

WHY ARE YOU BOTHERING THIS WOMAN?

Matthew 26:6-13

One Christmas a friend was ringing the bell for the Salvation Army. A well-dressed man walked by, glanced at the red kettle, and walked on. Then he stopped, turned back, pulled a wad of money out of his billfold, and stuffed the cash into the kettle. “They helped me once,” he said, and went on. Our friend never learned the story, but something in that man’s history led him to an impulsive act of giving.

Thankfulness often leads to generosity, and thankfulness to God often leads to extravagance in worship. And extravagance in worship often leads to criticism from onlookers who don’t understand. That is what took place at Bethany shortly before Jesus was crucified.

Group Discussion. Is it possible to be too generous? Why do you answer as you do?

Personal Reflection. What is the most extravagant act of worship you have ever seen or you have ever done?

Just before the events of this passage, Jesus predicted his crucifixion, and the chief priests and elders conspired to kill him (Matthew 26:1-5). Immediately after this, Judas went and asked for money to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16). One woman’s act of devotion provides breathing space and a moment of respite before the final week of conflict in Jerusalem. *Read Matthew 26:6-13.*

1. Put yourself in the place of one of the disciples witnessing the scene in verses 6-7. What do you see, smell, and hear?
2. As a disciple on the scene, how do you react to what happens, and why?
3. What do you think was the woman's own purpose in pouring the perfume on Jesus?
4. Some people have been shocked at Jesus' statement in verse 11, thinking he meant that we should do nothing for the poor. Why did he make this point so strongly?
5. What connection did Jesus make between the woman's actions and his coming death (vv. 12-13)?
6. Perhaps you have seen worship practices, or church buildings or church programs, that made you think *that money could have been spent on people in need* (as was said in v. 8). How do you judge whether something other Christians do is wasteful or worshipful?

7. Perhaps you have been criticized by other believers for honoring Christ in a way they thought was wasteful. How did you react to that criticism?

8. We have heard women make the observation that women are hard on each other—that is, critical and judgmental, holding each other to extremely high standards. How do you react to this observation?

9. Why do Christians “bother” each other? In other words, what do we get out of it?

10. When you are tempted to judge other believers, how can Jesus’ response to this woman help you develop a more gracious attitude?



Give thanks for Christians’ generosity, which shows their love for Christ and for people. Pray for forgiveness for judging others for their generosity. Forgive those who have criticized you for your generosity.

NOW OR LATER

Study Romans 14:1–15:7 in which Paul urges Christians to accept one another rather than to judge one another.