

BIBLE STUDY HELPS

TITLE: Willing and Prepared

TEXT: Mark 14:32-42

TARGET: SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Jesus prepared to pay the price for our sin, willingly submitting to the Father's plan. We should use His example as we prepare to live for Him daily.

LOOK UP: FOCUSING THE GROUP

Guide:

- Who is already preparing for Christmas? How long have you been preparing? What are you doing to prepare for everything that takes place during the Christmas season?
- What other events in life require a lot of preparation? Which events are more fun to plan than others? Which life-event is the most difficult for which to plan?

We are expanding the session passages that are used in the study guide. We will look at two examples of how Jesus prepared for what He was about to face in the last days and hours prior to His death. He knows what lies ahead, but He still must prepare for what He is about to face. As the disciples observe His time of preparation, they are met with confusion because they did not have the same outlook on the future that Jesus had.

We need to learn from His experience about the high price Jesus paid for our sins. We should also understand how important it is for us to prepare to live for Jesus daily.

Our first examination of how Jesus prepared takes us to the home of Simon the leper and the preparation that took place by way of an act of worship.

LOOK IN: UNPACKING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Someone Read: Mark 14:3-8

³ While he was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured it on his head. ⁴ But some were expressing indignation to one another: "Why has this perfume been wasted? ⁵ For this perfume might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they began to scold her. ⁶ Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a noble thing for me. ⁷ You always have the poor with you, and you can do what is good for them whenever you want, but you do not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body in advance for burial.

Jesus was in the home of Simon the leper. We assume that he no longer had leprosy. Suddenly a woman (Mary) boldly approached Jesus with her gift of perfume and poured it on Jesus's head. The perfume was so expensive it would have cost almost a year's wages.

This woman's act of worship and service was to honor Jesus by anointing His head with oil. This was a fragrant ointment imported from the mountains of India. The beautiful jar was broken, and the costly ointment was poured on Jesus's head. (John records that the oil was poured on Jesus's feet—Mary probably did both; for Jesus was reclining with his legs stretched out behind the table.) It was a common custom at some Jewish meals for the honored guests to be anointed with oil (see Luke 7:44-46), but it would not be expensive nard. Such an anointing, using expensive oil and pouring it on the head as well as the feet, pictured a royal (messianic) anointing.

Identify: Why did Jesus say this woman did what she did? (anointed His body in advance for burial, v.8)

This woman literally and figuratively "poured" into Jesus's life as He prepared for death.

Ask: Who has experienced the health decline of a loved one? How did you prepare for that person's impending death? Has anyone experienced Hospice coming in during the last days of a loved one's life? How was this helpful during the final days?

The purpose of Hospice is to care for people who are nearing death. They prepare the person and the family for what is about to take place. Most people would never criticize the care given to someone as they prepare to die. Yet, the disciples didn't understand what was taking place.

Identify: How did the disciples respond? (They were indignant; they said she wasted the perfume that could have been sold for a profit; the money could have been given to the poor)

The Life Application Bible Commentary reminds us that all four Gospels record Mary's (the woman's) example of devotion. It goes on to explain how there are important reminders for how we should love the Lord and not repress those who do good works:

- 1. Let her alone.** We must not disregard or depreciate someone else's loving act of service just because it's not our style of serving. Sometimes envy, ignorance, or hardness of heart keep us from seeing the value of showing honor and praise to Christ.
- 2. She has performed a good service.** Mary's act was courageous and sacrificial. Christ welcomed her and regarded her efforts. We must not be so practical in our stewardship of resources that we criticize the genuine and beautiful ways others express their love for Christ.
- 3. She has done what she could.** Mary took the initiative. She did an act of devotion when no one else would. She gave of her resources in a way only she could. Some people only talk about what they can do or wish they had done, but Mary did what she felt led to do.

[Source: Barton, Bruce B. (1993). Life Application Bible Commentary: Mark (p. 402).]

Discuss: It's obvious that the extravagant giving in preparation for Jesus's death didn't sit well with some of the disciples. What must we learn from the response of Judas and the disciples regarding how we respond to others' worship and service to Jesus?

Respond: We aren't preparing for Jesus's burial but for His return, as we studied last week. What are some things we can learn from this woman that can help us live lives that are prepared for Jesus's return?

In the verses that follow, Jesus leads His disciples to prepare for the Passover. It is during this time that He predicts His betrayal and tells Simon Peter that he will betray Jesus three times. Then we come to the garden prayer of Jesus and the importance this prayer time was in Jesus's preparation for what He was about to face.

Someone Read: Mark 14:32-42

³² Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he told his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³ He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴ He said to them, "I am deeply grieved to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake." ³⁵ He went a little farther, fell to the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will." ³⁷ Then he came and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Couldn't you stay awake one hour?" ³⁸ Stay awake and pray so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹ Once again he went away and prayed, saying the same thing. ⁴⁰ And again he came and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open. They did not know what to say to him. ⁴¹ Then he came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The time has come. See, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Get up; let's go. See, my betrayer is near."

Guide:

- Identify the various emotions and feelings Jesus was experiencing in these passages. (distressed, troubled, grieved, pain, etc.)
- What are your thoughts regarding all these emotions and feelings Jesus, the Son of God, was experiencing?
- What does Jesus's experience cause you to consider regarding the role of prayer in our lives as you prepare daily to live for Him?

Jesus had told Peter, James, and John that He was deeply grieved to the point of death. Then He asked them to stay awake while He went on to pray.

Identify: What did the disciples do? (They slept!)

Before we are quick to criticize the disciples, we need to evaluate how we might have responded. If Jesus had told you what He told Peter, James, and John, how might you have responded? Would you have prayed for Jesus? Would you have simply stayed awake? Or would you have fallen asleep while Jesus was facing such a tumultuous event?

Consider: Knowing what we know about what took place when Jesus was arrested and brought to trial, how might the disciples' reactions have been different had they stayed awake and prayed? What can we learn from their lack of discipline?

The example Jesus gives us is so important. We can't face the troubles or temptations of this world without ongoing and intimate prayer with the Father. We must subject ourselves to His will, no matter what we face.

The passages that follow find Judas completing his actions of betrayal, and Jesus's disciples deserting Him. All this and what was to come could not be faced without Jesus preparing His life and His heart for what lay ahead.

LOOK OUT: LIVING OUT THE TARGET

Jesus willingly paid the price for our sin, submitting to the Father's plan. In the days leading up to His sacrifice, He prepared by allowing others to "pour into His life" and He spent an agonizing time in prayer in order to gain strength for what He was about to face.

Respond: What did you learn from the woman's anointing of Jesus and Jesus's prayer in the garden that could help you as you prepare to live for Jesus from day-to-day?