

# THE WIDOW OF NAIN

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

## BIBLE REFERENCES

## Luke 7:11-17

## QUESTIONS

1. How do you let compassion drive your actions?
2. "Do not weep." Everything Jesus said and did was with purpose and He used these words with purpose. For what purpose do you use your words?
3. Why did Jesus cross the boundaries of ritual purity and tradition? Refer to the information in the Script & Additional Context page about ritual purity. What boundaries do you have to cross in order to be like Jesus?
4. Have you ever stopped yourself from speaking to or helping someone because of your stereotypes, traditions or how your involvement would look to your friends? How can you overcome these obstacles to demonstrate God's love to the world around you?
5. In the video, it said, "God in Jesus Christ manifests Himself as Lord over the living and the dead."
  - a. What does this mean?
  - b. How does this change your perception of death and of those who have passed away?
6. In the story of the Widow of Nain, we see Jesus, without hesitation, entering into her pain.
  - a. Do you move toward people who are in pain? Or do we instinctually move away from them?
  - b. How can you fight against this instinct?

[illegible]

7. Moving towards someone's pain, loss, and vulnerability is uncomfortable. But that's where Jesus goes. This also parallels the Good Samaritan. He does the uncomfortable, he gets his hands dirty and binds up the wounds of the traveler. Uncomfortable is never easy.
  - a. How do you get through uncomfortable situations?
  - b. How can you model your reactions to Jesus' reactions?
8. The people exclaimed in the story "God has come to help His people," through His Son. When was the last time you did something that would warrant such an exclamation?
  - a. Do you think, as Christians, that those around us should feel that "God has come to help His people," through us?
  - b. How could someone see you as an instrument of God?
9. In the Bible, widows often were, and represented, the outcast, the broken, and the vulnerable. Do you feel a responsibility to take care of the outcast and vulnerable in your congregation? In your community?

[illegible]

# SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

---

## SCRIPT

Hello and welcome. For today's session we will take a close look at the experience of Jesus and the widow from the city of Nain.

At the beginning of the eleventh chapter of Luke, Jesus healed the centurion's servant in Capernaum and as a result, many joined Him as He journeyed to Nain. In the 11th verse, Luke writes: "Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went after Him, and a large crowd." Imagine the demeanor of this crowd; Jesus had healed a sick person, so many were likely in a celebratory mood. Perhaps others anticipated the next miracle that Jesus would perform and were excited about what could possibly happen next.

Now picture the funeral procession coming the other way. Luke writes in verse 12, "and when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her." This woman faced a world that was unfavorable for widows without a son. She was sad not only about the loss of her son, but about the prospects of her future, and the grief-stricken crowd accompanying her probably saw no way to ease her pain. So, two completely different groups of people close in on each other and a number of possibilities arise for how they will interact.

Luke writes, "When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother." Jesus didn't wait for the procession to pass, but He jumped in and addressed the grieving mother, letting His compassion drive His actions. Then He greets the woman with the words, "do not weep."

Perhaps you've comforted a grieving person with the same words as Jesus. What could motivate someone to tell a grieving person not to cry? We may be trying to encourage them to pull themselves together. We could be compensating for our own vulnerability. Everything Jesus said and did was with purpose and He used these words with purpose. Jesus directed these words toward the mother. His words were meant to bring comfort and hope, in anticipation of the power He was about to demonstrate. He told her not to cry because He was about to do something extraordinary. Jesus wanted her to pause, wait, and experience the glory of God.

Jesus crossed the boundaries of ritual purity and tradition and risked ceremonial uncleanness. Breaking through the uncomfortable and unthinkable, Jesus reached out, touched the coffin, and called out to the young man to rise up. This astonishes the crowd that has been following Jesus since the healing of the Centurion's servant. Then when the young man arose, Jesus gave him back to his mother and restored their relationship. She was no longer hopeless and lost. Her life was made whole again. Jesus turned this procession of death into a procession of life. In the raising of the young man of Nain, God in Jesus Christ manifests Himself as Lord over the living and the dead.

Luke finishes his report of the event talking about the crowds. 'They were all filled with awe and praising God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.' Jesus impacted both groups of people, and both left changed with an incredible story to tell. They now saw Jesus as a great prophet like Elijah and Elisha. Can you imagine encountering the mother and son and their expression of joy? When we recognize Jesus impacting our life, our expression and our witness should be changed forever.

## ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

### Being a witness...

From the script: *When we recognize Jesus impacting our life, our expression and our witness should be changed forever.*

Properly, a "witness" (martyr) is "one who testifies" (martyreō) by act or word his "testimony" (martyrion) to the truth. This act of testifying is called his "testimony" (martyria). In ancient days, as at the present, this was a legal term designating the testimony given for or against one on trial before a court of law.

In Christian usage the term came to mean the testimony given by Christian witnesses to Christ and his saving power. Because such testimony often means arrest and scouraging, exile, or death, the Greek was transliterated to form the English word "martyr," meaning one who suffers or dies rather than give up one's faith. However, in the New Testament suffering was an incidental factor in the word. A thorough study of witnessing would necessitate a study of the whole Bible.

## Ritual purity

In Old Testament times a person or thing could contract ritual “uncleanness” (or “impurity”) in a variety of ways: by skin diseases, discharges of bodily fluids, touching something dead (Num 5:2), or eating unclean foods (Lev 11 ; Deut 14). An unclean person in general had to avoid that which was holy and take steps to return to a state of cleanness. Uncleanness placed a person in a “dangerous” condition under threat of divine retribution, even death (Lev 15:31), if the person approached the sanctuary. Purification always involved waiting a period of time (until evening for minor cases, eighty days for the birth of a daughter), and could also involve ritual washings symbolizing cleansing, atoning sacrifices, and priestly rituals.

The central lesson conveyed by this system is that God is holy but human beings are contaminated. Everyone by biology inevitably contracted uncleanness from time to time; therefore, everyone in this fallen world must be purified to approach a holy God. Although "uncleanness" cannot be equated with "sin," since factors beyond human control could cause a person to be unclean, nonetheless, there is a strong analogy between "uncleanness" and "sin." The "sin offering" (better, "purification offering") served to cleanse both sin and ritual impurity (Lev 5:1-5 ; 16:16-22).

Jesus deliberately touched rather than healed by his word to show compassion and to anticipate by his action the coming change in law under the new covenant. Jesus did not hesitate to touch the dead (Matt 9:25; Mark 5:41; Luke 8:54), and allowed a sinful woman (e.g., a prostitute) to touch him (Luke 7:36-38), despite her ritual (as well as moral) uncleanness. In such cases, and that of a woman with a flow of blood ( Matt 9:20-22 ; Mark 5:27 ), Jesus is not defiled (he went through no ceremonial purification), but those are cleansed and healed. This speaks theologically of Christ's impeccable person.