

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. In what ways might you be trying to follow Jesus on your own terms rather than accepting His terms as King?
2. How does understanding that Jesus became King through the cross rather than through military conquest change your view of power and leadership?
3. Which of the four responses to Jesus in this passage (transactional, experiential, misaligned, or rival) do you most identify with and why?
4. What would it look like in your life to pour out your 'life insurance' like Mary did with her expensive perfume?
5. How do you distinguish between genuinely experiencing God versus simply chasing a religious high or emotional experience?
6. When have you tried to use spiritual language to hide selfish intentions, and what does that reveal about your relationship with God?
7. Why is it significant that the person who has been wronged in a relationship gets to set the terms for restoration, and how does this apply to our relationship with God?
8. What areas of your life reveal that you want Jesus to fit conveniently into your plans rather than submitting to His lordship?
9. How does recognizing that Jesus brings peace by absorbing violence rather than executing it challenge your expectations of how God should work in the world?
10. Mary demonstrated vulnerability and intimacy with Jesus in a public setting without concern for others' opinions. What prevents you from being that vulnerable with Jesus, and what would need to change?

5-Day Devotional: Following Jesus on His Terms

Day 1: The King Who Comes in Peace

Reading: Zechariah 9:9-11; John 12:12-16

Devotional: Jesus entered Jerusalem not on a war horse but on a humble donkey, fulfilling ancient prophecy and revealing the nature of His kingdom. Unlike earthly kings who seize power through force, Jesus brings peace through sacrifice. He removes weapons of war and offers reconciliation instead of conquest. This Palm Sunday entrance was God's announcement: your King has arrived, and He's nothing like you expected. He doesn't demand your service through intimidation but invites your surrender through love. When we truly see Jesus as the peaceful King, we stop negotiating and start surrendering. Today, consider what it means that your King chose humility over power, peace over violence, and a cross over a throne.

Day 2: The Cost of True Devotion

Reading: John 12:1-8; Mark 14:3-9

Devotional: Mary's extravagant act reveals what happens when you see Jesus clearly. She poured out a year's wages—her financial security, her backup plan—on Jesus' feet. This wasn't reckless; it was recognition. When you understand who Jesus truly is, no sacrifice seems too great. Mary didn't calculate the cost; she calculated His worth. The room filled with fragrance just as our lives should emanate the aroma of Christ when we hold nothing back. Judas saw waste; Mary saw worship. The difference wasn't in the act but in their understanding of Jesus' value. What are you holding onto as your "life insurance" instead of pouring out for Jesus? True devotion costs everything because He's worth everything.

Day 3: Vulnerability Before the Safe King

Reading: Psalm 34:1-8; 1 Peter 5:6-7

Devotional: Mary let down her hair—her glory, her most intimate feature—to wipe Jesus' feet, something only slaves touched. This scandalously vulnerable act reveals a profound truth: Jesus is safe. He doesn't exploit our vulnerability; He treasures it. In a world that demands we manage our image and protect ourselves, Jesus invites us to come without pretense. The cross proves His trustworthiness—He absorbed violence rather than inflicting it, paid the price for peace rather than demanding we earn it. You don't need to hide your struggles, manage your weaknesses, or present a polished version of yourself. The King who bled for you can handle your honesty. Today, bring something you've been hiding to Jesus in prayer.

Day 4: Beyond Transactional Faith

Reading: Matthew 6:25-34; Romans 8:31-39

Devotional: Judas followed Jesus with a calculator in hand, always measuring return on investment. When God doesn't deliver according to our expectations, transactional faith crumbles into anger and betrayal. But Jesus isn't a divine vending machine dispensing blessings for good behavior. He's a King establishing relationship, not a contractor fulfilling terms. The danger of transactional faith is that it makes us the center—our plans, our priorities, our comfort. But Jesus is the end, not the means. He doesn't exist to support your life; your life exists to glorify Him. This isn't oppressive but liberating. When Jesus is enough, nothing can take Him away. Circumstances change, but He remains. Today, examine where you've been bargaining with God instead of trusting Him.

Day 5: Crowned Through Crucifixion

Reading: Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:5-11

Devotional: Jesus' coronation happened on a cross. The crown was thorns, the throne was wood, the royal robe was stained with blood. This is how God became King—not by executing violence but by absorbing it. The sign above His head read "King of the Jews," placed there in mockery but true nonetheless. Through His blood, Jesus made peace, reconciling all things to Himself. This is the glory the disciples didn't understand at first—that their King would reign through sacrifice, conquer through surrender, and bring life through death. Easter is coming, but we can't skip Good Friday. The resurrection has power because of the crucifixion. Jesus' terms are costly because He already paid the cost. Today, worship the King who wore a crown of thorns so you could share His eternal crown.