



WEEKLY STUDY

Week 1

We began a new series called Unstuck but continued to read through the book of John. In John 11, Jesus is asked by some close friends, Mary and Martha, to heal their brother. He almost seems to put them off, claiming that their brother would live. The sisters' expectation is that Jesus would respond with compassion and haste. They were distraught and dug into their expectations instead of leaning into who they knew Jesus to be. There is actually freedom when we let go of our expectations and let Jesus do his thing. May you experience a taste of that kind of freedom this week!

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark
Lead Pastor of Discipleship

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture, follow the daily prayer prompt, and then pray this or your own prayer.

*O God,
You have offered us a freedom in Christ that is rare. Reach us in our stuck-ness and help us to believe. I believe Jesus is the Son of God and that he will rewrite the ending of my story—bringing dead things to life! Give me patience and a Kingdom perspective for that new story to unfold.
Amen.*

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: JOHN 11.2-7

Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. ³ So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, “Lord, your dear friend is very sick.”

⁴ But when Jesus heard about it he said, “Lazarus’s sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this.” ⁵ So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and

Lazarus,⁶ he stayed where he was for the next two days.⁷ Finally, he said to his disciples, “Let’s go back to Judea.”

- We ask “why?” in the face of unexplained suffering and sickness. Jesus preempts the question from the two sisters who have sent word to him asking for help. He hasn’t seen Lazarus in his current condition. He hasn’t read medical reports. He didn’t ask about symptoms or pre-existing conditions. He simply says, “He will live. And glory will be given to God through this healing.” This confidence he had in Lazarus’ healing allowed him to stay put and not take on the urgency felt by the sisters. Can you relate to the urgency of the sisters’ request for their brother? As you think through your recent prayers to God, can you identify moments where you expected God to act quickly?
- *Jesus, fill me with assurance that you see beyond death and into life. Enter into the places where I feel or fear death today and give me peace.*

TUESDAY: JOHN 11.11-15

“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.”

- Jesus often uses language in ways that cause us to stretch our understanding. He told the disciples that Lazarus was asleep. He meant that he had died. But *death* for the disciples was not something that a person wakes up from. They didn’t have a category for what Jesus was saying, and so he related Lazarus’ death to sleep. The boldness of Jesus seems to grow throughout this scene. He invites the disciples, “Come, let’s go see him.” What they would have heard was, “Let’s go see a dead body.” But all of this happens to increase the belief of all those involved. Have you ever felt stuck in grief or fear even after hearing the promises of God?
- *God, I don’t understand or always see the light beyond my present darkness. Today I commit to following Jesus when he says, “let us go to him.”*

WEDNESDAY: MARK 9.23-24

Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”

²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

- A father had come to Jesus and asked for healing for his son who had been afflicted by an unclean spirit. He was desperate. Jesus calmly pointed him to the belief that his boy could be made well. The cry of a desperate father may sound familiar to you. Jesus invites us to believe the unbelievable.
- *Jesus, thank you for every display of your power—both big and small. I believe, help my unbelief.*

THURSDAY: 1 KINGS 8.17-19

“My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁸ But the LORD said to my father David, ‘You did well to have it in your heart to build a temple for my Name. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, your own flesh and blood—he is the one who will build the temple for my Name.’

- David seemed destined to be the king to build a temple for God. After all, he was a strong leader who had brought God’s people through so much. But he learned from God that it was not to be. The temple would be built, but not by him and not in his lifetime. Talk about unmet expectations! We will all face changes to the legacy we anticipate. There will be projects left undone and more we had hoped to do in any particular season. God is kind to remind us that it all works together for his glory and our good.
- *God, may I find freedom from my own expectations—freedom to pursue you alone.*

FRIDAY: LUKE 22.42-44

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

- This may be one of the most relatable moments we have with Jesus. In the face of impending suffering, he asked God to find another way. But he also knew that God’s will needed to be done. *Not mine but yours.* His immediate situation didn’t change, but he found freedom in giving himself up to God’s plan. And that plan is our path to ultimate freedom.
- *Jesus, as much as I wish the cross could have been avoided, I am thankful for your obedience that changed the ending of my story.*

SATURDAY: ACTS 3.1-10

Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ² Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴ Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” ⁵ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

⁶ Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” ⁷ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. ⁹ When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

- This story is a classic example of finding freedom in unmet expectations. The man who was lame since birth was expecting Peter and John to give him some money. After all, religious people are supposed to do that, right? That expectation went unmet. Instead Peter told him to get up and walk in the name of Jesus. How much silver and gold would he have exchanged for that?
- *Thank you Jesus, for seeing my need beyond my expectations.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

In this week's message we heard Pastor Jacob read from his most recent book *Breaking Open*:

"All the emotions we feel in brokenness don't fall flat to the floor, but instead travel like arrows to the heart of God. He can handle the anger and the sadness and the confusion. He welcomes it. As we break open to God, our hearts open to the heart of God. He meets us there in the sorrow, in the pain. God helps us get out of the seat of determining our future and leads us to entrust our lives, our deaths, and then our lives again to him." *Breaking Open*, pg 124.

- Do you have experience climbing out of the seat of determining your own future? What are the barriers to doing so?
- Where are you feeling stuck in unmet expectations?
- How would you identify the difference between breaking down and breaking open?