

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

questions

Read **John 12:1-11**.

1. In Bethany, on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus attends a dinner given in his honor. Who are the main characters in this story and what action did they contribute to the plot?

Verses	Character	Action
12:2	Martha	helped serve the meal and the guests
12:2	Lazarus	reclined at the table with Jesus the guest of honor
12:3	Mary	anointed Jesus with expensive perfume; wiped his feet with her hair
12:4-6	Judas	objected to Mary's lavish gift on the grounds that the money would have helped feed the poor
12:7-8	Jesus	guest of honor; defended Mary and put Judas in his place

- ♥ Which person in the story most reflects your style and personality? How so?
- 2. Mary, Martha and Lazarus all loved Jesus and wanted to express their gratitude to him. What might be some reasons why Mary was particularly extravagant (12:3,5) in showing her gratitude?

She wanted to show Jesus how grateful she was for bringing her brother back to life. Having just anointed her dead brother for his burial, it made sense to her to anoint Jesus to show her thankfulness. Mary, obviously had a deep love for Jesus. She, no doubt, was grateful also for what Jesus had done personally for her, for she loved to sit at his feet and listen as he taught. Wiping his feet with her hair was a gesture of utmost devotion and reverence. (A woman did not normally let down her hair in public; it was an intimate and publicly scandalous act, but Mary didn't care what others thought of her; she was more concerned that Jesus was honored and loved.)

Your group may have other ideas as to why Mary was so extravagant.

(Nard is an oil-like perfume extracted from the root and spine of the nard plant, grown in India. The fact that it had to be imported, made it very expensive. I could have easily been Mary's life savings.)

- ♥ *Extravagant* means characterized by spending excessively or wastefully; exaggerated or unreasonable; unreasonably high in price or cost. What extravagant act of love and devotion, directed to God, have you ever heard about or witnessed? How did it affect you?
 - ♥ Mary took the most precious thing she had and spent it all on Jesus. What, if anything, about your relationship with Jesus might ever prompt you to show the extravagance that Mary did?
 - ♥ What are some ways you could extravagantly show Jesus your love, gratitude and devotion? Will you? (Time is one of our most precious possessions. Giving Jesus long and focused amounts of time by worshipping, listening and praying is one way we can extravagantly show our love.)
3. Mary performed a private, intimate act of devotion and worship publicly, in the presence of others. How was Mary's anointing of Jesus a blessing to: a) Jesus? b) Mary? c) The dinner guests? d) Us today?

Jesus: Jesus knew he would soon die an dishonorable death, so this act of love and gratitude had to be a blessing and comfort to him. He knew that at least one person understood the sacrifice he was ready to make.

Mary: Because of all Jesus had done for her and all he meant to her, Mary was blessed to be able to humble herself and publicly take the risk of being misunderstood in order to show Jesus her deep love and gratitude. As the final events of Jesus' life unfolded over the next week, I'm sure Mary was so glad she did this when she did, before it was too late (sort of like someone taking the timely step to heal a relationship before a death or someone who has good intentions, but waits too long to do the good thing.)

The dinner guests: John reports that the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. No one present could ignore Mary's act of devotion and no doubt many listened more carefully to what Jesus was saying and teaching after they saw what a difference he made in Mary's life. Her act of devotion brought the warm, pervasive glow of love. Many put their faith in Jesus (12:11).

Us today: We are challenged by Mary's act of costly devotion and it serves as an example to us of how Jesus deserves our worship, honor and love. It forces us to ask ourselves if we have given Jesus the honor and love he deserves. It motivates us to express our sacrificial love to him.

♥ Intimacy with Jesus is a fragrance that fills the air, that cannot be ignored by others. Have you ever displayed your intimate love for Jesus in the presence of others?

Maybe by expressing your intimate love for Jesus in public prayer or worship or expressing your love for Jesus and how much he means to you and why in a testimony.

What risks do you take if you choose to do so?

You might be embarrassed by having attention drawn to you or you could be misunderstood.

How might you and others be blessed if you took the risk?

Others might be drawn to Jesus because of your actions or words or you might motivate others to express their love for Jesus. It would also deepen your personal relationship with Jesus.

♥ Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, is mentioned three times in the Gospels: **Luke 10:39**, **John 11:32** and **John 12:3**. What common element do you find in all these accounts?

Mary is always found at the feet of Jesus. She had a proper understanding of who Jesus was and who she was in relation to Jesus.

How like or unlike Mary are you? How does Mary's example speak to you? What are some ways that you can come to the feet of Jesus?

4. Jesus most certainly knew what Judas was doing with the disciples' money bag (12:6). Why would he let this situation continue? Was he setting Judas up for failure? Why or why not?

Jesus, in knowing Judas' weakness, put him the position to face his temptation and overcome it. By putting him in the position of money-keeper, Jesus appealed to Judas' sense of honor. Jesus did not want Judas to fail, but to succeed – even to the last minute when he shared his bread with him at the Last Supper. Judas had a choice of whether or not to betray the trust that Jesus put in him and he chose to reject Jesus and go his own way. It is a choice that Jesus gives us all.

♥ When have you done something out of love for God and then were criticized for what you did (12:5)? How did it make you feel? How do you feel about it now? Was it worth it? Why or why not?

♥ If Judas had been an honest disciple, would he have had a good point (12:5)? Why or why not?

Opinions may differ on this point. There are those who think the money could have been better spent, but Jesus understands Mary's heart and the value of her gift.

♥ See yourself as a dinner guest at Jesus' dinner. Given the value of the perfume and the intimacy of Mary's act, how would you have reacted? Why?

5. Jesus defended Mary's actions (12:7-8). What does this tell you about Jesus?

It shows us that Jesus knows and understands the motives of our hearts and that he can be trusted with our deepest secrets. Jesus showed himself as a good friend and was not going to let others take advantage of Mary for what she had done. He commended Mary, not because he was indifferent to the poor, but because he understood that she had done a generous act of kindness in preparing him for his death.

How does his reaction affect your relationship with him?

Jesus' defense of Mary shows his kind and understanding heart. He knew and understood her motives. This should help us trust Jesus with the intimacies of our own hearts.

♥ How do you think Jesus would react to any gift of devotion that you give him? What would his reaction mean to you?

♥

♥ Does Jesus' comment in **12:8** mean that we are not to be concerned about the poor? Why or why not? Jesus was not saying that we shouldn't be concerned about the poor. The fact that the disciples had a funds to help the poor prove that this was not Jesus' meaning. There is, however, the right time to do everything and this was Mary's time to anoint him. It was an opportunity that would be lost if she did not do it now. The poor would always be there and they could be helped later.

Read **John 12:12-19**

6. Who did the crowd understand Jesus to be? What did their names for him (**12:13**) reveal about their expectations?

The crowd expected Jesus to be a political savior. They called him King and said, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," a phrase out of the Psalms that refers to the Messiah, God's anointed One. If he could raise Lazarus from the dead, surely he could overthrow the Romans! Palm branches were also a symbol for the Jewish state. Palm branches appear on the coins struck by the Jews during their revolutionary struggle against the Romans. The word Hosanna means "save now" or "give salvation now".

♥ **Zechariah 9:9-10** and **Revelation 19:11-16** give two different pictures of Jesus at different times in history. What is similar about these images and what is different? How can Jesus be both?

When Jesus mounted the donkey, it was a deliberate claim to be the Messiah. It was a dramatic enactment of the words of Zechariah the prophet who told of the Messiah to come. But, by riding a donkey, Jesus was proclaiming to be a certain kind of king. A king that came riding on a horse, was intent on war. A king that came on a donkey was coming in peace. This action of Jesus was a sign that he was not the warrior figure that the people dreamed of. Rather, he is the Prince of Peace.

Someday, Jesus will come again and this time, on a horse (Rev. 19:11-16). When that happens he will come as King of kings and Lord of lords and he will once and for all defeat and destroy his enemies forever. For us today, on this side of the cross, Jesus is both Prince of Peace and Mighty Warrior!

♥ What area of your life is difficult to surrender to King Jesus' authority? Why? Can you trust King Jesus?

♥ If Jesus entered the room right now, what would you shout?

Read **John 12:20-33**.

7. Jesus says that his time has come. What does **12:24** involve for Jesus?

Jesus is teaching his disciples that life only comes through death. This is totally the opposite of what the world thinks and believes. For Jesus, this meant submitting to the cross to die in our place. Because of his death, we all can have eternal life – the life that begins now and never ends.

What does **12:24** involve for you?

Dying to self is the only way to true life. Giving up control is the way to freedom. Becoming weak is the way to be strong. When we die to self, like a seed that dies, we reap the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and we are free from the self sins: self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love, self-condemnation, self-centeredness, self-promotion, etc.

♥ Where is Jesus calling you to die so that you might live?

8. Jesus often made his point with a *paradox* (a statement that seems to contradict itself). What is the paradox in **12:25** and what does it mean?

John 12:25- Amplified - Anyone who loves his life loses it, but anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. [Whoever has no love for, no concern for, no regard for his life here on earth, but despises it, preserves his life forever and ever.]

John 12:25- The Message - In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal. The person who attempts to preserve his life and makes life on this earth the most important thing, will eventually lose his life (for eternity). But the person who makes sacrifices in this life and makes the life to come her priority, we gain true life, the life that begins now and never ends.

The expression "hates his life" does not mean contempt for oneself or a suicidal impulse. Rather it is a way of living where we live for priorities that are outside ourselves. We put God and the needs of others before ourselves. This, Jesus taught, is the way to true life, true freedom and true strength.

Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline* puts it this way:

Self denial is not the same thing as self contempt. Self contempt claims we have no self worth, and even if we do have worth, we should reject it. Self-denial declares that we are of infinite worth and shows us how to realize it. Self-contempt denies the goodness of the creation; self-denial affirms that it is indeed good. Jesus made the ability to love ourselves the prerequisite for our reaching out to others (Matt. 22:39). Self-love and self-denial are not in conflict. More than once Jesus made it quite clear that self-denial is the only sure way to love ourselves.

John 11:25 - The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Self-denial is the freedom to give to others. It means to hold others' interests above our interests.

♥ What are some examples of loving life wrongly (**12:25**)? What are some examples of having the proper indifference towards life (**12:25**)?

God made a beautiful world for us to live and created "things" for us to enjoy. However, he was to be the center of our lives, our first priority and our first love. "Things" were to be used and enjoyed and seen as gifts from him.

Sin caused a break in our relationship with God. God was forced out of our hearts and "things" were allowed to enter. God's gifts, instead of God, became the center of our lives. (Sometimes the "things" are relationships. God gives us family and friends, but they are not to come before him. People and relationship can become idols.)

Jesus calls us back to living life as God intended. He becomes the focus of our lives and "things" are held with an open hand. To have the proper indifference towards life is for us to possess "things" as a gift from God to be enjoyed instead of "things" possessing us. We learn to live with or without God's good gifts. We are to love God and use things, not love things and use God.

The Apostle Paul put it this way: **Philippians 4:12** - "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." He could say this because he lived for and loved God, not "things."

9. What do you need to do in order to follow Jesus (12:26)?

If we are going to follow Jesus, we must be where his is; we have to be with him. And we can't follow him if we can't see or hear him. (We can't follow anyone if we can't at least see them or hear them). So, if we want to follow Jesus, we have to learn ways of hearing his voice and we have to ask him to teach us to see into the spiritual world so that we can see what He is doing and then follow his lead. It's impossible to follow Jesus without having a close intimate relationship with him. Jesus didn't say follow his example or even follow his rules; he said follow ME.

(This can also be a personal question. Each person needs to decide what it is they need to do in order to get to know Jesus better and to hear his voice. For some it might mean spending more time with Jesus or learning his Word better or joining him in praying for others.)

♥ If you had to sacrifice social status or certain relationships to follow Jesus, what are at least two things you would get in return (12:25-26)?

We would gain eternal life (v. 25); the Father would honor us (v. 26); we get to be where Jesus is! (v. 26)

♥ Is it possible to serve Jesus without following him? Why or why not?

We sometimes think we can serve Jesus (by doing good things, giving and serving others), but Jesus makes it clear that we can't serve him unless we are following him. If we truly want to serve Jesus, we have to be where he is and do what he is doing. Service cannot be separated from a close relationship to Jesus. If we do good things apart from Jesus, we are really only serving ourselves.

10. What principle does Jesus give us to live by when we are in a difficult situation and our heart is troubled (12:27-28)?

Jesus knew what was ahead for him and his heart or soul was deeply troubled (distressed). When we feel like this over our circumstances, our first prayer is usually, "God, get me out of this. Please change the circumstances." Jesus, however, says, "Should I ask God to save me from this? Should I ask him to change the circumstances?" (v. 27). Jesus answers his own question. He says, no, I won't ask God to get me out of it or change my circumstances. There is a reason I'm going through what I'm going through. The better prayer is, "God bring glory to yourself by what I'm going through." Jesus trusted his Father and he knew that Father God would take care of him and work everything for good and use it for his purposes.

We can have the same attitude as Jesus did. Instead of praying for God to change our situation, we can pray that God would use it for our good and his glory.

Is this principle realistic? How would it help?

It is realistic only for the person that knows and trusts God and believes that God has their best interest at heart. It is realistic only for the person who truly believes that God will be faithful to his promise to work all things together for good. It is realistic only for the person who sees and believes that God works through our hard times and trials to grow us up and make us like Jesus.

The best prayer for these situations is modeled after Jesus' prayer in the Garden before his death. He told God what he wanted by saying, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup (hard time) from me. But, not my will, but yours be done." Jesus could pray this prayer only because he completely trusted God and believed that in the end, God would make it right.

11. According to 12:30-33, what three things does Jesus say will be accomplished by his being *lifted up* (crucified and then exalted)? (You may want to read these verses from the *Amplified Version*)

The time for the world to be judged has come (the world is in crisis and about to receive its "sentence.")

The prince of this world will be driven out

When he is lifted up on the cross, he will draw and attract all people to himself (to God).

- ♥ Which of these accomplishments means the most to you? Why?
- ♥ How would you describe the *prince of this world* to someone who doesn't know who he is (**John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:1-2; 1 John 5:19**)?

You can read the verses from the extra scripture sheet found at the end of this guide. With your group, especially notice what the devil **DOES**. This more than anything, reveals who he is.

- ♥ In what ways has Jesus' death on the cross *driven out* Satan (**Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8**)?

Satan is "driven out" because Jesus conquered death once and for all, by rising from the dead and then never dying again. Because Jesus lives, we also will live after death. For the one who is in Jesus and Jesus is in them, the devil's power in their life is broken. They are no longer a slave to sin.

The reason Jesus came (to take our sins upon himself when he died) was so that he could destroy the works of the devil.

Read **John 12:37-43**.

12. What different responses to Jesus do you find in **12:37, 42-43**?

v. 37 – even after seeing miracles and especially Lazarus raised from the dead, some still would not believe.

v. 42-43 – some believed, but did so secretly out of fear of what the religious leaders might do. John makes it very clear that the motivation of a "secret disciple" is that they loved the praise of men more than of God.

- ♥ Does **12:42-43** describe you in any way? How so?

Even though we may be an "open" Christ-follower, we may still find that our motivation in doing some things is for the praise of men and not for the praise of God. Jesus taught that is our motives that God sees, not our actions.

- ♥ Is there such a thing as a secret disciple of Christ? Why or why not?

Good discussion question for your small group! You might want to consider **Matthew 10:32-33**.

- ♥ Where do you find it most difficult to live your faith? Why? What have you learned in this lesson that might help you?

Response

Jesus was born for a reason and he had a purpose in life. Read Jesus' purpose statement in **John 12:46**. For what purpose did Jesus come into the world?

We, too, are born for a reason and have a purpose in life. What is your purpose in life? Do you know? Have you ever written a purpose statement for your life that takes into account your gifts, abilities, opportunities and goals in life? Think and pray about why God created you. For what purpose are you here? What is your mission in life? What abilities has God given you to fulfill your purpose? When we live according to our God-given purpose, life has significance and meaning, while bringing great joy.

Encounter with Jesus

Come into the presence of Jesus by reading the other Gospel accounts of Mary anointing Jesus in **Matthew 26:6-13** and **Mark 14:3-9**. What expensive "perfume" can you offer Jesus from your life? Can you be extravagant in your love by giving him and letting him control your *time*? Your *abilities*? Your *material possessions*? Your *money*? Your *intellect*? Your *body*? Your *relationships*? Your *heart* (the real you)?

After you have "anointed" Jesus with the extravagance of your love, listen for his response. How does he receive the gift you have given him? What words of love and affirmation do you hear? Spend some time in worship at the feet of Jesus (**Luke 10:39, John 11:32; John 12:3**).

BELOW IS THE EXTRA SCRIPTURE FOR LESSON 10 THAT YOU CAN PRINT OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME.

NIV

Luke 10:39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.

John 11:32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. **10** I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Revelation 19:11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. **12** His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. **13** He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. **14** The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. **15** Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. **16** On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

2Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

1John 5:19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Hebrews 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—

1John 3:8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

NLT

Luke 10:39 Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught.

John 11:32 When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell down at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—even on a donkey's colt. **10** I will remove the battle chariots from Israel and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and I will destroy all the weapons used in battle. Your king will bring peace to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

Revelation 19:11 Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. And the one sitting on the horse was named Faithful and True. For he judges fairly and then goes to war. **12** His eyes were bright like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him, and only he knew what it meant. **13** He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God. **14** The armies of heaven, dressed in pure white linen, followed him on white horses. **15** From his mouth came a sharp sword, and with it he struck down the nations. He ruled them with an iron rod, and he trod the winepress of the fierce wrath of almighty God. **16** On his robe and thigh was written this title: King of kings and Lord of lords.

John 8:44 For you are the children of your father the Devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning and has always hated the truth. There is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.

2Corinthians 4:4 Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them. They don't understand the message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

Ephesians 2:1 Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins. **2** You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.

1John 5:19 We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the power and control of the evil one.

Hebrews 2:14 Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death.

1John 3:8 But when people keep on sinning, it shows they belong to the Devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy these works of the Devil.