

Breathe

Module: Q & Eh?

Lesson 4: What Makes Jesus Cry?

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- provide evidence that Jesus is not distant, but close in times of need.
- identify Jesus' bigger plan in the story of raising Lazarus from the dead.

Leader's Note: Two Tracks

There are two tracks for this lesson. It's up to you to decide which one works best for your group. If you sense your students are comfortable being vulnerable and your leaders are capable of handling some potentially emotionally charged issues, then follow Option A. If you don't feel as though you or your leaders are prepared to handle these types of issues yet, follow Option B.

OPTION A

Materials Needed:

- Bibles
- Pen/pencil and paper
- Sound system with sombre instrumental music (e.g. Agnus Dei by Arvo Part)
 - Sanctus and Agnus Dei are available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeYsJl07Uxw>
- Several lit candles (either in hurricane candleholders or tea lights in a small bowls of water)
- Signs that read “Enter in Silence”
- Optional: picture of “Jesus Wept” by Mike Scovel (<http://www.youth-ranch.org/mikework/sculpt1.htm>) with a spotlight on it or show it on PowerPoint

Pre-lesson preparation:

- Because students will need to enter in silence, have signs posted outside of the room, to notify everyone to enter silently and sit in the middle of the room. If possible have a leader greet students at the door, encouraging them to respect the quiet and reflective mood in the room. Instruct students that they will reflect in silence while the music plays.
- If possible, have 2 locations available. In the first room, set up before arrival with lit candles, music playing and picture of “Jesus Wept” with spotlights (room lights dimmed or turned off). If you only have 1 room, have the group gathered towards 1 corner (in which the candles and picture could be focused in that 1 corner). The second room should be set for your regular program with Bibles, pens and papers accessible for students to pick up when they enter.

Minds On: (10 minutes)

Have sombre instrumental music playing in the background. Wait until all of the students have arrived. (If there are latecomers, instruct a leader outside the room to escort them in discreetly.)

Read John 11:35. Ask students to reflect on the passage for 1 minute. Read John 11:35 again. Again, wait briefly while the students think about the passage.

Action: (40 minutes)

Prompt:

Silently, inside your mind, answer this question: What do you suppose could be so powerful, so important that the God of the entire universe would cry? If you knew everything, and had power to do anything, what might make you cry?

Allow time to think.

Note: Voice to noise ratio

Be aware of the level of your voice in a given context. When there is a lot of noise, we tend to raise our voice to be heard. When there is silence, adjust your voice level appropriately.

Prompt:

In a moment, I will lead you to the other room. When you arrive there, take a Bible, a pen and a piece of paper. Read John 11:17-36. I want you to respond in one of the following ways: You can either draw a picture depicting what you believe Jesus was feeling and thinking at that moment OR pretend to be one of Lazarus' friends in the passage and write a letter to a friend of what you think Jesus is thinking or feeling. When you're done, fold the paper in half and hold on to it.

Note: Room Transition

If you need to stay in the same room, have students move to a different part of the room and raise the lights (either through a dimmer or one set at a time, so the change is not too abrupt).

Divide students into pairs or threes of their choosing. Have each group read John 11:1-37 and answer the following questions:

- Why did Jesus wait so long before going to Lazarus (especially since he might have been able to save him)?
- Does this change the thoughts or feelings you thought Jesus had based on your picture/letter? Why or why not?

Consolidate/Debrief: (15+ minutes)

Prompt:

Some of you may think it was cruel for Jesus to hold back. It seems as though he could have done something and yet didn't at that moment. When he cries, there's a whole series of emotions: anger, frustration, confusion. Let's hear the rest of the story.

Read John 11:38-44.

All along, Jesus had a plan. It didn't make sense to his disciples at first. It didn't make sense to Martha or Mary, even when Martha acknowledged that Jesus is the resurrection i.e., the one who could bring people back to life from the dead. Jesus knew what he was doing. In the midst of that, he wasn't so focused that he was emotionless. Rather, he felt the heaviness in his friends' hearts and he wept. He cried with them. He knew what the outcome would be, but he was so deeply in friendship with them that he wept.

Breathe In

Have students return to silence (maybe with the music playing if appropriate). Ask them to reflect on one situation/circumstance in which they were deeply wounded and felt that Jesus didn't care at all. Then ask them to write on a piece of paper "Jesus wept" and have them reflect on the question, "Do I believe Jesus would have wept with me in that situation?"

Note: Being Present

It is possible that some students will be emotional, depending on personal history. They may need space to process their feelings. Depending on the student, you can show support simply by being nearby. Position yourself to one side of the student (not in front), and be present. You don't have to say a word, instead your presence is a sign to them that, if they need it at that moment, they can lean on you (figuratively or literally). You should be aware and cautious of your church's policy on such situations. Make sure you are familiar with your church's child protection policy in terms of appropriate contact and how to deal with disclosures of abuse or other harm-related incidents. Also plan with your leaders ahead of time how as a team you will respond to delicate situations. For example, it's advisable to have female leaders approach female students (male leaders with male students). In these moments when the Holy Spirit may expose some wounds, there may be some tough issues to deal with. Use your best discernment and proceed prayerfully.

Note: Don't Keep Secrets

In most Canadian jurisdictions, there are laws regarding when, how and what types of incidents require a report to the authorities (these are likely covered by your church's child protection policy). As a leadership team, you should all know how to handle such incidents based on your child protection policy. When very sensitive issues arise, there may be "red flags" to alert you. e.g. "Can you keep a secret?" It is advisable not to promise to keep a secret, since in many cases you are required by law to report what you have heard. Instead, reassure the student you are willing to walk through whatever issue they need to deal with, and you may need to involve others in helping that process. A

possible response may be, “Whatever you would like to share, I want to help you as best as possible. That may involve me bringing someone else in to help with the situation. I want you to know that no matter what happens I’m willing to walk with you on this.”

Breathe Out

If they feel comfortable to discuss an issue, let students know that youth leaders are available to talk if they’d like. If not, suggest that they discuss this matter with a trusted adult before the next session.

OPTION B

Materials Needed:

- Copies of John 11 (Appendix A) (1 per student)
- Pen/pencil and paper
- 1 copy of “Emotional Mystery Tour” clues (Appendix B) cut into strips
- 1 copy of Appendix C answer sheet (or use “Tour Answers” PowerPoint)
- Copies of “Emotional Mystery Tour Riddle” sheets (1 per student) (see Pre-lesson preparation for details)
- Optional: prizes

Pre-lesson preparation:

- Please note this lesson will take longer to prepare because of the scavenger hunt.
- Plant the 5 Emotional Mystery Tour clues in 5 secret locations. Tape them in place so they don’t “accidentally” get moved.
- Create riddles on how to find each clue. Personify the riddles. For example, if you plant a clue near the welcome mat of the church, you might provide a clue that says:

I welcome people every day,
They smear me with feet,
Then go on their way.
- Type your riddles with word processing software. Copy and paste the 5 riddles into 4 or 5 separate documents. In each separate document (except the first) rearrange the order of the riddles, to create 4 or 5 different versions of the clue sheets. This will ensure that not all students arrive at a location at the same time.
- Have the answer sheet posted before people arrive but covered.

Minds On: (25 minutes)

Emotional Mystery Tour:

Ideally, students will be in pairs for this exercise; however, you might choose a different group size depending on the number of students at your meeting. Tell the students in a moment they will be literally looking for clues about why Jesus cried when Lazarus died (John 11:35). Tell them they will receive a riddle sheet, and a copy of the scripture. The riddle sheet suggests 5 different locations in the church where clues are hidden. When they find a clue, they must copy it down. Once they have found all of the clues, they are to return to the meeting room, look through the scripture sheet, and try to figure out the correct sequence for the clues. In other words, which clue goes with which Bible verse? Clarify the boundaries of the hunt (e.g. stay on the main floor of the church, and out of the baptismal tank! etc.) When everyone is ready say “On your marks, get set, GO!”

Action: Approximately 25 minutes

When the students return, remind them their job is to order their clues in sequence. Tell them to look through the passage and next to the clue write the number of the verse or verses suggested. Their clues should culminate in verse 35. Either in groups or individually, have students work through the clues, write out their suggested progressions to v35 on a piece of paper and draw a conclusion as to why Jesus cried. Once all the groups have finished their progressions, draw in the attention of the whole group. Reveal the answers one at a time. Ask which groups got it right. If students disagree, discuss what their thinking was. Take a moment to suggest that Jesus did not just cry randomly, but they were part of an emotional series of events for Him.

Consolidate/Debrief: (10 minutes)

Prompt:

Contrary to how some people (or even some religions) see Jesus, he is not an emotionless being who just teaches people to be nice. Jesus connects with people emotionally and will remain with us even when we ask questions.

Breathe in

If students still have their questions from Lesson 1, have them retrieve it. Otherwise, provide students with a piece of paper and pen. Ask students to take 3 minutes to write down any questions a question they feel afraid to ask Jesus. Remind them that Jesus is willing to listen no matter what their questions are.

Breathe out

Have students take a poll of 10 friends (outside of youth group) or family members with this question: “Do you have any questions you would be afraid to ask Jesus?” Students don’t need to record those questions and those taking the poll can remain anonymous. Students can communicate back their poll results (e.g. 5 of the 10 people have a question they would be afraid to ask Jesus) to you within the week (e.g. by phone, email, text, etc.).

Pray that the students would know that God is close to them and want to hear their questions, no matter how difficult.

Appendix A

John 11:1-44

11 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) ³ So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

⁴ When he heard this, 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.” ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, ⁷ and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

⁸ “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?”

⁹ Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. ¹⁰ It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”

¹¹ After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”

¹² His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” ¹³ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

¹⁶ Then Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles^[b] from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Footnotes:

- a. [John 11:16](#) Thomas (Aramaic) and Didymus (Greek) both mean twin.
- b. [John 11:18](#) Or about 3 kilometers

Appendix B

Though Lazarus was sick, Jesus held back because he knew the bigger plan. Jesus knew the “big surprise” i.e. Lazarus would be raised from the dead.

Jesus deliberately stayed back so that Lazarus would die because he knew the bigger plan i.e. raising Lazarus from the dead

Jesus lets the disciples in on the “big secret”.

Jesus reveals the big secret to Martha, i.e. he is the resurrection

Jesus wept not because Lazarus was dead but because of how distressed his friends were

Appendix C

Order	Verse	Clue
1	3-4	Though Lazarus was sick, Jesus held back because he knew the bigger plan. Jesus knew the “big surprise” i.e. Lazarus would be raised from the dead.
2	5-6	Jesus deliberately stayed back so that Lazarus would die because he knew the bigger plan i.e. raising Lazarus from the dead
3	12-15	Jesus lets the disciples in on the “big secret”
4	20-26	Jesus reveals the big secret to Martha, i.e. he is the resurrection
5	31-35	Jesus wept not because Lazarus was dead but because of how distressed his friends were