





**REVIEW**

The impetus of this eight-part series is one verse – John 12:3 – in which we read that Jesus’ friend, Mary, took a pound of costly perfume to anoint His feet, then wiped them with her hair. It’s the story of a disciple of Christ who lived generously out of her love for God. **Does Mary’s perfume pouring strike you as generous, weird, over the top, baffling, or par for the course? Do you already consider yourself to be pretty generous, or is this an area of life in which you’re keen to grow?**

On the day Mary anoints Jesus’ feet, He has just raised her brother, Lazarus, from the dead. **How did Mary feel about the fact that Jesus hadn’t been there when Lazarus became seriously ill, and died? Why did she feel this way? How would you have felt?**

Jonathan says, ‘If [Mary’s] faith is remarkable, then so is her honesty... She manages both to love Jesus completely and say how bewildered and upset she is by what He has done – a balancing act that Christians throughout the ages have found immensely difficult. She expresses her love for Him, and also the pain He has caused – not by His actions, but by His absence.’ **Can you relate? If you’re comfortable to do so, share about a time in your life when God could’ve intervened to alleviate pain, death, or disaster – yet didn’t. How did the experience rock or reinforce your faith?**

Mary experiences worry, dread, frustration, anger, pain, confusion, love, grief, and then astonishment and extraordinary joy. **Discuss the sequence of events that led to her emotional rollercoaster. Is there a particular day of your life – or perhaps a whole season – that stands out as being fraught with mixed feelings of the strongest variety?**

It’s in the midst of her maelstrom of emotions that Mary chooses to anoint Jesus’ feet, seizing an opportunity to love and serve Him. Her act of extravagant generosity stems from her relationship with Jesus. The heart of Mary’s story is just that: *heart*. She understood something of Jesus’ transcendent love, and she set her love upon Him in return. **How has your relationship with Christ inspired and shaped your generosity? Do you agree with Jonathan that we can’t lead generous lives just because we feel we should, but that we lead generous lives because we can’t do otherwise? Why, or why not?**

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The Bible is jam-packed with incredible stories of God’s generosity towards His children. **Which stories come to mind? Which is your favourite, and why? How have you experienced God’s generosity this week? What was God’s ultimate display of generosity to humankind?**

Mary models the transformative power of generosity. Her story shows us how we might respond to God’s generosity by being generous in no less than seven different ways. She is firstly generous with her time. **What else could Mary have been doing with her time (besides spending it on Jesus)? What was her sister doing with her time? Why is time such a rare and prized commodity?**

Jonathan says, ‘Like Martha, we can all be addicted to busyness if we’re not careful. Busyness can show how invaluable we are, how heroic, how self-giving, how servant-hearted, how profoundly essential we are. Busyness shows us to be fundamental to what’s going on. Busyness has lots going for it! It makes us look great, and even – let’s be honest – it can give us a sense of superiority over the less busy.’ **In which arenas of your life (for example, work, home, church, or leisure) do you most need to fight an addiction to busyness? If you were suddenly freed up in this area, would it affect your sense of worth or purpose? Why, or why not? Do you ever feel as if *just being* with a person is unconstructive, or even a waste of time? If so, where do you think you got that idea?**

When Mary anoints Jesus’ feet, she’s giving up time she could have spent on herself or on all manner of things, to care for Jesus. She puts His needs above hers by giving up her time to serve Him. She instinctively knows what matters more. She doesn’t rush. She tenderly cares for Him. **How would you explain to a teenager or a toddler that spending time on people matters more than spending time on things? Where, and with whom, is God prompting you to slow down?**

Horizontal lines for writing.

## **BIBLE EXPLORATION**

John 12:3 says, ‘Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus’ feet with it, wiping His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance.’ **Whose generosity fills your life with a God-glorifying fragrance? Have you thanked them?**

Read John 12:4–6. **Why do you think Judas is so peeved? In Luke 10:38–42, do you think Martha has the same motives as Judas? Why, or why not? Do you ever feel irritated by other people’s extravagant displays of selflessness or generosity? If so, why? What’s your next step?**

John tells us that we’re able to love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). **Would you be able to explain to someone investigating the claims of Christ that your love for Him has increased as your awareness of His love for you has deepened?**

Read Psalm 90:12, Ephesians 5:16, and Colossians 4:5. **How does the careful, generous use of our time display our godliness?**

## **LAST WORD**

We are called to be generous with time – a rare and precious commodity. By giving others the gift of our time, we’re letting them know they matter and have value. Being generous with our time also helps us fight unnecessary busyness, distraction, and the need for approval and affirmation from others. In a world where countless demands compete for space on our calendars, may it be evident, twenty-four hours at a time, that we are a people who live generously.

## **DEEPER WALK**

*Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.*

**Read:** Meditate on Ephesians 3:18: 'And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is.' In response to this incredible truth, how is God calling you to lay down your schedule for someone this week?

**Write:** On a page of your journal, write out your daily or weekly agenda. How much space is there – literally – in the margins? As you pray through your diary commitments, jot down any ideas that come to mind of ways you might rearrange your time, freeing you up to spend it generously on others.

**Pray:** Begin today building the habit of generously giving God your time in prayer. Set a timer for just a few minutes and relax in God's presence, sharing your honest hopes and fears, and asking Him your honest questions. Each consecutive day, increase the time by just thirty seconds, to flex your generosity muscle when it comes to time with Jesus.