
Lesson Overview

Biblical Passage	John 12:1-8
Supporting Passages	Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9
Memory Verse	Proverbs 15:8
Biblical Truth	Christ honors your sacrifice when it comes from the heart and brings honor to Him.
Context	During the last week of His life, Jesus was in Bethany for a dinner in His honor. While there, Mary anointed His feet with expensive perfume and wiped them with her hair. Judas criticized the woman's wasteful action, which he said could have been used to help the poor. Jesus defended Mary and proclaimed that her sacrificial action was done in preparation for His burial.
Learning Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will understand that sacrificial giving to God is born out of the love for Him that is in our hearts.• Students will practice sacrificial giving in a personal way this week.
Prayer Suggestions	<p>As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for your students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pray that your students will understand God's giving nature.• Pray that your students will be sensitive to opportunities to give of themselves.• Pray that your students will express faith in God in their giving, realizing that what they have is His.

Biblical Commentary

Investigation

Jesus' return to Jerusalem was leading directly to His crucifixion. Jesus' disciples and His friends could sense a confrontation building between Jesus and the chief priests. The dinner recorded in this passage of Scripture was a brief respite in the events of the week. Matthew, Mark, and John recorded the event (Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9).

This is a story of lavish love. Mary, the sister of **Lazarus** and Martha, could not contain her sorrow over Jesus' coming death or the love she had for her Lord. Jesus had restored her dead brother to her. Her love was extravagant; she did not stop to count the cost of the perfume, nor did she worry about customs that would condemn her actions as inappropriate. Her love challenges us to pour out our love for our Savior. Nothing should be so precious that it stands in the way of our expression of love to the One who died for our sins.

Importance

This passage teaches that **Jesus is God and Savior**. This passage of Scripture is important for students because it teaches that Jesus honors any sacrifice that comes from the heart and brings honor to Him.

Interpretation

John 12:1 Jesus had been in Bethany (John 11:1-57) and raised Lazarus from the dead. However, a plot by the chief priests to kill Jesus led Him to leave Bethany. He traveled to the village of Ephraim near the desert (John 11:54). Luke recorded that Jesus passed through Jericho as He returned to Jerusalem for His triumphal entry (Luke 19:1). In Jericho, Jesus met and dined with Zacchaeus.

Regardless of the danger, Jesus and His disciples returned to Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus knew He was headed to the cross but did not hesitate in following the Father's will. Many Jews would have been traveling along the road to Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus and His disciples stopped in nearby Bethany to spend time with their friends Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. Apparently, Jesus arrived in Bethany on Friday, one week before He was crucified.

What would it have been like to see Lazarus; the man Jesus had raised from the dead? It seems many Jews were asking that same question. Many were coming to Bethany not only to see Jesus but also to see Lazarus. Because the news of Lazarus' resurrection had spread, many Jews were going to Jesus and placing their faith in Him. So the chief priests decided to put Lazarus to death as well as Jesus (John 12:9-11).

John 12:2 Despite the fact that the chief priests were seeking to kill Jesus, His friends held a dinner in His

honor. John placed the dinner before the triumphal entry, probably on Saturday night. However, Mark and Matthew included this event later in the week prompting some to place this dinner on Tuesday night (Mark 14:1-3). Matthew and Mark both placed the dinner at the home of someone called **Simon the Leper** (Matt. 26:6, Mark 14:3).

At the dinner the men reclined around the table, as was the custom of the day. Jesus, Lazarus, Simon the Leper, and Jesus' disciples were present. Other men may have been reclining at the table with them. It would have been unacceptable for women to recline at the table with the men. Nevertheless, Lazarus' sister Martha was present and helping with the meal preparations. It seemed to be in Martha's nature to be busy with the needs of others (Luke 10:38-42). Lazarus and Martha's sister, Mary, was also present.

John 12:3 Only John identified the woman who performed this act as Mary. In contrast to Martha, Mary was completely absorbed by her commitment to her Lord (Luke 10:38-42). Her actions in this verse were very unusual. John recorded that she poured the expensive perfume on Jesus' feet. Mark and Matthew recorded that she poured this ointment on His head. She probably did both. To pour the **nard** on Jesus' head would have been considered a sign of honor similar to the anointing of a king. It was unthinkable for Mary to pour expensive perfume on the humblest part of Jesus' body, His feet, and then wipe them with the most glorious part of her own body, her hair. In fact, it was unthinkable that Mary would even let her hair down in the presence of men. Mary seemed so carried away with her love for Jesus that she did not allow customs to stand in her way.

It also would have been unusual for Mary to use as much ointment as she did—apparently the entire pint. This extravagant use caused the fragrance to fill the room. Mary's actions were motivated by her great love for Jesus.

John 12:4-5 **Judas** stated this nard was worth a year's wages, literally 300 *denarii*. A *denarius* was a small silver coin that was the standard day's wage for a worker. Only John names Judas as the grumbler. According to Matthew, the disciples were grumbling among themselves (Matt. 26:8-9). The text indicates Judas was the one who verbalized the concern, but he was not the only disciple who was indignant at Mary's extravagant show of love for Jesus.

John 12:6 Judas' stated plan was that the nard be sold, and the money given to the disciples. Then it would be entrusted to him and redistributed to the poor. However, John made it clear that Judas was not really motivated by his love for the poor but by his greed.

Judas had probably been stealing from the company for some time, perhaps from the very beginning. Jesus knew that Judas was a traitor from the beginning (John 6:70-71). Matthew and Mark noted that Judas left this dinner and went to the chief priests to arrange to betray Jesus into their hands (Matt. 26:14-16; Mark 14:10).

John 12:7 Jesus defended Mary's actions against the grumbling of His disciples. Jesus' statement, "that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial," is probably a parallel to the statement Mark recorded: "She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial" (Mark 14:8). The Amplified Bible translated John 12:7 as follows: "But Jesus said, Let her alone. It was [intended] that she should keep it for the time of My preparation for burial. [She has kept it that she might have it for the time of My embalming.]" Jesus probably meant that Mary was anointing His body in anticipation of His burial; it is doubtful that He meant she was saving some of the ointment for later. It appears she had broken the container and used it all.

From Jesus' statement, it appeared Mary understood the ordeal Jesus was about to face. He had told His disciples He was going to be crucified (Luke 18:31-34). Mary may have known about those predictions. She could not change what was about to happen, but she could show her love for Jesus by anointing Him.

John 12:8 Jesus did not mean for the disciples to understand that the poor were not important. If the disciples

were to minister to Jesus while He was on earth, they would have to do it quickly. The time of His death was at hand.

Implications

Mary's love could not be contained. She might have felt embarrassment at letting her hair down since that was not done in her culture. The disciples grumbled about her show of love. None of them honored her for her "over-the-top" show of love for Jesus. Nevertheless, she lavished love on her Lord. Does your love for the Lord consume you? How can you show your love for Jesus as Mary did? How can you help your students to express a lavish love for the Savior?

The jar of nard may have been the most expensive possession Mary had. Its worth to her might be compared to your car or the furniture in your home. Mary broke open the jar of expensive perfume and poured it all out. Her gift challenges us to a life of sacrifice. In what ways does your life show evidence of sacrifice? Do the lives of your students show evidence of sacrifice? How can you challenge your class to such a life?

In contrast to Mary, Judas' response to the situation was to look for a way to profit. According to Mark, even the disciples who claimed to love Jesus were caught up in grumbling against Mary. How like them can those of us in the church be! Can you think of situations where you have been critical instead of celebrating with your brothers and sisters in Christ? Often students are prone to grumble and poke fun at each other. How can you help them to avoid having a critical spirit?

Teaching Plan

Connect

Review Questions

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will answer five review questions from the previous lesson.

Download the "Review Questions" activity sheet. Print one copy for your own use.

After greeting students, use the review questions to test what they can recall from the previous lesson as well as to provide context for today's lesson.

Master Teacher Option: Perfume Testing

(10 minutes, moderate set-up)

Students will try to identify perfumes by their scents.

Spray several different scented liquids on individual cotton balls and place them on a table. Use items such as vinegar, rubbing alcohol, or water. Include one cotton ball scented with nice perfume. Provide a piece of paper and pen for each student.

Place each cotton ball on a numbered sheet of paper on the table. Distribute the paper and pens to students. Instruct them to number their papers with as many scents as you have provided. Tell students to smell the cotton balls and try to name the scents by writing their guesses beside the corresponding number on their paper. After students have had time to guess, reveal the answers. Ask: **Which one of these scents to you think is the most valuable?** (*The perfume*) Ask: **Why wouldn't you clean the floor with this perfume?** As students share their answers say: **Today we're going to look at an event that took place near the end of Jesus' earthly life. A woman who loved Him a great deal used very expensive perfume to do a seemingly mundane task--washing someone's feet.**

Explore

Master Teacher Key Study: Mary's Anointing of Jesus

(15-20 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will examine Jesus, Mary, and Judas' perspectives on Jesus' anointing recorded in John 12:1-7.

Use the Master Teacher Outline and the Biblical Commentary to prepare to share the truths of this

passage with students. Download the Outline and Master Teacher Worksheet. Print a copy for each student. Encourage students to take notes on their worksheets as you teach. The underlined words in the Master Teacher Key Study Outline correspond to the blanks on the worksheet.

Learning Goal: Students will understand that sacrificial giving to God is born out of the love for Him that is in our hearts.

Pass out pens and copies of the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Then use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach John 12:1-8.

Transform

Deeper Discussion

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss what it means to sacrifice for Christ.

Learning Goal: Students will practice sacrificial giving in a personal way this week.

Ask a student to read John 12:1-7, then lead students to discuss personal sacrifices using these discussion questions:

- **Can you think of a sacrifice you have made in life? What sacrifices have you made in order to play a sport, play an instrument, or keep close friendships?**
- **Can you think of a time in your life when you sacrificed something for God?**
- **What would be most difficult for you to sacrifice—your money, possessions, attitudes, or actions?**
- **Why do you think people who don't know God have a hard time understanding the sacrifices Christians sometimes make?**
- **What sacrifices do you sense God might call you to make in the near future?**

Master Teacher Option: Communicating Importance

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will identify ways to communicate to others what they feel about them.

Set up a dry erase board with markers. List the following words on the board: Parents, Siblings, Grandparents, Friends, Teachers, Church Members, and Strangers.

Learning Goal: Students will practice sacrificial giving in a personal way this week.

Say: Each of these words represents people you come in contact with on a regular basis. Your interactions with these people indicate the kind of relationship you have with them—they

indicate how important these people are to you. Ask: **How can you communicate to these people how much they mean to you?** Encourage students to share everyday examples that communicate meaning as well as ways to go out of their way to show people importance. It may be as simple as telling their parents they love them or as elaborate as cooking dinner for a sick grandparent.

Then write *Jesus* on the board above the list of people. Say: **As a Christian, your relationship with Jesus should be the most important relationship in your life. Mary's sacrifice to Jesus showed Him and the others how much He mattered to her—it displayed her overwhelming love for Him.**

Ask students to think about ways they can show Jesus their love. Encourage them to think of ways they can offer Jesus a sacrifice as a way of displaying His importance in their lives. Suggest that obedience is the greatest response to Jesus, even when it demands sacrifice. Ask: **How can our obedience to Christ demand sacrifice?** Guide students to understand that moving, losing friends, being ridiculed, not accumulating material wealth, and other sacrifices can all come as a result of our obedience. Allow a moment of discussion and then close by telling students to think about ways that they need to be obedient this week, even if it means sacrifice.

Take Home Activity

Family Devotion

(10-15 minutes at home, easy set-up)

Distribute copies of the Family Devotion to students and encourage them to share the devotion with their family.

A copy of the Family Devotion will be included in your lesson PDF download.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

*Use these questions to review the content from Lesson 32: He is the Resurrection and the Life.
The correct answer for each question is printed in bold, italic font.*

1. Who sent word to Jesus informing Him Lazarus was sick? (*Lesson 32*)
 - a. Lazarus
 - b. Mary**
 - c. Martha
 - d. A disciple

2. How long had Lazarus been in the tomb when Jesus arrived? (*Lesson 32*)
 - a. One day
 - b. A week
 - c. A month
 - d. Four days**

3. What did Martha say to Jesus upon His arrival in Bethany after Lazarus' death? (*Lesson 32*)
 - a. "Lord, I am so angry."
 - b. "Lazarus is dead."
 - c. "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."**
 - d. "Lord, I don't understand."

4. How did Jesus identify Himself to Martha when she said she believed in the resurrection at the last day? (*Lesson 32*)
 - a. Jesus said He was the resurrection and the life.**
 - b. Jesus said He was the Lamb of God.
 - c. Jesus said He was a carpenter's son.
 - d. Jesus said He liked fish.

5. What did Jesus do at the tomb of Lazarus? (*Lesson 32*)
 - a. He ate lunch.
 - b. He paid His last respects.
 - c. He raised Lazarus from the grave.**
 - d. He left in sorrow.

Master Teacher Key Study: Mary's Anointing of Jesus

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will examine Jesus, Mary, and Judas' perspectives on Jesus' anointing recorded in John 12:1–7.

Use this outline and the Biblical Commentary to prepare to share the truths of this passage with students. Download the Master Teacher Worksheet. Print a copy for each student. Encourage students to take notes on their worksheets as you teach. The underlined words in the Master Teacher Key Study correspond to the blanks on the worksheet.

Introduction: Jesus led His disciples near Jerusalem knowing that He was about to die. They rested in the company of Lazarus—whom Jesus had raised from the dead—and Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha. While Jesus was at the table with Lazarus and His disciples, Mary came into the room, poured a bottle of expensive perfume over His feet and dried them with her hair. Judas criticized this intimate gesture. Jesus rebuked Judas, saying that what Mary had done was anoint Him for His burial. Mary's action was a demonstration of the kind of sacrificial spirit Jesus was about to exhibit.

1. Mary's heart was humble.

- Jesus and His disciples were feasting with friends, including Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.
- Mary wanted to sit at Jesus' feet and learn from Him. On this occasion Mary took a dramatic and humble action: She poured expensive perfume over Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. Washing someone's feet was an act reserved for servants.
- Of all the people present, Mary seemed to understand best who Jesus was.
- The disciples' reactions varied. Judas ridiculed Mary's action.

Illustration: Female celebrities walk the red carpet in front of television cameras during the Academy Awards. A sign of status for these stars is to do perfume commercials, or better yet, to have a perfume named after them. Can you imagine some of these status-conscious women falling before a religious figure, breaking a bottle of her expensive signature perfume over his feet, and wiping it off with—if you can imagine—her hair?

2. Judas' heart was haughty.

- Judas watched Mary's action then rebuked her protesting, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor!"
- John notes that there was clear self-interest behind this comment. Judas was a thief. Since he kept the moneybag for Jesus and the disciples, he saw other uses for this expensive perfume.
- Sacrificial acts honoring God weren't highly valued in Judas' eyes; Jesus wasn't either.

Illustration: Some celebrities who seek to "do good" sometimes seem to do so only to be seen. Many well-to-do or individuals of celebrity establish foundations in their own names in order to "build their personal brands" while appearing to do good.

3. Jesus' heart was heavy.

- Jesus saw what was in Mary's heart and what was in Judas' heart. Jesus' comment reflects His awareness of the shortness of time He had with His friends and their shortsightedness.
- Mary ministered to Jesus. She blessed Him. As He faced the cross, Jesus appreciated this loving act, initiated from the heart of one who loved Him. How marvelous to be a blessing to Jesus!
- Jesus used Mary's action to help His disciples understand what was to come.

Illustration: Decisions made by the powerful can have far-reaching and long-lasting consequences for

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others. It is sometimes said that when the President of the United States whispers something in the Oval Office it resounds like thunder around the world. Jesus' rebuke to Judas is still remembered today.

Conclusion: At the heart of the Christian faith is the concept of sacrifice—giving up something of value to demonstrate the much greater value of God. Mary had been prompted by God to minister to Jesus with a humble spirit. In the same way, we need to sacrifice to show God we honor Him. Christ will honor your sacrifice when it comes from the heart and honors Him. In the same way, God will rebuke any self-serving righteousness we attempt to gain spiritual status in the eyes of others. We need to worry less about looking good by saying the “right” things and worry more about sacrificing to God our sinful attitudes, a portion of our money, and our time and energy in actions that minister to others.

LESSON 33

MARY'S ANOINTING OF JESUS

Biblical Passage: John 12:1–8

Memory Verse: Proverbs 15:8

The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him.

GIVE IT UP

1. Mary's heart was _____.
2. Judas' heart was _____.
3. Jesus' heart was _____.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you think of a sacrifice you have made in life? What sacrifices have you made in order to play a sport, play an instrument, or keep close friendships?
- Can you think of a time in your life when you sacrificed something for God?
- What would be most difficult for you to sacrifice—your money, possessions, attitudes, or actions?
- Why do you think people who don't know God have a hard time understanding the sacrifices Christians sometimes make?
- What sacrifices do you sense God might call you to make in the near future?

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . .

“The best way to grow your value is to grow yourself. Become a sponge for ideas. Take time to truly think about what you do and why you do it. So often we live our lives on autopilot, unable to distinguish between activity and accomplishment.”

—*Mark Sanborn*

LESSON 33

MARY'S ANOINTING OF JESUS

Biblical Passage: John 12:1–8

What does sacrificial giving look like in this day and age? We read about it in Scripture, but how does it translate into today's society? Have you ever considered matching your gift to mission ventures with the amount you spend on Christmas gifts to family members each year? What about reducing the amount you spend on family each year at Christmas by half and giving the other half to missions? What if this became a decision you made together as a family? Would you consider this to be a form of sacrificial giving?

Read John 12:1–8. Jesus was unopposed to Mary's elaborate expression of her love for Him, even though this was obviously expensive perfume that she was using on His feet. But Jesus saw this for what it was, an expression of love and not pretense.

How often do we find the opportunity to lavish people with love, not worrying about its expense, but having more concern for them than for ourselves?

This was an unselfish act on Mary's part, and Jesus knew it. He also knew that Mary was closer to understanding the nature of the Kingdom of God than most. In God's Kingdom, giving was extravagant—not for show, but for the sake of love. Jesus was God's extravagant gift to us.

Here's the challenge: Come up with a plan for being proactive in giving sacrificially. Ask your kids to participate in coming up with ideas, too. Then you'll see just how unselfish they can be when it comes to giving and expressing love and compassion.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS:

- Put yourself in Jesus' place. If you had been Him in that moment, what might you have said to Mary as she poured expensive perfume over your feet?
- Why do you think Jesus didn't stop Mary after Judas made his comment?
- What do you think was Jesus' message behind His words?
- How does this act symbolize what Jesus would ultimately do for us?