



TRANSIT

WEEK 4 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY CHAD BRUEGMAN

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

Can you remember the material things...the stuff you wanted when you were ten years old? Sixteen? How about today? How have these things changed or stayed the same?

SHARE

Welcome to “Transit.”

We all want to go somewhere. To get there, we have to make a purposeful decision to begin the journey. When we travel, we take different vehicles – cars, planes, subway systems, buses, bikes, etc. Each of the vehicles serves a distinct purpose in moving us closer to where we want to go. As we purposefully take a journey together through “Transit,” the hope is that we can discover how we can grow closer to God through prayer, studying God’s word, relationships, serving, giving, and sharing our story about what Jesus Christ has done in our lives. As we talk about and experience these spiritual disciplines, we hope you realize that the power is not in the vehicles themselves, but in the subject of our affection, which is Jesus Christ. We can’t do anything to earn God’s love or salvation, but there are real ways we can cultivate a thriving relationship with God.

Ever heard the saying, “It’s a dog-eat-dog world?” Ever felt like you were the one getting eaten? Life can be difficult, now add to that the problems that come about from selfish people trying to push you out of the way. If we are honest, we all have felt pushed around and it makes us want to fight back so we can get ours. When we are surrounded by difficulties and selfishness, sometimes the last thing we think about is asking God how we can serve someone else. Not only for their sake, but for our own. God designed us to love and to serve others walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. Serving others shows great strength. When Jesus spoke about the greatest being servants, it wasn’t just wishful thinking, it is a spiritual reality. It is actually how the world works, even if those around you fail to acknowledge it.

None of us love funerals. If asked, “Would you rather go to a party or a funeral?” most people would pick the party. Most of us would rather tailgate before a game with friends than sit solemnly through a funeral service and think about the idea of death. King Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, once wrote:

Ecclesiastes 7:1,2

A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.

King Solomon didn't say it was “more enjoyable” but “better” to go to a house of mourning.

How can funerals awaken the human heart to what's important?

GROW

When we serve others, we are ultimately serving Christ. Serving is a form of worship that draws us closer to God. When we lay down what might be important to us to serve others, we get to experience the presence of God in a unique way. As we identify with Jesus and follow his example of servant hood, we see things in a whole new light and on a whole new level.

When Jesus, who should have been the guest of honor at dinner, got down on the floor like a slave to wash the disciples' feet, it was a demonstration of power, humility and greatness. It was yet another moment that Jesus showed us what God is like in the flesh. Notice the posture of Jesus—not only is he operating on a whole different level than the disciples, but he literally is showing them how to see people from God's perspective. He wasn't teaching them how to be nicer to people, but how true leaders are servants; it is how the kingdom works. When we purposefully lower ourselves to serve others we just see things differently, but we must humble ourselves first.

Let's read John 12:1-11

G.L. Borchert, in the New American Commentary of John, describes just how valuable this perfume was and even more so, the brave act of falling at Jesus' feet in front of others:

During the meal Mary brought to that place a “pound” (litran, cf. 19:39, apparently similar to the Roman libra, equivalent nearly to our twelve ounces or 327.45 grams) of ointment or perfume (myron, either “myrrh” or a generic word for “perfume”). Such ointment is here designated more specifically as being very expensive (polytimou, virtually synonymous with the Markan polyteles, 14:3, similar to the Matthean barytimou, 26:7) and composed of genuine (pistikēs, cf. also Mark 14:3) nard. This nard was a special oil probably extracted from the root (and “spike”) of the Indian nard plant. While John does not mention the container, there is no reason to doubt the Synoptic description of the perfume or ointment being preserved in a valuable alabaster flask or jar (Matt 26:7; Mark 14:3; Luke 7:37). Such a flask normally had a long thin neck which would be broken (cf. Mark 14:3) in use, and the contents could then be poured out.

The Johannine story has Mary pouring the ointment or perfume over the feet of Jesus and wiping his feet with her hair. As indicated in the John the Baptist story (see my comments at John 1:27), touching the feet of someone was regarded by Jews as a very degrading experience and was normally reserved for slaves and others to whom little “honor” was due. The fact that Mary was willing to do this act at a meal in the presence of others communicates volumes about her elevated regard for Jesus.

Imagine your entire year's wages in a bottle of perfume. Why would this act by Mary be so unbelievable?

Falling at the feet of Jesus wasn't just a saying for Mary; she lived it and was unashamed of her love for God.

To this very day, Mary's account is recorded in scripture. She is not remembered as a lady with really expensive stuff, but as a brave woman of God, willing to pour out what she has at the feet of Jesus. What is one thing that stands out to you most about her story?

MOVE

In this week's message on servanthood, Chad talked about how powerful it is to see servanthood in action. We tend to remember people who went out of their way to love, mentor, serve and help us, especially when we didn't feel worthy or important enough to be served or helped. This is why Jesus continually shows us how leaders serve and commends those who are willing to lay down their pride and with great faith, fall at the feet of Jesus in every area of their life. Those are the people we remember, because it is hard to forget the names of those who serve.

Ecclesiastes 7:1a

A good name is better than fine perfume...

Earlier in this study, we opened with a question about the kind of stuff we wanted when we were younger and how our wants changed over time. Even though time changes, it is curious to see just how many of us still need that one last thing that will hopefully complete our lives. Maybe it is a job promotion, recognition, that girlfriend, boyfriend, spouse. Maybe it is that new SUV someone at work bought. If you only had that new car, life would feel more complete. Most of us, at some point can struggle with the need for more stuff to fill the emptiness or worthiness we desire. For you, it might not be stuff, but status, power or influence and if you get that job promotion or achieve that next level, you can show the world that you are a winner and post it on Facebook. Scripture tells us that more important than stuff or status, is “a good name.” It is precisely why we remember the story of Mary pouring out a year's worth of wages. We remember her name and her story, because she didn't care about what anyone thought or what it cost, but she cared about serving at the feet of Jesus. It was only God's opinion that she cared about.

Have you purposefully served anyone this year or did something special for someone that cost you? If so, what did you learn from that experience?

Think about your local church family. Have you found a place where you can serve others?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO.

If you struggle with serving others, try and memorize this verse and allow God's truth to rewire your thinking:

Matthew 23:11-12

The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.