

The Gospel of John: that you might believe...and LIVE

Faith in Jesus is a Matter of Life & Death

John 11

Intro: Freelance writer Xavier Jackson recently published a list of *"The Most Hilariously Insane Overreactions of All Time."* Here are a few...

When Mary Bach reached the cash register at Walmart with her pack of Brown 'N Serve sausages, she knew that something was very wrong -- the label read 98 cents, but the cashier tried to charge her a full dollar. She wasn't impressed, & neither, I assume, were the people lined up behind her with their groceries while she haggled over the 2-cent outrage. Walmart offered to defuse the situation by refunding the 2 cents, but the damage was done, and this grandmother wasn't about to take it lying down. So she sued the world's largest retailer, alleging that it was totally intentional & they were trying to rip her off. According to Bach, the suit wasn't about the money -- it was about principle. The kicker is that Bach won the suit. The courts awarded her \$100 for her suffering & \$80 for her trouble. On one hand, that's a trivial sum compared to the time & energy she must have devoted to pursuing it. But that is also 9,000 times the disputed amount, making this the world's most successful & dumbest lawsuit at the same time.

Eleven-year-old Matthew Migliaccio was warming up the pitcher before a friendly game of Little League baseball when, apparently underestimating his own strength, he lobbed a ball that flew straight over the pitcher's head & hit Elizabeth Lloyd, who was sitting nearby, in the face. Migliaccio ran over to see if she was OK, at which point she allegedly shrugged it off & told the kid that these things happen. If you know that balls are going to be tossed around, you should be prepared to take one on the chin every now & then. Apparently, Lloyd changed her mind, because fairly soon after the ordeal, Migliaccio began receiving threatening letters from her on a regular basis. But perhaps she was just blowing off steam the way that most of us like to do, by mercilessly harassing an 11-year-old. But the situation only escalated 2 years later when the woman went ahead & sued Migliaccio for a mind-boggling \$500k. Her suit alleged that his throw was "intentional & reckless" and that Migliaccio "assaulted & battered" her. Apparently, it wasn't so much a bad throw as a really, really good one. Migliaccio's lawyer has replied to the claims sarcastically: "What are we gonna do, take his bike? He's 11." But the fiasco doesn't end with Elizabeth Lloyd's lawsuit -- on top of that, her husband is also suing Migliaccio for "the loss of services, society and consortium of his wife," which is to say that the middle schooler hit her so hard with a baseball that they couldn't be intimate for two years. **Holy cow, can even Verlander throw a baseball so hard it will make you celibate? And this kid is just 11! This kid should be pitching in the majors!**

In 1974, Robert Preston was accepted into the U.S. Army and was training to be a helicopter pilot, but unfortunately for him, he flunked out of the training. It's understandable that someone might take that pretty hard, but Preston decided that he would show them just how well he could fly a chopper. By which we mean he decided to show the president directly. So he stole a helicopter from Fort Meade and proceeded to fly it to Washington,

D.C. Once there, he hovered it above the White House for six minutes, presumably thinking that the president would run out onto the lawn, call up the Army and say, "Hire this kid! He hovers with the grace of an angel visiting from heaven itself!" Naturally, the Secret Service was not amused by these antics. Preston landed the helicopter after his stunt, but once he realized that those armed men weren't coming over to congratulate him and declare him the president's personal helicopterist, he took off, and a helicopter chase over Washington, D.C., ensued, with Preston actually forcing one of the choppers down with his skillful flying. Possibly figuring that that might have been enough to prove himself, Preston returned to the White House, probably hoping for a warmer welcome. Instead, he was met with gunfire. He finally got the hint and landed, then was promptly arrested. He received a measly one-year in jail for the stunt. Amazingly, he still wasn't allowed to be a pilot.

New Series: Things like \$0.02 at Walmart, getting hit by a little league baseball and even flunking out of helicopter school do not classify as matters of Life & Death. Not even close. Over the next 5 weeks, I plan to identify 5 things that do meet the requirements of a Matter of Life & Death! The 1st is, *"Faith in Jesus is a Matter of Life and Death."*

Text & Prop: Faith in Jesus is a Matter of Life & Death -- John 11:1-57

I. Disappointment Affects Our Faith

Mary & Martha: Deep in grief and despair due to the loss of their brother, Lazarus. Even within their grief, there is disappointment as well.

Martha: *"Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."* **Vs. 21**
Mary: *"Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."* **Vs. 32**

III: Ted Turner used to be a very religiously committed high schooler, faithful in church & was planning to be a missionary. When he was 15, his younger sister contracted a degenerative tissue disease called lupus. She was racked with pain & constantly vomiting, & her screams regularly filled the house. Ted would come home & hold her hand in an attempt to comfort her. He prayed for her healing, she prayed to die. After years of misery, she died. Ted's dad, Ed Turner, remarked at the time, *"If that's the type of God He is, I want nothing to do with Him."* And Ted lost his faith. Ted later said, *"I was always taught that God was love & God was powerful, & I couldn't understand how someone so innocent should be made or allowed to suffer so."* But, things went from bad to worse in the Turner house. On March 5th, 1963 Ed Turner (Ted's father) had breakfast with his wife, went upstairs, placed a .38 caliber silver pistol in his mouth, and pulled the trigger. He was 53. That sealed the deal with Ted, *"If that's the kind of God He is, I want nothing to do with him."*

III: Bart Ehrman, a famous skeptic at UNC Chapel Hill says he lost his faith on the same problem. *"I think that if, in fact, God Almighty appeared to me and gave me an explanation that could make sense of the torture, dismemberment, and slaughter of innocent children, and the explanation was*

so overpowering that I actually could understand, then I'd be the first to fall on my knees in humble submission and admiration. On the other hand, I don't think that's going to happen. Hoping that it will is probably just wishful thinking, a leap of faith made by those who are desperate both to remain faithful to God & to cope with the harsh realities of the world."

Some Haven't Lost their Faith, but We can Relate to C.S. Lewis: After losing his wife to a painful bout with cancer, he wrote "I can't understand why God is always there when things are going well, telling you what He expects of you, but go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once... Why is God so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?" **You're probably thinking that this was C.S. Lewis pre-conversion. But, no this is a long time after he became a Christian. He eventually walked through this darkness and his faith came out stronger on the other side, but nobody lists this as their favorite quote from ole' Clive Staples Lewis.**

When you Feel Disappointed by God, You have 3 Options (J.D. Greear):

- **Lose Your Faith:** You conclude (Turner & Ehrman) that he's not really there; he's never been there; and if he is there, you don't want to have anything to do with him. Your faith is lost.
- **Isolate Questions from your Faith:** Gloss over it & refuse to think about it. Many have simply shut off parts of their hearts & minds to the hard questions, refusing to think about them because they are afraid their faith can't stand up to them. They don't want to lose their faith because that would be too painful, so they just don't think deeply about these things. The result, however, is a superficial faith that doesn't consume your whole being because you have a good you can't love with your whole heart.
- **Press Deeper into your Faith:** Let these questions drive you deeper into God. I'll tell you that the times in my life when I asked the hardest questions, when I struggled, and even doubted God – that was when my faith grew the most, because the sweetest & strongest.

"The depths of God's love can often be known in the depths of despair. You can't know how deep the love of God is until you cry out to him from the depths of despair, & you say, 'My pain is deep. God's love is deeper still.'" Spurgeon

Due to Disappointment some have lost their faith, others have isolated their faith from pain, but some have pressed deeper into their faith.

II. Jesus Invites us To Apply Our Faith

"Now Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give

*You.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Jesus said to her, **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"** She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is come into the world.'" **John 11:21-27***

Note: For the 5th time, Jesus declares I am the _____ (bread of life, light of the world, door of the sheep, good shepherd & resurrection and the life). There is a promise associated with His statement: Jesus has defeated our final enemy: Death!

"The last enemy that will be destroyed is death." **1 Corinthians 15:26**

"When you are sick, you want a doctor and not a medical book or a formula. When you are being sued, you want a lawyer and not a law book. Likewise, when you face your last enemy, death, you want the Savior and not a doctrine written in a book." **Warren Wiersbe**

Faith in Jesus really is a Matter of Life & Death because Faith is the only Key to Unlock Jesus' Victory over Death!

Inv: There was a fireman doing a safety talk to a group of school kids. He told them, in case of a fire, to go to the door to see if it is hot. Then he said, *"Fall to your knees. Does anybody know why you ought to fall to your knees?"* One boy replied, *"Yeah, to start praying to God to get you out of this mess!!!"*

Are you in a mess? And I'm not talking about \$0.02 at the Walmart checkout line or a little league baseball bonking you on the head, I mean a real faith-shaking, heart-breaking, foundation-cracking mess. Hear the words of Jesus today, *"I am the resurrection and the life..."* In moments like these, **Faith in Jesus is a Matter of Life and Death.**

Illustration: A little girl was walking thru the hallway of her home & came upon the cellar door. It was one of those "trap door" kinds & it was open down to the dark cellar where no light was on. She called down & her daddy answered. She said, *"I want to come down there where you are."* He said, *"Well honey, I've taken down the ladder, but if you'll jump I'll catch you."* Now, he could see her because the lights were on upstairs but she could not see him down in the darkness of the cellar. *"I can't see you, Daddy!"* *"It's okay, honey, I can see you. Just go ahead and jump!"* But she said, *"I'm afraid."* Then her dad said, *"Wait a minute sweetheart. I want to ask you a question: Do you believe that I am down here?"* *"Of course, I'm talking to you."* *"Well, do you believe that I am strong enough to catch you?"* *"Yes, of course you are."* *"Alright, do you believe that I love you?"* *"Yes, Daddy I know that you love me."* *"Have I ever told you a lie?"* *"No, Daddy you have never lied to me."* Finally, he said, *"Well if you know that I am here, and you know that I love you, and you know that I am strong enough to catch you, you know that I've never told you a lie, then jump."* And she jumped! She just stepped off

into that black hole, & of course, her daddy caught her, gave her a little hug & set her down.

Your Questions: Do you believe in God? Do you believe He is strong enough to handle your fears? Do you believe that He loves you? Has He ever lied to you? **If the answer to those questions are yes, yes, yes & no...JUMP because Your Faith in Jesus is a Matter of Life and Death!**

Faith in Jesus is a Matter of Life and Death

Reading List

Monday: Hebrews 11:1-6

Tuesday: Matthew 17:14-21

Wednesday: Mark 11:22-24

Thursday: Proverbs 28:20

Friday: Romans 10:14-17

Saturday: Psalms 31:23-24

Sunday: Matthew 25:14-30