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## SESSION THREE

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# The Last Supper

### SESSION SUMMARY

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For more than a thousand years, the Israelites celebrated God's deliverance from Egypt through the Passover meal. At the same time, this meal pointed ahead to an even more glorious sacrifice and work of God. Jesus reinterpreted the Passover meal in light of Himself and His coming sacrifice on the cross, where He would pay for the sins of the world. With a demonstration of authority and humility, Jesus set forth the pattern of countless Lord's Supper celebrations that now point back to His new covenant sacrifice and point forward to His coming kingdom.

### SCRIPTURE

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Matthew 26:26-30; John 13:1-15

# THE POINT

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**The Lord's Supper points to Jesus' sacrifice for sins.**

## INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

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### Option 1

Painted by Leonardo da Vinci in the late 15th century, *The Last Supper* is one of the most iconic paintings in the world. Along with the *Mona Lisa*, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and a handful of other works, the painting has been a focal point in the art world since its creation.

On the wall of a converted monastery in Milan sits Jesus, center table, surrounded by His disciples in the very moment that He predicts His betrayal. Respected for its mystery and majesty, the mural has been much copied over the years through cultural caricature. Rather than Jesus and His disciples, you might find world leaders or pop culture icons like Han Solo, Kermit the Frog, or Bugs Bunny gathered around the table.

Although the painting is not the most accurate depiction of the historical setting of the supper, it is hauntingly beautiful and leaves quite the impression upon its viewers. Thousands of years of Passovers pointed ahead to this meal, and thousands of years of Lord's Supper celebrations point back to this supper of humble service, covenantal sacrifice and kingdom anticipation.

- **Why do you think the Last Supper painting has been so popular?**

### Option 2

Every sports team has a uniform, and sports fans tend to associate a team with a uniform color, like "Kentucky Blue" or "Carolina Blue." But people are probably even more likely to recognize their team's mascot, like the Kentucky Wildcats, the Carolina Tarheels, the Minnesota Vikings, the Denver Broncos, or the Baltimore Orioles. To sports fans, each of these colors or mascots represent their teams.

- **What's your favorite sports team? Who is the team's mascot? What are the team's colors?**

In a much more meaningful way, the Lord's Supper represents Jesus' sacrifice for us. And the last supper—Jesus' final meal with His disciples—pointed forward to the way Jesus would die on the cross where His body would be broken and His blood would be poured out for us. So, when we participate in the Lord's Supper at church, we should remember Jesus and His sacrifice for us.

# HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

## THE POINT

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**The Lord's Supper points to Jesus' sacrifice for sins.**

## CHARACTERS

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- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **The Disciples:** the twelve men Jesus chose to follow Him, take part in His ministry, and share the gospel with others

## PLOT

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Our story progresses to an event that is well known even among those unfamiliar with the Bible—the last supper. In celebration of Passover—the miraculous event that took place in Egypt during the time of Moses—Jesus and the disciples gathered together to share a meal, the elements of which would point to what He would eventually accomplish on the cross.

## TIMELINE

### THE LAST SUPPER

*The fulfilling of the New Covenant.*

### JESUS IS ARRESTED

*Jesus agrees to drink the cup of suffering.*

### THE CRUCIFIXION

*Jesus as our substitute sacrifice.*

## JESUS WASHED THE DISCIPLES' FEET

To set the scene of the last supper, we'll dig into the account in the Gospel of John. Take a look:

**1** Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. **2** During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, **3** Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, **4** rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. **5** Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. **6** He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" **7** Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." **8** Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." **9** Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" **10** Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." **11** For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." **12** When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? **13** You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. **14** If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. **15** For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you." (John 13:1-15)

*Undercover Boss* is a television series that sees owners and/or senior executives posing as an employee, under a fake identity, in order to evaluate the working culture within their companies and get to know entry-level employees. Each show features a different executive working undercover for a period of a week or two during which the boss will inevitably face some sort of predicament and get to know his or her employees.

The turning point of each episode is the big reveal when the various lower-level workers are transported to company headquarters or some other central location where the boss discloses his or her true identity after having worked with these employees. Depending on how those workers performed their various roles over the course of the episode, the boss either rewards or disciplines them.

Jesus' entire life was marked by service. He served the crowds and His disciples constantly, escaping only for a few short breaks to rest in prayer and contemplation. One might think this last meal would surely be the moment of His big reveal. Like the undercover boss, maybe we imagine that—having taken the form of a servant until the end of the episode—the King removes His blue-collar uniform and sits enthroned in royal robes to the amazement of His followers. That is what we might expect. Instead, the King removes His robe and kneels in yet another act of service to the amazement of His followers.

One might say that Jesus' entire life was marked by service—it was the very reason He came. Far from a peripheral aspect of His life and ministry, service was at the very heart of who He is and what He does.

What would motivate such service? What kind of posture of heart would cause someone to lay aside privilege and preference for the sake of others? In a word—*humility*. Christ's service was not begrudging or selfish, but selfless and sacrificial. He sees the needs of His people and He responds.

After washing the dusty feet of His disciples, Jesus reclined again at the table and issued a challenge and a command: Go and do likewise. If the King should serve His people, how much more should His servants serve each other?

- **Is your life marked more by serving or being served?** (*p. 23, PSG*)

## JESUS EXPLAINED THE PURPOSE OF THE SUPPER

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Each week, faithful followers of Christ all around the world take part in the Lord's Supper. As deacons, ushers, or other members distribute the bread and juice, a pastor recites this passage from Matthew, a parallel passage from Mark or Luke, or perhaps 1 Corinthians 11. Here is Matthew's account.

**26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matt. 26:26-28)**

For thousands of years, God required sacrifices of His people. From Adam to Noah to Abraham to David, God's were a people of sacrifice. But as our God seeks to serve rather than be served, He always intended to be the One to offer the ultimate sacrifice for His people. As Jesus came to serve and not be served, He would offer up His life as a ransom for others. His blood would be poured out for our sins—and the last supper was a representation of that.

Think of it this way: the Statue of Liberty, the Vietnam Memorial, and the U.S. Flag are each an iconic representation of something. Each tells a story of hope, sacrifice, or patriotism, and each communicates a vision of purpose and meaning. Every culture has these types of symbols, and seeing them brings to mind certain ideals or, in some cases, misplaced hopes.

When Jesus broke the bread and lifted the cup, He was painting a picture of a new reality. He crafted a visual depiction of the events that would soon occur—His body would hang between earth and air, and His blood would flow from His pierced side. His broken body: the breaking of bread. His blood poured out: the drinking of the cup. Even now, as we participate in the Lord’s Supper together, we do so to remember what He sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 11:17-26).

## JESUS POINTED FORWARD TO A FUTURE SUPPER WITH ALL BELIEVERS

Patience is something that does not come naturally to any of us. A favorite meal on the stove requires a taste test. An incredible dessert demands to be eaten long before the party even begins. Technology has rendered many completely unable to wait in patience. Why spend the time shopping and cooking the elaborate meal when you can order a pizza or heat a frozen dinner? Why take the time to write a letter and wait on the mail when you can text?

But there is something about waiting and anticipation that are inherent to the Christian faith. In fact, we see the importance of patience and waiting even in the account of the Lord’s Supper.

**29 “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” 30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Matt. 26:29-30)**

There in that tiny upper room, what must have seemed like an offhand remark is actually a beautiful promise. Jesus would not drink of the vine again soon, but He would drink it again. Not only would He drink it again, but He would do so in the kingdom of His Father, with the disciples.

The message of the coming kingdom is a message of hope, joy, and fulfillment and is the longing of the Christian heart. So, we pray for God’s kingdom to come (Matt. 6:10). We hunger and thirst for the kingdom, because we hunger and thirst for the King.

- **When have you felt the deep desire, or need, for God’s kingdom? For Jesus?** (p. 24, PSG)

## TIMELINE

### HE IS RISEN

*The resurrection of the Son of God.*

### HEARTS ON FIRE

*All Scripture points to Jesus.*

### JESUS SENDS

*The disciples witness the risen Christ and receive the peace He brings.*

## 99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Lord's Supper (p. 24, PSG)

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*The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer, and anticipate His second coming (1 Cor. 11:26).*

## CHRIST CONNECTION

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One of the great commands we find throughout Scripture is to remember. Remembering resets our identity on where we have come from and on what we have come through. Remembering not only solidifies our identity by looking into the past, but it also fortifies our mission as we look to the future. In the Passover meal, the Israelites remembered their God who served, delivered, and guided them. As Christians partake in the Lord's Supper, we remember Christ, whose entire life was marked by service in the mission of God and service for the good of His people.

# YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

## GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **How does the Lord's Supper provide a picture of salvation in Christ?** *The bread—Jesus' body—was broken for us as He endured the punishment our sins deserved. The wine—His blood—was the blood shed for the atonement of our sins.*
- **The Lord's Supper can become a church ritual rather than a meaningful remembrance. What are some ways that you can cultivate a more intentional experience next time you take the Lord's Supper with your church?**  
*One way would be to spend some time in personal prayer before you take the elements, confessing any sins before God and asking Him for the grace to participate in the Lord's Supper in a meaningful way.*
- **What is the last thing you can remember waiting for in anticipation?**  
*Answers will vary.*
- **Do you honestly look forward to the full arrival of God's future kingdom? Why or why not?** *It is not surprising that many young people have conflicting emotions regarding Jesus' imminent return. They look forward to it for sure, but they also hope that it is distant as well—after all, they want to grow up, get married, have kids, and experience life as they imagine it. Be sympathetic to students in your group who think this way. The reason they do is because of the simple fact that they haven't grasped how much better everything will be when Jesus returns. They haven't fully grasped that life experiences won't go away, but will be infinitely enhanced as things are done directly under the lordship of Christ, for both His glory and our good.*

### HIS STORY

*God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.*

### YOUR STORY

*Where your story meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



## HEAD

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Earthly kings are not typically known for their service. However, our God has established a different kingdom—one marked by humility and selflessness. Every time we partake in the Lord's Supper now, we are constantly reminded of the servant nature of our God because the Lord's Supper points to the sacrificial nature of Christ's death for our sins.

- **Read Mark 10:45 and Acts 17:24-25. What do these passages say about how God relates to us?** *In essence, they both tell us that God doesn't need to be served by us, but because of our great need for Him, we are the ones who are served by the almighty God.*
- **Why do you think people often believe they must first serve God in order for Him to respond with love and grace?** *Many people have a works-based understanding of God, thinking a person needs to do something in order to receive something from God in return.*



## HEART

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The Lord's Supper has a way of increasing our expectation of the day Jesus will return. It points our attention to and increases our anticipation of the day when we will no longer need symbolic representations of Christ's sacrifice since Christ Himself will be with His people. Jesus mentioned the anticipation of His return, as did Paul (Matt. 26:29; 1 Cor. 11:26). We should never allow the Lord's Supper to become dull or ritualistic; instead, we should allow it to guide our imaginations into what that day will be like when the people of God are gathered together for the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:1-9).

- **How can the Lord's Supper encourage believers in their faith?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does this session give you a renewed understanding of the Lord's Supper?** *Answers will vary.*



## HANDS

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Just as the Lord's Supper points toward the fact that Jesus' service is not selfish, but selfless and sacrificial, we should remember our servant identity in the kingdom of God. In partaking of the Lord's Supper, we agree with God's mission of sharing the gospel with others. Because of Jesus' humble service to us and because of His new covenant sacrifice, we can live lives of service as we excitedly wait for His return.

- **In what areas of your life are you serving others?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some practical ways you can practice service toward those in your home, church, school, and community this week?** *Answers will vary.*

## ► ADDITIONAL INFO

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### **LEADER PACK**

For this session, refer students to pack item #5, which contains a quote poster related to the last supper.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to [lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17](http://lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17))**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

**[GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)**

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

**[MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject)**