' 'Jerusalem,' 'Bethany' and 'River Jordan'. Explain that today's story has all these places in. Call out the names, for the children to run to the right place. Add more challenging instructions such as, 'hop to Judea', 'walk backwards to Jerusalem,' and so on.

**Trusting without seeing**

Explore with older children the way that we trust many things we cannot see. Do the following actions and discuss how they demonstrate this.

- Blindfold someone and give them something safe to eat.
- Switch on an electrical appliance or light.
- Ask someone to sit down on a chair.
- Read out part of a bus timetable.
- Read the directions on a medicine bottle (make sure it is empty).

In today's story, we see Jesus' power at work. We can't see the power, but we can see the results.





## USE THE BIBLE

### Lazarus, come out!

*(for younger children.)*

This is a difficult story to tell to younger children. You may want to start by talking gently with them about things that die stay dead. They will probably have seen dead insects, or animals. They may have some experience of losing a pet, or even a relative. Explain that today's story is about something completely amazing that Jesus did. At the end of it, give them the chance to tell you their reactions.

One day some people came to Jesus with a message. They came from the village where Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus lived.

'Jesus, please come,' they said. 'Your dear friend Lazarus is ill.'

But Jesus knew that God wanted to do something special, and that it was not right for him to go to Lazarus yet – so he stayed for two more days where he was.

Finally, the day came when Jesus said to his followers, 'Our friend Lazarus has died. You are going to see something that will help you

believe. Come on, let's go to him.'

When they got to Bethany, they found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Martha came to meet them.

'Oh, Jesus,' she said, 'if you had been here Lazarus would not have died.'

Jesus said, 'Your brother will rise again.'

Everyone who believes in me, even though they die, will live. Do you believe me?'

'Yes, Lord, I believe you are the Son of God,' Martha said.

Then Mary, and lots of other people, came to see Jesus. They were all crying and crying. That made Jesus cry as well.

Then they took Jesus to the tomb – the cave where Lazarus' body had been laid.

'Take away the stone,' said Jesus.

'But Jesus,' said Martha, 'he's been dead for four days. His body will smell terrible.'

'Trust me, Martha,' said Jesus. 'You will see the glory of God.'

So they took away the stone.

Jesus prayed 'Father, thank you that you always hear me. I want everyone here to believe you sent me.'

Then he shouted out, very loudly, 'Lazarus, come out!'

And Lazarus did! He walked out, wrapped in strips of cloth and with his face covered.

'Unwrap him,' said Jesus, 'and let him go.'

After seeing that amazing thing, lots of people believed in Jesus.

### Mime the story *(for older children)*

Read the Bible story, with children taking the different parts and miming them. You can do it straight from scratch, with the children improvising as they go along. Alternatively, they can study the story first, and decide how the different characters may have reacted. To make things more dramatic, hide Lazarus, well-wrapped in toilet tissue, inside a 'cave' made from chairs and blankets. Afterwards, ask them what they think it must have been like to be there on that day.

### The living deadman

You may well want to use the wonderful story with this title on the web site at [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com), which tells the story from Lazarus' point of view.



## BE CREATIVE

### Play it again

Younger children might also want a chance to act out this story. You will need lots of toilet paper or bandages.

Keep it very simple, with a wrapped-up Lazarus lying down, and people to be Mary, Martha and Jesus. When Jesus calls, 'Lazarus, come out!' Lazarus comes to life. Give everyone who wants to the chance to play the different parts. Talk about how everybody's sadness changed to surprise and joy.

### Make a model

Make a model of the scene at the tomb when Lazarus walks out. You can do individual models or a larger one as a group activity. For the people, use play figures or make them from pipe cleaners or cardboard tubes. Dress them in scraps of cloth. Make the tomb from air-dry clay or salt dough, and paint it when dry. Add greenery and pebbles for realism.

### Speech bubbles

Write out the following names of characters from our story: Martha, Mary, the Jews, Jesus, Me. Cut out speech bubbles and write on the

following quotations from the Bible verses. The words in italics are the answers, so don't write those on.

- This illness is so that God's glory may be shown. *Jesus*
- Let us go with Jesus and die with him. *Disciples*
- I am the resurrection and the life. *Jesus*
- If you had been here my brother would not have died. *Mary/Martha*
- I believe you are the Son of God. *Martha*
- Lazarus, come out! *Jesus*
- The teacher is here and is calling for you. *Martha*
- See how Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters. *The Jews*

Display the names and give out the quotations to each child or small group. They try to place the quotation under the appropriate name.

Which of the quotations might they match with their own name? Why?

### Family groups

Remind the children that Mary, Martha and Lazarus were sisters and brother. Then play a tape of lively music, giving instructions to children for them to follow – such as hop, skip, run. When the music stops, the leader calls out

a number below six and the children have to form groups of that number. Anyone left out helps the leader to choose the next number. Talk about how hard it was for the tiny family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus when Lazarus died.

### Presentation

If appropriate, work on a presentation for the rest of the church on today's Gospel. This could be something as simple as asking the children to write down their reactions to today's session and then displaying them. Or, it could involve acting out the story and leading some prayers.

### Cards

Make greetings cards for church or family members who are not well or housebound. If possible, make arrangements for some of the children to deliver the cards with the leaders.

### Caring for others

Explore ways to help a local care home or hospital, such as learning some songs and asking permission to perform them and delivering any special news or gifts from the church.

Exchange photos to keep the memory alive and help continue the relationship.

## WORK IT OUT

Jesus did not go to Lazarus as soon as he was called.

Sometimes it seems as if Jesus has not heard us, either. Why do you think this is? Could it sometimes be better for us to wait? Maybe we are not ready for what God wants to do in our lives. Does God always hear our prayers?

- How do you think the disciples felt after seeing this miracle? Do you think that it would have given them courage, considering the danger they faced? (See vv. 8 and 16.)
- Does believing in Jesus change the way we feel about dying? How can we best comfort people around us who are sad and suffering?
- Check how much of the story the children have taken in by seeing if they know which of these statements are true, and which false.
- Lazarus lived in Bethlehem. **F**
- He had three sisters. **F**
- One of his sisters had once wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. **T**
- Jesus had been in danger of being stoned to death. **T**
- Jesus said that Lazarus was only sleeping. **T**
- Then he said he was sorry that he had not been there earlier. **F**
- The disciples said, 'Let's go and die with Jesus.' **T**
- Jesus told Martha that her brother would rise again. **T**
- Some people said, if Jesus could feed 5,000 people, couldn't he have helped Lazarus? **F**

## PRAY IT THROUGH

If you have made a model of today's story, use it as a focal point for the prayers.

### Give thanks

Dear Jesus, thank you that you brought Lazarus back to life. That was amazing! You are wonderful, and powerful, and mighty. We praise you. **Amen.**

### Wrapping prayers

Invite the children to make long thin strips of paper or cloth – such as were taken off Lazarus when he was raised from the dead. Then, ask them to write their own prayers about the incident along the strip. Read them out in turn.

### For others

A prayer for anyone we know who needs especially to know God's care today. Loving God, may the people we know about, who suffer pain, anxiety or bereavement,

experience your love and comfort today. Thank you, Jesus, that you promised to be with us always.

May your Spirit bring each of these people hope today.

Please help us to know how to help and comfort them.

**Amen.**

### Responsive prayer

Dear God,

please bless all those who face death. Let them know your presence and your comfort.

**Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life.**

Please help us when someone we know and love dies.

**Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life.**

Help us, like Martha, to believe in you even when life is hard.

**Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life.**

Thank you for raising Lazarus from the dead, and showing everyone that...

**Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life.**

**Amen.**

- Martha said her brother had been dead for five days. **F**
- Before he spoke to Lazarus, Jesus prayed to God. **T**
- This miracle caused lots more people to believe in Jesus. **T**

## MUSIC AND RESOURCES

Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord (JP)

All that I am, I lay before you (MP)

At the name of Jesus (MP)

Come on and celebrate (JP)

How great is our God (JP)

I will sing, I will sing a song unto the Lord (JP)

Lord, I lift your name on high (KS)

Poor Lazarus is sick (*Story Song*, Stainer & Bell Ltd & The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, 1993)

The Resurrection and the Life am I (*Sing Out Today*, Moravian Book Room, 1994)

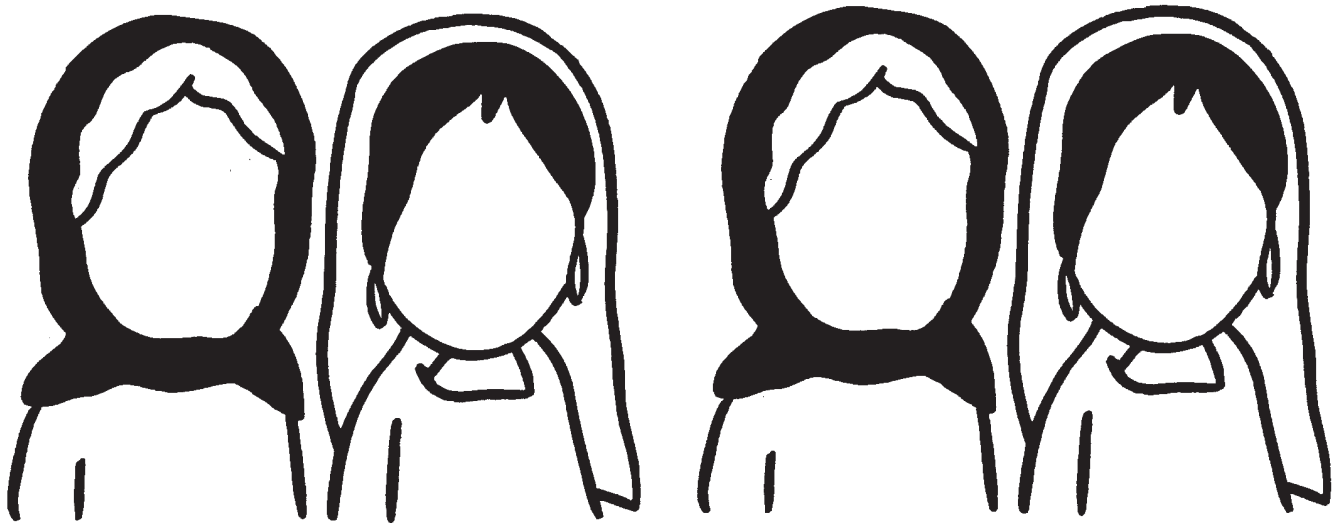
The Spirit lives to set us free (JP)

When Lazarus lay in death's cold shroud (*Come, You People of the Promise*, Stainer & Bell Ltd, 1994)

Anna Morris, *Martha, Mary and Jesus* (Palm Tree Bible Stories), Palm Tree Press Ltd, 1988, ISBN 0862080746.



Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'  
John 11.43-44 (NRSV)



Activity sheet for extra time, or to take home. Photocopy and/or enlarge.

1. Draw Mary and Martha's faces when their brother had died. Then draw them when Jesus brought Lazarus to life.

18		26	14		7	19	22		15	18	21	22		17	22	8	6	8		8	26	18	23

2. How long will it take you to crack the code? Clue:- 1=z 26=a

3. See how much you can remember of today's story by answering the quiz questions here. You can find the answers in John 11.1-45.

- What was the name of the village where Lazarus lived? A: \_\_\_\_\_
- What were the names of Lazarus' sisters? A: \_\_\_\_\_
- Did Jesus rush to see Lazarus, or did he wait? A: \_\_\_\_\_
- How many days had Lazarus been in the tomb when Jesus came? A: \_\_\_\_\_
- When Jesus arrived, how did he feel? A: \_\_\_\_\_
- What was blocking the door of the tomb? A: \_\_\_\_\_
- Before he called Lazarus, what did Jesus do? A: \_\_\_\_\_
- What made it hard for Lazarus to walk? A: \_\_\_\_\_
- What effect did the miracle have on people? A: \_\_\_\_\_