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Prepare Before the Session

Read the session for today in the Study Guide. Then read the options in this Teaching Guide, placing checkmarks beside the activities you plan to include. After you have decided which options to use, gather the appropriate materials.

**WHAT’S IN YOUR TEACHING GUIDE**

This Teaching Guide has three purposes:

➤ to give the teacher tools for focusing on the content of the session in the Study Guide.
➤ to give the teacher additional Bible background information.
➤ to give the teacher variety and choice in preparation.

The Teaching Guide includes two major components: Teacher Helps and Teacher Options.

**Teacher Helps**

**Bible Background**

The Study Guide is your main source of Bible study material. This section helps you more fully understand and interpret the Scripture text.

**Teaching Outline**

provides you with an outline of the main themes in the Study Guide.

**Teacher Options**

The next three sections provide a beginning, middle, and end for the session, with focus paragraphs in between.

**Focus Paragraphs**

are printed in italics at the top of the page because they are the most important part of the Teaching Guide. These paragraphs will help you move your class from “what the text meant” to “what the text means.”

**You Can Choose!**

There is more material in each session than you can use, so choose the options from each section to tailor the session to the needs of your group.
Jesus Celebrates the Last Supper

After Jesus arrives in Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-48), he spends a week teaching in the temple (20:1–21:38). Meals have played a significant role throughout Jesus’ ministry, so it is fitting that he gathers at last for a Passover meal with his disciples. Yet the prospect of Jesus’ death looms over this meal, as Judas and the temple leadership have plotted his death (22:3-6). This meal will be Jesus’ last supper with his disciples and the last occasion he will have to teach them before his arrest.

Luke’s account of the meal itself focuses on two sets of sayings (Talbert, 207). Both emphasize eating bread and drinking from the cup, but the first set of sayings focuses on the coming kingdom (vv. 14-18), while the second focuses on Jesus’ gift of his life (vv. 19-20).

Jesus first expresses his strong desire to share the Passover meal with his disciples before his suffering (see Luke 9:22; 17:25). He then points forward to the final fulfillment of the banquet he will share in God’s kingdom (see Luke 13:29; 14:15).

After these words, Jesus shares a cup with the disciples (v. 17). Although we can’t be certain of all the details of first-century Passover observance, this cup is best understood as the second cup served immediately before the meal itself (Culpepper, 418–19). Only Luke preserves a tradition that includes two cups. Both Matthew and Mark have only one (Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-24), as does Paul (1 Cor 11:23-25).

The second set of sayings (Luke 22:19-20) refers to events during or after the Passover meal. Although not all the ancient manuscripts of Luke include verses 19b-20, the oldest and most reliable manuscripts do (Vinson, 668). Therefore, the Common English Bible translators have retained the longer text.

In these verses, Jesus uses elements of the Passover meal to interpret his own death as the gift of his life for his disciples. Jesus asks the disciples to repeat this meal in his memory, since the offering of his life is the foundation for the new community that he creates for them (Talbert, 207–208). Jesus’ death seals this new covenant and, in that sense, makes possible a new community and a new communion or relationship between God and humanity.

Jesus’ words about the covenant recall the ceremony of Exodus 24:3-8 in which Moses threw blood on the altar and on the people, binding God and the Israelites together in relationship. Now, Jesus’ blood seals a new relationship between his followers and God. Just as Israel’s leaders shared a meal in God’s presence after making their covenant (Exod 24:10-12), so now the disciples and Jesus share a
covenant meal that marks their new relationship.

**Jesus Teaches the Disciples**

The time in the upper room does not end with words over the bread and the cup. Luke next provides his readers with Jesus’ farewell speech. This speech sets Luke’s account of the evening off from Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts, which do not contain this material. In verses 21-30, Luke draws on both the traditions of Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. The Old Testament provides examples of farewell speeches like those of Jacob (Gen 49:1-28) and Moses (Deut 31:1-29). But it was also customary for Greek and Roman writers to describe the last speech of a soldier or sage before his death. The leader would usually speak about his own life, predict future events, and bestow authority on his followers (Johnson 348–49). Jesus’ speech unfolds in three stages: Jesus foretells his betrayal (vv. 21-23), warns against the desire for status (vv. 24-27), and promises a reward for faithfulness (vv. 28-30).

In the first section of his farewell speech, Jesus predicts that one of his disciples will betray him (vv. 21-23). In contrast to the other Synoptic Gospels (Matt 26:21-25; Mark 14:18-21), which place this prediction before the meal, Luke places it afterwards. This placement emphasizes that it is possible to eat with Jesus and still betray him (Talbert, 210). The impending act of betrayal stands as a warning to all who share in the Lord’s Supper and calls them to self-examination (Craddock, 257).

Jesus had previously predicted his death (Luke 9:18-22; 9:44; 18:31-33), and Luke makes clear that his death is part of God’s redemptive plan. Even so, that divine purpose doesn’t negate Judas’s own responsibility for his treachery, as Jesus still pronounces woe upon him (v. 22). Luke reminds his readers that even in the midst of human sinfulness, God works to achieve the divine purpose of redemption (Culpepper, 422–23).

Yet Judas is not alone in his failure to follow Jesus to the end. As the second section of the farewell speech reveals, all the disciples falter due to their desire for power and status (vv. 24-27). Their initial response to Jesus’ prediction of betrayal is to argue about which one of them will be guilty of the deed (v. 23). Surprisingly, the disciples’ argument immediately shifts away from a focus on Jesus’ betrayal to a focus on their own rank in the kingdom Jesus has promised. This desire for status in the kingdom is not new, for the disciples had already argued about their respective standing (9:46-47).

In response, Jesus reminds them that God’s kingdom is not like earthly kingdoms, where those in authority are ironically called “friends of the people” (v. 25). The mark of greatness among Jesus’ disciples is not authority but service. Jesus’ own example of service is the model the disciples are to follow (v. 27).

The third section of Jesus’ farewell speech (vv. 28-30) is a promise that he will reward the loyalty of his disciples who have remained true, enduring the time of testing with him. Because of their faithfulness, Jesus will bestow royal authority on them. Using legal language, Jesus tells
them that he is now passing on to them the authority to rule that God first granted to him.

That authority is manifest in two ways. First, the disciples will eat and drink at Jesus’ table in his kingdom. Luke’s first readers would have understood this language in reference to a king and his comrades-in-arms who received special privileges, including table fellowship (Vinson, 683), or in reference to the elders of Israel who sat at the table with Moses in God’s presence (Exod 24:11; Johnson, 345). Second, the disciples will sit on thrones ruling the twelve tribes of Israel, a role Luke portrays in Acts 1–6 as fulfilled in their leadership of God’s people (Johnson, 349). But the complete fulfillment of these promises points forward from the earthly lifetime of the apostles to the end of the age and to the heavenly banquet that all disciples will share with their king (Luke 12:37; 13:22-30).

A Way to Begin

We live in a culture obsessed with power and prestige that continually tries to shape us into its mold. Luke’s Gospel, however, points us to another way of living. This way focuses on a heavenly kingdom with service at its center. Help participants explore the contrast between what our culture values and the values of God’s kingdom made visible in Jesus’ life of service.

Most Prestigious Jobs

Since 1977, the Harris Poll has surveyed Americans to discover what occupations they consider most prestigious. Distribute copies of the resource page “Most Prestigious Jobs.” (Note: this page is based on 2014 data, the most recently compiled at the time of publication; you can search the Internet for 2015 data.) Discuss the list and what this list tells us about what our society values. Ask the following questions.

Questions

➤ What characteristics do the occupations on the list share?
➤ What occupations appear most often over time?
➤ What does this list tell us about what our society values?
➤ What value does the ranking seem to place on service to others?

Do you think other societies would have similar lists? Why or why not?
➤ If you made your own list of most prestigious occupations, which ones would be at the top? Why?

In the News

Collect images of celebrities from recent newspapers and magazines or an Internet search. Display these to the class or pass the images around for participants to see. Ask the following questions:

Questions

➤ What characteristics do these celebrities share?
➤ What do these images suggest that our culture values?
➤ How do our cultural values compare or contrast with the values of the kingdom of God? What values are shared? What values are different?
A Way to Explore Scripture

Luke’s account of the Last Supper reveals the sharp contrast between Jesus’ self-giving and the disciples’ focus on their own place in God’s kingdom. Help participants understand how following Jesus leads disciples away from self-seeking action to serving others.

A Quotation

Read Luke 22:14-30. Using information in the Learner’s Study Guide and the Bible Background section, review the setting of the Passover meal and the disciples’ dispute over who is greatest. Discuss the differences between the disciples and Jesus in their understanding of greatness and the kingdom of God.

Share the following quotation from Martin Luther King, Jr.:

If you want to be important—wonderful. If you want to be recognized—wonderful. If you want to be great—wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That’s a new definition of greatness.

And this morning, the thing that I like about it: by giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know Einstein’s theory of relativity to serve. You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And you can be that servant.

Farewell Speeches

Provide copies of three famous farewell speeches. You might choose them from the Bible (for example, Gen 49:1-28; Deut 31:1-29; Josh 24:1-27) or research those of important historical figures (for example, George Washington, Douglas MacArthur, Ronald Reagan).

Divide the class into three groups. Assign each group a different farewell speech. Have each group analyze their assigned speech. What was the setting? Who was the audience? What does the speaker say about his or her own life? About the future? What instructions does the speaker give to the audience? Have each group share its findings with the class.

Read Luke 22:14-30. Analyze Jesus’ speech as you did the others.

Questions

➤ What is similar or different when comparing Jesus’ farewell to the others?
➤ What would it mean for you to follow Jesus to the end? How would your life change?

Questions

➤ How does King’s definition of greatness compare with that of the disciples? Of Jesus?
➤ What is not required to be a servant?
➤ What is required to be a servant?
➤ How can disciples develop the character of a servant?
Luke reminds his readers of Jesus’ gift of his own life and the reality of a new covenant with God sealed by this gift. Receiving that gift leads to a new focus for living, as we no longer strive for positions of prestige but instead follow Jesus’ example of service. Guide participants to reflect on the meaning of the gift of Jesus’ body and blood. What actions should they take in response to that gift?

**Hymn**
Provide the lyrics to the hymn “As He Gathered at His Table.” (If this hymn is not in your hymnal, you can find it online at Hymnary.org.) Ask participants to identify words and phrases that reflect details in today’s Scripture passage. List these on the board. Ask the following questions.

**Questions**
➤ What actions of Jesus does the hymn emphasize?
➤ What responses on our part does the hymn suggest?
➤ How might we put those responses into concrete action this week?

Close by singing this hymn or another hymn about Communion.

**A Time for Reflection**
Distribute index cards or small sheets of paper to each participant. Ask them to reflect on the meaning of the Lord’s Supper for them and on their own steadfastness in following Jesus. Have them write two or three sentences that summarize their reflections.

Close with prayer, thanking God for the gift of new life that Jesus offers in his broken body and shed blood. Pray for renewed commitment to follow him in deeper discipleship and devotion.

**Resources**


Bible Background

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus


Luke’s account of the arrest focuses on Jesus’ interaction with Judas (vv. 47-48), the remaining disciples (vv. 49-51), and those who have come to arrest him (vv. 52-53).

The arrest unfolds quickly while Jesus is speaking to the disciples, who have fallen asleep (v. 46). A crowd suddenly appears, led by Judas Iscariot, whom Luke is careful to identify as one of the Twelve.

The meaning of “Iscariot” has been the source of much debate. The four major positions are (1) that this Judas is from the village Kerioth, making him the only disciple from Judea rather than Galilee; (2) that he uses a sicarius, a kind of knife later associated with assassins during the First Jewish War; (3) that the word derives from a Hebrew root meaning “the one handing over,” designating him as the betrayer; or (4) that it derives from a Hebrew root meaning “false one” (Klassen, 1091–1092). Luke concludes his list of the apostles in 6:12-16 with the note that Judas Iscariot would become a traitor. Yet after that initial comment, Judas’s name does not appear again until Satan enters into him and he plots Jesus’ death with the chief priests and their legal experts (Luke 22:1-6).

Here on the Mount of Olives, Judas draws near to Jesus to kiss him, or literally, to “love” him. The Greek verb phileo means both “to love” and “to kiss,” a concrete expression of love (Fitzmyer, 1450). Judas’s act reveals the depth of his disloyalty as the sign of friendship becomes the mark of treachery.

Yet in the face of such betrayal, Jesus remains calm and serene. With some irony, he asks Judas whether it is with a kiss that he has come to hand him over. This question is not found in the other Gospel accounts but is unique to Luke.

Luke is the only Gospel writer to record the subsequent question of the disciples, “Lord, should we fight with our swords?” (v. 49). This question shifts the focus from Judas to the other disciples threatened by Jesus’ arrest. In contrast to Jesus’ calm and self-control, the prayerless disciples are fearful and uncertain. Though they address Jesus as Lord, it is clear that they have understood neither his message of nonviolence nor the divine plan (Green, 782, 734).
Nor do they wait for Jesus’ leadership, as one of them immediately strikes the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear (v. 50). John 18:10 identifies this disciple as Peter and the servant as Malchus. Luke, in his streamlined account of the arrest, does not provide these details. In contrast to the disciples, Jesus does not resist. Rather, he commands the disciples to stop any such attempt. In addition, he heals the servant’s ear, continuing the ministry of healing that has been a part of his work since the beginning (see Luke 4:23; 5:17, 31; 6:18-19; 7:7; 8:47; 9:2, 11, 42; 13:32; 14:4; 17:15; Johnson, 353).

Having spoken to Judas and his other disciples, Jesus then turns to address those who have come to arrest him. Just as he had posed an ironic question to Judas, he now asks them whether they have come to arrest him as if they were capturing a thief or a revolutionary (see Luke 10:30, 36). The first-century historian Josephus uses the word the CEB translates as “thief” to describe those who rebelled against the Roman Empire during the first Jewish War of AD 66–70 (Fitzmyer, 1451). Jesus’ question emphasizes his opponents’ fearfulness in contrast to his calm. He concludes that this is rightly their hour, a time of darkness (Luke 22:53).

Peter’s Denial of Jesus
As the leaders arrest Jesus, they take him from the Mount of Olives to the house of the high priest (v. 54). Here, the focus of the narrative shifts from Jesus to Peter, the only disciple to follow Jesus there. Peter has followed in the shadows, keeping his distance. He eventually comes to sit at a fire others have kindled in the middle of the courtyard to keep warm against the chill of the night (v. 55). Although we do not know its precise location, the high priest’s house would have been in the area of Jerusalem known as the Upper City. Archeological excavations there have uncovered several houses that suggest the probable layout: a central courtyard with living spaces on three sides and a large hall (Vinson, 697–98).

Luke rapidly recounts three accusations and Peter’s three denials. The first accusation comes from a servant woman who states that Peter was with Jesus (v. 56). The second comes from someone else who states emphatically that Peter was “one of them,” that is, one of the disciples with Jesus on the mountain (v. 58). Peter again denies his association with Jesus. An hour passes, and then a third individual, a man, insists that Peter was with Jesus, since he is also from Galilee (v. 59). That accusation prompts a third denial from Peter, but while he is still speaking, the rooster crows, and Jesus turns and looks at him. Only Luke records the detail of Jesus looking at Peter. That look, added to the rooster’s crow, cuts Peter to the quick. He
remembers that Jesus had told him he would deny him three times before the night was over. Despite his brave boast at dinner that he would follow Jesus to prison or death (v. 33), Peter has failed. His fear has led to faithlessness, and he leaves the courtyard weeping (v. 62).

These tears prove the beginning of his repentance, however, and Jesus’ other words to the disciples—that they would turn again and strengthen Jesus’ followers (v. 32)—also prove true. Although Luke’s Gospel does not, like John’s (John 21:15-22), provide an explicit account of Peter’s restoration, it is clear from what Luke does write that beyond Peter’s failure and tears lie new days of fellowship and leadership. Peter’s failure is not final, and his restoration reveals the hope that exists for all repentant disciples who falter along the way.

A Way to Begin

As Christians, our commitment to Christ lies at the center of our lives. We proclaim our loyalty to Christ and his kingdom above all else. But all too often we find our loyalties tested, and all too often we fail. Luke’s Gospel shows us that we are not alone. It provides an honest look at Jesus’ first disciples and their failures. Help participants explore the concept of loyalty and become aware of their own struggles and failures in Christian discipleship.

○ Models of Loyalty and Disloyalty
The word “loyalty” can be applied in many contexts. Businesses reward their loyal customers. Sports teams need loyal fans, and countries need loyal patriots.

Ask participants to list examples of loyalty and disloyalty, drawing from their own lives and their knowledge of literature and film.

Questions
➤ Is loyalty common or rare? Explain.
➤ Why is loyalty important for strong relationships?
➤ When does loyalty matter the most?
➤ What do the examples we have shared suggest about loyalty and about our lives as disciples of Jesus?

○ Who Said It?
Distribute copies of the resource page “Who Said It?” Have participants match the quotation provided with the person reported to have said it. [The answers are 1. E; 2. B; 3. D; 4. A (20:6); 5. C; 6. F.]

Questions
➤ Which quotations sound the most like biblical quotations? Why?
➤ Which quotations seem most similar to each other? Which ones seem most dissimilar?
➤ When is loyalty most important to you? Why?
➤ Do these quotations challenge or confirm your own definition of loyalty?
➤ How do these quotations speak to our loyalty to Christ and our discipleship?
Reenacting the Story
Early in the week, enlist volunteers to role-play today’s Bible story. You will need a narrator, Jesus, Judas, Peter, the high priest’s slave, two or three arresting officers, and the three people in the courtyard who accuse Peter.

Have the volunteers perform the role-play. Afterwards, discuss how putting oneself in the story helps us understand it better.

Invite those who did not play a role to share their insights.

Stepping into the Story
Prepare slips of paper with the names of the following characters: Jesus, Judas, Peter, the high priest’s slave, and an officer who arrests Jesus.

Divide the class into five groups. Have each group draw a character’s name. Ask them to imagine the Scripture passage from their character’s point of view. They may want to close their eyes while you read.

Read Luke 22:47-62. Have participants answer the following question as their assigned character would: what did you see, hear, feel, or experience?

Discuss how putting oneself in a biblical character’s shoes can shape our understanding of this story.

Three Failures
Divide the class into three groups. One group will focus on Judas, a second on Peter, and the third on the remaining disciples on the Mount of Olives. In addition to the focal passage, the group that focuses on Judas should read Matthew 27:3-5 and Acts 1:13-19. The other groups should read the focal passage and Acts 1:13-19 and Acts 2:14-17, 37-47. Have them discuss the following questions in their groups.

Questions
➤ How does this disciple fail Jesus?
➤ What factors contributed to that failure?
➤ What was the disciple’s response to that failure?

Bring the class together and have each group share its findings. Ask the following questions.

Questions
➤ How does Judas’s failure differ from that of Peter and the other disciples?
➤ What factors explain that difference?
A Way to End

All of us fail to follow Jesus fully and consistently. We prove no better than Jesus’ first disciples. Yet our failures are not the ends of our stories. Repentance and restoration can lead to new opportunities for relationship and ministry for us, just as they did for Peter.

❍ Second Chances
Share the following quotation.

This is the way forgiveness works. It is God’s willingness to give us second chances in life on the same terms we were given our first chances.... The way of forgiveness is the way of gratitude and astonishment. It lets the past become our teacher rather than our judge. Forgiveness allows us to focus on future solutions instead of past problems by substituting the words next time for if only as we move through our regrets to the way of hopefulness. (Claypool, 35)

Ask participants to reflect on an area in their discipleship where they have failed Jesus. Have them consider concrete ways they will accept God’s forgiveness and focus on the future rather than the past.

Close with prayers of thanksgiving for forgiveness and second chances.

❍ A Response of Confession and Renewal
Lead participants to compose a brief prayer or responsive reading based on the following prompts. Enlist a secretary to record the class’s words on the board.

O God,
Like Judas, we have...
Like the other disciples, we have...
Like Peter, we have...
Yet to us as well, you offer...
To us as well, you give...

Read the prayer together. Close with prayers of thanks to God for forgiveness and for new paths of service and ministry.

Resources


A Prayer of Forgiveness

After his trials before the Jewish leadership (Luke 22:66-71) and Pilate (Luke 23:1-25), Jesus faces execution. The soldiers lead him, along with two criminals, to be crucified that day at a place known as Golgotha or “The Skull.” There, Jesus is crucified between two criminals, fulfilling his own prediction at the Last Supper that he would, in the words of Isaiah 53:12, be “counted among criminals” (Luke 22:37).

Jesus prayed for forgiveness for those responsible for his death (v. 34). Although not all of the ancient manuscripts of Luke contain these words, the prayer fits with Luke’s emphasis on Jesus as one who taught his disciples to forgive others (see Luke 11:4). Stephen echoes this prayer of Jesus as he is stoned to death in Acts 7:60. 

An Assurance of Paradise

Luke emphasizes the mockery with a threefold repetition. First, the leaders scoff at Jesus, sarcastically commanding him to save himself if he is the Messiah God has chosen (Luke 23:35). The soldiers also ridicule Jesus and offer him sour wine. This action itself may be a mockery of the tradition of offering a king the best wine (Culpepper, 456). In contrast to sweet wine, the wine that soldiers frequently drank was dry and sharp, as numerous ancient records attest (Fitzmyer, 1505). In their mockery, the soldiers use the language of the inscription posted above Jesus’ head (“This is the King of the Jews,” v. 38), combining it with the words they have heard the leaders say, “Save yourself?”

The mockery reaches a climax when one of the crucified criminals also abuses Jesus. Although the other Synoptic Gospels tell us that these men revile Jesus (Mark 15:32; Matt 27:44), Luke alone reports what the criminals say. The first echoes the language of the religious leaders, asking if Jesus is the Messiah and asking that he save not only himself but also him and his accomplice. Like the leaders and the soldiers, he understands salvation in political terms or in terms of this present world. Yet for Luke, Jesus is 22:18. There are the people who stand by watching. Finally, there are those who mock.

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not a conquering Savior but the one who, through word and deed, is restoring God’s people through forgiving their sins (Johnson, 380). Through him, the kingdom has come (see Luke 11:20; 17:21).

The second criminal, however, seems to understand Jesus’ true identity as the suffering Messiah. He rebukes the first criminal, calling him to acknowledge his own destiny and to fear God. As Pilate had done earlier (23:13-23), this criminal affirms Jesus’ innocence. Then he speaks to Jesus, calling him by his name—a name that means “the Lord saves.” In Luke, only the demon-possessed or those seeking healing have called Jesus by that name (4:34; 8:28; 17:13; 18:38; Johnson, 378).

Here, like those who have sought bodily healing, the criminal makes a request. He asks Jesus to remember him, as Samson (Judg 16:28), Hannah (1 Sam 1:11, 19) and others have asked God to remember them (Green, 822). His request affirms Jesus’ kingship, as he recognizes Jesus’ true identity as the ruler of Israel whose enthronement will follow his crucifixion (Acts 5:30-31; Green, 823). In sharp contrast to the mockery of the others, this repentant man professes faith in Jesus as one who can save.

In response, Jesus promises the criminal will be in paradise with him. He begins with an assurance, literally with an “amen” (“I assure you” in CEB), only the sixth time that Luke records that word on Jesus’ lips (see 4:24; 12:37; 18:17; 18:29; 21:32) and the only time he uses that word in addressing one person alone. Jesus also emphasizes the word “today” (v. 43), as in his inaugural sermon at Nazareth (4:21) and in his conversation with Zacchaeus (19:9). Jesus affirms that this criminal will be with him in paradise. The word “paradise” is rare in the New Testament, used elsewhere only in 2 Corinthians 12:4 and Revelation 2:7. Its original use was in reference to the garden God prepared for Adam and Eve, but later Jewish writers use it in connection with the afterlife (Johnson, 378–79).

A Final Prayer of Trust
After this intimate conversation, Luke turns to describe the larger scene against which these events unfold. It is noon, but it looks like midnight. Darkness covers everything for three hours because the sun stopped shining (Luke 23:44-45).

Jewish readers of Luke’s Gospel would perhaps remember the prophetic connection of darkness with the day of the Lord (Isa 13:9-10; 50:2-3; Amos 5:18, 29; 8:9), while Gentile readers would have connected this event with the belief that signs like this often accompanied the deaths of rulers and other great men (Culpepper, 460).

In addition, the curtain in the temple was torn in two (Luke 23:45). There were thirteen veils or curtains in the Second...
Temple, but the two main curtains were the one that divided the holy place from the holy of holies and the one at the entrance of the holy place. The Jewish historian Josephus described the curtain at the entrance to the holy place as a beautiful Babylonian tapestry representing the universe, woven in blue, scarlet, and purple (Fitzmyer, 1518). None of the Gospel writers gives us the specific location of the curtain that is torn during Jesus’ crucifixion, however. In any case, the two cataclysmic events—the darkness and the tearing of the curtain—emphasize the effect of Jesus’ death on the whole world, including Jerusalem’s temple.

Against this backdrop, Jesus utters his last word. Appropriately, that word is a prayer expressing his confidence in God. Jesus addresses God as Father, as he has earlier (Luke 10:21-22; 11:2, 13; 12:30, 32; 22:42; 23:34). The words of the prayer are a quotation from Psalm 31:5, words later used in Jewish tradition as part of the evening prayer before bedtime (Fitzmyer, 1519). His prayer complete, Jesus breathes his last. Throughout this passage, Luke emphasizes Jesus’ composure in the face of death. His final prayer of trust, drawing on the words of Scripture, reflects an appropriate ending to his life lived in accordance with God’s plan.

A Way to Begin

No matter how we try to shield ourselves against it, death is our universal human destiny. At the heart of Christian faith is the affirmation that Jesus shared that destiny with us in his death on the cross. Luke’s account reveals that Jesus’ death is of one piece with his life, demonstrating forgiveness, mercy, and trust in God. Guide participants to reflect on their own experiences related to death and dying.

○ A Good Death
Ask the following questions.

Questions
➤ What makes some deaths fitting while others seem out of place?
➤ What makes for a good death?
➤ If you had a choice, how would you prefer to die?
➤ What sort of death would you prefer to avoid?
➤ How should we approach death?

○ Advice about Death
Ask participants to reflect on their own experiences, including the times that they have spent with those who were dying. Ask the following questions.

Questions
➤ What advice have you been given about the process of death and dying?

➤ Based on what you have experienced, what advice would you give to others about death and dying?

○ Famous Last Words
Distribute copies of the resource page “Famous Last Words.” Have participants do the matching exercise. (The answers are 1. B; 2. F; 3. A; 4. E; 5. C; 6. D; 7. G.) Ask the following questions.

Questions
➤ Which of the quotations seem the most appropriate last words, and why?
➤ Why do last words matter? What do they reveal?
➤ What would you like your last words to be?
A New Point of View

Divide the class into four groups and ask the groups to focus on one of the following roles: the leaders, the soldiers, the first criminal, and the second criminal.

Ask the groups to read Luke 22:32-46 and discuss the following questions from the perspective of their characters.

Questions
➤ What do your characters see, hear, feel, and experience?
➤ What do your characters say about Jesus?
➤ How do you assess what they say about Jesus?
➤ How do the characters speak the truth even without realizing it?
➤ How might your characters react to the words of Jesus from the cross?
➤ What is Luke saying through the story about Jesus’ death?

The Crucifixion in Art

Arrange to display three or four paintings of the crucifixion, including at least two that include the two criminals who are crucified with Jesus.


Questions
➤ What similarities and differences do you notice among the paintings?
➤ Does anything in the paintings suggest that Jesus is being mocked?
➤ Who is prominent in the paintings? Who is in the background?
➤ What distinguishes Jesus from those crucified with him?
➤ Does anything distinguish the two criminals?
➤ What features from Luke’s account of the crucifixion do you see in the paintings?
➤ What is the artist’s perspective on the crucifixion?

Jesus’ Last Words

Divide participants into three groups. Assign each group one of the sayings of Jesus in Luke’s account of the crucifixion: Luke 23:34, 43, and 46. Ask each group to discuss the following questions using their Bibles and the content from the Learner’s Study Guide.

Questions
➤ What prompts these words from Jesus? Why does he say them?
➤ Do these words draw on the Old Testament? If so, how and why?
➤ Do these words draw on previous teachings of Jesus in Luke’s Gospel?
➤ Why are these words important for Christians today?
Two Hymns by Isaac Watts
Provide hymnals for each participant. Have them locate the hymns “Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed” and “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” Have them read the words to themselves. Ask the following questions.

Questions
➤ What connections to today’s text do you see in the language and ideas of these hymns?
➤ What words in the hymns call for a response to Jesus’ death?
➤ What are some specific ways you might respond this week to the death of Jesus?

Close by singing one of these hymns or reciting the words together.

Personal Reflection
Distribute index cards or a sheet of paper to each participant. Ask them to select one of the three last words from Jesus we have studied today (Luke 23:34, 43, 46). Have them write their responses to the following questions.

Questions
➤ Why does this word from Jesus matter to you?
➤ What specific action will you take this week in response to this word?

Resources


Bible Background

The Women at the Tomb

After Jesus’ death, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for Jesus’ body and buried it in a new tomb. Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, but he had not agreed with the council’s decision to accuse Jesus before Pilate (v. 1). The tomb, probably carved from a rock face, had a groove cut into the entrance so people could open and close it by rolling a stone disk or wheel from side to side (Green, 830). The women who had followed Jesus from Galilee accompanied Joseph to the tomb and saw how Jesus’ body was laid there (v. 55). Because sundown—the beginning of the Sabbath—was approaching, there was no time to wash and anoint the body properly, so they returned home to prepare spices and ointments.

On the Sabbath, they rested (v. 56) in obedience to the commandment. But at dawn the next day, they returned to the tomb with their spices. They found the stone rolled back and Jesus’ body missing (Luke 24:1-3).

The absence of the body perplexed the women (v. 4). As the women wondered, two men suddenly appeared. The identity of the men was never revealed, but they were dressed in “gleaming bright clothing” (v. 4) that marked them as God’s messengers. Some of Jesus’ disciples later reported the women had seen “a vision of angels” (v. 23). There are several connections between the events at the tomb and Luke’s account of Jesus’ transfiguration (Johnson, 387; Vinson, 741). There, Jesus’ own clothes “flashed white like lightning” (Luke 9:29), and two men, Elijah and Moses, “clothed with heavenly splendor,” spoke with him “about [his] departure” (v. 31).

Whether these messengers were Moses and Elijah or angels, their initial word to the women was one of rebuke. They asked the women why they sought the living among the dead (v. 5). The tomb was a place for dead bodies, but the one the women sought was alive. God had raised him from the dead.

With that decisive announcement, the men shift from a rebuke to a reminder. They urge the women to call to mind Jesus’ own words about his death and resurrection (vv. 6-7). The men’s phrasing echoes several passages where Jesus announced the coming suffering, death, and resurrection of the Son of Man (see Luke 9:22, 44; 18:32-33). The men’s words prove to be an effective reminder, and the women return from the tomb to report to the apostles and others what they had seen and heard (v. 9).

Credible Witnesses

At this point, Luke finally identifies the women by name: “Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and
the other women with them” (v. 10). The first two women listed were among those who had followed Jesus and the twelve from Galilee (8:2-3). Mary Magdalene, who is named first in the Gospels’ lists of women at the cross and the tomb (Matt 27:61; 28:1; Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1; John 20:1-2, 11-18), was from Magdala, a village on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had cast seven demons out of her (8:2). Joanna was the wife of Herod’s steward or administrator, Chuza. Both of these women, along with others, supported Jesus and the twelve with their own possessions (8:3), a significant mark of discipleship throughout Luke and Acts.

The reference to Mary the mother of James is less clear. Her name doesn’t appear in Luke 8:2-3, although she may well have been among the “many others” mentioned there. The ambiguity about her identity arises because Luke includes two men named James in his list of the twelve apostles (6:14-16). First, there is James the son of Zebedee and the brother of John, a business partner of Simon Peter (Luke 5:10). Second, there is James the son of Alphaeus. In addition to these two, there is James, the brother of Jesus, who later emerged as the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13-21). Mary the mother of James could refer to any of these three.

These female disciples were credible messengers. They reported first-hand eyewitness testimony. There were several of them, more than the three Luke named (24:10). Most important, these women had proved to be loyal disciples who had supported Jesus and his apostles financially and travelled with them for several months (Culpepper, 470; Vinson, 743). They were well known to the other disciples who had travelled with them from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Peter’s Report
The apostles did not believe the women even though, as the Greek tense of the verb reveals, they “kept repeating these things.” Several factors contributed to this lack of belief. When Jesus had earlier explained he would be “delivered into human hands” (Luke 9:44), the disciples didn’t grasp what he said and were afraid to ask him about it. Their response in verse 11 reveals not only unbelief but also male condescension, as the women’s words struck them as “nonsense” or “humbug” (Fitzmyer, 1547). Other contemporary Jewish sources reveal a marked distrust of female testimony, and the disciples’ refusal to believe was in part
due to the fact that the witness came from women rather than men (Vinson, 743; see also Johnson, 388–91).

But one apostle is curious about what the women said. Peter gets up and runs to the tomb. When he looks in, however, all he sees is the burial cloths (24:12). This sight caused him to wonder what had happened. Yet this experience doesn't lead to faith, as he sees only the empty tomb and not the risen Lord (Fitzmyer, 1548).

Peter's Easter didn't end with mere marveling, however. Though none of the Gospel writers provide a detailed account, the risen Lord did appear to Simon Peter later that day, an event Paul reported as well (1 Cor 15:5). Peter's report proves decisive for those gathered in the upper room. When the two Emmaus disciples returned to Jerusalem to report their conversation with the risen Lord (Luke 24:13-33), they found the others repeating this glad news to each other over and over: “The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!” (v. 34). Though this news had at first seemed too good to be true, the repeated experiences of disciples with the risen Lord confirmed the truth of what the women had first heard at the empty tomb—Jesus has been raised.

A Way to Begin

On the first Easter morning, the women went to the tomb only to find that Jesus was not there. Angels announced the news that Jesus was risen. When the women reported this to the disciples, they didn’t believe them: the story seemed too good to be true. Luke’s Gospel reminds us that the story of Easter is always a story of surprise.

共享好消息

询问参与者回忆他们分享的好消息，但其他人不相信。

**Questions**

- 你分享了什么好消息，给了谁?
- 为什么他们不相信你?
- 有什么，如果有的话，最终说服了你?

接下来，询问参与者回忆一次他们收到好消息但不相信的经历。问类似上述关于这次经历的问题。

回忆过去的东日

要求参与者反思他们的东日经历。

**Questions**

- 当你还是个孩子的时候，你的家庭如何庆祝东日?
- 你的教会庆祝了什么特殊传统或活动?
- 你吃了什么?
- 是否有些事情出乎意料，为什么?
- 你最记得最清楚的事情是什么，为什么?

复活节惊喜

让参与者回想他们生活中最出乎意料的事情。

**Questions**

- 这是什么，为什么出乎意料?
- 你的反应是什么?
- 这个出乎意料的事情是否继续影响你的生活？如果是，如何？
Questions for Discussion

Read Luke 24:1-12, 33b-34. Highlight the various responses the disciples have to the resurrection. Ask the following questions.

Questions
➤ Why did the women go to the tomb at dawn?
➤ Why were they perplexed by the empty tomb?
➤ Why do you think they were terrified when the two men appeared?
➤ How did the women respond to what these messengers told them?
➤ How do you think the women felt as they shared their news with the others?
➤ Why did the other disciples not believe the women's report?
➤ Why did Peter run to the tomb?
➤ Why do you think Peter returned home wondering?

Wondering about Easter

Read Luke 24:1-12, 33b-34. Trace the theme of wonder in these verses. The women wonder why the stone is rolled away and Jesus is missing (v. 4). The angels wonder why the women are seeking Jesus among the dead (v. 5). The other disciples wonder about what the women tell them (v. 11). Peter’s own visit to the tomb leaves him “wondering what had happened” (v. 12). Ask the following questions.

Questions
➤ Why do the women wonder at the open and empty tomb?
➤ Why do the angels wonder at the women’s presence at the tomb?
➤ Why do the other disciples wonder about the women's story?
➤ Why does Peter return home wondering?
➤ What is similar in these examples of wondering? What is different? Why?
➤ Why are there so many questions on this first Easter day?
➤ Why is the news of Jesus’ resurrection so hard for the first disciples to believe?
➤ Why is this news so hard for people to believe today?
➤ In what ways do you wonder about Easter? Why?

Sketching the Resurrection

Provide art supplies for each participant: paper, pencils, crayons and markers, etc.

Read Luke 24:1-12, 33b-34. Ask participants to sketch or draw their interpretation of the Gospel story. Invite them to share their work with the class.

Discuss how the drawings depict the various characters in the story. What features from Luke's account are emphasized? What similarities and differences are there among the drawings?
A Way to End

Despite their initial disbelief, by Easter evening the eleven apostles and the others gathered with them were affirming that Christ had risen. The witness of the women and of Peter changed their outlook from doubt to faith and from despair to hope. God continues to work such changes in us as we begin to live out the meaning of Easter’s good news. As you conclude, guide participants to reflect on the significance of Easter for their lives and commit to new ways of living as Easter people.

○ Reasons to Believe

Ask the following questions.

Questions
➤ What strengthens your personal belief in the resurrection?
➤ What role do Jesus’ words play in your belief?
➤ How does the role of Scripture influence your belief in the resurrection?
➤ How does the testimony of the first disciples shape your belief?
➤ How does the testimony of people you know strengthen your belief?
➤ What is the role of personal experience in your belief in the resurrection?

○ Easter Hymns

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Provide hymnals for each participant. Direct them to the section of the hymnal where the Easter hymns are found.

Assign each group three or four hymns to examine. Distribute copies of the resource page “Easter Hymns.” Have each group answer the questions provided with respect to their assigned hymns.

Bring the class together and have each group share its findings.

Close by selecting a familiar Easter hymn to sing or recite together.

Resources


MOST PRESTIGIOUS JOBS

Below is a list of occupations and the percentage of Americans who find these occupations prestigious.

**America’s Most Prestigious Professions**

% of people finding the following occupations prestigious

- Doctor: 88%
- Military officer: 78%
- Firefighter: 76%
- Scientist: 76%
- Nurse: 70%
- Engineer: 69%
- Police officer: 66%
- Priest/Minister/Clergy: 62%
- Architect: 62%
- Teacher: 60%

WHO SAID IT?

Match the quotations with the people who wrote them.

_____ 1. “Faithless is he that says farewell when the road darkens.”

_____ 2. “Loyalty that is bought with money, may be overcome by money.”

_____ 3. “Where the battle rages the loyalty of the soldier is proved.”

_____ 4. “Many people will say that they are loyal, but who can find a reliable person?”

_____ 5. “Every one that flatters thee  
Is no friend in misery.  
Words are easy, like the wind;  
Faithful friends are hard to find.”

_____ 6. “The only true test of loyalty is fidelity in the face of ruin and despair.”

Authors:
A. The book of Proverbs  
B. Seneca, 1st-century Roman philosopher  
C. Richard Barnfield, a sixteenth-century contemporary of Shakespeare  
D. Elizabeth Rundle Charles, nineteenth-century author  
E. J. R. R. Tolkien, twentieth-century author  
F. Eric Felten, twenty-first-century author

Sources:


FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Identify the person who spoke these famous last words.

_____ 1. More light!

_____ 2. Let’s roll.

_____ 3. Thank God, I have done my duty.

_____ 4. I hope I haven’t bored you.

_____ 5. Farewell, my friends. I go to glory.


_____ 7. Let me go to the house of the Father.

A. Admiral Horatio Nelson (d. 1805)
B. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (d. 1832)
C. Isadora Duncan (d. 1927)
D. Humphrey Bogart (d. 1957)
E. Elvis Presley (d. 1977)
F. Todd Beamer (d. 2001)
G. Pope John Paul II (d. 2005)
EASTER HYMNS

Answer the following questions about your assigned hymns.

(1) What do the hymns declare that God has done?

(2) What do the hymns affirm is now true about Jesus Christ?

(3) What response, if any, do the hymns call forth from its hearers? That is, what do they ask people to do?

(4) What response do the hymns call forth from you?

(5) What specific action will you undertake this week in response?