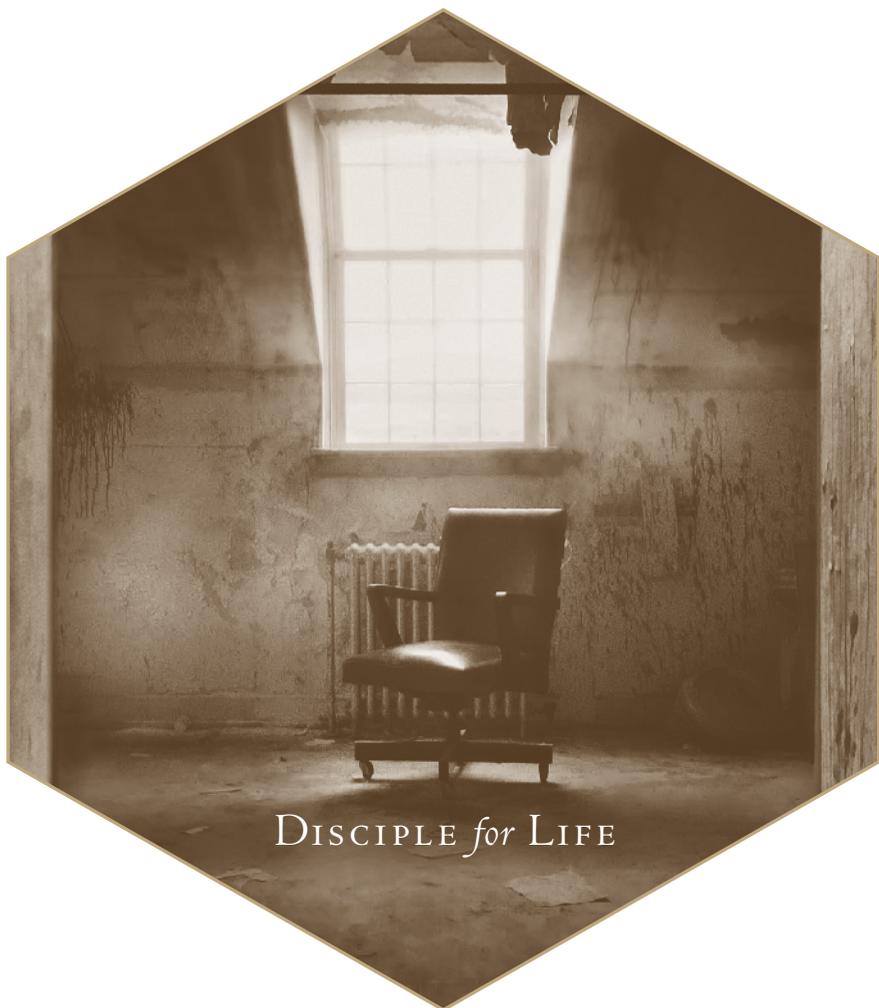


DISCIPLE *for* LIFE

Knowing Jesus

LIVING BY HIS NAME

Robby Gallaty



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Contents

About the Author	4
Introduction	5
How to Use This Study	6
The HEAR Journaling Method for Reading Scripture	8
Week 1: Revealing His Identity	12
Week 2: The Power of Faith	30
Week 3: Spiritual Growth	48
Week 4: The Path to Life	66
Week 5: Experiencing the Kingdom	84
Week 6: Seeking in Our Doubt	102
Leader Guide	120
Tips for Leading a Small Group	132
Group Information	135

About the Author

Robby Gallaty has served as the senior pastor of Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee, since 2015. He wasn't always a pastor, though.



For three years Robby battled a drug addiction that ravaged his life. A \$180-a-day heroin and cocaine addiction drove him to steal \$15,000 from his parents. After living without gas, electricity, and water for months; losing eight of his friends to drug-related deaths; watching six friends get arrested; and completing two rehabilitation treatments, Robby remembered the gospel that a friend shared with him in college and was radically saved on November 12, 2002.

Eight months later David Platt, a seminary student and church member at the time, asked Robby to meet weekly for accountability, prayer, and Bible study. For the next two years David instilled a passion for missions, expository preaching, and disciple making in Robby's life. He also encouraged Robby to go back to school to pursue theological education.

Robby earned his master of divinity in expository preaching in 2007 and his PhD in preaching in 2011 from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Today Robby's gospel conviction and evangelistic zeal compel him to passionately make disciples who make disciples.

In addition to his leadership at Long Hollow, Robby is also the founder of Replicate Ministries and the author of several books, including *Growing Up*, *Firmly Planted*, and *Rediscovering Discipleship*.

Robby and his wife, Kandi, have two young sons: Rig and Ryder.

Introduction

Place yourself in the first century A.D., a few decades after the miraculous resurrection of a controversial Nazarene who claimed to be the Son of God.

Detailed accounts of this man's life and teachings had been circulating for a few decades by this point. Matthew, written by a former tax collector who had spent three years following Him, was filled with details that a Jewish audience would have immediately picked up on. Mark closely followed the actions of Jesus' ministry as He traveled between towns healing, casting out demons, and preaching about the kingdom of God. Luke was a meticulously researched account written by someone who was probably a Gentile doctor and had come to believe in this Jewish man as the Son of God.

So why would another one of Jesus' disciples feel the need, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to write a fourth account?

Even though the word of the gospel had spread far and wide by this point, many people were being taught heretical doctrine. Some had no problem believing Jesus was a good teacher, but they didn't believe He was the Son of God. John wrote his book to examine Jesus' very nature. He intended to bring the focus back onto Jesus Himself, proving that He was both fully man and fully God.

Today we find ourselves in a similar situation, when there are as many opinions about who Jesus was as there are people talking about Him. Now, more than ever, we need to reevaluate the way we look at Jesus. Was He just a good teacher, or was He more?

As we mine the rich theology encased in the Book of John and come to know Jesus, we'll find that the answer to this question will change everything. Our response to it is the most crucial step we'll take in our lives.

How to Use This Study

This Bible study book includes six weeks of content. Each week has an introductory page summarizing the focus of the week's study, followed by content designed for groups and individuals.

GROUP SESSIONS

Regardless of the day of the week your group meets, each week of content begins with the group session. This group session is designed to be one hour or more, with approximately 15 to 20 minutes of teaching and 45 minutes of personal interaction. It's even better if your group is able to meet longer than an hour, allowing more time for participants to interact with one another.

Each group session uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among group members, with God's Word, and with the video teaching by a group of trusted pastors.

Start

This page includes questions to get the conversation started and to introduce the video segment.

Watch

This page includes key points from the video teaching, along with space for taking notes as participants watch the video.

Discuss

These two pages include questions and statements that guide the group to respond to the video teaching and to relevant Bible passages.

Pray

This final page of each group session includes a prompt for a closing time of prayer together and space for recording prayer requests of group members.

INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY

Each *Disciple for Life* small-group resource provides individuals with optional activities during the week, appealing to different learning styles, schedules, and levels of engagement. These options include a plan for application and accountability, a Scripture-reading plan with journaling prompts, a devotion, and two personal studies. You can choose to take advantage of some or all of the options provided.

This Week's Plan

Immediately following the group session's prayer page is a weekly plan offering guidance for everyone to engage with that week's focal point, regardless of a person's maturity level or that week's schedule.

Read

A daily reading plan is outlined for Scriptures related to the group session. Space for personal notes is also provided. Instructions for using the HEAR journaling method for reading Scripture can be found on pages 8–11.

Reflect

A one-page devotional option is provided each week to help members reflect on a biblical truth related to the group session.

Personal Study

Two personal studies are provided each week to take individuals deeper into Scripture and to supplement the biblical truths introduced in the teaching time. These pages challenge individuals to grow in their understanding of God's Word and to make practical application to their lives.

LEADER GUIDE

Pages 120–31 at the back of this book contain a guide that develops a leader's understanding of the thought process behind questions and suggests ways to engage members at different levels of life-changing discussion.

The HEAR Journaling Method for Reading Scripture

Daily Bible Reading

Disciple for Life small-group Bible studies include a daily reading plan for each week. Making time in a busy schedule to focus on God through His Word is a vital part of the Christian life. If you're unable to do anything else provided in your Bible study book during a certain week, try to spend a few minutes in God's Word. The verse selections will take you deeper into stories and concepts that support the teaching and discussion during that week's group session.

Why Do You Need a Plan?

When you're a new believer or at various other times in your life, you may find yourself in a place where you don't know where to begin reading your Bible or how to personally approach Scripture. You may have tried the open-and-point method when you simply opened your Bible and pointed to a verse, hoping to get something out of the random selection from God's Word. Reading random Scriptures won't provide solid biblical growth any more than eating random food from your pantry will provide solid physical growth.

An effective plan must be well balanced for healthy growth. When it comes to reading the Bible, *well balanced* and *effective* mean reading and applying. A regular habit is great, but simply checking a box off your task list when you've completed your daily reading isn't enough. Knowing more about God is also great, but simply reading for spiritual knowledge still isn't enough. You also want to respond to what you're reading by taking action as you listen to what God is saying. After all, it's God's Word.

To digest more of the Word, *Disciple for Life* small-group Bible studies not only provide a weekly reading plan but also encourage you to use a simplified version of the HEAR journaling method. (If this method advances your personal growth, check out *Foundations: A 260-Day Bible-Reading Plan for Busy Believers* by Robby and Kandi Gallaty.)

Journaling What You HEAR in God's Word

You may or may not choose to keep a separate journal in addition to the space provided in this book. A separate journal would provide extra space as well as the opportunity to continue your journal after this study is completed. The HEAR journaling method promotes reading the Bible with a life-transforming purpose. You'll read in order to understand and respond to God's Word.

The HEAR acronym stands for *highlight, explain, apply, and respond*. Each of these four steps creates an atmosphere for hearing God speak. After settling on a reading plan, like the one provided in this book in the section "Read" each week, establish a time for studying God's Word. Then you'll be ready to HEAR from God.

Before You Begin: The Most Important Step

To really HEAR God speak to you through His Word, always begin your time with prayer. Pause and sincerely ask God to speak to you. It's absolutely imperative that you seek God's guidance in order to understand His Word (see I Cor. 2:12-14). Every time you open your Bible, pray a simple prayer like the one David prayed: "Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wonderful things from Your instruction" (Ps. 119:18).

H = Highlight

After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, open this book to the week's reading plan, open a journal if you'd like more space than this book provides, and open your Bible. For an illustration let's assume you're reading Philippians 4:10-13. Verse 13 may jump out and speak to you as something you want to remember, so you'd simply highlight that verse in your Bible.

If keeping a HEAR journal, on the top line write the Scripture reference and the date and make up a title to summarize the meaning of the passage. Then write the letter H and record the verse that stood out and that you highlighted in your Bible. This practice will make it easy to look back through your journal to find a passage you want to revisit in the future.

E = Explain

After you've highlighted your verse(s), explain what the text means. Most simply, how would you summarize this passage in your own words? By asking some simple questions, with the help of God's Spirit, you can understand the meaning of the passage or verse. (A good study Bible can help answer more in-depth questions as you learn to explain a passage of Scripture.) Here are a few good questions to get you started:

- Why was the verse or passage written?
- To whom was it originally written?
- How does the verse or passage fit with the verses before and after it?
- Why would the Holy Spirit include this passage in the Bible book?
- What does God intend to communicate through the text?

If keeping a HEAR journal, below the H write the letter E and explain the text in your own words. Record any answers to questions that help you understand the passage of Scripture.

A = Apply

At this point you're beginning the process of discovering the specific personal word God has for you from His Word. What's important is that you're engaging with the text and wrestling with the meaning. Application is the heart of the process. Everything you've done so far coalesces under this heading. As you've done before, answer a series of questions to discover the significance of these verses to you personally, questions like:

- How can this verse or passage help me?
- What's God saying to me?
- What would the application of this verse look like in my life?

These questions bridge the gap between the ancient world and your world today. They provide a way for God to speak to you through the specific passage or verse.

If keeping a HEAR journal, write the letter A under the letter E, where you wrote a short summary explaining the text. Challenge yourself to write between two and five sentences about the way the text applies to your life.

R = Respond

Finally, you'll respond to the text. A personal response may take on many forms. You may write an action step to do, describe a change in perspective, or simply respond in prayer to what you've learned. For example, you may ask for help in being bold or generous, you may need to repent of unconfessed sin, or you may need to praise God. Keep in mind that you're responding to what you've just read.

In this book or in your journal, record your personal application of each passage of Scripture. You may want to write a brief explanation-and-application summary: "The verse means _____, so I can or will _____."

If keeping a HEAR journal, write the letter R, along with the way you'll respond to what you highlighted, explained, and applied.

Notice that all the words in the HEAR method are action words: *highlight, explain, apply, respond*. God doesn't want us to sit back and wait for Him to drop truth into our laps. God wants us to actively pursue Him instead of waiting passively. Jesus said:

Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you.

Matthew 7:7

Revealing His Identity

Week 1



John's Gospel starts as Genesis does: in the beginning.

Creation is the bedrock of a biblical worldview, for it's the first ultimate truth: God made everything. He wove it like fabric. He spun it like clay. He breathed it into formation like glass.

More remarkable than what God did is the way He did it: His tool was His Word. He spoke, and it was. The apostle John traced this Word through time.

Men spoke of this Word while surrounded by both sea and sand, from human thrones and from pits of despair. One man in the wilderness, dressed in leather and camel hair, announced that this Word that gives light to everyone was coming into the world wrapped in human flesh.

A remarkable claim like this requires remarkable evidence, and John provided it for us. In John's Gospel we come to know Jesus in the same way evidence is presented to a jury in a courtroom. John introduced witnesses who testified of the Word made flesh. He examined the words Jesus said about Himself. He described the things Jesus did that testified of His divinity.

Everything you're about to see points to one conclusion: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and by believing, you can have life through Him.

Start

Welcome to session 1 of *Knowing Jesus*. Use the following content to begin your group session together.

We've become experts at filling every hour of our days with something—work, recreation, friends, family, school, church, and daily routines. We have email, text, Internet, and even live chat at our fingertips 24-7. We have smartphones with as many apps as they can hold; inexpensive video-streaming accounts; and endless hours of books, blogs, and games to consume. We squeeze in time between meetings or shifts to check off items on to-do lists or to catch up with activity in our social-media feeds.

What unavoidable responsibilities fill your day?

What additional things do you add to your day?

How do you relax and recharge after a long day?

We first encounter Jesus after He and His disciples had had a trying day. They started out with a long boat ride across the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd of people immediately flocked to them, attracted by the One they had seen work miracles. The disciples worked during Jesus' all-day healing and teaching service, were directed to distribute food for dinner, and then had to pick up all the leftovers. It had been a long day; all they wanted was to get back to their boat, row home, and sleep. As it turns out, their long day was about to get longer.

Pray that God will open your hearts and minds as you watch video session 1.

Watch

The more we know Jesus, the more we love Him. The more we love Him, the more we obey Him. The more we obey Him, the more He manifests Himself to us.

Jesus is always praying, spending time with the Father.

Jesus discloses His identity in an amazing way.

What Jesus is saying, without saying anything, is that He is God.

Jesus calms fears by saying, “Don’t be afraid.”

I AM is the verb *to be*. God always is, He always was, and He always will be. He’s always in the eternal present.

Discuss

Use the following statements and questions to discuss the video.

The opening of the video included the following statement about Jesus:

The more we know Him, the more we love Him. The more we love Him, the more we obey Him. The more we obey Him, the more He manifests Himself.

How does this cyclical process help you understand discipleship?

Read Mark 6:47-50 and John 6:16-20.

In John's account what physical details in each verse help set the emotional tone?

What additional details did Mark include? How do they add to the intensity of the situation?

What did Jesus do while the disciples were struggling against the wind?

Robby pointed out that this situation was the second time Jesus took something the disciples knew well—the lake—and used it to teach them dependence on Him.

How does adversity help us learn dependence?

What was something significant Robby pointed out in Mark 6:48?

The accounts of Jesus walking on the water contained proof of Jesus' divinity: the fact that He walked on the waves (see Job 9:8) and His response to the disciples' fear.

How did Jesus respond when He saw that the disciples were afraid?

What was significant about the way He referred to Himself?

In what situations have you felt that you were struggling in the dark, needing to hear Jesus say, “Fear not, for I AM”?

Read Matthew 14:27-33.

Matthew’s account gives further insight into the events of that evening, particularly Peter’s involvement. But it also shows us something important that happened after Jesus got into the boat.

How did the disciples respond to what Jesus performed that evening on the lake?

What proof do you think convinced them?

If you’ve reached the same conclusion the disciples did in Matthew 14:33, what convinced you? If you haven’t, what do you think it would take?

Before we transition to prayer, something we’ll do at the end of each group session, think about what we saw before Jesus walked on the water. Jesus intentionally took time at the end of a long day to go off by Himself to pray. We don’t often think of Jesus as needing to rest and be refreshed. While we don’t know exactly what He was praying in this instance, we see an invaluable example for our relationship with God.

How does prayer refresh you? How does it keep you focused on God instead of fearful of your circumstances?

What’s your most difficult challenge to a consistent, healthy prayer life?

Conclude the group session with the prayer activity on the following page.

Pray

We, like the disciples, tend to get terrified when things around us seem as if they're falling apart. We may have moments of boldness, but they often become moments of doubt. Whether or not we admit it, we look for a Savior to come walking on the water to rescue us. Jesus did just that, and He used the disciples' struggle to teach them a lesson.

Spend a few minutes sharing with the group situations—whether personal circumstances, world events, or friends' experiences—that seem beyond hope or control.

Read aloud Matthew 8:23-27. Close by thanking God for His sovereign control, praying that He will help us see Him for who He is and worship Him appropriately.

Prayer Requests

Encourage members to complete “This Week’s Plan” before the next group session.

This Week's Plan

In addition to studying God's Word, work with your group leader to create a plan for personal study, worship, and application between now and the next session. Select from the following optional activities to match your personal preferences and available time.

Worship

- Read your Bible. This Bible study book will help you read the Gospel of John over the next six weeks. Complete the reading plan on page 20.
- Spend time with God by engaging with the devotional experience on page 21.
- Connect with God each day through prayer.

Personal Study

- Read and interact with "A Man Born Blind" on page 22.
- Read and interact with "A Man Brought Back" on page 26.

Application

- Spend time in personal reflection, looking for signs of a coming storm on your horizon. Consider ways you can prepare ahead of time to keep your eyes focused on Jesus, no matter what happens.
- Memorize John 6:20.
- Pray for an opportunity to share your testimony with someone outside the group this week. If you know somebody who's experiencing something you've been through, pray for an opportunity to encourage that person.
- Start a journal. This week write about a time you've tried to brave a storm on your own and describe the way it turned out. Journal about a time you've trusted your situation entirely to God and describe the way it turned out.
- Other:

Read

Read the following Scripture passages this week. Use the acronym HEAR and the space provided to record your thoughts or action steps.

Day 1: John 1:1-28

Day 2: John 1:29-51

Day 3: John 2:1-12

Day 4: John 2:13-25

Day 5: John 3:1-21

Day 6: John 3:22-36

Day 7: John 4

Reflect

CERTAINTY OF THE UNSEEN

Has this thought ever crossed your mind? *If I had been in that boat with the disciples, I would have believed too.* It's so much easier to trust Jesus when you can see Him walking on the waves toward you with your own eyes. We're good at feeling the pressure from the wind and the swell of the waves underneath our boats. We can hear our planks creaking and see our masts swaying too heavily. It's harder to trust Jesus, whom we can't see.

Consider what the writer of Hebrews said about faith without sight:

Faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

The author of Hebrews tells us that faith isn't what we have in spite of a lack of evidence. Faith is what we have in lieu of needing evidence at all. Our faith is our evidence. People who are called by Jesus' name have experienced His saving grace at some point. They're filled with the Holy Spirit, who guides, corrects, and counsels them. They're driven by a thirst for the Word of God.

When faith seems hard, remember that you can still see Him; you can see Him at work in your life. You can still hear Him; you can hear His voice through His Word. "Those who believe without seeing are blessed" (John 20:29), Jesus said.

Identify ways Jesus has revealed Himself to you. These reminders will comfort you when the storm comes.

Personal Study 1

A MAN BORN BLIND

Everything John included in his Gospel has a point: to prove that Jesus is who He said He was. So occasionally, John described instances when Jesus was on trial in a manner of speaking. One such occasion is in John 9. Let's examine the evidence John provided.

Read John 9.

Rabbis claimed only the Son of God could do certain things. Healing a man born blind and raising a man from death to life were two of them. Those seem like fair expectations. Not much argument there, right?

John 9:1, written to an audience who understood this, established the stakes right off the bat.

The disciples tried to rationalize the man's condition by asking why he was born this way. Jesus gave them an answer they probably didn't expect: so that His glory could be shown.

What's a bad incident that happened in your life that doesn't have a rational explanation?

How did you get through it?

How can Jesus be magnified through a person's response to devastating circumstances in his or her life?

As soon as the man came home seeing, it absolutely shook things up. His eyes, which had previously seen only darkness, now let light in.

Verses 8-12 show that the gravity of this situation didn't go unnoticed. The man's neighbors and friends were sincerely baffled by the extraordinary thing that had been done. What was perhaps frustrating to the healed man was that after he went and washed, Jesus wasn't standing there to greet him.

Jesus was doing something incredible; He was letting the healing speak for itself, because He knew what kind of a stir it would cause. The investigation that followed was going to point to Him and come to one of two conclusions: either this man had been lying the whole time about being blind, or Jesus did something that only the Messiah could have done.

Perhaps you've felt the immeasurable peace only Jesus can bring in the face of sadness. Maybe you've felt the crushing weight of your sin lifted.

What's something Jesus has done in your life that can be explained only by Him?

The people instantly knew this was a matter that needed to be investigated. So they took the man to the religious leaders in town—the ones who knew exactly what to look for in the coming Messiah.

So in John 9:13-34 they interviewed everybody who knew this man to figure out whether his story was true. Was he really blind from birth? He wasn't *really* born that way; he did something very, very early that made him blind, didn't he? What exactly did this man do to heal you?

Their questions were insensitive and maddening, especially to the man who was healed. But we find the same things being asked today about the works of God.

What are excuses people make to explain away the work of God?

What has someone said that caused you to doubt your belief in God?

In verses 35-41 Jesus revealed Himself to both the man He healed and the people seeking to inspire doubt about Him. The man's simple profession in verse 38 is contrasted heavily with the angry skepticism coming from the Pharisees:

"I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped Him.

John 9:38

The man's statement set up a grand reversal. The man who was blind could now see, both physically and spiritually. Those who could physically see were made spiritually blind by the healing.

What does it mean to be spiritually blind?

How can the works of God make the blind see and cause the seeing to go blind to His ways?

How can your eyes be opened to see God in all His incredible ways?

Close your study time in prayer, thanking God for all He has done. Pray that your eyes, like those of the man born blind, will be opened to see who Jesus is.

Personal Study 2

A MAN BROUGHT BACK

In personal study I you explored John's account of Jesus healing the blind man. Rabbis knew that only God could perform such a miracle. Another thing rabbis knew only the Son of God could do was raise a man from the dead. The logic was perfect: if God is the ultimate giver of life, then giving it again to someone who died is possible.

Just as Jesus did something in John 9 that proved who He was, He used a situation in John 11 to reveal who He was in all His glory.

Read John 11:1-11.

The account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead may be a familiar one, but even if you've heard it many times before, let's read it with first-century eyes. As the text points out, Jesus learned of Lazarus's sickness before he died. Mary and Martha knew Jesus, a miraculous healer, could save him if He got there in time, but Jesus did something that probably frustrated them: He waited two extra days before making His way to Lazarus.

When have you asked for God to come and do something like heal a sickness?

What goes through your head when it seems that God isn't acting?

Why do you think Jesus delayed going to save Lazarus?

How do Jesus' words in verse 4 address our desire to see God work on our timetable?

Read John 11:17-27.

John was still presenting a case for people to believe in Jesus, which is made starkly evident in verse 17. Jewish tradition believed a person's spirit hovered around the body for three days after death. If Lazarus had gotten up just a day after they thought he was dead, his resurrection would have been attributed to a misdiagnosis or a false report of his death.

But Lazarus has been dead for four days by this point. Everyone around him knew there was no chance of his coming back. Still, Martha clung to her hope that Jesus could fix it.

Jesus told Martha that Lazarus would rise again, but she thought He was talking about spiritual things. Little did she know that He had plans that would astound her and would prove her incredible confession in verse 27.

Jesus said He's the resurrection and the life (see v. 25). What does this declaration mean to you personally?

What did Jesus mean when He said those who live and believe in Him "will never die—ever" (v. 26)?

Read John 11:38-44.

Something purely unexplainable by human reason happened that day in Bethany. Jesus called out to an open grave filled by the stench of death and an air of hopelessness, and the man who was lying there got up and walked out of it.

More interesting is the reason Jesus said He raised Lazarus. Verse 42 informs us that it was for the benefit of the people looking on.

We're still looking at this resurrection thousands of years after it happened. It happened for us as much as it did for the disciples and Martha. For those of us who've found new life in Christ, what happened to Lazarus actually happened to us as well.

Scripture tells us that we were dead in our sin but were made alive together with Christ—just as Lazarus was.

Read Ephesians 2:1-5.

Describe your life before you came to know Christ.

What was the situation that brought you to a saving knowledge of Jesus?

How has a relationship with Christ changed your perspective on everything around you?

What does a person have to fear who was once dead but was brought back to life to live solely for the One who gave it?

How do your everyday actions change, knowing your life is a gift from God?

Close your study time in prayer, praising God as the One who gives life. Die again to self, firmly placing Jesus at the center of your actions, thoughts, and motivations.