

## Session One

### Questions for Discussion

- What do you think about Judas Iscariot being seated right beside Jesus at the table and already determined to betray him? What does that say to you about the risks of Christian discipleship?
- In what way does your participation in the regular ritual of Holy Communion help you to recall your own experiences of deliverance?
- Talk about a time when you truly felt that sharing the Lord's Supper was both profoundly sacred and deeply joyful.
  - How do you see yourself when you approach the altar to take Communion? What do you remember of the story of Jesus when you eat the bread and take the cup?
  - In what way does your participation in the regular ritual of the Eucharist meal help you recall your own experiences of deliverance?
  - How would you say the observance of Holy Communion defines or shapes who you are?

*In the hours before Jesus would be arrested, tried, and held for crucifixion, he was with twelve men who were his companions and intimates, men with whom he had prayed, worshiped, and shared life. When he went to pray, knowing he would die, he asked those who were closest to him to pray with him.*

*Remember, these close companions were not perfect. They had let him down and would do so again. One would even betray him. Still, they were the best friends he had; and they were with him as he approached his darkest hour.*

*If you were sitting down to what you knew to be your last meal, who would you want sitting around the table with you?*

### Bible Study and Discussion

Exodus 12:21 Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go, select lambs for your families, and slaughter the passover lamb. <sup>22</sup> Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood in the basin. None of you shall go outside the door of your house until morning. <sup>23</sup> For the LORD will pass through to strike down the Egyptians; when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over that door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you down. <sup>24</sup> You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children. <sup>25</sup> When you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this observance. <sup>26</sup> And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this observance?' <sup>27</sup> you shall say, 'It is the passover sacrifice to the LORD, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" And the people bowed down and worshiped. <sup>28</sup> The Israelites went and did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.

What do you say (or should you say) to your children when they ask what the Lord's Supper means?

Jeremiah 31:31 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt-- a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

What are the implications of being bound to God by a covenant inscribed inwardly on our hearts rather than on stone tablets?

John 15:12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup> I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

What does it mean to accept the bread and the cup during Communion not only as Jesus' disciples, but as his friends?

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. <sup>27</sup> Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. <sup>30</sup> For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

Why did Paul consider it so crucial that partakers of the Lord's Supper "examine" themselves first? To what extent do we do that today?

#### In Perspective – Inside One of Jesus' Disciples

Imagine you are one of Jesus' disciples, reclining around a low table – a fisherman, perhaps one of the sons of Zebedee. You have been following Jesus for some time now, and often you have not been certain of what he was doing or why he was doing it. But you have witnessed some remarkable, even miraculous, things – thousands of people fed with a couple of fish and a few loaves of bread! Now Jesus is turning toward you, offering you a piece of bread he has just blessed. What could this mean? What do you feel? What do you think?