

Session 1: John 12:1–50

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

To honor God we must honor his Son, Jesus, the one whom the Father sent to redeem us.

Head Change

To know that Jesus is the Son of God, the prophesied Messiah who fulfilled Scripture and came so that we might know the Father.

Heart Change

To feel a desire to know Jesus and obey his commands.

Life Change

To put your faith in Jesus, the light of the world.

OPEN

Imagine that all of the lights in your home were turned off. How well do you think you could navigate your home—including cleaning, cooking, and hosting friends—without any light?

Most of us would struggle without light. If we were deprived of our sense of sight, our world would become much more difficult to navigate. Simple tasks would be complicated and potentially dangerous. In the same way, living apart from Jesus deprives us of spiritual light—God’s wisdom and guidance.

In this study, Dr. Tony Evans will guide us through the second half of the Gospel of John, showing us who Jesus is and how our lives can radically change when we turn to him. In our passage today, Jesus says that he is the light of the world. Through him, we can know the Father and see the path of obedience he’s called us to.

DISCUSS

John 12 highlights two types of people—those who celebrated Jesus and those who were outraged by him. The reaction to Jesus today is the same: Jesus may be denied or loved, but he cannot be ignored.

Read John 12:1–8.

Lazarus, Martha, and Mary hosted Jesus and his disciples for dinner not long after he had raised Lazarus from the grave. Mary anointed his feet with expensive perfume, a generous and expensive gift. While some people scoffed at her gift, Jesus defended her extravagance. **What can Mary’s boldness, and Jesus’s reaction, teach you about how God sees your humble acts of worship? What do you think would be an extravagant act of worship, like Mary’s perfume, in today’s culture?**

Judas, the treasurer of the disciples, objected to Mary “wasting” a valuable asset. But we learn that Judas’s motives for objecting were not as pure as they sounded—he was a thief, more inclined to steal than to give. **How would you describe Mary’s and Judas’s attitudes toward money? Toward Jesus?**

Mary behaved more like a true disciple than Judas, even though he was one of Jesus’s twelve disciples. Jesus saw that Mary was offering her gift in faith and rebuked Judas directly: “Leave her alone.” **What happens to you when your act of faith is encouraged and praised? If you observe someone stepping out in faith contrary to cultural norms, what could you do to defend and encourage them?**

When a dead man walks out of his grave, word gets around. Read John 12:9–11.

Lazarus’s resurrection became big news in Judea, which drew crowds of people to Jesus and angered Jewish leaders. Factions and jealousy among church leaders remain a troubling reality today. **In what ways have you observed religious leaders’ feuds and arguments take attention away from Jesus?**

What part can you play in online or in-person conversations to keep the focus on Jesus rather than “winning” an argument?

Some of the chief priests were Sadducees, a Jewish sect that did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Lazarus

In verse 42, we learn that some who believed in Jesus did so secretly. We all face the same temptation to seek people's approval over God's. **In what circumstances have you been tempted to keep your faith quiet? What happened when you stayed silent? On the other hand, in what ways have you been blessed when you spoke up or acted on your faith?**

Jesus equated himself with the Father: whoever believes in him believes in the one who sent him. But to reject Jesus is to reject God. Jesus's words were radical and likely as difficult for many to accept then as they are now. **In what ways do people today respect Jesus as a teacher, but not as God? How can Jesus's words help clarify his identity as fully God when you tell others about him?**

Jesus emphasized that the Father sent him to save the world. But our own decision to reject or accept him is what judges us before the Father. Jesus's words show us both his role as savior and our responsibility to respond to him. **Who do you think Jesus is? Have you accepted him, rejected him, or are you still curious about him? Explain your answer.**

No matter how you answered the previous question, stay open to learning from Jesus in this study. Examine his claims. Watch his behavior. When we see Jesus, we see the Father, the true light of the world. **What could you do to learn more about Jesus in the Gospel of John?**

LAST WORD

As Jesus approaches his last days, anticipating his coming suffering and death, he is more and more willing to reveal his identity. He challenges his followers with real-world truth about the cost of identifying with him. It won't be easy for him or them, but he assures his listeners that they can trust him. He has come from the Father to save them, if only they would listen and believe.

Are we listening? Do we love our lives too much, or are we willing to lose our lives for his sake? Jesus is telling us that giving ourselves to him is worth the cost. Are we willing to see the world through the light of Jesus's life?

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and deepen your study of the Gospel of John.

1. Religious Groups in Jesus's Day

During his visits to Jerusalem, Jesus was repeatedly confronted by a contingent of religious leaders who questioned his teachings, attempted to trap him into saying something heretical, and plotted to kill him. But who were they, and why did they consider Jesus a threat?

There were two primary Jewish groups in Jesus's day: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Members of each group could have been priests or members of the Sanhedrin, the authoritative religious council for Jews.

The Pharisees were a large group of spiritual leaders who demanded exacting obedience to the Mosaic law. But, in their zeal to honor God's Word, many of them did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Their desire to maintain Jewish religious identity and purity while under foreign oppression led them to develop additional rules and traditions to the law.

Read Mark 7:1–8.

Verses 3 and 4 explain the extra rules and traditions the Pharisees insisted everyone follow. **What were Jesus's disciples doing that upset the Pharisees? In what way did the Pharisees' extra rules take away from the intent of the original law?**

When following rules—and appearing to be more holy than the people around us—becomes more important than loving God and our neighbors, we've traded true devotion for a mask of spirituality. **In what ways was the Pharisees' zeal to do "right" things actually an empty ritual that missed the point of the law?**

It is very easy to vilify the Pharisees, but their legalism and judgmental hearts are not so different than our own. **How**

