

the road to the cross

Week 1 - Recognition

mark 14-16

This week we begin a new series which focuses on Jesus' final week on earth. As we progress through the series, we will gain a better understanding of the true meaning and significance of Jesus' life, and of his death and resurrection. This week we begin the story three days before Jesus' death...

1. Can you think of a time when you have failed to recognise someone for who they truly were? What happened, and what was the outcome?

An intro question to get them thinking about the idea of recognising people for who they are. Get them to share stories, and focus on what the outcome of failing to recognise was.

Read Mark 14:1-9

2. In these verses, we learn about the situation that Jesus is in. List the ways in which Jesus seems to be under pressure at this point in time.

He has only two days left on earth (which he knows), and we see that the priests want him dead, he is eating a meal with a leper, people think that the woman is doing a foolish thing.

3. Explain in your own words what is happening in verse 3.

You may need to help them to understand the situation here. Pouring the perfume on someone's head isn't unusual, but in such expensive quantities would have been.

- a. What is your initial reaction to this situation?

Most likely we should see this to be quite an extraordinary and unusual response to Jesus!

- b. What is the reaction of the people who are present?

They are astonished that the woman has done this, and consider it to be a great waste. They rebuke her harshly for her actions.

4. How does Jesus respond to the situation?

He responds that far from being foolish, it is an act of love towards someone (himself) who won't be with them for very long. He has the right perspective on the situation. Note that v7 does not say that Jesus sees poor people as unimportant, but rather that a person's status in life pales in comparison to the importance of eternity and what Jesus is about to do.

- a. Imagine you were there, and heard Jesus' reply (verse 8 in particular). Why would this seem a weird thing to say?

Jesus has just stated that he is about to die! It would be a shocking thing for the people there to have heard. Most likely you would not believe him. Also weird that he could claim to be the Saviour, and at the same time announce that he was about to die.

5. What is the significance of the actions of the woman?

She recognises Jesus for who he is, and understands what he has said about his death. The value of the perfume is insignificant in comparison to making the right response to Jesus.

Read Mark 14:10-26

6. What added pressures do we read now exist for Jesus?

In addition to what we listed previously, Judas (one of the disciples) has now agreed to betray Jesus. Jesus then goes on to share a meal with his betrayer. It is also his last meal – he knows that he will die tomorrow (note we are now two days after the previous verses).

7. In light of all these pressures, how does Jesus respond?

Jesus remains calm and in control of the situation. Despite all that is going on around him, he is aware of what must occur, and is not swayed by these events.

8. What is significant about the meal which Jesus shares with his disciples?

It is the final meal that he will share with them. Here, he again tells his followers of what will shortly happen to him.

9. In the table below, summarise the response of the people we have read about:

Priests	Judas	Disciples	Woman	Jesus
<i>Are keen to find a way to arrest Jesus and have him killed</i>	<i>Provides a way for the authorities to arrest Jesus. Betrayal!</i>	<i>Continue to fail to understand the significance of what is about to occur.</i>	<i>Recognises Jesus for who he is, and the value in what he is about to do.</i>	<i>Remains calm and in control of the situation.</i>

10. Looking at the four responses to Jesus, which one are you most like?

A chance for them to individually think about the kind of response that they have made to Jesus. Chances are that most will be like the disciples – knowing Jesus, but failing to fully grasp the significance of what he has done for us.

- a. In our attitudes and actions we often fail to recognise Jesus for who he truly is, for what he has done, and for what he will do. What are some areas of your life in which you need to recognise Jesus and the role that he should play?

An opportunity here for some personal application. Get them to be specific in their answers.

- b. How can we be better helping one another to do this?

A chance to think through how we can encourage one another in the things that have been listed above, and help each other out as a group.

Pray as a group that God would help us this week to build on our understanding of who Jesus is, and what he has done. Pray that we would recognise his role in our lives, and live in response to this.