

LIFE Group Leader Handout

September 10, 2017

Essentials—Love God

Pastor Mike O'Connor

Scripture—Mark 14:3-9

3 And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. 4 There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? 5 For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. 6 But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. 9 And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Main Idea—How Would We Answer the Question if God Would Ask, "Do You Love Me?"

Love for God is commanded as the first thing and greatest thing in both the Old and New Testaments

Is God Beautiful or Instrumental?

- God is beautiful when He is loved and enjoyed for who He is
- God is instrumental when we look at Him primarily as a source of things we want and need.

Mary's service shows her deep love for Jesus—

- The feast was for many and good, the anointing was for One and was personal.
- The food was expected—an obligation of hospitality, the anointing was unexpected, the act of one in love.
- The feast was ample, the anointing was extravagant
- The feast met a current, legitimate need that was clear and obvious, the anointing met a need that only one who was very close to Jesus would understand
- The meal was an opportunity for the acclaim of many, the anointing was acclaimed by Jesus only

The Alabaster Flask was broken and spilled out—an illustration of wholehearted devotion to Christ

What will motivate us to give ourselves in full surrender to Jesus in this way?

- The Place where Jesus found me.
- My Continuing Need.
- His uniquely satisfying love

Application—

- How did Mary's service for Jesus inspire or challenge you?
- Your current love for God—more represented by the lockbox, the dispenser, or the broken and spilled out flask?
- The process of renewing love for Christ (The place where Jesus found me, my continuing need, His uniquely satisfying love)—which of these is drawing you come to Him at this point in your walk with God?
- Are you using the Bulletin Insert to help understand and deepen love for God? What insights are you getting so far?

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL FIRST MEETING?

By Carter Moss

So you've got your small group ready to go: you picked a time and place, you selected what you want to study, and you've got people showing up for it! What do you do now? The first meeting together can have a lot of fun energy, but there can also be a lot of anxiety in people--especially if it's a new group and they don't know many people there, or if they haven't experienced a small group before. It's important to make a good impression at that first meeting. How do we make our first meeting fun, compelling and informative?

Keep it relational. The most important goal on the first night is to set up the relational feel that you want the group to have and to help everyone feel comfortable with each other. This is what sets small groups apart from classes and other meetings. As the leader, introduce each person who arrives to other people in the group. You can also mention that it might take a few weeks to learn each other's names, and that's normal. Icebreaker questions are a great tool to use anytime to help put people at ease, to get them comfortable talking, and to help them get to know each other. They're especially valuable at the first meeting. Sharing one or two personal things creates lots of opportunity for connecting with each other.

Cast a clear vision. The first week is your chance to cast a clear and compelling vision about what group members can expect their group experience to be like. It's often good to hand out a "Group Covenant" (I can supply that--Cindy). You don't want to make them overwhelmed with "rules" but setting up simple guidelines can help everyone feel comfortable. Cover things like confidentiality, showing up on time, praying for each other, etc. Also, spend some time talking about your goals for the group in general. Maybe your hope is that friendships will be formed or that people will learn new things about the Bible.

Find the balance. There's a pressure to start off with a bang. We want to get to know each other, share expectations, start the study, give everyone a memorable moment and more. But don't give in to the pressure to do all these things on the first night. Be sure to end on time to first week to set that expectation for the future. You also don't want to overwhelm your members with information. But at the same time, you want the first week to feel valuable so that people want to come back. You also want to communicate that you have a plan and that it's not all go-with-the-flow. So there is a balance to find.

Remember that the ultimate goal is that your group members leave the first meeting having met some people, knowing what to expect in the group, and trusting you are a safe leader who will lead them into a time of relationship building and faith building. That leaves them wanting more and excited to come back! It will leave you feeling the same way!