

FRIENDS ^{WITH} GOD



DISCOVER

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

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LET'S EXPLORE *THE* BIBLE!

“Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand.”

Mark 4:33



From “once upon a time” to “happily ever after,” you know a good story when you read one. The Bible is the *ultimate* true story. It tells us what God has done from the beginning of time, what’s going to happen at the end of the world, and some of the best stuff in between.



But what are all these stories for? And why should you read them? I’m here to tell you! God created the Bible to help *you* discover how much God loves you and wants to be with you as your forever friend. All the stories, poems, prophecies, and letters in the Bible give *you* the answers to life’s questions and problems. So now *you* can grow closer to God no matter what you’re going through. That’s because I’m always with you. And the Bible can help you remember that.

How should you read the Bible? With an open heart and an open mind to understand just how much God loves you. Because God really, really, *really* loves you, my friend.

Your friend,
Jesus

Wild and Wonderful Truths About the Bible

The BIBLE

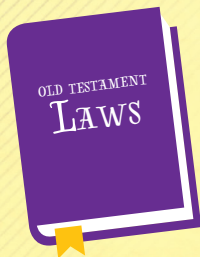
 IS A MINI-LIBRARY 

The Bible is a *giant* book. I mean it's *really* big. But it's also a collection of smaller books—66 in all.

You might think of it as God's library. Just like a library, this amazing collection of books is divided into sections. The first section is called the Old Testament. It includes everything that happened before Jesus was born. The second section is called the New Testament, and it includes everything that happened after Jesus was born.



The Old Testament has 39 books, which are grouped into four parts:



The first five books (also called the Pentateuch) tell us all about the laws God made for his people and why they needed them. It covers the story of Creation through the start of the nation of Israel. It explains why God created us and how much he loves us.

- Genesis • Exodus
- Leviticus • Numbers
- Deuteronomy



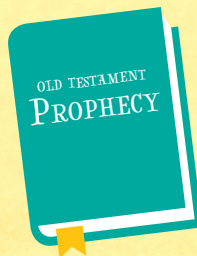
The next 12 books tell us the history of the Israelites, God's people, especially all the ups and downs of their friendship with God.

- Joshua • Judges • Ruth
- 1 & 2 Samuel • 1 & 2 Kings
- 1 & 2 Chronicles • Ezra
- Nehemiah • Esther



These books show us the powerful feelings people have about their friendship with God.

- Job • Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon

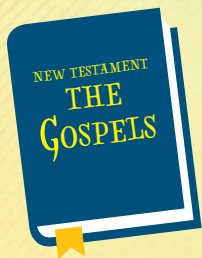


God used many prophets—people who speak God's truth—to give messages to his people and explain what friendship with God really means.

- Isaiah • Jeremiah • Lamentations
- Ezekiel • Daniel • Hosea • Joel
- Amos • Obadiah • Jonah • Micah
- Nahum • Habakkuk • Zephaniah
- Haggai • Zechariah • Malachi



The New Testament has 27 books, which are grouped into four parts:



“Gospel” means “good news,” and the good news is that Jesus came to take away our sins (the wrong things we do) so we can be friends with God. These four books tell us all about Jesus’ life, including his birth, miracles, friendships, teachings, death, and resurrection.

• Matthew • Mark • Luke • John



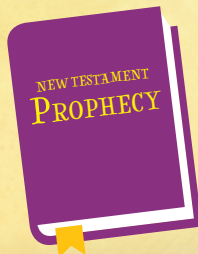
Each of these books is a letter (also called epistle) written to people about their Christian faith and their friendship with God.

• Romans • 1 & 2 Corinthians
• Galatians • Ephesians
• Philippians • Colossians
• 1 & 2 Thessalonians
• 1 & 2 Timothy • Titus
• Philemon • Hebrews
• James • 1 & 2 Peter
• 1, 2, & 3 John • Jude



The New Testament gives us this one book all about the history of Jesus’ first followers and the beginning of the Christian church.

• Acts

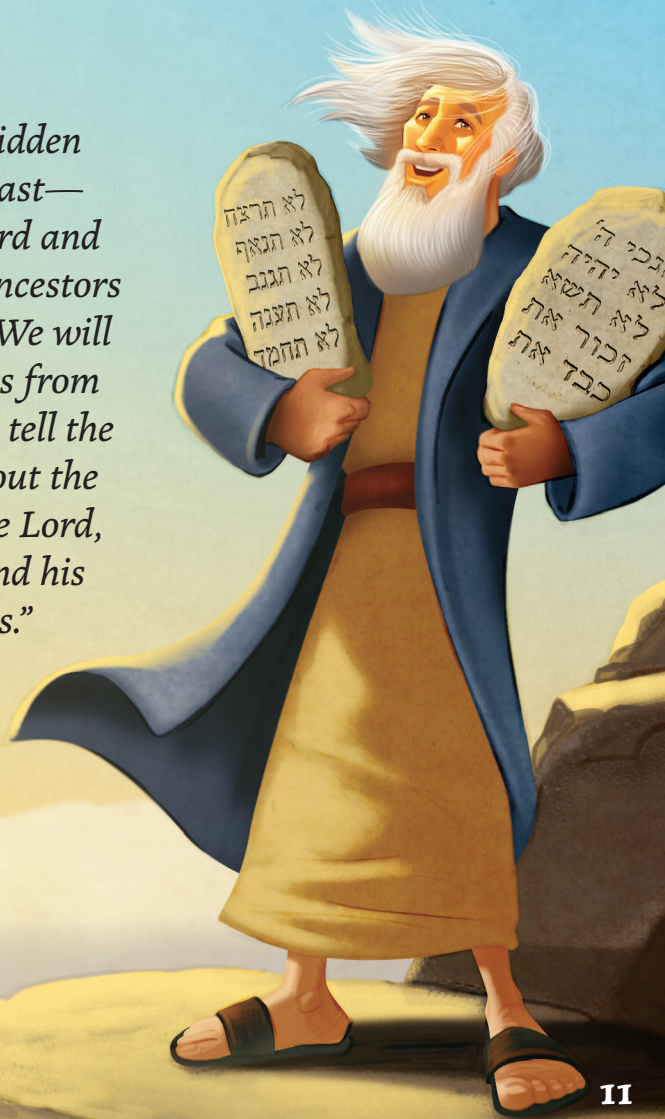


The New Testament has this one book of prophecy, which tells us how the world will end. Thankfully, everyone who believes in Jesus will live forever as friends with God!

• Revelation

“I will teach you hidden lessons from our past— stories we have heard and known, stories our ancestors handed down to us. We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord, about his power and his mighty wonders.”

Psalm 78:2-4



CHAPTERS & VERSES

The Bible wasn't originally written with chapter and verse numbers. But the Bible is so big that people decided to mark it with numbers so it would be easy to find exactly what you're looking for.

With chapters and verses, it's super simple to find the Bible stories you want to read. Here's how to find one of the most popular verses in the Bible, John 3:16.

- ▶ First you find the book (John). Hint: It's in the New Testament.
- ▶ Then you find the third chapter in John.
- ▶ And then you find the 16th verse.
(Look it up now. What does that verse say?)

"If you search for [God] with all your heart and soul, you will find him."

Deuteronomy 4:29

Jesus and Nicodemus

²³Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him. ²⁴But Jesus didn't trust them, because he knew all about people. ²⁵No one needed to tell him about human nature, for he knew what was in each person's heart.

3

There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader.

²⁶After dark one evening, Jesus said to him, "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you."

²⁷Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again,* you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

²⁸"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

²⁹Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.* ³⁰Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.* ³¹'So don't be surprised when I say, 'You* must be born again.' ³²The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

³³"How are these things possible?" Nicodemus asked.

³⁴Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things?" ³⁵I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe our testimony. ³⁶But I tell you about earthly things and you don't believe. How possibly will you believe in my testimony about heavenly things? ³⁷No one has ever seen or heard, or touched, the Son of Man* who has come down from heaven. ³⁸And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ³⁹so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life."

⁴⁰"For this is how God loved the world: He gave* his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ⁴¹God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

CHAPTER

VERSE

...ent against anyone who believes in him. ¹⁸Whoever does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. ¹⁹And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰Who do evil hate the light and refuse to go on to the light for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹But who do what is right come to the light so that others can see that they are doing what God wants.*"

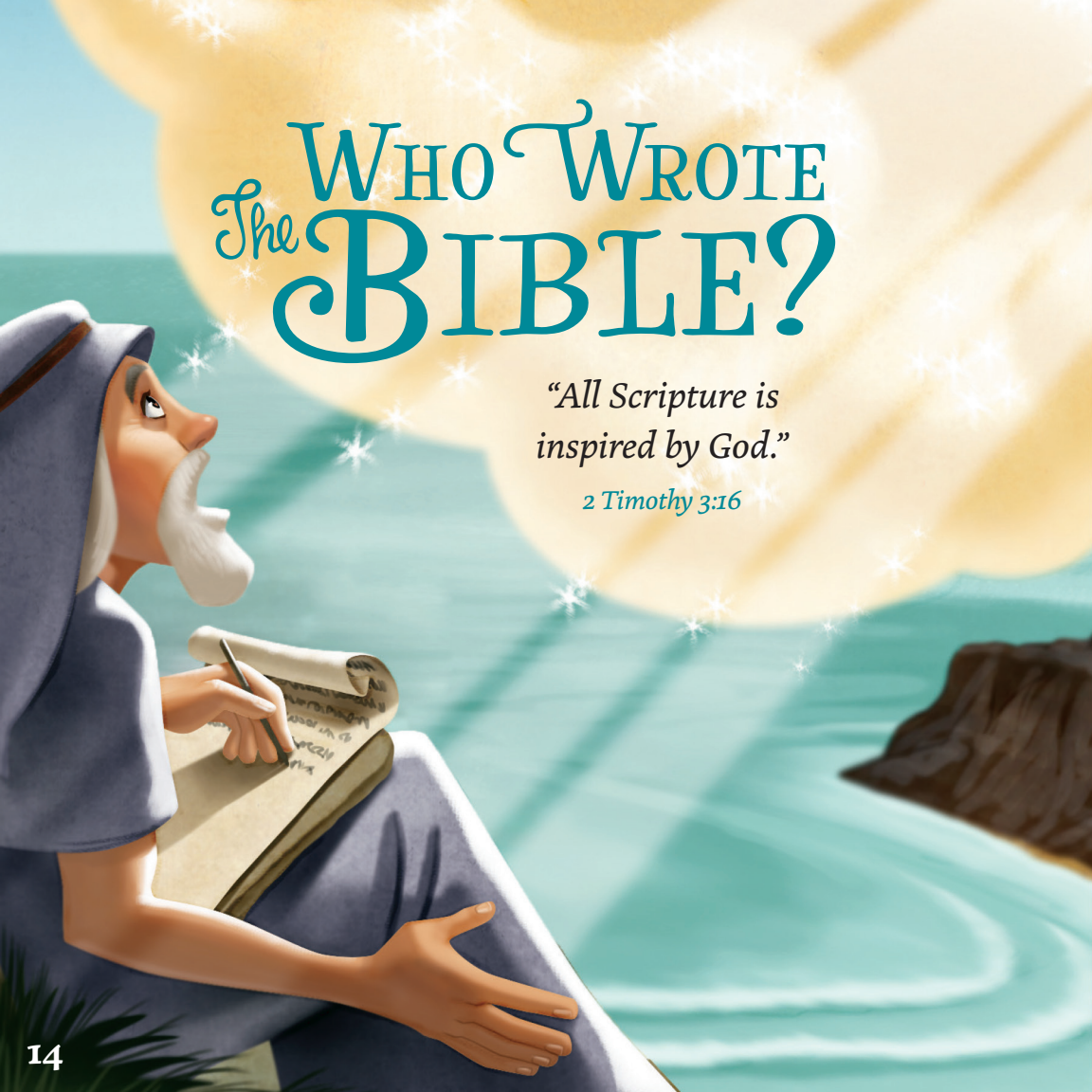
John the Baptist Exalts Jesus

²²Then Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and went into the Judean countryside. Jesus spent some time with them there, baptizing people.

²³At this time John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there; and people kept coming to him for baptism. ²⁴(This was before John was thrown into prison.) ²⁵A debate broke out between John's disciples and a certain Jew* over ceremonial cleansing. ²⁶So John's disciples came to him and said, "Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one you identified as the Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going to him instead of coming to us."

²⁷John replied, "No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' ²⁹It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the bridegroom's friend is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. ³⁰He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

³¹"He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else.* ³²He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! ³³Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. ³⁴For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. ³⁵The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands. ³⁶And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey

An illustration of a prophet with a long white beard and a blue robe, sitting on a rocky shore and writing in a scroll. The background features a large, glowing yellow sun or moon over a blue body of water, with sparkling light effects scattered throughout the scene.

The WHO WROTE BIBLE?

*"All Scripture is
inspired by God."*

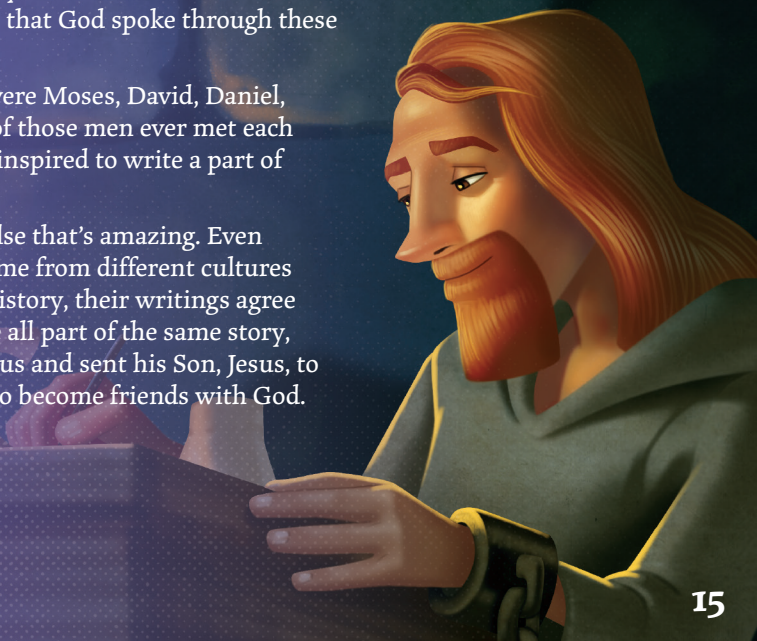
2 Timothy 3:16

God didn't pick up a pen and write the Bible himself. Instead, God chose more than 40 people to write and tell his story. These people came from lots of different backgrounds; some were kings, some were fishermen or shepherds, others were businessmen or soldiers; one was even a doctor. They wrote with different writing styles, too. And some wrote about history, some wrote letters to friends, while others wrote poetry.

Here's the amazing thing about all these different writers: They were all inspired by God to write what they did. Some people say that the Bible is "God-breathed," which means that God spoke through these writers as they wrote.

Some of those writers were Moses, David, Daniel, Isaiah, and Paul. None of those men ever met each other, but they were all inspired to write a part of God's story.

And here's something else that's amazing. Even though these writers came from different cultures and different times in history, their writings agree with each other. They're all part of the same story, which is that God loves us and sent his Son, Jesus, to make it possible for us to become friends with God.



T · I · M · E · L · I · N · E — OF — The BIBLE

3000 B.C.—
Stonehenge
is built in
England



Creation

2500 B.C.—
Great Pyramid
of Giza is built
in Egypt

Abraham
is born



Jacob steals Esau's
inheritance

1500 B.C.—
Coins are
invented

God gives
Moses the Ten
Commandments



Gideon defeats
the Midianites





Ruth and
Naomi travel
to Bethlehem



David
defeats
Goliath



God gives
Solomon
wisdom



Jonah is
swallowed by
a big fish



God saves
Daniel in the
lions' den



750 B.C.—
Fake teeth
are invented

Esther becomes
Xerxes' queen

200 B.C.—
Paper invented
in China



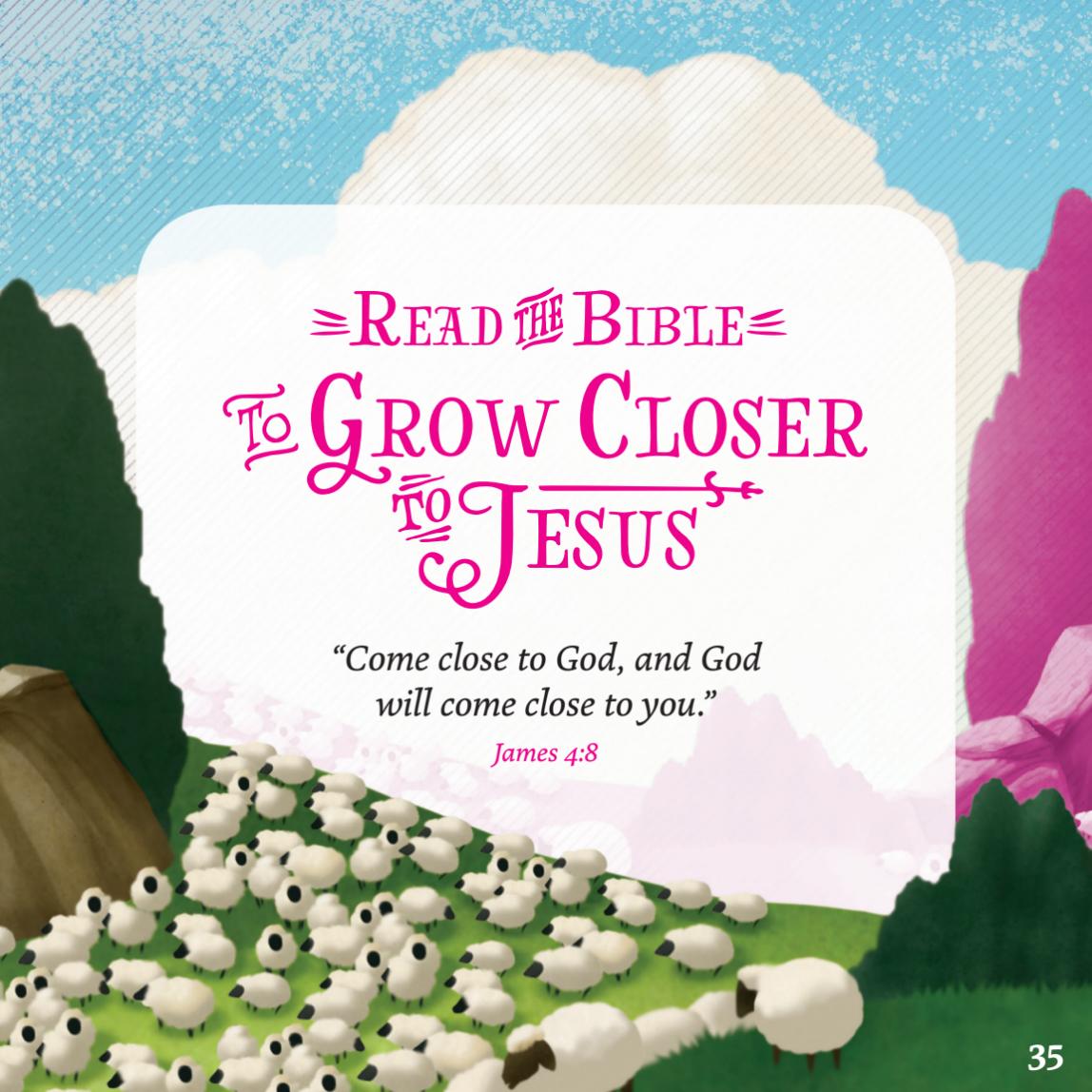
Jesus is
born!

The events in the Bible took place thousands of years ago, but their truths remain as important and helpful as ever. Bible experts believe Moses wrote the first books of the Bible around 1400 B.C. (Before Christ), while the last books of the Bible were written in the years after Jesus' death.

Follow this timeline to see when key events in the Bible took place in history.

*“Through their faith, the people in days
of old earned a good reputation.”*

Hebrews 11:2



≡ READ ~~THE~~ BIBLE ≡
TO GROW CLOSER
TO JESUS

*“Come close to God, and God
will come close to you.”*

James 4:8

I was just another girl in the crowd. As normal as normal could be. I laughed, cried, ate, slept, and stubbed my toes, just like you. There was nothing special about my life...until God chose me to do something no one else would ever do. God wanted me to be the mother of his Son—the Son of God!

Me?

To be honest, I was scared. When I got the news—from an angel, no less—I had a lump in my throat, a knot in the pit of my stomach, and a chill down my spine. Surely someone had made a mistake! But God doesn't make mistakes. God gave me a gift that I could share with the rest of the world...including you.

Because I'm not the only one God wanted to give Jesus to. Jesus may have been my baby, but he's also your best friend. God chose *you* to receive the gift of Jesus, too.

And that's not all. God has given you another precious gift: the Bible. The Bible is the story of Jesus—my son, God's Son—and how he came to bring you closer to God. Reading the Bible brings you closer to Jesus and knowing Jesus' heart.

There are so many amazing stories about Jesus in the Bible. I hope you'll read them all!

—MARY



Try It!

Read the Bible as if Jesus is sitting right next to you. Find two chairs. Sit in one and leave the other empty. Imagine Jesus sitting next to you as you read Matthew 19:13-14. Write about imagining Jesus sitting next to you.

Want to grow closer to Jesus?

Read these stories about some of the jaw-dropping things Jesus did.

- ▶ Jesus calms a storm—Mark 4:35-40
- ▶ Jesus walks on water—Matthew 14:22-33
- ▶ Jesus raises a man from the dead—John 11:1-44