

The Corporal Works of Mercy: Visit the Sick and Imprisoned and Bury the Dead

Do you know what the shortest verse in the Bible is?

It is John 11:35, “**And Jesus wept.**” These three words are a big deal! They share with us the heart of Jesus in a very special way. In this chapter, we read about Jesus’s friend, Lazarus, who becomes sick and dies. When Jesus traveled to their home in Bethany, He met Lazarus’s sisters, Mary and Martha, and others who loved Lazarus. All of them were crying in deep sadness. In this moment, *Jesus cried, too.* Death of a loved one always hurts.

Why do you think Jesus cried?

There are many good answers to this question. First, we must remember that Jesus was fully human with emotions just like us. It broke Jesus’s heart to see His dear friends, Mary and Martha, filled with sorrow and to see Lazarus’s lifeless body. (*If you remember, death was not a part of God’s original plan. It was only after the sin of Adam and Eve that suffering and death entered the world.*) Lazarus was dead and His friends were broken-hearted. Jesus cried because His heart breaks with ours – *especially over sin and death.*



One of the corporal works of mercy is burying the dead. Why?

Grow: It is important to remember that God created every human person with a body and a soul. When we die, our soul leaves our body to go on to eternal life and our body remains here to be buried. (At the end of time, we will be reunited with our earthly bodies. What a wonderful and joyous mystery that is!)

We bury the dead because:

- The human body is *sacred*, set aside by God to be His living tabernacle. Out of reverence for the sacred we treat a person’s body with respect, *always!*
- It is important for the broken-hearted to have a physical reminder of their loved one as a place to visit and **pray** for the repose of their soul.

A man named Tobit

In the Old Testament we read of a man named Tobit who was an Israelite. Tobit took the work of the corporal works of mercy very seriously. Within this wonderful book of the Bible we read of a night when Tobit sat down to eat a holy meal and was interrupted by the news that a fellow Israelite lay dead out in the street. He left His meal at once and retrieved the man’s body to bury.

We learn two important things from Tobit: 1.) The job to bury the dead – or any work of mercy – is not just reserved for our family and friends, but *everyone*. 2.) The works of mercy must be done with urgency! Tobit left a table full of food to serve his neighbor. There is never time to waste when there are people in need.

Visiting the sick

Serve: Have you ever been sick and missed school – or had to stay over night at the hospital? Those who are sick, especially for a long time, may feel sadness or even loneliness. Adults who are sick and cannot leave home may have a hard time getting groceries, medicine, or preparing meals for themselves. Visiting the sick is an important work of mercy – it lets those who are suffering know they are not alone!

