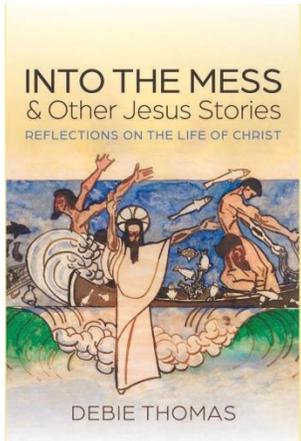


**Into the Mess & Other Jesus Stories: Reflections on the Life of Christ** by Debi Thomas—



**Week 3 Chapter 7 In a Nutshell to Chapter 11 Only One Thing**

**Check in Question:** How do you show hospitality?

**Opening Prayer**

Loving God,

As we gather to reflect on Your Word, open our hearts to the movement of Your Holy Spirit.

Like the woman at the well, help us cross the boundaries that keep us from Your living water.

Like the woman with the alabaster jar, teach us to offer You our whole selves with humility and love.

Free us from anything that keeps our worship empty, and draw us into a holiness marked by hospitality, compassion, and courage.

May we sit at Your feet with Mary, serve with Martha's devotion, and follow wherever Your Spirit leads.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Reflection questions:**

**Based on Chapter 7: *In a Nutshell***

1. Have you ever experienced the presence or movement of the Holy Spirit in your life?
2. Thomas says that if Christianity never confuses or challenges us, we may not truly be practicing it. How does this statement resonate with you?
3. When has your faith stretched or unsettled you?
4. Why do you think belief matters so deeply to God?

**Based on Chapter 8: *The Woman at the Well***

1. The woman at the well crosses every social and religious boundary of her time. Have you ever met someone who lives beyond expected boundaries in a meaningful or surprising way?
2. From this story, what does Jesus reveal about what the Kingdom of God looks like?

**Based on Chapter 9: *What the Body Knows***

1. The story of the woman who anoints Jesus' feet varies across the Gospels. How do you imagine her?
  - A familiar friend?
  - A woman with a complicated past?
  - A devoted disciple?

2. In this scene, one group is shocked by her actions, while the woman seems deeply self-aware and free. What do you make of this contrast?
3. The woman with the alabaster jar shows profound hospitality—far more than the host did.
  - How do you offer hospitality to others?
  - What does meaningful hospitality look like for you?

**Based on Chapter 10: *Vain Worship***

1. Do you see jewelry as a sign of status, an expression of beauty, or simply a personal accessory?
2. Jesus critiques legalism, self-righteousness, and exclusivism. Do you notice any of these tendencies in our own religious communities today?
3. Does your understanding of holiness lead you toward hospitality, inclusion, and freedom? Why or why not?

**Based on Chapter 11: *Only One Thing***

1. Do you relate more to Martha or to Mary—and in what ways?
2. Thomas suggests that Mary is acting as a true disciple. Do you agree? Why?
3. How did Jesus elevate and champion women within his cultural context?
4. What might the Church look like if women held more leadership roles?
5. Jesus calls us to live with “holy wildness.” What passion or boldness do you feel He is inviting you to embrace?

**Closing Prayer**

For whom and what shall we pray...

Gracious Lord,

Thank You for the insights and questions shared today.

Plant in us a deeper faith, a more generous spirit, and a heart open to Your Kingdom.

Strengthen us to resist legalism and self-righteousness, and guide us to live with the boldness and freedom You desire.

As we leave this place, help us carry Your love into every conversation, every act of service, and every moment of our daily lives.

May the Holy Spirit stir in us anew, that we may become instruments of Your peace.

In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Next time Chapters 12 The Widowed Prophet---16 But What do you Think?