

Our Atonement

Session 13 • Matthew 26:17-30



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Matthew 14–28*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Matthew’s Gospel*).

ASK: How does death sometimes sharpen our focus on the things that really matter in life? (p. 105)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 105.

DISCUSS: Encourage the group to consider the “final dinner party” scenario. Encourage a few volunteers to share whom they might invite and what they might say to those gathered.

CONTEXT: Draw attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Matthew 14–28*). Point out that this session examines the last supper, which is part of Jesus’s trial and crucifixion. Summarize this information from **Understand the Context** (p. 105) to give an overview of Matthew 26.

- “Passover began on Thursday evening at sundown. . . . Also on that day, or perhaps a day earlier, the chief priests met to initiate Jesus’s arrest (26:3-5). Sometime that afternoon, while Jesus spoke of end

times under the olive trees on the Mount of Olives, Judas the betrayer sold Him out (vv. 14-16). Sometime on Thursday, Jesus sent John and Peter to prepare for the Passover celebration (see Luke 22:8). Following the Passover meal, Jesus returned to the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, where He spent an agonizing time in prayer as He faced the coming event of the crucifixion (vv. 36-46).”

TRANSITION: *Today’s session focuses on Jesus’s Passover meal—His “last supper”—with His disciples. Through Jesus’s words around that meal, we’ll get a clear view of our own sins and what Jesus’s death means for our sinfulness.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 26:17-25 aloud as the group highlights the setting and significance of the event.

EXPLAIN: Briefly summarize verses 17-20. Note that the secrecy about the location would keep Jesus and His disciples hidden from the Jewish leaders.

- **(26:17)** “Where do you want us to make preparations for . . . the Passover” implies that Jesus already knew where they would celebrate the Passover. Jesus told Peter

and John to locate a certain man and to tell him that the Teacher's time is near. This referred to Jesus's impending death and seems to indicate that Jesus had shared what lay ahead for Him with this unnamed man.

- **(26:17-19)** Preparing the Passover involved arrangement of the room and the food for the meal. It also could have included sacrificing the lamb at the temple and transporting it to the site where it would be roasted and eaten. Other parts of the meal included greens, bitter herbs mixed with stewed fruit, wine, and unleavened bread.

ASK: How did the disciples respond to Jesus's announcement of betrayal? How do you think He felt in that moment? (p. 107)

RECAP: Allow adults to discuss their responses. Point out that Judas spoke last and that he called Jesus "Rabbi," while the others called Him "Lord." Explain the meaning of verse 24:

- "While the impending death of Jesus was the fulfillment of both prophecy and the plan of God, the actions of Judas arose from his own willful choice. There is no conflict between God's sovereign will and Judas's free will. Jesus was not a victim of some political process but the center of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. Judas was not merely a pawn in God's plan but someone who acted out of his own decisions and perhaps flawed thinking. Because of this, Judas would suffer the consequences for his decision." (p. 109, Day 2)

SHARE: Emphasize that Jesus knew exactly what was going on. Point out that His response showed that He understood how Judas had given himself over to sin.

ASK: What can we do to resist becoming immune to the dangers of sin? (p. 107)

READ: Direct the group to read Matthew 26:26-30 silently, underlining the meanings of the bread and the cup.

ASK: What was the significance of the Passover meal? How did the meal connect to Jesus's mission? (p. 107)

CONNECT: Summarize this content to highlight how Jesus redefined the Passover in light of His sacrifice:

- **(26:26-28)** The Passover meal included a variety of dishes with different meanings. One of those dishes was the *matzah* bread, a flat, unleavened piece of bread that represented the bread eaten in haste in Egypt as the Israelites prepared to flee (Deut. 16:3). Jesus broke and gave this bread to each disciple with the instructions to take and eat. With this action, Jesus changed the meaning of this bread. The breaking of the bread pointed to His death. No longer was this a reminder of the exodus; now it would serve as a reminder of Christ's atoning death. The lamb's blood was a major feature in the Passover ritual (Ex. 12:7,13,22-23). But now Jesus focused on His own blood, represented by the cup. Taking this cup, Jesus gave thanks and urged His disciples to drink from it. The cup of wine symbolized His "blood" that would be poured out for the forgiveness

of sins. That Jesus had them drink from a common cup symbolized their unity.

ASK: Why is it important for believers to remember Jesus's sacrifice on the cross? (p. 107)

PRAY: Direct adults to scan the QR code for the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (p. 59). Invite them to pray this session's memory verse, Matthew 26:28, back to God as noted in the prayer guide.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers must recognize their own capacity to betray Jesus.
- We find forgiveness by accepting Jesus's death as the payment for our sins.

CHALLENGE: As a group, consider why it is important for all believers to regularly remember Jesus's sacrifice on the cross. Remind adults that regularly celebrating Jesus's death through the Lord's Supper should challenge them to reflect on their sin and His atonement.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to the **Apply the Text** activity on page 107. Guide the group to consider how they personally prepare for the Lord's Supper and how they might encourage one another the next time the ordinance is observed. Point out the **Apply the Text** questions on page 111. Urge adults to reflect on these questions and to ask for God's help in eliminating false steps that could lead them to deny or betray Jesus.

PRAY: Encourage adults to continue using **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Matthew's Gospel*) to pray Scripture back to God during the week ahead. Close the session in prayer, thanking Christ Jesus for offering His body and blood so we can find forgiveness and avoid the wrath we deserve.

AFTER THE SESSION

Text or email your group this week with a phrase, verse, or thought from this week's lesson. Challenge them to complete the **Bible Skill** activity on page 107. Enlist a few volunteers to be ready to share what they learned when you gather for Bible study next week. Remind adults that the coming session will be the last in the study of Matthew's Gospel.