



NG Study Guide: Matt. 26:17-30 "The King's Supper" [8.20.17]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: Growing up in an observant Jewish home, I've celebrated over 100 Passover Seder meals with family and friends remembering the story of the Exodus. But when I became a follower of Christ, the Passover shifted from a religious, familial, and cultural tradition to a spiritual, life-transforming event. The apex of the Last (Passover) Supper is the Lord's Supper or communion. Communion is not only a ceremony or ritual, but is a symbol of an intimate union with Jesus. Today, we will discover how to experience communion with Christ.

A. How to prepare for the Lord's Supper [17-30]

The disciples sought to prepare for the Passover [17, 18]. How might you prepare for the Lord's Supper:

1. Remember you've been set free to worship God [17]:

The Feast of Unleavened Bread [17] is an eight-day feast which begins with the Passover [Ex. 12]. It is one of three major feasts on the Jewish calendar, and Jews are to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to observe the feast. The city would swell with pilgrims. The Passover commemorates God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt and the Exodus to the Promised Land. On the night of the tenth plague, the slaying of the firstborn, God promised to pass over any home (Jew or Gentile) where the blood of a lamb was placed upon the doorframe. Jesus is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world to free us to worship God [Jn.1:29]. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is also connected to the Exodus in that the Jews fled Egypt in haste, and per God's instruction they did not add leaven (yeast) to their dough as there was no time to let the dough rise. But there is another reason. Leaven is a picture of sin in the Bible. It permeates, corrupts, and spreads. God's people Israel would leave Egypt, a picture of the world, and were going to the Promised Land. They were to experience a new chapter in their relationship with God, and were to live as people set-apart to God rather than dominated by sin and the world. I need to live as someone set-apart to God rather than dominated by sin and the world. I've been set-free to worship God through Jesus.

2. Remember you need to follow Jesus' instructions [18-20]

The disciples wanted to know where Jesus planned to have His Passover meal [17]. Matthew records that the disciples were sent to "a certain man" [18]. Luke tells us the two disciples who were sent were Peter and John. Mark and Luke let us know that the sign was to look for a man carrying a water jug. Since that task was typically done by women the man would stand out. Peter and John would deliver the message from Jesus that His time was at hand and that he would keep the Passover with His disciples at the man's home [18]. The disciples did as they were instructed and prepared the Passover [19]. Jesus sat with the disciples when evening came, because the Passover begins at sundown [20]. There is an important principle to observe here: first the disciples did as Jesus instructed, then Jesus was with them in a very deep and intimate experience. We won't experience communion or intimacy with Jesus until we seek to submit to His will. You need to choose to learn, and to do what Jesus instructs.

3. Remember to humbly consider how you might betray Jesus [21-22]

Jesus predicts that surely one of the twelve would betray Him [21]. Jesus confronts our sin. The weight of Jesus words, and the conviction of His presence is such that the twelve became exceedingly sorrowful, and each asked, "Lord, is it I?" [22]. Notice, they don't all point to Judas and say, "It's Judas. I know it's Judas." Instead they ask, "Lord, Is it I?" Those three words, "Is it I?" are so powerful to me. They ring with humility, and introspection, and a self-awareness that it is our human nature to rebel against God's authority. Those three words are so powerful, but seemingly so rare. For instance, in the struggles that we inevitably encounter in our relationships with God, parents, spouse, children, friends, co-workers, and neighbors it is the rare soul who asks, "Is it I?" It is so healthy for me to wrestle with the idea would I betray Jesus? Betrayal is more than Judas handing Jesus over to the religious leaders. Betrayal is: disloyalty, faithlessness, breach of trust and selling out.

4. Remember to repent [23-25]

Jesus identifies his betrayer as the one who dipped with Him in the dish [23]. The betrayer was near or next to Jesus at the meal. Per John's account, Judas had the seat of honor to the right of Jesus [Jn.13:26]. Jesus gives a loving warning that it would be better not to have been born [24]. Imagine the guilt, shame, and torment of betraying Jesus. Then Judas asks, "Rabbi is it I?" [25]. Rabbi is a respectful term meaning "my teacher" but is certainly different than "Lord." This is the essence of the betrayal and unfaithfulness, Judas had not allowed Jesus to be Lord in his life. Jesus acknowledged that it was Judas who would betray Him [25]. Jesus confronts our sin, encourages us to repent, and warns us of the consequences. John tells us that Judas then left [Jn. 13:30]. When I'm confronted with my sin, will I repent? Will I change my thinking about God and my sin to turn from my sin to experience intimacy with Christ?

5. Remember Jesus' love and sacrifice for you [26-30]

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper or communion. The unleavened bread [26] (matzoh) was a symbol of their identity as a people set-apart to God, and called to worship Him alone. From now on the bread would also be a tangible reminder of his suffering and sacrifice for our sin [Lu. 22:19-20]. The cup [27] was the third of four cups of wine during the Passover Feast. They were symbols of God's four-fold promise to His people to: set-apart, deliver, redeem, and take them [Ex.6:6-7]. The cup they partook of was the third cup or the cup of redemption [Ps. 116:12-13]. It is Christ's blood that pays the penalty for our sin, and ushers in the new covenant. In the Old Testament or old covenant, God had promised a new covenant where sin could be forgiven once and for all [Jer. 31:34]. The blood of animals was shed to ratify the first covenant [Ex. 24:8], and Jesus' blood was shed to usher in the new. Jesus told them that He would not partake of the fourth cup with them that night [29]. The fourth cup was the cup of taking, and Jesus affirmed that they would partake together when He returned to take His people and deliver them to His Father's kingdom. And I eagerly await His Second Coming, and the restoration of all things. And while I wait, I want to be found faithful to Him. Because of His love and sacrifice for me, I've experienced life with Christ. I want be close and draw even closer to Jesus. And He has revealed how to experience communion with Him.

Q1. Describe a season in your life when you felt especially close to Christ. How did it feel, and what were you doing that helped you feel close?

Q2. What might cause someone to betray Jesus?

Q3. What does the ritual of communion mean for you? Describe some of the thoughts and feelings that you have experienced when partaking of communion.

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Read the following passages involving communion: Ex. 6:6-7, Ps. 116:12-13, Lu.22:19-20, 1Cor.10:14-17, 1Cor. 11:23-31. What do these passages reveal to you about communion with Christ?

2. Consider 1 Cor.5:7 *“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”* Paul is trying to tell believers that because of Jesus sacrifice, they should be a “new lump” because they are “unleavened.” Research what that means and how you can apply it to your life.

3. Review Exodus 12 regarding the requirement that all participants were to be circumcised [3x v. 44,48]. What does that reveal about the necessity of being a follower of Christ in order to participate in the Lord’s Supper or Communion? Which do you think is a greater sacrifice, cutting the foreskin or submitting to Christ? Why

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Look for an opportunity to befriend and build a relationship with someone whom you play sports, exercise, or you share a hobby.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.