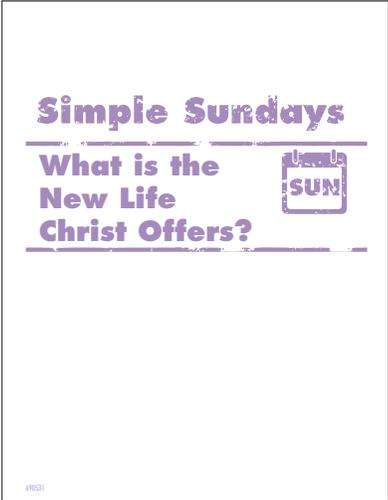


Simple Sundays

**What is the
New Life
Christ Offers?**





What is the New Life Christ Offers?

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Main Idea

We see the new life intended by God in the spontaneous way Mary anointed Jesus and Jesus' affirmation of this spontaneous act. To live the new life in Christ is to live in spontaneous moments of grace, following the example of Christ.

You Will Need

Bibles; index cards, pens; place for a Prayer Walk

Faith Statement

God raised this Jesus from the dead, vindicating his sinless life, breaking the power of sin and evil, delivering us from death to life eternal.

—A Brief Statement of Faith

Background

Mary is the focal point of this story. Everything seems to center around her. Lazarus is at the table, dining with Jesus who has given him the gift of new life. Martha is serving in the role she loves. Judas is complaining, unhappy with the events taking place. Others are gathered at the meal—watching, listening, and learning.

And there is Mary. Her heart is full of love, full of thanksgiving. And in one of these spontaneous moments, perhaps as she is washing Jesus feet, she takes a pound of costly perfume and pours it all over his feet. It is such an overflowing amount, so rich that the room is filled with the fragrance. And in an action so intimate that it is hard to watch, she takes her hair and wipes Jesus' feet. It had to be pure spontaneity, the washing, the perfuming, the wiping. But behind the spontaneity was pure love, pure gratitude, and pure expression.

Jesus seems not to be embarrassed with the generosity, nor disturbed by the outpouring of emotion, but at peace in the moment. The spontaneity of Mary's action is met with Jesus' spontaneous response of acceptance and approval. The life Jesus lived was full of those spontaneous, rich, deeply moving moments. This spontaneous approach to the moments of life is what God intends for us.

You and Your Youth

This session focuses on the spontaneous act of the anointing of Jesus by Mary and calls us to live such spontaneous moments as well. The youth are encouraged to discover the meaning of the story by acting out the Bible story in tableau form. Some props might be helpful to make it easier for the youth to get into character. These could be as simple as towels, sheets, bandannas, or scarves. Give the youth space and time to explore the Bible story in their own way. This will help them be open to one another in discussing the application of the story.

Pray for the young people by name and prepare yourself to be open to each child of God.



Enter

Learn names, encourage interaction, and laugh together as the session begins.

Spontaneous Generosity

As the youth gather, ask them to imagine that they each have \$73,000 to spend. Invite them to name the things on which they would spend the money. Allow time for each to tell how he or she would spend the money. When all have finished, explain that in 2014, the annual average household income in the United States was approximately \$73,000.

Tell the group that the story in today's session tells of a woman who spent the equivalent of this amount—a year's wages in her day—on one jar of perfumed ointment and then poured it all on Jesus. Ask for reactions.

Say that the word for the day is "spontaneous." Brainstorm definitions of the word and ask the youth to listen for examples of spontaneity in today's story.

Opening Prayer

Dear God, as we gather to study your Word this day, we ask that you give us minds and hearts that are open to hearing and believing. Help us know about the spontaneous life you call us to live, following the example of Jesus Christ. Amen.



Explore

Study the Bible

Bibles

Prepare to create a tableau reading of the Bible story. A tableau is a frozen representation of the events being described. It requires identifying the people and the scenes, determining the right poses for the tableau, and taking positions while reading the story.

1. First read the Bible story, paying special attention to the people (Jesus, Lazarus, Mary, Martha, the disciples, Judas Iscariot) and the changes of scenes (the dinner, the anointing, the discussion that followed). Depending on the size of your group and time available, your entire group might do the tableaux, or a different group might do each scene. Determine who will become each person, what the pose will be, and who will narrate.
2. Present the tableaux.

3. Follow up with discussion. Describe each person in the story and why that person responded to the events of the story in the way he or she did.

Decide to Whom It Belongs

Index cards, pencils

Ask youth to name their five most valuable possessions. Then ask them to rank those possessions in order of importance to them, with one being the most important and five being the least important. Do not put names on the lists.

After all have finished, collect the lists and redistribute them, making sure no one gets his or her own list. When each has someone else's list, tell them to draw a circle around two items they believe are least necessary and think of a way the value of these items could be used for the poor. Have each tell what he or she has decided that someone else could do without and what better could be done with the money.

Suggest that this is what the guests at Simon's party thought when the woman poured out the expensive perfume. Now ask owners to reclaim their own lists. Go around the group and ask each what the circled items on their list means to them. Perhaps the value to the owners is quite different from what their friends felt when circling. Ask:

- Have you ever spent your money on yourself or a best friend spontaneously?
- Have you ever been criticized for your decisions about spending money?
- How do you serve God in ways someone else may think is foolish?



Express

These discussions are an opportunity to apply the Scripture to our lives. If you do not seem to relate to these situations, then change them to make them relevant to your own life.

Youth Issue

You worry about taking spontaneity to the extreme. To you, that would be a place that is undisciplined and directionless. You prefer that actions be well thought out. Anything new should be tested in ways where little harm can be done. You would much rather be careful. Spontaneity feels careless. You wonder if it would be more appropriate for youth to work on living a cautious life rather than a spontaneous life.

Action Steps

We act by seeking God's guidance and committing ourselves to follow in the steps in which God leads us. One way to do this is through a Prayer Walk. The idea is to take a walk, outside or in the building where you are meeting, or even in a specific part of the building. Begin by committing the walk to God, asking God to show you something that is important or relevant for you to see. It may be small or insignificant to others, and may be as simple as the shape of a tree, a cloud, or someone's face. As you walk, reflect on the session for today wondering what the spontaneous life might be like for you. Be ready to gather back as a group at the end of your walk and share what you have experienced.



Exit

Closing Prayer

State that those gathered may never have a chance to perform an act for Jesus like the woman did, but each must pray and discern how he or she can serve the Lord and what the cost may be. Challenge the youth to recognize opportunities when he or she may serve and act without hesitation.

Close together with the following prayer:

Dear God, help us be open to your Spirit and the spontaneous gifts of life you bring our way. Amen.