

# BRMC Small Group Study: John 12:12-36

## Leaders Guide

Please note that the suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study. Feel free to adapt the questions for your group.

### Leader's Notes:

#### Context:

At the end of John 11, we see the final Passover before the crucifixion. The narrative of the festivals has come full circle. This marks a turning point in the Gospel of John. John 11 explored the last of seven great miracles Jesus performed (resurrection of Lazarus) before his own resurrection. We now move to a new narrative that brings us toward the crucifixion and resurrection.

#### Introduction:

In this study, we will see Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy. Jesus also shares that his hour has now come and he is preparing for his death.

#### Lesson Objectives:

- To understand the turning point of Jesus' ministry which led to his eventual death and resurrection.
- To understand what it means to lose one's life for the sake of gaining it.

### Observation

1. Imagine you are a Jew in Jerusalem observing the arrival of Jesus (John 12:12-19). What would your thoughts and emotions be?
2. Divide your Small Group into smaller teams and draw a simple comic of your reading of John 12:24-26.
  - *Provide paper and pens for your small group. You do not have to draw grains of wheat. Instead, feel free to explore what this means to you.*
  - *This is a fun activity for your small group bond over.*
  - *This would also encourage close reading of the text.*
3. What are some repeated words or phrases in John 12:20-36?
  - *The hour; glorify; lifted up; light; darkness*
  - *The repetition of these words and phrases indicate that they are likely to be significant to the narrative. Remind the group to pay attention to these words and phrases as the group goes through the questions below.*

### Interpretation

4. Why did the people carry palm leaves and why did Jesus enter Jerusalem on a donkey? What does this tell us about Jesus' motive?
  - *Read Zechariah 9:9-10.*
  - *Palm leaves were a symbol of victory and kingship. The people waved them because they thought that Jesus would be the messiah who would save them from their oppressors through conquering the Romans. ('Hosanna' literally means 'to save').*

- *Jesus arrived on a donkey because he came as a peaceful saviour and not as a militant (he would have come on a war horse otherwise). Zechariah 9:10 mentions that Jesus will “speak peace to the nations”.*

5. What is the significance of the Greeks arriving to meet Jesus (John 12:20-23)?

- *The Greeks were a metaphor for the rest of the world i.e. those apart from the Jews. Their interest in Jesus was therefore a representation of the world wanting to know Jesus.*
- *In all previous mentions regarding timing, Jesus said that his time had not yet come. This is the first time Jesus says that his time has come which makes it a significant turning point.*
- *This is especially so when Jesus says it after the Greeks came looking for him. This shows that Jesus came for the world and not just for the Jews.*

6. What are the similarities between the grain of wheat and our lives? What are the implications? (John 12:24-26)

- *When a grain of wheat germinates, its outer shell falls away eventually and the plant grows. Jesus is talking about this very process. When the seed ceases to be a seed and becomes a plant, it takes on life which it never had before. Likewise, our lives would be much more vibrant and God-centred if only we would “hate” our worldly lives and live for Jesus instead.*
- *Jesus was not asking his listeners to literally die. Instead, he asked them (and us) to hate their worldly lives. This metaphorical dying represents a resurrection that occurs when Jesus is lord of your life.*

7. What is the significance of the Son of Man being lifted up (John 12:32)?

- *Jesus says it himself that it is to draw all people to him. But more than that, there is also a reference made to Numbers 21:9 as previously mentioned in John 3:14-16 when Jesus spoke with Nicodemus.*
- *In the narrative in Numbers 21:4-9, the people were grumbling against God (again, for the umpteenth time) while travelling through the desert and the Lord sent venomous snakes causing many to die. When the Israelites repented, God instructed Moses to make a snake and put it up on a pole. Anyone who was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake would live.*
- *In John 12:32-33, Jesus would be lifted up as saviour to the people. He would take on the sins of the world and save those who look to him from death. Just like the snake on the pole, whoever looks to Jesus would be saved.*

8. Why did Jesus respond to the question, “Who is this Son of Man?” with comments on light and darkness (John 12:34-36)?

- *Jesus did not answer the question directly. Instead, he directed them to believe in the light they have with urgency.*
- *When the people give up their wrong expectation of who the messiah should be and receive the revelation that Jesus provides, they would understand who the Son of Man is.*

## **Application**

9. What does “hating one’s life in this world” look like practically?

- *In Question 6, the group would have explored the idea of “hating one’s life”.*
- *Here, lead the group to share a specific example of how they can be intentional in “hating” their life.*

10. What are some misdirected expectations of Jesus that we may have?

- *That if we believe in Jesus, he will give us whatever we want all the time.*

- *That because of Christ resurrection, we do not ever need to suffer (e.g. the sufferings of the martyrs of faith).*