

She Did What!

1. Warm up: Who's a woman that you greatly admire? In a few sentences, say why.
2. Genesis 1:27 tells us that "God created humankind in God's image. In the image of God they were created, male and female God created them."
 - a. If God created both male and female (and everything in between) in God's image, then we need the full gender spectrum to achieve the fullest possible human understanding of God and spiritual life. So what happens to our understanding of God and spiritual life when part of the gender spectrum is silenced or ignored?
 - b. Although progress is being made, many churches still deny women equal opportunity to share their voice, perspective, and gifts. Why are so many churches still silencing and suppressing women?
3. On Sunday Jeff launched a sermon series based Helen Bruch Pearson's book *Do What You Have the Power to Do – Studies of Six New Testament Women*. Each of the six women we will study played a pivotal role in the ministry of Jesus, even though we may have never heard of them before. On Sunday, we began by studying a woman who did something unthinkable in the culture of her time. Read Mark 14:1-9, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. When the woman in our story barged into Simon's dinner party, what do you imagine was the emotional reaction of all the men around the table? What would you guess the woman herself was feeling as she entered this space where she wasn't supposed to be?
 - b. Look again at verses 4 – 5. How would you characterize the response the woman got from the men in the room? What is the subtext of what they were saying? What does their response tell us about how they viewed women?
 - c. This question is for the women in your Oasis Group. Does the reaction of the men in this Gospel story remind you of anything you've ever experienced? If so, tell us about it.
 - d. The men in our Gospel story chided the woman, **but Jesus** had a very different response. He said, "Leave her alone! Why do you trouble her? She has done a fine and beautiful thing for me." What does the tone and tenor of Jesus' response tell us about his attitude toward women – and how does that make you feel?
4. Helen Bruch Pearson identifies three key discipleship lessons we can learn from the woman in our Gospel story. In the Old Testament culture that shaped first century Jewish thought, prophets had to be men. Prophets had great spiritual authority, including the authority to choose and anoint a new king. They did so by pouring oil over the head of the one being anointed. That's exactly what the woman in our Gospel story does. Boldly, brazenly she did what she sensed God was calling her to do even though she'd

always been taught she couldn't. Jesus praised her, saying, "She has done what was in her power to do." Mark 14:8. **In this we found our first key lesson: Dare to do what you have the power to do.** God expects no more, and no less, from us.

- a. When faced with overwhelming problems or opposition, we are tempted to say, "This problem is too big for me. I can't fix this." And we become paralyzed by inaction. Where in your personal life, family life, or work life are you facing a problem that feels too big for you? Tell us what the problem is? Then tell us something (however small) that you have the power to do to at least help address the problem. Following the example of the brave woman in our story, are you willing to take a step of faith and do what you have the power to do?
 - b. We often feel like our world and our nation is spinning out of control, and we become paralyzed by the magnitude of the problems. What might it look like to apply today's Gospel story to our national or global state of affairs?
5. When Jesus told his male disciples that he would soon be killed, they rebuked him and, in essence, told him he was overreacting – that God wouldn't let that happen to him. Matthew 16:21-23. So Jesus became emotionally isolated in his stress and anxiety. But the woman in our Gospel story was different. She was able to hear what Jesus was saying, open herself to his emotional distress, and share his pain. She didn't just anoint him as king, she also anointed him for his burial. Mark 14:8. In other words, she was grieving with Jesus. That prompted Jesus to say, "She has done a fine and beautiful thing for me." Mark 14:6. **From this we learn a second key lesson: Instead of blithely dismissing people's pain, we should dare to be present with them in it.** As Romans 12:15 says, "Weep with those who weep."
 - a. What are the factors that cause us to want to dismiss or avoid the pain others experience, rather than entering into it? What makes that so hard?
 - b. Who's someone you know that's experiencing pain? What's something you could do to be present with them in their pain?
6. The gift the woman in our story gave Jesus was extravagant. The bottle of nard she poured over his head was worth \$36,000 in modern currency. By her action, she was showing us what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus. **This is the third key lesson: We are called to be the kind of people who break ourselves open and pour ourselves out in acts of great kindness and beauty.**
 - a. Tell us about a time someone has done something extravagantly kind and beautiful for you? How did that feel? Will you ever forget it?
 - b. Tell us about an act of extravagant kindness and beauty that God may be calling you to do at this point in your life?

Mark 14:1-9

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; ²for they said, 'Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.'

³ While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. ⁴But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.' And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a fine and beautiful thing for me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what was in her power to do. She has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. ⁹Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.'