

Upfront Bible 5

Jesus is a friend beyond death

John 11

Set up a large clock face with moveable hands. Throughout the drama, a voiceless character moves the hands around the clockface as indicated.

The three main characters each carry a huge (cardboard) prop:

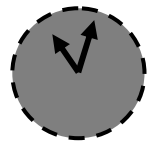
Mary - huge jar

Martha - huge bowl of fruit

Lazarus - large door

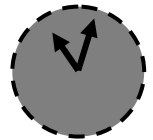
Storyteller: What time is it?

It's rewind story time. So we're winding the clock back – back – even further back – to the time of the Bible – back to when Jesus lived as a human person, just like you or me. Way back to then. So it's Bible time.



And it's ... party time!

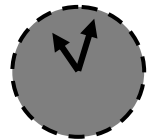
(Team members in the audience start blowing party blowers, handing them out to the audience, throwing streamers and biffing balloons around over the audience. Accompany with party music. While this is going on Mary, Martha and Lazarus enter, each carrying their big prop, and set up on the stage.



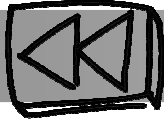
- *Mary hides behind her jar*
- *Lazarus opens and shuts his door, welcoming people in through it, calling them up out of the audience, shaking their hand, ushering them through the door, and then indicating for them to rejoin the crowd*
- *Martha smiles and offers imaginary fruit from her bowl.)*

Storyteller: Time to freeze

(Music stops, team members in the audience freeze and sit down)

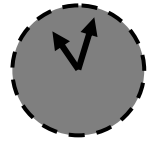


During this next section a 'Jesus' character enters and interacts with Lazarus, Martha and Mary. If you are uncomfortable with having Jesus personified, have Lazarus mime opening the door and welcoming an imaginary Jesus, escorting him over to Martha, who also mimes greeting and offering food.*



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Storyteller: **Six days before Passover Jesus went back to Bethany, where he had raised Lazarus from death. ²A meal had been prepared for Jesus. Martha was doing the serving, and Lazarus himself was there.**



³Mary took a very expensive bottle of perfume and poured it on Jesus' feet. She wiped them with her hair, and the sweet smell of the perfume filled the house.

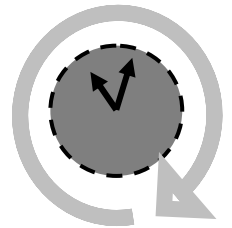
(Martha and Lazarus mime smelling the perfume in the air)

Storyteller: **⁴A disciple named Judas Iscariot was there. He was the one who was going to betray Jesus,**

Judas character stands up in the audience also smelling the perfume and moves towards the bottle. Judas examines a 'price tag' on the bottle.

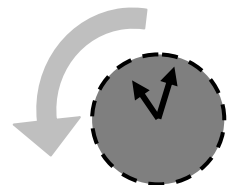
Judas: Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?"

Storyteller: **Jesus replied, "Leave her alone! She has kept this perfume for the day of my burial."**



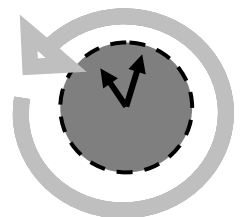
(Lazarus, Judas, Mary & Martha freeze)

Storyteller: Ah, a strong smelling perfume, sometimes used for burial, sometimes used to show friendship. In this case used for both. If we wind our clock forward a week, we find that Jesus has been killed and placed in a tomb. Mary is coming with perfume for his burial...

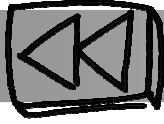


But if we wind our clock back, back a week to the party *(music starts, team facilitate celebration as before, but only for a short time)*

And then wind back further ... now there is **no** celebration at the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus.



Lazarus, Mary, Martha & Judas walk backwards across the stage; Judas exits completely.



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Lazarus lies on a mat, obviously sick. Martha offers him water. Mary calls a child forward and pretends to send a message via them. (Mary actually just tells the child to run a lap of the audience and then return to their seat.)

Storyteller : Lazarus was sick in the village of Bethany

³The sisters sent a message to the Lord and told him that his good friend Lazarus was sick.

⁴When Jesus heard this, he said, "His sickness won't end in death. It will bring glory to God and his Son." ⁵Jesus loved Martha and her sister and brother. ⁶But he stayed where he was for two more days.

Everyone freezes and watches the clock tick through 2 whole cycles.

⁷Then he said to his disciples, "Now we will go back to Judea."

¹⁷When Jesus got to Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

Lazarus is behind a large rock, Mary holds the door, Martha holds up a signpost pointing to Jerusalem (2 miles), Bethany (You are here!), Tombs (next 50 meters) and Galilee (70 miles)

¹⁸Bethany was only about two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many people had come from the city to comfort Martha and Mary because their brother had died. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house.

²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²Yet even now I know that God will do anything you ask."

²³Jesus told her, "Your brother will live again!"

Jesus meets Martha at the sign post.

Now, to fast forward a bit, Mary comes out, she's terribly upset and crying,

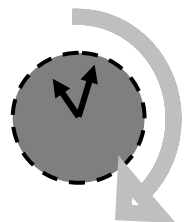
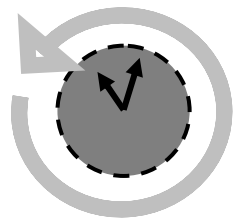
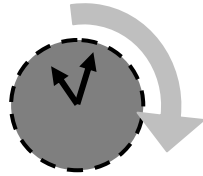
Mary appears through the 'door' with a large handkerchief crying loudly and uncontrollably.

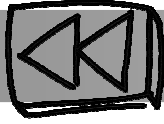
(speaking loudly to be heard over the crying) the people from Jerusalem come out, and they are terribly upset.

A few leaders and lots of audience members stand up with large handkerchiefs crying loudly and uncontrollably.

(speaking very loudly to be heard over the crying) Jesus is terribly upset too – because Lazarus was his friend. It's not looking good.

(silence & freeze)





Upfront Bible 5

The Storyteller moves across to the clock...highlighting the idea of being too late, and drawing attention to the idea of death stopping the clock

Is Jesus the friend that turns up too late? Isn't he going to do anything? Is Jesus the kind of friend who **can** do something about ... being dead? Doesn't that stop the clock completely?

No. Not for Jesus. Jesus is the friend who is the friend beyond death – let's read on.

So he went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone rolled against the entrance.

³⁹Then he told the people to roll the stone away.

But Martha said, "Lord, you know that Lazarus has been dead four days, and there will be a bad smell."

⁴⁰Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you had faith, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹After the stone had been rolled aside, Jesus looked up toward heaven and prayed, "Father, I thank you for answering my prayer. ⁴²I know that you always answer my prayers. But I said this, so that the people here would believe that you sent me." ⁴³When Jesus had finished praying, he shouted, "Lazarus, come out!"

Lazarus appears from behind the stone as a mummy. (You might want to use a different actor to the original Lazarus, so there is no rush to change from costume to bandages. Keep the face mostly covered.)

⁴⁴The man who had been dead came out. His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of burial cloth, and a cloth covered his face. Jesus then told the people, "Untie him and let him go."

Jesus was a friend to Martha and Mary, and Lazarus. But Jesus is a friend to all of us. A friend for all of life and even beyond death.

Move to the clock. During the final paragraph the clock circles through as many revolutions as it takes to complete the script.

Jesus died and came alive to show us that nothing can stop him loving us...his love goes on and on and on and on...right throughout our lives, and beyond death....on and on and on and on.

