

CHURCH.

LESSON 28

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray and commit your group and this course on building Christ's Church to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> LUKE 11:29 – 14:35
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Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Luke 11:29 to 14:35).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE]</i> (4) MATTHEW 5:23-24
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Review two by two.

(4) Resolve conflicts. Matthew 5:23-24. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) <i>[THE GOSPEL OF JOHN]</i> JOHN 12:1-50
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Introduce. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study John 12:1-50 together. John 12:1-50 describes the anointing of Jesus at Bethany, his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, his meeting with the Greeks who sought him and the unbelief of the Jew who rejected him.

<u>STEP 1. READ.</u>	GOD'S WORD
Read. LET US READ John 12:1-50 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

<u>STEP 2. DISCOVER.</u>	OBSERVATIONS
Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)	

12:1-11

Discovery 1. Mary anointing Jesus.

This event is not the same as the one described in Luke chapter 7, but it is the same as the event described in Matthew 26 and Mark 14. A dinner was given at the house of Simon the Leper in honour of Jesus. According to the custom in Israel, the guests were reclining next to the table. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, broke a jar containing very expensive perfume and poured it over the body of Jesus, from his head to his feet. Then she wiped his feet with her hair. The whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

The event contrasts the *generosity* of Mary with the *selfishness* of Judas. Judas criticised her act as a terrible waste of money. He had calculated that the perfume was worth a year's wages (300 denarii, 1 denarius was the wage for a day's work)! Some of the other disciples were also indignant. Wherever Mary looked she met angry glances and looks of shocked disapproval. Only Jesus himself came to her defence. Only Jesus understood her intention and said, "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial."

Mary, more than any of Jesus' disciples, must have been convinced that his enemies would soon put Jesus to death. While Jesus had often predicted his death (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34), Mary was perhaps the best listener that Jesus ever had. According to Jewish custom, after death the body was wrapped with spices in strips of linen. However, Mary wanted to honour Jesus while he was still alive. So she poured the spices out over Jesus as a preparation in advance for burial. Jesus accepted her costly gift and he predicted that her kind deed would be made known all over the world.

Of course, Jesus cared for the poor, and of course, Jesus disapproved needless wasting. But Mary's deed was not a waste! It was an act of love towards Jesus, a preparation for the most important death in the history of this world! And it was an act of faith in Jesus' predictions about his death, expressing her conviction that Jesus would soon die. Jesus teaches Christians that he evaluates the spending of money in a different way than people generally do.

12:12-19

Discovery 2. The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

The following two facts are very important to me.

(1) Jesus shows that he is in control of the whole situation. The Sanhedrin had not planned to kill Jesus during the Passover Feast, but his triumphant entry into Jerusalem forced them to hasten the execution of their plot. By entering Jerusalem, Jesus shows that he has come to lay down his life voluntarily.

(2) Jesus shows that he is the Messiah, the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6). His entry into Jerusalem on a colt was a literal fulfilment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. The people of Jerusalem would see their king coming to them, riding on a colt. While riding on a horse was associated with war, riding on a donkey was usually associated with peace! By riding on a colt, Jesus shows that he is the Messiah, but not the political and military messiah of popular Judaism, but the Messiah of the Bible. He shows that he did not come to conquer their political enemies, but that he had come in the interest of peace. He would die to make peace between God and sinful man!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 12:1-50 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

12:20

Question 1. Why were their Greeks among those who came to worship in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast?

Notes. For centuries the Jews had immigrated to surrounding countries or had been exiled to faraway places. There they built synagogues to worship God and to study the Old Testament. Gentiles who were attracted by the purity of monotheism (in contrast to the numerous gods among the heathen) began to convert to Judaism. Some Gentiles were circumcised and promised to obey the whole law. They became Jews and shared in all the privileges and responsibilities of Judaism. They were called "proselytes" (Acts 2:11). But other Gentiles were not circumcised and did not keep the Ceremonial law were called "the God-fearing" (Acts 16:14). They were not allowed into the temple, but only in the Court of the Gentiles. Thus, up to the time of Jesus, the ceremonial law of the Jews still formed "a wall of separation" (Ephesians 2:14-15) between Jews and Gentiles. Later Paul speaks about the ceremonial law with all its rules and regulations as "the wall of hostility that brought separation" between Jewish Christians and non-Jewish Christians within the church at Ephesus (Ephesians 2:14-15).

The Greeks, who had come to the Passover Feast, were such God-fearing Gentiles. We do not know why they wanted to meet Jesus. Maybe they no longer believed in the wisdom of the Greeks and also could not find any real peace in the religion of the Jews (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). The answer of Jesus suggests that they wanted to talk to Jesus about *salvation*. These Greeks made their request via Philip and Andrew, the only two disciples of Jesus who had Greek names. Jesus gave his answer to his disciples, who in turn conveyed the answer to the Greeks.

12:23-24

Question 2. What does Jesus mean when he says that unless a kernel of wheat dies, it remains only a single seed?

Notes. A crowd of Jews were standing around Jesus when he made his reply to the question of the Greeks. He said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds". Jesus said that the time has arrived that he would be 'glorified'. Jesus was referring to his death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven and finally his enthronement in heaven when he goes to sit at the right hand of God the Father.

While the Greeks wanted to meet the living and famous earthly king (the Messiah), who had such a triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus was speaking about his approaching death. He made it clear to them that meeting the earthly Messiah would not help them at all! The earthly Messiah first had to die. Only then, as the heavenly Messiah, would he

be able to save them! But now, the time of his most bitter suffering and death had finally come. Jesus spoke of his death as “a seed falling into the earth and dying”.

Every farmer knows that unless a seed falls into the earth and dies, it cannot become a plant bearing many more seeds! On the one hand, Jesus says that it is absolutely necessary for him to die. If he does not die on the cross, no one can be saved! On the other hand, Jesus says that his death would produce the greatest harvest in the world. If he dies, then very many people would be saved. Thus, when Jesus speaks of his death as a seed falling into the earth and dying, he is teaching that *his substitutionary death* on the cross is absolutely necessary for the salvation of people and also that it would have the greatest effect on the history of this world!

12:25-26

Question 3. Why should a Christian hate his life in this world?

Notes. Jesus says, “The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me”.

A Christian must hate his life in this world, because it is the only way his life can be saved. A person who loves his own life is a person who gives his own life, his family and friends, the material possessions and the ambitions of this world a higher priority than Jesus Christ. Such a person will lose his life, that is, Jesus Christ will deny him and he will perish forever.

Three things are important with respect to hating your own life in this sinful world:

(1) The principle of self-denial.

When we look at John 12:23-26 together, we notice that the same principle of self-denial is true for Jesus and for Christians. In John 12:23-24, Jesus *must die* in order to save very many people. And in John 12:25-26, the Christian must be willing to die for the cause of Christ. Of course, a Christian cannot do that in his own strength. Nevertheless, the principle of self-denial is very important for Jesus Christ and for Christians!

(2) The teaching about putting Jesus first.

The same teaching of giving Jesus the first place in one’s life is taught in the other Gospels. Jesus is teaching the same teaching in Matthew 10:37-39, Mark 8:34-38 and Luke 14:26-33. In Matthew 10:37-39, Jesus says, “Anyone who loves his father or mother *more than me* is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”. In Acts 5:29 Peter says to the governing authorities, “We must obey God rather than men”. A Christian must give Jesus Christ the first place in his personal life and in his social life. He must give his highest allegiance to Jesus Christ and not to his parents, or teacher, or company or government. If there is a conflict between what Jesus Christ commands and what parents, teachers, company or the government authorities demand, then a Christian must choose to obey Christ and gently resist the others.

(3) The suffering in service.

In John 12:26 Jesus says, “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me”. Jesus means that if a Christian serves him, then let him follow Jesus Christ all the way, even though it is the way of self-denial and the cross. “To take his cross and follow Jesus” in Matthew 10:39 means “to be willing to suffer difficulties, rejection, persecution and sometimes death for the cause of Jesus Christ and his kingdom in this world. But the Christian may keep in mind that the cross leads to the crown. Jesus says, “Whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it”. And he says, “My Father will honour the one who serves me”.

12:31-32

Question 4. Who is the prince of this world? What does it mean that he will be driven out?

Notes. “Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself.” The lifting up of Jesus from the earth refers to his death on the cross, his resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven. The death of Jesus on the cross is at the same time the judgement of this world and the driving out of the devil from his princely position in this world.

(1) The judgement of the world.

“The world” of which Jesus is speaking is not the whole earth, but only the world of the people who rejected him and of their leaders who condemned him. It is the world of Judas, who betrayed him; the world of the soldiers, who mocked him; the world of Pilate, who sentenced him to death and the world of Herod who also mocked him. In short, the world is the whole society of evil people that are alienated from the God of the Bible (and the Prince of Peace) and that have the devil as their prince. This world had tried Christ and cast him out, without realising that by means of that very act it had condemned itself. This world is now judged, that is, condemned to everlasting destruction in hell (cf. Revelation 21:8).

(2) The driving out of the devil.

The prince of this world is the devil. Before the first coming of Jesus Christ the devil had much more power within this world and had tried to keep God's messengers away from his domain (Daniel 10:13,20,21).

However, during his first coming, Jesus Christ destroyed the work of the devil (1 John 3:8) and bound the devil through his driving out of demons (Matthew 12:28-30), through his death (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14) and resurrection, and through his ascension and enthronement in heaven (Revelation 12:5-9). Thus he judged and condemned the devil (John 12:31; 16:11). The devil never had any power over Jesus Christ (John 14:30). The devil still has power over the world of unbelievers (1 John 5:20), but no power over the believers in this world (1 John 5:19). Christians can oppose the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9). Although Christians are still engaged in a spiritual battle against the devil and his demons (Ephesians 6:10-12), the devil can no longer hinder the spread of the gospel to every nation in the world (Revelation 20:1-3).

Jesus says that through his death on the cross "the prince of the world will be driven out". The casting out of the devil out of his position as ruler in the world results in Jesus drawing millions and millions of people from every nation of the world to himself! By the death of Jesus on the cross and by his resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven, the devil has lost his power over the nations and he cannot keep them from hearing and receiving the gospel any more. From now onwards, Jesus Christ would rob people from every nation on earth out of the dominion of the devil and bring them over into his own kingdom (Colossians 1:13).

The Greeks, who came to see Jesus, represented the beginning of an uncountable number of people from the Gentiles that would believe in Jesus Christ. And since his first coming until today, millions and millions of people have been drawn into his kingdom.

12:37-46

Question 5. How does the Bible view faith and unbelief?

Notes.

(1) How the Bible views faith.

Philippians 1:29 teaches, "It has been granted to you ... to believe on Christ". And Acts 13:48 records: "All who were appointed for eternal life believed". The consistent teaching in the Bible is that faith is a gift of God. Faith is not a work of man. God gives faith and then man has the responsibility to exercise the faith that God gives to him. John 12:42-43 teaches that genuine faith is not simply an intellectual assent, but a commitment to believe with the heart and to confess that faith with the lips.

(2) How the Bible views unbelief.

In John 12:37-40 John writes, "Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ... For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says 'God has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn - and I would heal them'."

The God of the Bible holds people responsible for their own unbelief. In Isaiah 1:2-4 we read that the children of Israel rebelled against God and became corrupt. Therefore, in Isaiah 6:9-10 God judges them and says, "Make the heart of this people callous; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." The Israelites had seen so many miracles and heard so many good words of the prophets and yet, by their own choice they had closed their eyes and ears and had hardened their hearts against God. They refused to believe. So God allowed them to become what they wanted to be. God made their eyes and ears even more tightly shut! They were no longer able to hear or to see! They reaped what they themselves had sown (Galatians 6:7-8)!

In the same way, the Pharisees and many other Jews had seen the miracles of Jesus Christ and had heard his many teachings and yet they too had refused to believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore, they are judged in the same way (Matthew 13:11-17).

Likewise, every person today has a responsibility to respond to the words of God in the Bible. He has a responsibility to respond to the teachings and works, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If a person's attitude is like that of the Pharisees and he constantly criticises Christ (Matthew 12:2,7,10,14,24), then his heart will also be hardened and he will not be able to enter into God's kingdom.

However, every person, who sincerely responds to God's word, need not have any fear. Every good and clean heart will respond to God's word, will grow and will bear fruit (Matthew 13:23; Mark 4:20; Luke 8:15)!

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from John 12:1-50.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application. (Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from John 12:1-50.

- 12:3. Sometimes like Mary make a large expense that would honour Jesus Christ.
- 12:6. Watch out that when you are responsible for the finances that you do not become stingy or dishonest like Judas.
- 12:10. If the enemies of Jesus Christ plotted to kill him, they will also plot to kill Christians. Be prepared.
- 12:16. Do not look at Jesus Christ in the same way as the religious leaders of the Jews did. They not only did not know their own religious Scriptures (cf. Matthew 22:29; John 5:39), but also replaced the Scriptures with their own traditions and even with new religious books!
- 12:17,19. Generally, not the religious leaders, but the ordinary people will spread the word about Jesus Christ to other people. Let the ordinary people spread the gospel message.
- 12:20-21. If the religious leaders will not receive Jesus Christ, the ordinary people will! Proclaim the gospel message to the ordinary people.
- 12:24-25. Self-denial and suffering for Christ's sake are two of the most important Christian virtues.
- 12:31-32. Proclaim the gospel message to people in the whole world, because Jesus Christ is drawing them to himself.
- 12:42-43. People with genuine faith in Jesus Christ will confess Jesus Christ with their mouth even when they are persecuted.
- 12:48. The message of the gospel will either justify you now or judge you in the last day.

2. Examples of personal applications from John 12:1-50.

I want to give Jesus Christ the first place in my life. I have committed myself to give my highest allegiance to Jesus Christ and not to my parents, or teacher, or company, or government or religious leaders. If there is a conflict between what Jesus Christ commands me to do and what my parents, teachers, company or the government authorities demand me to do, then I will choose to obey Christ.

I want to serve Jesus Christ all the way, even though it is the way of self-denial and suffering. I have committed myself to take my cross and follow Jesus. I am willing to suffer difficulties, rejection, persecution and even death for the cause of Jesus Christ and his kingdom in this world. But I always want to keep in mind that the cross leads to the crown. Only in the way of service can my life be saved! Only in the way of service and suffering will God the Father honour me!

STEP 5. PRAY. **RESPONSE**
 LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in John 12:1-50.
 (Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	[INTERCESSION] PRAY FOR OTHERS
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Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	[ASSIGNMENT] FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the Bible study of John 12 together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of Luke 15:1 – 18:17 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (5) Remain faithful. Proverbs 3:3-4. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. Update your notebook on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.