

Study Guide

With just a word Jesus called Lazarus from the grave, and His Word can help bring us out of our tombs as well. This ten-week Bible study is designed to help you move toward your own Lazarus awakening. (Group leaders, if an eight-week format works better for you, you'll find directions at the end of this guide for adapting it. Also, check out the downloadable workbook and leader's guide available at www.joannaweaverbooks.com.)

Any translation of the Bible you enjoy and understand will work fine for this study (though I have used the NIV to word my questions). You'll also need a notebook and a pen to record your answers to the questions in this guide. Before each lesson ask the Holy Spirit to increase your understanding as you examine God's Word so that you can apply the truths you discover.

Each lesson starts with questions for individual reflection or group discussion, then moves into a "Going Deeper" study of scriptural principles. At the end of the lesson, you'll have an opportunity to write about or discuss what spoke most to you in that chapter. The stories, quotes, and sidebars within the chapters may provide further opportunities for discussion or reflection.

"I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts," Psalm 119:45 tells us. The same freedom awaits each one of us as we set our hearts on knowing God's Word. Prayerfully commit yourself to this study, giving God access to every tomb that keeps you from living resurrected. For Love is calling your name.

Are you ready to "come forth"?

**CHAPTER ONE: TALE
OF THE THIRD FOLLOWER**

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. This chapter mentions my difficulty with algebra in high school. What was your best subject in school? What was your worst?
2. Look at the sidebar titled “What Kind of Father Do You Have?” on page 4. Which (if any) misrepresentation of God as Father have you struggled with? Have you experienced another kind not named? How do you think your connection with your earthly father has affected your relationship with God?

Going Deeper

3. Consider the words of David in Psalm 22:1, echoed by Jesus on the cross. Scripture is filled with people who struggled with love-doubt. What kind of circumstances in your life have caused you to question God’s love? What has helped you get God’s love from your head to your heart?
4. Read the story of Lazarus found in John 11:1–12:11 (or see Appendix A). Circle or underline key phrases. What stands out to you most in this passage, and why?
5. Put yourself in the sandals of Mary, Martha, or Lazarus. Write a letter to Jesus from that person’s perspective. You can choose any point on the time line of the story.
6. What do the following verses reveal about the love God has for us?

Psalm 86:15 _____

Romans 8:35–39 _____

1 John 3:1 _____

7. Write out Ephesians 3:17–19 on an index card, beginning with the words “I pray.” Refer to the card frequently over the next few days, memorizing the passage phrase by phrase. Repeat it until it becomes a part of you.
8. What spoke most to you in this chapter?

CHAPTER TWO: LORD, THE ONE YOU LOVE IS SICK

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Describe briefly how you came to know Jesus as your personal Savior. (If you haven't yet received the gift He offers, why not do it today? Look at “The Invitation” on page 27.)
2. If you were to send a message to Jesus concerning your current situation and need, how would you fill in the blank: “Lord, the one you love is _____”?

Going Deeper

3. Sin is deadly and separates us from God. Match the downward spiral of sin and its effects listed below to the following scriptures by filling in the appropriate letter in the blank before the phrase: (a) Psalm 106:43; (b) Acts 8:23; (c) James 1:14–15.

___ Fills us with bitterness	___ Enticed by our own evil desires
___ Makes us waste away	___ Holds us captive
___ Ends in death	___ Causes us to rebel against God
4. Read “What God Does with Our Sins” (pages 24–25). Which one of the points listed by Rosalind Goforth speaks most to your heart? Look up the accompanying scripture and then write it out in your own words.
5. How does Satan—not to mention your own lower nature—tend to lull you to sleep spiritually, even though you're a Christian?

6. Consider the following verses. According to these scriptures, why is it so important that we wake up, and what should our awakening involve?

Matthew 25:1–13 _____

Romans 13:11–12 _____

Ephesians 5:11–15 _____

7. “God is not mad at you!” That’s the best part of the gospel, someone has said. In fact, instead of holding a grudge, the Lord wants to forgive us and make us His own. Look up the following scriptures and really meditate on them. Under each reference listed below, write down keywords or phrases that reveal God’s attitude toward us.

Isaiah 44:21–22 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 Colossians 1:21–23a

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter?

CHAPTER THREE: OUR FRIEND LAZARUS

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Describe a moment—big or small—when you felt especially loved. What were the circumstances, and what people were involved? Why do you think that experience was so special to you?
2. Take the test found in the sidebar titled “What Kind of Friend Am I?” on pages 44–45. What did you discover about your relationship with God? with others? Share one aspect of friendship in which you’d like to grow.

Going Deeper

3. How do you respond to the idea that God is an emotional God, feeling deep loneliness and a need for connection? Do you find that possibility

comforting or frightening? Read Genesis 2:18–3:13. What do you think God felt when Adam and Eve chose to disobey? If He had penned a journal entry that day long ago, what might it have said?

4. Read Hebrews 8:10–12, which describes the new covenant God has made with you and me. If we really understood and responded to His deep desire for fellowship, how would our perspective change toward the following things we do as Christians?

Daily prayer and reading the Bible: _____

Attending church: _____

Living a holy life: _____

5. The statements below describe three famous friends of God: Abraham, Moses, and David. Using Numbers 12:7–8, Acts 13:22, and James 2:21–23 as references, match each characteristic below with one of these friends. Do any of these qualities apply to you, even in a small way?

- | | |
|-------|---|
| _____ | He was a man after God’s own heart. |
| _____ | He was faithful in all God’s house. |
| _____ | His faith and actions worked together. |
| _____ | He would do everything God wanted him to do. |
| _____ | He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. |
| _____ | God spoke clearly to him and not in riddles. |

6. Read John 15:13–17. Write down what you discover in this passage about being a friend of Jesus.

7. Read “Help Me Love You More!” on page 38. How would you fill in the blank in the sidebar? Write your own prayer to the Lord, asking Him to increase your ability to love Him better and more.

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter?

CHAPTER FOUR: WHEN LOVE TARRIES

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Describe a time in your life when waiting was especially difficult. How did you react to the process, and what did you learn?

2. Delayed gratification is difficult for all of us. Consider the following aspects, and identify which one (or ones) you struggled with most while growing up and which is hardest for you today. If possible, give specific examples.
 - Adapting to less-than-perfect situations
 - Waiting for the fulfillment of our needs or desires
 - Accepting not only delays but also denials of what we want
 - Other: _____

Going Deeper

3. One of the hardest things for many people to understand about God is that He doesn't always interrupt or intervene when we're in trouble. Instead, He specializes in redeeming the situation, using it for our good and His kingdom. Look at the following passages and write down the problem God allowed and the benefit that eventually resulted.

Acts 7:59–8:3 *Problem:* _____

Acts 11:19–21 *Result:* _____

Acts 21:30–36 *Problem:* _____

Philippians 1:12–14 *Result:* _____

4. We humans tend to love formulas—if we do A and we do B, then God will have to do C. Read Isaiah 55:8–9 and Romans 11:33–36 several times, and allow the heavenly perspective to sink into your heart. Write a response to the Lord concerning the ways you may have tried to control Him through “formulas” rather than simply trusting He knows what is best.

5. Read “The Blessing of Trouble” sidebar on pages 58–59. Think of a time when you asked God for something and *didn’t* get what you asked for. How has that experience affected your character and your life? Do you think you grew from the experience? Why or why not?
6. What do the following verses have to say about the benefits of waiting? Circle the benefit that means the most to you.
 Psalm 40:1–3 _____
 Isaiah 64:4 _____
 Lamentations 3:24–27 _____
7. In what area of your life do you need to hand God the “quill of your will”? Read Romans 8:28 and write it back to the Lord as a prayer, replacing “all things” with specific details of your situation. End the prayer with a declaration of your love and commitment to His will.
8. What spoke most to you in this chapter?

CHAPTER FIVE: TOMB DWELLING

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. An old New Mexico tombstone reads, “Here lies Johnny Yeast. Pardon me for not rising.”¹ Another one in Colorado protests, “I told you I was sick!” These are silly epitaphs, but on a more serious note, what would you like your grave marker to say?
2. Consider the “Hurts, Hang-ups, and Habits” sidebar on page 70. Which of these three categories of strongholds tends to trip you up most often in your walk with God? If you feel comfortable sharing, name at least one item you’re struggling with (or have given in to!) right now. Privately or as a group, take those things to the Lord in prayer, claiming the promise of James 5:16.

Going Deeper

3. The Bible speaks powerfully to so many issues. Using a concordance, look up a word or assorted words that relate to your particular struggle—lust, anger, pride, fear, lying, whatever you may be facing. (If needed, ask a friend experienced in Bible study to help.) Pick three pertinent verses to write down, then choose one to memorize.

4. We all have lies in our lives that have been internalized as truth. In order to uncover false beliefs, consider the following questions. (Don't discount anything, even seemingly small stuff that has happened or innocent pastimes you tend to turn to for escape.)
 - What failure or trauma from your past still defines you as though it's your *identity*?
 - What coping mechanism do you regularly turn to for *security*?
 - In the words of self-help guru Dr. Phil, "How's that workin' for ya?"

5. According to the following verses, why is it so important for us to acknowledge our need of forgiveness and healing?

Psalm 66:18–20 _____

Isaiah 30:15–16 _____

1 John 1:9–10 _____

6. The book of Isaiah gives us many glimpses into the purpose of Jesus's coming and ministry. Under the corresponding verses, list the things you discover.

Isaiah 42:1–4

Isaiah 61:1–3

4. Read through Psalm 91 and consider the benefits of making God our shelter and dwelling place rather than choosing to remain in our tombs. List five benefits you appreciate, then pick the one that means the most to you, and write a short paragraph explaining why.
5. God went out of His way to remove the barrier that stood between us and Him. Look up the following passages and fill in the blanks.
- Leviticus 16:2 The barrier: _____
- Matthew 27:50–51 The process: _____
- Hebrews 10:19–22 The result: _____
6. Which one of the following “stones” might be blocking God’s access to the places in you that need healing? Look up the corresponding verses, and paraphrase your favorite part back to the Lord as a prayer, asking for help to remove it so that you might be free. Can you think of any other stones—besides these three—that might be keeping you from Him?
- *Unworthiness* (Romans 4:7–8; 8:1)
 - *Unforgiveness* (Ephesians 4:31–5:2)
 - *Unbelief* (Romans 4:20–22)
7. As you hear Jesus asking you to roll away the boulder blockading your heart, what does His response to Martha mean to you: “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (John 11:40)? What would it take for you to lay aside unbelief and move forward in your process of healing?
8. What spoke most to you in this chapter?

CHAPTER SEVEN: WHEN LOVE CALLS YOUR NAME

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Did you have a nickname growing up? What did your mom call you when you were in trouble?

6. If possible, describe a time when the Holy Spirit used one of the following methods to speak to you—a repeated theme, an impression, a confirmation, a spirit check, or a verse from the Bible. How did you know it was God speaking? (Remember, often it isn't until we've obeyed that we realize it was His voice all along.)

7. What does the statement “The teacher is always silent during a test” mean to you (especially in light of the story of Jesus and the three praying women told on pages 116–17)?

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter?

CHAPTER EIGHT: UNWINDING GRAVECLOTHES

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Read the story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30–35. Based on your nature, if you had been on the road that day, which of the following roles might you have played? (I've embellished a bit!)
 - The Priest—saw the bruised and bleeding man but kept moving, too busy to stop.
 - The Levite—looked closer but didn't feel adequate to help so dialed 911 as he went on his way.
 - The Soccer Mom—was distracted by squabbling kids and text messages and didn't even notice.
 - The Samaritan—laid aside his plans and got involved, helping the wounded man.
 - Other: _____

2. Read “Kissing Frogs” on page 124. It has been said that we should love people when they least expect it and least deserve it. Think of a time when someone loved you like that—or a time when you had the privilege of doing that for someone else. Describe the experience.

Going Deeper

3. Read 1 John 3:16–20 and answer the following questions:
 - According to verse 16, who is our example, and what did He do?
 - What warning are we given in verse 17?
 - Instead of offering words and lip service, how are we to love (verse 18)?
 - What amazing benefit (verses 19–20) do we derive from loving like that?

4. Which of the “Lessons from Good Sam” (pages 132–33) speaks most to you? Which seems the most challenging? Why?

5. Do you have a friend or acquaintance who is struggling to escape graveclothes right now? Take a moment to pray for her or him. Ask what God would have you do to help love that person back to life. (It may be as simple as a phone call, a shared meal, or an encouraging note.) Whatever He lays on your heart, do it—knowing that God wants to love that person through you.

6. While we’ve discussed how we can help others unwind their graveclothes, what does Hebrews 12:1–6 tell us about unwinding our own? List at least five things we should do.

7. Read Isaiah 64:6 and Revelation 3:17. How does our insistence on wearing the “filthy rags” of our own righteousness keep us from experiencing true healing and freedom? According to Revelation 3:18–19, what does God “counsel” us to do?

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter?

CHAPTER NINE: LIVING RESURRECTED

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Have you ever witnessed an amazing transformation in someone's life that was brought about by Christ? Describe it. How did seeing it make you feel?
2. If you were asked to give a testimony of transformation in your life, what would you say? If you can't think of one, is there an attitude or behavior you are currently asking the Lord to change? Describe the difference you believe it will make when this aspect of your life is transformed.

Going Deeper

3. Complete Jesus's seven "I am" sayings listed below. Circle the one that currently means the most to you and explain why.

John 6:35 "I am the bread of life _____."

John 8:12 "I am the light of the world _____."

John 10:9 "I am the gate _____."

John 10:14–15 "I am the good shepherd _____."

John 11:25 "I am the resurrection and the life _____."

John 14:6 "I am the way and the truth and the life _____."

John 15:5 "I am the vine _____."

4. Knowing the "Great I Am" (Jesus Himself) helps us better understand who we are as well. Look at Appendix D: "Who I Am in Christ." Choose one phrase from each of the three categories, and write out the corresponding verse. Memorize one to include in your Holy Spirit "knowledge base."
5. List three things that currently "move you"—make you overreact or feel upset, worried, and/or fearful. Now describe how counting yourself dead (Romans 6:11) might help change your perspective and enable you to say along with Paul, "nor did I count my life dear to myself" (Acts 20:24, NKJV). If applicable, name a time in your life when your relationship with Christ helped change your lower nature reaction.

6. Meditate on John 15:1–8. Read it several times, and allow the verses to penetrate your heart. Circle or underline phrases that have particular meaning for you. In the context of these verses, what is the difference between striving and abiding? In practical terms, what would choosing to abide actually look like in your life? What would have to change?
7. Read George Müller’s secret of service on page 151. Using it as a template, write an obituary for yourself, declaring your decision to die so that Christ might live.
8. What spoke most to you in this chapter?

CHAPTER TEN: LAUGHING LAZARUS

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Have you ever escaped a dangerous, life-threatening situation? Describe it and the emotions you felt after cheating death. If you’ve never actually experienced this, describe how you think you would feel.
2. Read the “Living in the Light of Eternity” sidebar on page 168. What aspect of living resurrected would you like to begin practicing right now? What single change in your life would help you do this?

Going Deeper

3. If you really believed that this world isn’t all there is, how would it affect the way you view the following aspects of your life? (Write your response first, then consider the scripture given.)

Finances: _____

(Matthew 6:19–21)

Worries: _____

(2 Corinthians 4:17–18)

Sickness: _____

(2 Corinthians 12:7–9)

Hardships: _____

(James 1:12)

Persecution: _____

(John 15:18–20)

4. Which of the following myths have you been able to discard as you've studied the story of Lazarus? Place a check mark (✓) by those you've let go of and a question mark (?) by the ones you'd like to let go of. Feel free to add any other myths about God's love you have become aware of.

___ We must earn God's favor.

___ If God loves us, terrible things should never happen to us.

___ Death is the worst thing possible.

___ God is distant when we suffer.

___ God's timing really stinks.

___ Tragedy is just tragedy—nothing good can come of it.

___ Other: _____

5. What do the following verses tell us about Jesus's return and the importance of being ready?

Luke 12:35–37 _____

1 Thessalonians 5:1–6 _____

2 Peter 3:4, 8–14 _____

6. Jesus promised that He would come back to take us to heaven so we could be together with Him (John 14:1–3). In light of that reality, consider the following questions:

- What do you imagine that day will be like?
- How close to Jesus do you hope to be?
- Spiritually, what do you need to begin doing here on earth so that when that day comes, you can be known there as you are known here (1 Corinthians 13:12)?

7. Please don't rush through this last exercise. Take time to allow the truth of the following hymn, "The Love of God," to move from your head to your heart. Read the words slowly, then say or sing them again. Allow the immensity of the Father's love to wash over your heart. Rest in it. Revel in it. Receive it as truth. Then write a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to make God's love real in every corner of your heart.

The love of God is greater far
 Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
 It goes beyond the highest star,
 And reaches to the lowest hell;
 The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
 God gave His Son to win;
 His erring child He reconciled,
 And pardoned from his sin.

Refrain:

O love of God, how rich and pure!
 How measureless and strong!
 It shall forevermore endure
 The saints' and angels' song.

When years of time shall pass away,
 And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
 When men, who here refuse to pray,
 On rocks and hills and mountains call,
 God's love so sure, shall still endure,
 All measureless and strong;
 Redeeming grace to Adam's race—
 The saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
 And were the skies of parchment made,

Were every stalk on earth a quill,
 And every man a scribe by trade,
 To write the love of God above,
 Would drain the ocean dry.
 Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
 Though stretched from sky to sky.
 —Frederick M. Lehman²

8. Looking back on your journey through this book, what concept has made the biggest impact on you? In what ways has it changed the way you think or live, especially in the area of love-doubt?

USING THIS STUDY IN AN EIGHT-WEEK FORMAT

Because this is a shorter study than the ones in my other two books, it may fit well at the end of a Bible-study year or as a summer study. If ten weeks is too long for what you have in mind, you can adapt it to the number of weeks you need by combining chapters (though I would discourage doing fewer than eight sessions).

While you are free to choose how to combine chapters, I suggest covering chapters 1 and 2 (“Tale of the Third Follower” and “Lord, the One You Love Is Sick”) in your opening week and chapters 9 and 10 (“Living Resurrected” and “Laughing Lazarus”) in your last week of study. When combining weeks, choose one “For Discussion or Reflection” question from each chapter and three from each “Going Deeper” section. Be sure to assign these selected questions the week before the chapters are to be discussed.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this guide, you’ll find even more Bible-study resources on my Web site: www.joannaweaverbooks.com. The “Going Deeper/Book Study Helps” section features a reproducible study guide in a workbook format and a leader’s guide. After you’ve finished your study, please visit the site again to share creative ideas of what worked well for you. I look forward to hearing them!

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