

# Following Jesus in the Gospel of John

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## **Week of March 7, 2010. John 12:1-11 The anointing of Jesus' Feet**

**Opening:** Have snacks and drinks available for people to socialize as they arrive. Have the snack sign-up sheet initiated last week posted for folks to sign on vacant spots.

**Interactive Activity:** Using perfume to anoint Jesus' feet was recognized as an "extravagant act." It was considered such to a large degree because of the cost of the perfume (a year's wages). Pose the following question to the group: "What is the most extravagant purchase you have ever made?" Or, thought of another way: "What was the most foolish purchase you ever made?" Have fun with this! This is a chance to tell those stories we all have when we let go of our American-Protestant sensibilities and "wasted" a bit of money on something.

**Opening prayer:** Leader open in prayer or ask if someone might volunteer to pray. Invite people to refresh their snacks or move right into the study.

**Scripture passage:** Have someone read John 12:1-11 or consider breaking the reading into parts with several readers.

**Sermon Recap:** Either the leader or a willing participant recap the main points of Craig's sermon (use the sermon notes to jog your memory). For the continuation of the study, encourage the group to take their own notes during the sermon. Perhaps group members will jot down their own questions or observances they would like to be discussed in the small group.

**Group Discussion:** Below are several suggested topics for discussion. The intent is not necessarily to cover them all, but to select, revise and add to as desired.

**A note on the questions:** There is a big idea/concept to lead off each number below. The question follows. The concept should set the context for answering the questions.

- 1) What is your initial response to this passage? Anything puzzling, surprising or new?
- 2) A year's wages today can be thought of in a number of ways. One helpful way would be to multiply the 2010 WA state minimum wage of \$8.55/hour by a 40-hour workweek and 52-weeks (\$17,784). Another helpful way is by looking at economic information. According to 2007 data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the average U.S. annual wage is \$49,483 (source: [www.Wikipedia.org](http://www.Wikipedia.org) "List of countries by average wage"). Based on this information, how does the extravagance of Mary's act in verse 3 change in your mind?
- 3) Can you think of something equivalent to this level of extravagance that you have experienced? Or maybe something similar that has been done for church/religious purposes?

- 4) If you were shocked at the level of extravagance exhibited by Mary, you are not alone. John recounts that Judas had similar feelings. Setting aside John's comments about Judas' true motives for the moment, is there a point here? Should money/possessions given for church/religious purposes always be used for the "greatest good?"
- 5) One way to think of the passage is the apparent tension between worship (Mary's devotion to Jesus in this act), and social justice (the practical/pragmatic application of selling the perfume and giving the proceeds to the poor). How do you balance the tension between worship and service in your own life?
- 6) Jesus spends most of his ministry doing and preaching about social justice - healing the sick, feeding the hungry, etc. Given this, it is strange that Jesus admonishes Judas for thinking in terms of social justice. Is this surprising to you? (This is a good opportunity to discuss what were likely Judas' true motives. We certainly have the benefit of hindsight here!)
- 7) Scripture supports living out faith through our deeds rather than a life of worship divorced from action (read James 2:14 and following for reference). Is it possible that Jesus is speaking to something else in this passage?
- 8) While Jesus never speaks to Mary's intent, it was clearly one of worship. After all, Jesus had recently raised her brother Lazarus, from the dead! Instead of viewing acts of extravagance through the eyes of our market-driven pragmatic American eyes, should we spend more time looking at the heart/intent of the giver?

### **Lent Reflections:**

- What extravagant act of worship have you made to God recently?
- Guidance: Where is God at work in your life now; and what surrender, trust, or action is He asking you to trust Him with.

**Closing Prayer:** Continue the conversation you have had with each other with God. Praise Him and make requests based upon the things already shared in the discussion time. Ask someone to open and another person to close when the group seems done praying.

Then ask if there is anything we need to know about so we can be prayer with you this week?

**Social Time:** Time permitting, allow everyone to linger and visit for another 10 or 15 minutes.

# Resources

## Common Guidelines for a Healthy Group

- Purpose – We will meet on a regular basis to share in a common interest or need for friendship and spiritual growth.
- Group Attendance – We will give priority to group meetings and will call ahead if late or absent.
- Preparation – We will come prepared for whatever discussion or activity the group has planned for the meeting.
- Safe Place – We will be intentional about creating a safe environment so group members can be heard and feel loved.
- Participation – We are all encouraged to share openly and honestly; we will not advise without invitation, condemn anyone, or dominate a discussion or activity.
- Confidentiality – We will not repeat outside of the meeting anything of a personal nature that is shared in the meeting.
- Teamwork – We will share the responsibilities of our group, develop our God-given gifts, and encourage emerging leaders from within our group.
- The Right Fit - People are free to visit several groups and find the group that is the right fit for them.

## Message Series Scripture Passages

Feb 14 - John 4 - Jesus and the Samaritan woman

Feb 21 - John 8 - Woman caught in adultery. Week 1, Doug

Feb 28 - John 9 - Man born blind receives sight. Week 2, Nancy

March 7 - John 12:1-11 The anointing of Jesus' Feet. Week 3, Josh

March 14 - John 13 - Jesus washes the disciple's feet. Week 4, Doug

March 21 - John 18:1-11 – Judas. Week 5, Nancy

March 28 - Palm Sunday - John 18 - Jesus and Pilate. Week 6, Josh

April 4 - Easter - John 20:1-10 - Peter and John race to the tomb

Contact information for discussion guide writers.-

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