



## LESSON 12 ~ EXTRAVAGANT LOVE

John 12

### DISCUSSION STARTER

- If you had a year's income to spend on friends, which would you choose: 1) Big party for all? 2) Dream trip for a few? 3) Extravagant gift for one?

### INTRODUCTION

We are at the point, in John's story, where Jesus has only one week left to live. The rest of our study, which covers half of the Gospel, will center entirely on the last few days of Jesus' life. You will notice, if you look at the Summary sheet for the Gospel of John in your notebook, that Jesus leaves behind his *public* ministry, which closes **Chapter 11**, and begins a *private* ministry, which opens **Chapter 12**. It is in this chapter that we feel the tension building as Jesus begins his final march to Jerusalem where he will meet his death.

In some way, each event in **Chapter 12**, foreshadows the end that is coming. For Jesus, going to Jerusalem for Passover was an act of highest courage, for the authorities had made him an outlaw and were plotting his death. However, as we consider the final events and teachings of Jesus' life, we must remember his words spoken in **John 10:17-18**, "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."

### PREPARATION

1. Before you read **John 12**, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (**John 16:13**). You may want to make the following prayer your own:

*Spirit of the Living God, the One who comforts, strengthens and encourages me.*

*I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.*

*I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.*

*So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.*

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,  
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

*I ask this in the powerful Name of Jesus (as if Jesus were asking it).*

*Amen*

2. Read **John 12** slowly and thoughtfully in your own Bible. As you read and reread, *underline or highlight* any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a *question mark* beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

**You may also want to read this chapter in another translation.** The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *Amplified Version* of the Bible. It is important, however, that you don't try to answer the questions in the lesson from just the *Amplified Version*. The questions are phrased to be answered from the *New International Version (NIV)*, the *New Living Translation (NLT)*, or something similar. Using **only** the *Amplified Version* may be confusing. It is given only as a supplementary text.

3. Write one question that you have about this chapter that you would like answered as you do this lesson.

## 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		
12:2		
12:3		
12:4-6		
12:7-8		

- ♥ 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?
  - ♥ *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?
- 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?
  - ♥ 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? What risks do you take if you choose to do so? How might you and others be blessed if you took the risk?
  - ♥ 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? 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?
  - ♥ 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?
  - ♥ 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? How does his reaction affect your relationship with him?

- ♥ 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?

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?

- ♥ **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?
- ♥ 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?

What does 12:24 involve for you?

- ♥ 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?
- ♥ What are some examples of loving life wrongly (12:25)? What are some examples of having the proper indifference towards life (12:25)?
9. What do you need to do in order to follow Jesus (12:26)?
- ♥ 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)?
  - ♥ Is it possible to serve Jesus without following him? Why or why not?

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)?

Is this principle realistic? How would it help?

11. According to 12:30-33, what three things does Jesus say will be accomplished by his being *lifted up* (crucified and then exalted)?

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

Read John 12:37-43.

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

- ♥ Does 12:42-43 describe you in any way? How so?
- ♥ Is there such a thing as a secret disciple of Christ? Why or why not?
- ♥ 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).