

Handouts for Real Question 4:

What has been your experience of serious illness, and/or death? Where was your faith in all of this?



Real Question 4, Part 4: God Speaks Scripture Handout

Gospel of John Chapter 11, Verses 1-7, 17-44

There was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany with two sisters, Mary and Martha, and he was ill – it was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. The sisters sent this message to Jesus, “Lord, the man you love is ill.” On receiving the message, Jesus said, “This sickness will end not in death but in God’s glory, and through it the Son of Man will be glorified.”

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea.”

[...]

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come, she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.” “Your brother,” said Jesus to her, “will rise again.” Martha said, “I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she said, “I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into the world.”

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, “The Master is here and wants to see you.” Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were in the house sympathising with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him, she threw herself at his feet, saying, “Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.” At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, “Where have you put him?” They said, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept; and the Jews said, “See how much he loved him!” But there were some who remarked, “He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man’s death?” Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb; it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, “Take the stone away.” Martha said to him, “Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.” Jesus replied, “Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me.”

When he had said this he cried in a loud voice, “Lazarus, here! Come out!” The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, let him go free.”

Sharing the Blessing Questions from RQ4

- What caught your attention? A word, or phrase, or picture? What is going on here? What does it say about Jesus? About Martha? Mary? Their friends and mourners?
- What do you remember about the mix of feelings in your experience of accompanying someone you love through serious illness, or dying and death?
- Looking back, what were the blessings mysteriously hidden in this experience?
- What might God be saying to you about your life and the whole mystery of God being with us in different ways in times of suffering? A word of blessing, or encouragement? "I feel blessed because..."

Real Question 4, Closing Prayer Handout

Adapted from St Paul's letter to the Romans, Chapter 8, V 31, 35, 37-39

Reader 1

So what should we say about this? If God is with us, then no-one can defeat us. ... Can any thing separate us from the love Christ has for us? Can troubles or problems or sufferings? If we have no food or clothes, if we are in danger, or even if death comes – can any of these things separate us from Christ's love?

Reader 2

In all these things we have full victory through God who showed his love for us. Yes I am sure that nothing can separate us from the love God has for us.

Reader 3

Nothing now, nothing in the future, no powers, nothing above us, nothing below us, or any thing else in the whole world will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Holy Mystery of God,

Source of our strength to accompany one another in times of suffering, loss and grief,
we thank you for the blessings we have found hidden there.

Holy Spirit of God, you are with us, and you help us in our weakness.
In times of grief and loss, we of ten do not know how to pray. Intercede
for us in ways our simple words cannot express.

As you commanded those at the tomb of Lazarus, may we in our turn unbind others, and be
set free ourselves, to live grace-filled lives to the full, with joy, compassion and mercy.
We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour

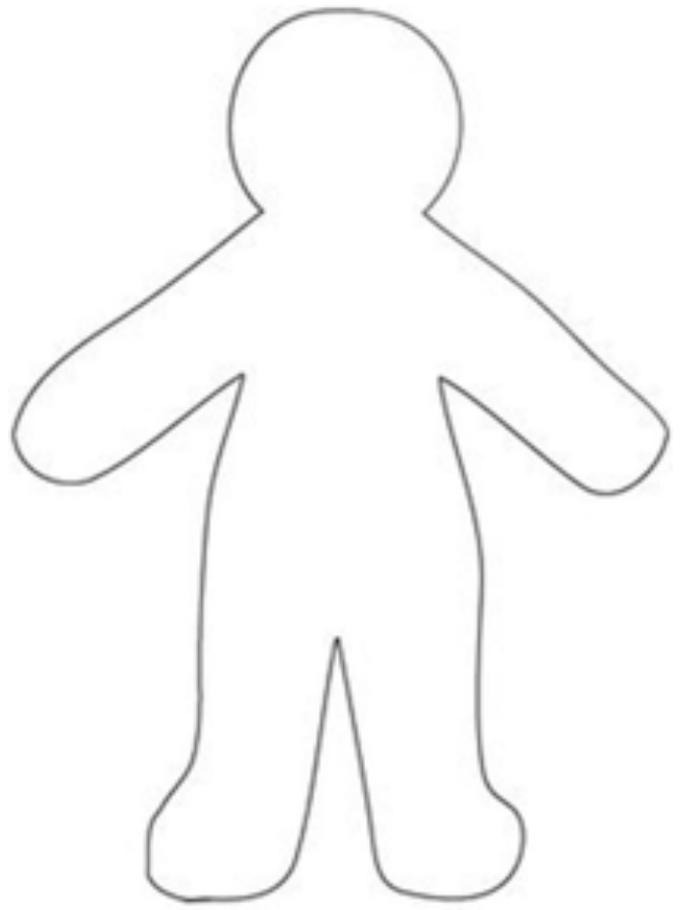
AMEN

The Counting our Blessings Prayer

Let our friendships be strong, O Lord, that they become a blessing to others.
Let our friendships be open O Lord, that they may be a haven for others.
Let our friendships be gentle O Lord, that they may bring peace to others, In Jesus name.

AMEN

Peace be with you!



Real Question 4, TEMPLATE for use in Closing Prayer

Provide enough figures in the basket and pens/colours on the prayer focus, one for each person. Instructions for making the figures for Options One and Two are as follows:

1. Photocopy/print figure onto card. Fold card into 4, with figure outline on the front. Cut out figure shape on front = 4 shapes. Repeat until you have the right number for your group. Note: For Option One, stronger figures, you may wish to use thicker card, cutting only one or two at a time. It is worth persevering as these figures will be easier to wrap! For Option Two, use thinner card, which is perfect for drawing and writing on, see Leader's Guide for Closing Prayer.
2. For the Option One binding strips: Use old cotton material (e.g. Pillow case or tea-towel). Cut strips of about 2cm wide x 25 cm long. Use these strips to wrap the figures in advance of the session
3. *Note:* Have some spare figures and strips of cloth in case more people turn up.
4. As alternatives to the Option One cardboard cut-outs you could (a) buy some small wooden Godly Play figures <https://shop.stmichaelsworkshop.com/collections/all/people-of-god> or (b) search in a craft shop or online for wooden people figures, e.g. Craftplay Vinco figures, 10 figures for £4.50.