

A thick, orange, hand-drawn scribbled line starts in the top left corner, loops around, and then extends downwards and to the right, ending near the bottom right edge of the cover. It has a fluid, unconfined appearance.

RYAN MCDERMOTT

UNBOUND

**Experiencing Life &
Freedom in Christ**

RYAN MCDERMOTT

UNBOUND

**Experiencing Life &
Freedom in Christ**

Publishing Team

Content Editor

Kyle Wiltshire

Director, Student Ministry

Ben Trueblood

Production Editor

Morgan Hawk

Manager, Student Ministry Publishing

John Paul Basham

Graphic Designer

Shiloh Stufflebeam

Editorial Team Leader

Karen Daniel

Published by Lifeway Press®

©2022 Ryan McDermott

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to Lifeway Press®, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027.

ISBN 978-1-0877-7349-0

Item 005839416

Dewey Decimal Classification Number: 230

Subject Heading: RELIGION / CHRISTIAN MINISTRY / YOUTH

Printed in the United States of America.

Student Ministry Publishing

Lifeway Resources

200 Powell Place, Suite 100

Brentwood, TN 37027

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review Lifeway's doctrinal guideline, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are from the Holy Bible, King James Version.

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR	04
HOW TO USE	05
SESSION 1 When Jesus Shows Up	06
SESSION 2 Do You Believe?	20
SESSION 3 Grave Clothes	34
SESSION 4 Wearing the Right Thing	48
SESSION 5 Put on Love	62
SESSION 6 The Starting Line	76
LEADER GUIDE	84



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ryan is passionate about preaching the gospel of Jesus, helping students be brave enough to believe they can change the world, and training the next generation of church leaders. He has an undergraduate degree in Christian Leadership from Palm Beach Atlantic University and a Master's degree in Ministerial Leadership from Southeastern University. Ryan has over seventeen years of experience serving students in the local church. Currently, he serves as the Executive Director of Family Ministry at Christ Fellowship Church, a non-denominational multi-site church with locations all across South Florida. Ryan lives in West Palm Beach, Florida, with his wife Christine and their two children, Declan and Kinley.

How To Use

This Bible study book includes six sessions of content. Each session includes video teaching, followed by content designed for groups and individuals.

WATCH GUIDE

Each teaching video is 6-8 minutes long and is designed to help students think about the topic for the session and engage in discussion. There is a guide with space for students to take notes as they watch the video teaching. Video content can be found at lifeway.com/unbound.

GROUP DISCUSSION

These pages include icebreakers, questions, activities, and statements that guide students to respond to the video teaching and to relevant Bible passages. It's important to consider the age, maturity level, and needs of students as you tailor this content for your group.

PERSONAL STUDY

Three days of personal study are provided for each session (except for session 6) to take students deeper into Scripture and to supplement the biblical truths introduced in the group discussion and teaching time. These pages challenge students to grow in their understanding of God's Word and to make practical applications to their lives.

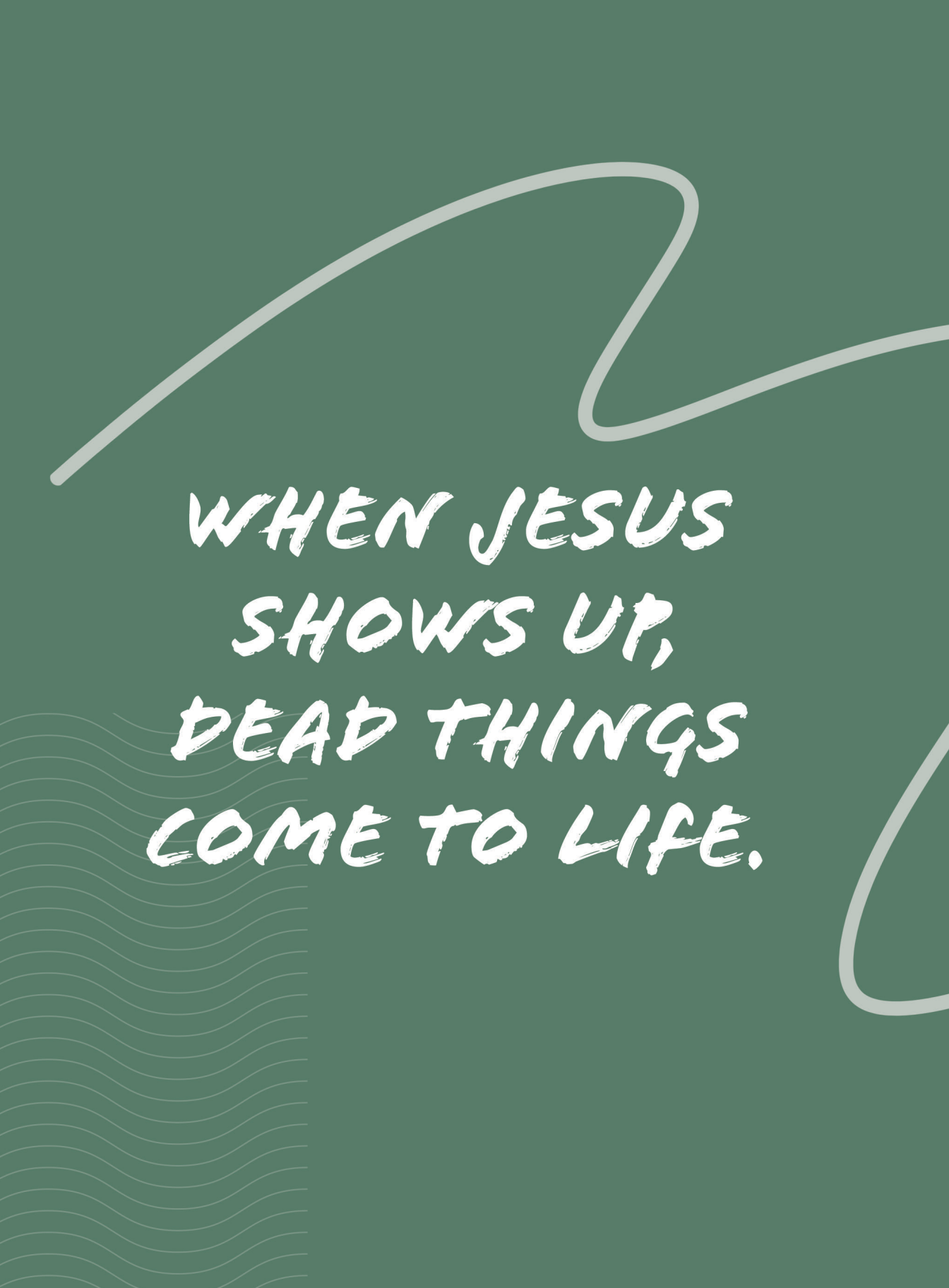
LEADER GUIDE

At the back of the book is a leader guide to help walk students through the content. There you will find a summary of the discussion guide for each session.

CONTRAST

SESSION 1:

**WHEN
JESUS
SHOWS
UP**



WHEN JESUS
SHOWS UP,
DEAD THINGS
COME TO LIFE.

WATCH GUIDE

Key Scripture:

Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying” (John 11:25, NLT).

NOTES

GREAT QUOTE

KEY POINTS

GROUP DISCUSSION

ICEBREAKER

Begin by making sure everyone in the group knows each other. Ask each student to introduce themselves, then begin the activity.

Think of a moment that the students in your group would all be familiar with. Maybe a recent sporting event or story from summer camp that most, if not all, would have experienced. Then ask a student who witnessed the event to explain what happened. After allow another student to detail any differences in what they remember from the first account.

If time permits, allow someone who wasn't there to recap what they heard happened. It's probable there will be discrepancies between the eyewitness accounts and the ones who only heard what happened after.

DEBRIEF: The point of this icebreaker is to help students understand that the best perspective comes from those who saw something for themselves.

QUESTION: Why are eyewitness accounts of an event often different from the retelling of someone who just heard about what happened?

GROUP DISCUSSION

The Gospel of John is believed by many to be an eyewitness account by one of Jesus's disciples. He also happened to be one of Jesus's closest friends, which means we can be sure that it is accurate and trustworthy when we read the words of John.¹ Why? Because John was actually there. He saw these events with his very own eyes, and he wrote them down so that so that anyone who reads his words might "believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing [they] may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 11:1-8.

The stories in the Gospel of John all follow a similar pattern. Jesus performs a miracle or makes a claim about Himself, which results in misunderstanding or controversy, and at the end of each story, people are forced to make a decision about who they believe Jesus is. The story of Lazarus represents a turning point in the Gospel of John. After this particular miracle, the conflict surrounding Jesus was so intense that religious leaders started plotting to kill Him, and they began to move forward with their murderous plan against Him (see John 11:53). When Jesus decided to go to Bethany, the disciples tried to talk Him out of it, but despite their very valid concerns for His life, Jesus went. It should strike us as incredibly significant that the turning point in the Gospel of John is not just a story about someone being brought back to life, but a story about Jesus willingly laying down His life for His friend.

❓ QUESTION: What are some of the claims about Jesus that people find controversial today?

Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus made a series of seven incredibly significant statements intended to define who He is. These claims of Jesus are so direct and personal that they all start with the phrase “I am.” This phrase may not carry much significance for us, but Jewish people living at the time of Jesus would have understood each of these statements to be a claim that Jesus was, Himself, God. The “I am” statements of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John would have reminded His original audience of an encounter that Moses had with God. Jesus’s intentional use of the same phrase “draws on Exodus 3:14 and other Old Testament passages where the phrase clearly refers to God.”² That is the very reason we see people get so upset with Jesus using this phrase. The statements He made were confusing, controversial, and offensive to some only because He claimed to be God.³

ACTIVITY

Take the next few minutes to search the Scriptures in the Gospel of John and examine the claims that Jesus made about Himself.

In John 6:35, Jesus said, “I am _____.”

In John 8:12, Jesus said, “I am _____.”

In John 10:9, Jesus said, “I am _____.”

In John 10:14-15, Jesus said, “I am _____.”

In John 11:25, Jesus said, “I am _____.”

In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am _____.”

In John 15:5, Jesus said, “I am _____.”

QUESTION: What insights do you glean about Jesus from these seven “I am” statements?

The “I am” statement in the story of Lazarus is found not in a conversation that Jesus had with Lazarus but with one of his sisters, Martha. She cried out to Jesus, expressing her frustration and making the desperate statement: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died” (John 11:21). To which Jesus simply replied, “Your brother will rise again” (John 11:23). Martha’s mind immediately went to a day in the future when she would be reunited with her brother; the last day when all will be raised again. Jesus, however, offered her not just a future hope but a present hope. Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live” (John 11:25). And then? The demonstration. Jesus put on display for all to see His power over disease, death, and the grave. He revealed to those witnesses that there is a resurrection power in Him that is available in this life and the next.

❓ QUESTION: How have you witnessed Jesus's resurrection power in your life?

God wants us to understand that the resurrection power of Jesus is not for somewhere, someday; it is for right here, right now. God wants us to understand that when Jesus shows up, dead things come to life. Thanks be to God, there is nothing too dead for Jesus! There is no situation, or circumstance, or individual that cannot experience the resurrection power of Jesus. When we invite God into the dark, desperate, broken, dead places in our lives, He brings His resurrection power to each and every one. God can breathe new life into our families, into our dreams, into our relationships, and even into us! This same God who raised Lazarus from the dead is available to anyone at any time.

❓ QUESTION: Is there an area of your life that you need Jesus to breathe new life into today?

CLOSING PRAYER: Thank You, Jesus, for Your resurrection power in our lives. Help us to live in that power, knowing You bring dead things to life. Amen.

Jesus Is Never Late

? Describe a time when you found it difficult to wait on something.

Part of this story from the Gospel of John is about waiting. After presenting their problem to Jesus, Mary and Martha had to wait for a solution. When Jesus heard about Lazarus, He didn't drop everything and rush right to his side (see John 11:6). He didn't provide instant healing. He didn't tell the messengers, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed," as He did in Matthew 8:13 (ESV). Not this time. He simply sent back a promise, "This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (John 11:4). Lazarus's sickness not only persisted, it progressed. He got even sicker and eventually died. It wasn't until he had been in the tomb for four days that Jesus finally showed up.

? When have you waited for God to respond after desperately asking Him for something?

Why did Jesus make them wait? John 11:5-6 seem to give us at least one reason: "Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was sick, he stayed two more days in the place where he was." To say it another way, Jesus loved them, so He stayed where He was. Wait, what? The text seems to suggest that His love for them is one of the reasons He made them wait. His love for them was one of His motivations for *not* snapping His fingers and making their problem disappear.

What if God is making us wait because He loves us? What if we actually began to believe that when God makes us wait, it is not because He is withholding something from us or because He is punishing us, but because of His infinite love for us? I wonder how that would change our perspective on "unanswered" prayers or unrealized dreams. I wonder how that would change how we wait upon the Lord.



Have you ever had a time when God made you wait on something, and the result was so much better than you imagined? Describe it here.

Charles Spurgeon, often referred to as the “Prince of Preachers,”⁴ once wrote: “Remember this, had any other condition been better for you than the one in which you are, divine love would have put you there.”⁵ In moments of hardship, trial, difficulty, or persecution, we need to remember that while our position might seem otherwise, God will sometimes allow us to struggle *because* He loves us.

We see in this story that Jesus is never late. He delays in coming so God would be glorified in their situation. He arrives at just the right moment so that everyone would know: Jesus truly is the Son of God. Prior to the coming of Christ, miracles were divided into two categories according to Jewish tradition: those that anyone could perform if empowered to do so, and those reserved only for the Messiah.⁶ This was one of those “Messiah Only” miracles. Not simply because Jesus raised a man from the dead, but it is the timing that makes this miracle so significant. When did Jesus arrive? On the fourth day. Rabbis taught that it was possible for someone to return from the dead if done within three days.⁷ They believed that the spirit of a person would hover around the dead body for three days after death, but after those three days, the spirit would depart and returning from the dead was no longer possible.

When Jesus raised Lazarus on the fourth day, He was clearly demonstrating His power over death and the grave, but also over time and expectation. Despite how we might sometimes feel, Jesus is never late, and He always has the power to change everything.



Is there an area of your life in which you need to trust God’s timing today? Write about it below.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, help me understand today that waiting is not a waste when I am waiting on You. Help me to trust Your timing in every area of my life today. Amen.

Jesus Is Never Surprised

- ① **Where do you turn in times of trouble?**
- ② **Do you present your problems to Jesus?**
- ③ **Is that normally your first reaction or your last resort?**

I love that Mary and Martha turned to Jesus with their problem. I don't know if it was their first reaction or a last resort, but either way, they brought their problem to the only person who could do something about it. Jesus cares about the details of our lives, and He longs to hear from us. We should not assume that Jesus was unaware that Lazarus was sick until He got the message from Mary and Martha. In fact, the opposite is true. Jesus knows all of our needs, desires, and problems before we do. Praying to Jesus and presenting our problems to Him is not for His awareness but for our relationship. He longs for us to come to Him in prayer, for us to declare our dependence on Him, for us to invite Him to involve Himself in our situation. Good fathers love to hear from their kids. God doesn't need you to inform Him about the details of your life, but He desires a relationship with you. When we pray, according to Psalm 116, God bends down to listen. He turns His ear to hear.

WRITE: Look up these Scriptures, and list what each one reveals about God's knowledge of our lives.

Psalm 56:8	
Psalm 147:5	
Isaiah 40:28	
Matthew 10:30	
Romans 11:33	

It is important for us to realize that God has never been shocked. He has never been caught off-guard. Nothing has ever occurred to God. He knows. He is infinitely aware of the details of our lives. That fact should bring us great comfort because it means the things in life that we don't see coming and are not prepared for do not take God by surprise. When we feel alarmed or confused or shocked or uncertain, we can turn to a God who is absolutely none of those things. Psalm 139:1-6 (ESV), among many other places in Scripture, speaks to God being all-knowing. David wrote:

O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

So whether you are presenting a problem to God or confessing your sin, you cannot shock or surprise Him. He just wants to hear it from you. Whenever I got in trouble as a kid, the hardest part was always waiting for my dad to come home. I knew that when he got there, I would have to explain to him what I had done. Of course, he already knew. There was no doubt in my mind that my mom had already filled him in but hearing it directly from me carried a different weight. Good fathers love to hear from their children. God is already infinitely aware of the details of our lives, but He also chooses to be intimately involved with us. The more we communicate with God, the stronger our relationship with Him will be.



Is there something you are facing right now that you have been hesitant to bring to the Lord? What is it?

PRAY: Lord Jesus, I thank You that I can always turn to You no matter what it is that I am facing. Thank You for hearing my cries. Help me to trust You with my problems today. Amen.

Jesus Weeps

Upon arriving at Bethany, Jesus found an entire community had surrounded Mary and Martha in their grief over Lazarus's death. Both sisters said the same thing to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21,32, ESV). The Bible tells us that when Jesus heard this and saw the mourning of the people, "he was deeply moved in his spirit and troubled" (John 11:33, ESV). So much so that when they showed Jesus the tomb Lazarus has been buried in, He sat down and began to cry. Let's just make sure we understand what happened here: God cried. The same God who breathed the stars into existence. The same God who set the sun in its place and the earth on its axis. The same God, who formed man from the dust of the ground and puts breath in your lungs, cried.



Have you ever shared in someone's grief or walked alongside someone who was having a hard time? Describe it.

Jesus shared in their sorrow over death. Why would He do this? We know how this story ends—He raises Lazarus from the dead. Just a few seconds later, these people witness a miracle and are reunited with the one they love, and Jesus was the only one who knew what was about to happen. It is so significant that Jesus didn't tell them to stop wailing, crying, and grieving. Instead, He sat down outside the grave of His friend and cried. It may be the shortest verse in the Bible, but it is arguably one of the most significant, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

There were a few reasons for Jesus's tears. One reason is because His people were weeping. Psalm 34:18 tells us: "The Lord is near the brokenhearted; he saves those crushed in spirit." In Matthew 5:4, Jesus Himself proclaimed, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." In the story of Lazarus, we see Jesus putting these promises into action. He joined with those who were broken-hearted. He mourned with those who were mourning and wept with those who were weeping. Why does that matter? Because it means you are not alone when you grieve. You are not alone when you cry. You are not alone when you are broken-hearted. In those moments, Jesus does not tell us to suck it up, get tough, or move on. Instead, He sits with us, has compassion for us, mourns with us, and grieves with us. Psalm 46:1 tells us that God is our

ever-present help in times of need. When we face difficulty in life we may feel—perhaps more than ever—that Jesus is close.

? **Do you have Scriptures you cling to in moments of difficulty? What are they and why are they important to you?**

I believe Jesus also wept here over the state of creation. Death was never meant to exist in the world that God created. It wasn't a part of His original design. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden of Eden, sin entered the world and with it shame, pain, grief, sorrow, evil, disease, and death (see Gen. 3). None of which were meant for God's people. What does that mean for us? Even though we have the opportunity to enjoy eternal life through a relationship with Jesus, God is still grieved by the things we must endure because of our fallen world.

I also think Jesus was sad. Hebrews 4:15 explains that Jesus was human, just like us. Therefore, He understands what we go through. He has felt everything that we feel. Here is what you have to understand about Jesus: He was 100 percent man and 100 percent God. He is the only 200 percent being to ever exist. In this story, we see the full humanity and the full divinity of Jesus on display. The man who wept over the death of His friend is the same God who called him forth from the grave. It's okay to feel sad sometimes. Emotions are not bad. Our emotions, however, must be connected to and informed by a greater reality. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul told the church that unless we set our sights on the reality of resurrection, we will continue to grieve as those who have no hope. What is his point? The fact that Jesus is alive and resurrection from the dead is possible through Him changes the way we view everything. It offers us hope in the midst of life's most difficult moments. This life is fleeting and temporary and fading, but there is a day coming when Jesus will right every wrong, heal every wound, and dry every tear.

? **Read 2 Corinthians 4:13–18. How does this passage of Scripture connect to the concepts we have just discussed?**

PRAY: Lord Jesus, thank You for being a God who weeps and thank You for being a God who comforts. Today, help me to understand how Your resurrection power changes everything. Amen.