

John Chapter 11

As you read John 11, notice how Jesus' perspective on things that occur around him is so different from everyone else's. A messenger arrives with news that would be upsetting to anyone, but Jesus sees the impending death of his friend for what it is—an opportunity to glorify God.

What's even more interesting is the reason Jesus decides to wait an extra couple days: because he loves Mary and Martha. How odd. These two sisters are going through one of the most difficult times in their lives. Yet, Jesus takes his time going to them because he loves them,

If you were told that someone close to you was about to die, how quickly would you drop everything to be by their side? You wouldn't waste much time, right? So, what does Jesus want us to learn from his decision to wait two full days before going to help his close friend Lazarus?

You've probably heard people talk about God's timing being the best timing and that everything happens for a reason, but that doesn't change the fact that we want what we want—now. It is so hard to accept that we need to wait for God's timing. This is true when we are in the middle of suffering, but isn't it also true when we go about doing God's work?

We find ourselves caught up in the need to accomplish something. We want to bear fruit now. Whether our goal is to serve God to the best of our ability or to simply show the world how good we are at serving God, we can become overly committed to making immediate results our highest priority.

That doesn't seem to be a problem for Jesus. Jesus takes his time. And, when he does get there, the results are better than they would have been if he had come immediately. Raising a man from the dead after four days is far more impressive than healing a man who is really sick. The extra delay causes Mary and Martha some extra suffering, but it makes a big difference in the kind of impact it has on the crowd, and on history.

What people in your life are you overly eager to push into an immediate saving relationship with Jesus? Who are you being impatient with? Do you think you might be trying to rush God's timing?

We all have friends who don't know Jesus yet (or at least we should). Don't let your ideal timeline get in the way of God's. You can let your relationships grow in such a way that your friends open up to you when the time is right. If Jesus can take so much time getting to Lazarus that his friend becomes a stinky corpse, then we can allow gospel conversations to come up naturally with people we are building relationships with.

God's timing will always be best. No matter how good of a planner you think you are. Stick with that, and forget about the pressure coming from other Christians. Just because they're only interested in celebrating the finish line, that doesn't mean you have to follow their lead.

Now that Jesus has publicly raised a man from the dead, he is becoming even more notorious than he already was. You have to wonder a bit about the motivation of all these spectators running off to tell the Pharisees about what had happened. Were they praising Jesus to their religious leaders, or were they tattling on Jesus for showing off?

Either way, the Pharisees are worried about Roman officials punishing all of the Jews if they find out about it. Never mind the possibility that this man might actually be sent by God, the same God they have worshipped all their lives and dedicated themselves to serve. He may be acting under God's authority, but he is clearly not being obedient to their authority, and for that he has to die.

This decision isn't as far outside our typical way of dealing with problems as we might think it is. How often do you find your anger flair up toward those who disagree with you? Hopefully you never reach the point of wanting someone to die because of it, but sometimes we can find ourselves so entrenched in our own way of thinking about an issue that we don't even realize how strong our opposition towards others has grown.

Whole denominations have divided over arguments about a particular doctrinal issue. Christians publicly argue with each other to prove that their version of Christianity is superior to another. And, the debates grow even louder when opposing sides have larger followings.

Why do we feel like we have to engage in arguments like:

- The age of the earth?
- Baptism by dunking or sprinkling?
- Organ music or guitars?

How many people have you seen draw closer to Jesus as a result of our petty doctrinal disagreements? Can't you think of a better use of your time and efforts?

Be honest, when we engage in these arguments, we're not really listening. Right? We already know we are right. So, we are not going to allow anything the other person says to change our minds. Yet, we somehow expect our arguments to change the minds of others. Not likely.

The real reason we insist on arguing these points is to make ourselves feel better about our beliefs. That might mean tearing down those who disagree with us just like the Pharisees who plan to kill Jesus to shut him up. Can you see how this makes for a bad witness? Wouldn't it be better if we put aside these less-important issues and find ways to work together?

Jesus recognizes the harm in public disagreements. He knows the opposition he faces from the religious leaders will bring his ministry to an abrupt end, but the timing is not yet right. So, he decides to stop publicly interacting with the Jews for a while.

There comes a time when your presence can be more of a hindrance than a help in sharing the good news of Jesus to others. Some things are difficult to accomplish through constant opposition and argument.

Take a look at the people you interact with on a daily basis. Are there people you argue with constantly? Maybe these interactions are thought provoking and fruitful, but maybe they are causing more harm than good. It's not a cop out to back away from confrontation when it is making more difficult for people to come to faith.