



NG Study Guide: Mark 14:1-11 “Passionate Worship” 8.22.21

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: Worship of God speaks of a life characterized by adoration, honor, and devotion. God is seeking worshipers who will worship in spirit and truth (Jn. 4:23-24). Those who worship in spirit and truth are inspired by God’s Spirit (more than mere emotion); and understand and yield to God as revealed in the words and works of Jesus. There are typically three responses to Jesus and His gospel: anger, apathy, or adoration. Mary’s anointing of Jesus is a picture of adoration or passionate worship. Let’s discover how to be true worshipers ...

1. Anger (1-2, 10-11): Why are people angry at Jesus?

The religious leaders (1-2): The threat to power, position, and lifestyle.

After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. ² But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.”

It is *two days before the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread* (1). The Passover commemorates God liberating the Jewish people from their bondage as slaves in Egypt (Ex. 12, Lev. 23:4-8). God offered salvation to all who would place the blood of the lamb upon their doorposts. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was observed for the next seven days; and no leaven (yeast) would be consumed typifying a holy people set-apart to God. These feasts were observed together as one of three major feasts on the Jewish calendar where Jews would come to Jerusalem to worship God together. The context of God’s deliverance on the Passover increased anticipation of the coming Messiah.

The religious leaders *sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death* (1). Since the healing of the man with the paralyzed hand on the Sabbath the religious leaders sought to kill Jesus (Mk. 3:6). However, *not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people* (2). Despite their desire to delay, Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29) will be crucified on the Passover just as foretold.

The religious leaders want to eliminate Jesus because He threatens their power, position, and lifestyle. Jesus uniquely reveals truth about God and calls us by His Spirit to submit to God (Jn. 14:6).

Judas (10-11): unmet expectations, and unbelief.

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. ¹¹ And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.

Judas agreed to betray Jesus, after Jesus continued to speak of His imminent death (10, 8). Judas bargained for the price of thirty pieces of silver, and agreed to deliver Jesus away from the crowd (11, Matt. 26:15, Lu. 22:6). Judas' betrayal was not primarily about money.

Judas wanted Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom and depose Rome upon their entry into Jerusalem four days before the Passover, but Jesus continued to speak of His death. Rather than recognize that Jesus is Messiah, that all that Jesus predicted had been foretold by the prophets, and thus yield and worship, Judas' unbelief and anger cause him to react and suffer incomprehensible remorse (Mt. 27:5). God has proven His love and care for you at the cross. He is Sovereign God, not some genie to summon to grant our wishes. Thus, the reaction of betrayal to unmet expectations reveals unbelief that always results in incomprehensible remorse (absent repentance).

2. Adoration (3-9) Characteristics of true worship.

³And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. ⁴But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted?" ⁵For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply. ⁶But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. ⁷For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. ⁸She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. ⁹Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

Gratitude for salvation and renewal of life (3):

Simon the leper is presumed to be the father of Lazarus, Marth and Mary. They hosted a feast for Jesus (Jn. 12:2). The meal is likely in gratitude for restoring Lazarus' life (Jn. 11) and healing Simon of leprosy, a disease that is often a picture of sin in the Bible, because it spreads, alienates, and there is no cure.

Passion to learn from Jesus (Lu. 10:38-42):

Mary is frequently pictured sitting at Jesus' feet, listening and learning from Him. The apostle Paul described himself in Jerusalem at the feet of his rabbi, Gamaliel, being discipled (Ac. 22:3). A true worshiper (or disciple) has a passion to learn from and about Jesus, and to imitate Him.

Martha was busy, presumably cooking and cleaning for Jesus and others, and she complained that her sister Mary was just sitting around listening to Jesus. Jesus explained that Martha was distracted, and that Martha had chosen the better part which would not be taken away from her. Serving God is an expression of true worship, but it must flow from time with Jesus rather than as an alternative. We serve God by serving others in response to what we learn from Jesus and our desire to imitate Him.

Selfless Sacrifice (3-5):

The *woman* (3) is identified by John as Mary (Jn. 12:3). She voluntarily anointed Jesus with very expensive perfumed oil (3). The value is highlighted by the assessment of the value at 300 denarii (5) or ¼ of a worker's annual salary. This valuable perfume was likely intended for Mary's wedding. *Alabaster* (3) is a soft stone, and once the *flask* was broken the entire contents would be poured out (3). Mark and Mathew record Mary poured the oil upon Jesus head. John notes that the 12 ounces of oil (a Roman pound) was not only poured on His head but also upon Jesus' feet, and that Mary wiped His feet with her hair (Jn. 12:3). This extravagant selfless sacrifice anointed Jesus from head to toe to honor Him before His burial (8). Not only did her act of worship fill the house with fragrance (Jn. 12:3), but the same aroma that was upon Jesus was upon Mary. Despite criticism from others (4-5), Mary was undaunted in her worship.

King David was also a true worshiper. When the Ark of the Covenant was being transported to Jerusalem, David danced passionately in worship to God having abandoned his royal robes and wearing only his linen undergarments. When his wife criticized his behavior, David declared that he was worshipping

before the Lord, and he would be even more undignified as he humbled himself to honor God (2Sam. 6:14-22).

Towards the winter of David's life, he sought to purchase a plot of land atop a hill at Mt. Zion to build an altar to worship God. The owner offered to give the land to King David, along with resources for the altar and the offering for God. David responded that he could not worship God if there was no sacrifice or cost on his part (2 Sam. 24:24).

Ministers to God (6-8):

Jesus quickly came to Mary's defense noting that her act was a *good work for Him* (6). The Greek term *kalos* is translated good, pure and lovely. The early church gathered to learn doctrine, pray, fast and hear from God, and were described as ministering to or worshiping Jesus (Ac. 13:2). Jesus cares about the poor, and wants His followers to serve them, but our charity flows from worshiping God (7-8). When we seek to love God supremely we can better love neighbors as we should.

Remembered by God (9):

Mary's act of worship would not only be remembered by people wherever the gospel is proclaimed, but more importantly her act of passionate worship is remembered by God.

3. Apathy (4-5) Indifference towards God.

But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted?"⁵ For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply.

Is worship a waste (4-5)?

Some were upset and asserted the oil *was wasted*, and that instead it could have been sold and the proceeds used for a charitable cause. The irony is that the objection came from Jesus' followers, people who should have understood that true worship of God is never a waste. It is reasonable to expect unbelievers to misunderstand why true worshipers give their lives - time, talents, and treasure - to honor God, and express adoration and devotion.

On the other hand, when those professing to be followers of Jesus, assert that sacrifice for Jesus is a waste, it may reveal apathy or indifference towards God even when couched in spiritual terms.

Sometimes the people who complain about other people who are genuinely trying to love God and their neighbors are simply trying to justify their own lack of actions that would generally reveal a true attitude of worship.

Is worship influenced by others?

Mark tells us there were *some who were* upset (4), but Matthew tells us that it was the disciples (Matt. 26:8). Yet John reveals that it was Judas (Jn. 12:4). Thus, Judas complained that Mary's anointing was a waste, and the oil should have been sold and given to the poor. It sounded spiritual, but in reality John tells us that Judas didn't care about the poor (Jn. 12:6). The other disciples were influenced by Judas' rhetoric, and end up adopting a position of apathy at best and anger at worst towards Mary's anointing, and Jesus.

Your attitudes and actions towards true worship not only impacts your own relationship with God, but you influence others for better or worse. Those who adore Jesus and truly worship recognize the dangers of apathy for self and others, *realize that worship is influenced by others, and accept their responsibility to influence others to be true worshipers!*

Study Guide Qs

Q1. What are some possible reasons why people can become angry at Jesus?

Q2. What are some characteristics of true worship that might be very important to God?

Q3. What are some dangers of apathy, and how might it differ from true worship?

Q4. Why might it be important to realize that worship is influenced by others: and our responsibility to influence others to be true worshipers?

“Disciples Who Dig Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a helpful article regarding a biblical theology of worship:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/theology-of-worship.html>

2. What it means to worship God in spirit and truth:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/worship-spirit-truth.html>

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?

2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

[Invite someone to participate in your Neighborhood Group. It is a wonderful way to be a disciple of Jesus who makes disciples.](#)

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible. A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

3. The “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.