



The Heart of a Worship Leader

Competency: To gain a biblical understanding of worship and to develop a heart posture that aligns with that understanding.

Assignments

1. Read Romans 12:1, John 12:1–8, and 2 Samuel 24:18–25 and answer the questions that follow.
2. Read the Article: *Where Feet and Hair Collide* by Josh Via and *Five Ways to Bless Your Neighbors* by Dave Ferguson and answer the questions that follow.
3. Watch Darlene Zschech Video “Your Body as a Sacrifice”
<https://youtu.be/ipun2ll1Mfs>
4. Over the next week, intentionally and boldly steer at least one conversation toward spiritual things and prepare to share about it.
5. To help cultivate a heart of humility, over the next week worship God by serving someone completely anonymously (i.e. putting a bag of groceries on a porch, mowing a yard for an elderly couple, etc.)

Romans 12:1, John 12:1–8, 2 Samuel 24:18–25

1. What does it mean to present your body as a living sacrifice?
2. What are some of the noteworthy characteristics of Mary’s worship described in John 12?
3. Describe a time when you felt that your worship was as sincere as it could possibly be. What made it different from other times?
4. In our world of modern conveniences and luxuries, what does costly worship look like for you?

5. What strikes you about David's attitude toward Araunah's offer? Why would it have been detrimental to David's worship to accept the offer?
6. How do you maintain a posture of humility when you are in the public eye and people are looking to you for leadership?

Where Feet and Hair Collide

By Josh Via

One of my favorite accounts in the whole New Testament happens in John 12—when Mary anointed Jesus' feet with her hair—one of the most humbling acts of service a person could ever provide in that culture. What I love most about this passage is the insight it provides into worship.

I love to see God's people come together to lift high the name of Jesus without reservation. Whether I'm writing a new worship song or simply choosing songs for a worship set, my goal is that they be rich in biblical truth—deep enough to allow biblical scholars to worship freely, and yet simple enough that a new follower of Jesus can understand what's being sung and experience that same sense of intimacy with Christ. There's a balance there that I'm still learning. But it's a balance that Mary found strikingly simple.

Her act of worship was deep and profound as she honored Him with the oil fit for a king; yet, it was amazingly simple because all she knew to do was to bow before Him and scrub His dirty feet. Through her selfless act, she provides a picture perfect example of worship leading at its best, giving us striking insight into the heart of a worship leader.

1. She worshiped willfully.

Notice all of the action verbs involved in Mary's worship:

“Then Mary *took* a pound of fragrant oil—pure and expensive nard—*anointed* Jesus' feet, and *wiped* His feet with her hair” (John 12:3).

In just one verse, John emphasized her willful act of worship through careful detail. It was this type of specific and willful action that brought her close to the heart of the Savior.

Worship is not something that passively happens to you. Worship is something that happens in you. Worship is something you are actively involved in. Worship is a conscious choice. Many believers miss the point. Many times I've heard someone say this in response to a Sunday worship service: "The worship was awesome today. The band was amazing!" Or, "The worship wasn't great today. The lead vocalist was pitchy." I've said it too. But no matter how incredible or how terrible the music might have been, to make statements like these misses the point.

Worship is not limited to the songs we sing or the tune to which we sing them. Certainly music is important. But worship is more than that. It involves the willful action and obedience of the entire being—not just our lips.

Worship is the willful action of offering our entire being back to Jesus. As He reveals Himself, we respond by surrendering our entire life back to Him.

As God reveals to us His character, we confess back to Him how great He is. And then we align our entire being to that confession. Worship is all about Jesus and our active participation in telling Him just how great He is. Worship is not about our preferences and not about what may or may not have sounded good at church.

2. She worshiped unashamedly.

Verse three says that after Mary anointed Jesus' feet, "the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil."

We must not miss the importance of this little phrase. When John said, "the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil," he meant that everyone in or around the house could smell the sweet aroma. There was no mistaking what Mary had done. And she didn't care who knew. She was unashamed to tell the whole neighborhood that Jesus was the object of her worship. And it was obvious to everyone.

Have you noticed the way children possess a general boldness and certainty about life that makes many adults uncomfortable? They will speak their mind candidly with little thought regarding others' perceptions or misconceptions about them. They simply call it the way they see it. I wish some of those innocent, unashamed, characteristics of our childhood would remain through adulthood—that we would live unashamed lives, especially in our worship of Jesus—that we would gladly share our love for Christ with everyone—that we would desire for the world to smell the aroma of our love for Christ.

The bottom line is this: Worship leaders are evangelists. The Jesus that we claim to worship on Sundays must be the Jesus we profess during the week. And if He has truly captured our hearts, we should gladly carry His name and His scent wherever we live, work, study, play, and shop.

Here's how the apostle Paul described the aroma that we have as believers in Christ: "For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Corinthians 2:15).

To a world that is lost and dying, we are the fragrance of Christ. We carry the scent of Christ to a lost world. Mary understood this. And she did it unashamedly.

3. She worshiped humbly.

Sandals were the primary shoes in Jesus' day. Highways were covered in dirt. On the dusty paths of Israeli terrain, no feet could go far without being totally covered and consumed with dust, grime, mire and filth.

Now contrast the dirty feet of a middle-eastern man with the elaborate, beautiful hair of a middle-eastern woman. In that culture the hair of a woman was her most prized possession. It was considered her beauty covering and her glory (1 Corinthians 11:15). Her hair was connected to her essence—what others thought of her and who she considered herself to be. And yet in spite of the cultural importance of her hair, Mary used her beauty covering in the same way she would have used a dirty washcloth. Picture the beautiful, immaculate, long flowing hair of Mary scrubbing the filth, mud and grime off of the feet of the Savior. This was a humiliating act. This was a degrading act. This was an act of total self-abandonment. She humbled herself by giving up the one thing that gave her honor and dignity, and she sacrificed it for a few moments to worship at the feet of Jesus. True worship means that we count all as loss for the sake of knowing Christ.

"More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

4. She worshiped unreservedly.

What about the perfume? Why was it significant? From Judas' comment in verse five, we discover that it is worth 300 denarii, which amounts to a year's wages or about ten thousand dollars.¹ Many scholars believe that Mary could have been saving this for her dowry—the costly gift that she would one day bring into her marriage. Instead, she poured it out at the feet of Jesus unreservedly. She kept nothing back. It was expensive. It was costly. It was important to her. Yet she gave it all. She anointed Jesus' feet with the same oil that was to be reserved and held for the most important person in her life. And she worshiped Jesus, not as her husband, but as her Lord and Savior—not as a mere

¹ Kenneth Gangel, *John*, The Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 4, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Holman, 2000), 232.



human being, but as the God of the universe. One commentary describes worship this way:

“In praising a creature, we may easily exceed the truth; but in praising God we have only to go on confessing what He really is to us.”²

Mary understood that no amount was too costly for Jesus. If she were physically able, I believe Mary would have sat at Jesus’ feet forever. She gave all that was important to her. And she gave it without reservation or hesitation.

Mary teaches us what the heart of a worship leader truly looks like.

1. Worship is willful. Worship is a conscious, active choice—a choice that supersedes feelings and opinions.
2. Worship is bold. There is no shame in true worship. It tells the world of our love for and devotion to Christ.
3. Worship is humble. There is no place for ego in the worship of God. We must abandon our will in submission to God’s will.
4. Worship is unreserved. Worship is costly. Worship is expensive.

Questions from the Article:

1. Of the four primary descriptions of Mary’s worship, which challenged you the most personally? Why?

2. How does your current thinking about worship conflict or agree with true biblical worship?

3. Josh defined worship as *“the willful action of offering our entire being back to Jesus. As He reveals Himself, we respond by surrendering our entire life back to Him.”* Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1961), 1444.



3. How would you rate the aroma of Christ in your life? Do the people around you easily smell the sweet fragrance of Christ or not?

Fragrance-Free

Wearing Off

Highly-Scented

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4. Based on Romans 12:1, John 12:1–8, and 2 Samuel 24:18–25, formulate your own definition of worship.