



# UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Through the Bible*

*September 15 - 21*

*John 12*

## Things to Know

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**Gospel Connections and Conversations**

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## Studying God's Word *In Community*

*Reminder: Seek to understand and apply God's word, **not** rehash the sermon.*

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## Sermon Recap

1. Worship flows from gratitude — when you remember what Jesus has done, you can't help but honor Him.
  2. Worship always costs something — if it doesn't cost you, it probably isn't worship.
  3. Worship may look wasteful to the world, but it is always beautiful to Jesus.
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## Discussion Questions

John 12:1-2 – How does the presence of Lazarus, Simon, Mary, and Martha—each touched by Jesus in a unique way—teach us that worship flows out of gratitude for what Christ has done?

1. John 12:3 – Mary’s act of pouring out costly perfume was extravagant and humbling. What might “costly worship” look like in your life today?
  2. John 12:4-5 – Judas’s objection sounded practical and even reasonable. Why do you think the voice of moderation can seem convincing when it comes to worship?
  3. John 12:6 – John reveals Judas’s hypocrisy and hidden motives. What does this teach us about how easily our hearts can disguise self-interest as concern for others?
  4. John 12:7-8 – Jesus commended Mary’s devotion as preparation for His burial. How does seeing worship in light of the cross reshape the way we respond to Jesus now?
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## Read

**Read John 12:1-8 and make observations about the text.**

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
  - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
  - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
  - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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## Scripture

*John 12:1-8*

### **Mary Anoints Jesus at Bethany**

**12** Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. **2** So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. **3** Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

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## John 12:1-8

**4** But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, **5** “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” **6** He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. **7** Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. **8** For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

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John 12:1-8

## Living on Mission In Community

Mary’s act of devotion shows us that true worship is never moderate, safe, or convenient—it is costly. She gave up what was most valuable to her because she believed Jesus was worth more than anything she possessed. In a world that tells us to keep our faith balanced and reasonable, Mary reminds us that Jesus deserves our best, not our leftovers. Worship that costs us nothing is easy, but worship that costs us something reveals what we truly treasure. So let me ask you: what would it look like for you to pour out your “perfume” and give Jesus your all this week?

*How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?*

## Optional Breakout Questions

*Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:*

1. How did you feed yourself?
  - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
  - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
  - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

# *Leader Resources - September 15-21*

## **Small Group Curriculum: John 12:1–8**

### **1. Session Overview**

**Theme:** Extravagant Devotion vs. Moderate Faith

**Main Idea:** Jesus is worthy of wholehearted worship that refuses moderation.

**Goal:** Help participants see how Mary's extravagant act of worship challenges our tendency toward "safe" faith and calls us to surrender all to Christ.

### **2. Opening**

- Prayer: Begin by thanking God for His presence and asking Him to expose any "moderation" in our faith.
- Icebreaker Question: What's something you or someone you know has gone "over the top" with? (Sports fandom, Disney trip, wedding, hobbies, etc.) Was it worth it?
- Small Group Sharing (2–3 people): Encourage vulnerability by asking: "Is there any way we can pray for our personal walks with God this week?"

### **3. Scripture Reading**

Read John 12:1–8 aloud together.

Optional: Assign different voices (Narrator, Mary, Judas, Jesus) to make the scene come alive.

## **4. Teaching Points**

### **A. Worship is Rooted in Gratitude (vv. 1–2)**

- Lazarus: raised from death.
- Simon the leper: restored to community.
- Mary & Martha: grief turned to hope.
- Worship begins with remembering what Jesus has already done.

### **B. Worship is Costly (v. 3)**

- Mary pours out perfume worth nearly a year's wages.
- She humbles herself by wiping His feet with her hair.
- Worship always costs us something—time, pride, reputation, money, self.

### **C. Worship is Contested (vv. 4–6)**

- Judas objects, cloaking greed in false piety.
- True worship always faces opposition—from others and from within our own divided hearts.

### **D. Worship is Commended by Jesus (vv. 7–8)**

- Jesus interprets Mary's act as preparation for His burial.
- He defends her and declares her devotion beautiful.
- Extravagant worship is never wasted—it is always noticed by Christ.

## **5. Discussion Questions**

1. What do you think the dinner conversation would have been like between Simon, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha? How does imagining their gratitude deepen your view of worship?
2. Why do you think Judas's words sounded reasonable to some, even though John calls him a thief?

3. Where do you feel the temptation to practice a “moderate faith” (keeping Jesus as a part, not the center, of life)?
4. What’s an example of “costly worship” you’ve witnessed (giving, serving, risking reputation)? How did it impact you?
5. How can our worship become the kind of “fragrance” that fills the house—overflowing into the lives of others?

## **6. Application Points**

- Personal Inventory: Identify one area where you’ve embraced moderation in your worship. Commit to one act of “extravagant devotion” this week.
- Gratitude Practice: Like Lazarus, Simon, and the sisters, list specific ways Jesus has worked in your life. Share one aloud in the group.
- Communal Witness: Pray for ways your group can live out devotion publicly in a way that “fills the room” with Christ’s aroma.

## **7. Closing Reflection & Prayer**

- Reflection: “Mary’s devotion looked foolish to Judas but beautiful to Jesus. Which voice do you most often listen to in your faith—the voice of moderation or the voice of devotion?”
- Prayer: Ask God to make your group a people of costly, wholehearted worship. Invite each person to silently surrender an area of their life to Him.

## **8. Memory Verse**

Romans 12:1 – “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

## **9. Leader’s Notes**

- Encourage Vulnerability: Model honesty about where you struggle with moderation (comfort, money, time). Your example will open the door for

others.

- Guide, Don't Lecture: The teaching points are a framework—let the group wrestle with the text through discussion.
- Balance Humor & Gravity: It's okay to let the group laugh about Lazarus's "back from the dead" moment or Martha's kitchen service, but land the conversation on the gravity of Mary's devotion and Jesus' death.
- Application Accountability: At the next meeting, ask how people lived out their "extravagant devotion" step.

