

The Passover with the Disciples

Lachelle's gaze fixated on the front of the church. That's right, it was the first Sunday. She felt a little twinge go down her back.

Lachelle had tried to ignore it. But it had been there—an elephant in her spiritual house, so to speak. She had worked, played, and prayed around it. She had tried to rationalize, camouflage, and disengage.

Amir was a wonderful black man. He was well-off, civically responsible, philanthropic, and religious. He was also a Muslim who said he was not tied to the dogma of the religion and did not mind if she was a Christian. Amir believed Jesus was a good man, but not the Son of God—or in his words, “God has no offspring.”

Amir was talking about engagement. Many of Lachelle's family members and non-Christian friends told her to grab hold with both hands! Would it be denying Christ to marry Amir? Perhaps she could win him to Christ? At 33, was she in love with Amir, or with the prospect of a wonderful life he could provide?

The children's choir was singing, and the chorus of their song, “You can have this whole world, but give me Jesus,” broke in on her thoughts. She looked again at the front of the church, where the Communion table was draped in white sheets.

“I've been so wrong, Lord,” she prayed. “Forgive me, and help me stay close to You.”

- 1.** *How is sacrifice often a part of being loyal to someone?*
- 2.** *When has the sacrifice Jesus made been most real to you?*
- 3.** *In what situations might you not remain loyal to Jesus?*

Jesus Sends Two Disciples to Prepare the Passover

Matthew 26:17-19, KJV

17 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

Matthew 26:17-19, NIV

¹⁷On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

¹⁸He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" ¹⁹So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

While Matthew speaks of the disciples in general terms, Luke specifies that Jesus sent Peter and John into Jerusalem to make preparations for the Passover meal (22:8). The two would take the Passover lamb to the temple, where the priests sacrificed it as a burnt offering, and then cooked it ahead of the gathering.

Jesus did not reveal the location in His directives, but rather gave them instructions as to how to find the place. Why the secrecy regarding the location of the Passover meal? Matthew 26:14-16 likely provides the answer: Judas had already agreed with the chief priests to betray Jesus.

Although Jesus knew His "appointed time" to die upon the Cross was "near" (vs. 18), He did not want His evening interrupted by His arrest. Only John and Peter would know the location until much later in the day.

The man the Lord led them to in the city may have been someone familiar with Jesus and the disciples as he

readily agreed with the request. Some suggest that the upper room was at the home of the father of John Mark, but we cannot know this for certain.

4. What instructions did Jesus give Peter and John regarding the location of the Passover feast later that night?

5. What was the benefit of keeping the place of preparation a secret until later in the day?

Jesus Identifies Judas as His Betrayer

Matthew 26:20-25, KJV

20 Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

23 And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

24 The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

Matthew 26:20-25, NIV

²⁰When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

²²They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?"

²³Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

²⁵Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "You have said so."

Jesus' startling statement regarding His betrayal came later in the evening, after Jesus washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:3-21). He waited until after the main course of the meal to make His alarming announcement.

The deep sorrow of the disciples came from the fact that the betrayer was one of them. One by one, with sadness in their voice, they asked, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?" (v. 22). In the Middle Eastern culture, the act of eating a meal together signified a close bond of friendship. Sharing the Passover meal with Jesus before betraying Him made the treachery of Judas's act even greater.

Jesus' response in verse 23 did not help identify the villain as all of the disciples dipped their hands in the bowl. His answer confirmed, however, the enormity of the offense of the one who sat at the table with them, which He highlighted with these memorable words, "It would be better for him if he had not been born" (vs. 24). Finally, Judas spoke up and received confirmation from Jesus that He knew his identity.

6. *What did the disciples do after Jesus said one of them would betray Him?*

7. *What made Judas's betrayal so reprehensible?*

Remembering Jesus' Sacrifice for Us

Matthew 26:26-30, KJV

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Matthew 26:26-30, NIV

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

²⁷Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

²⁸This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out

29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth 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 an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

³⁰When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

After Judas departed, Jesus added something new to the Passover feast; He instituted what has come to be known as the Lord's Supper. All four Gospels record this, with Paul providing further instruction regarding it in 1 Corinthians 11:17-32. The taking of the bread and wine symbolizes Jesus' death on the Cross for us and its continued practice in the Church reminds us of His ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

Jesus connected the shedding of His blood with our "forgiveness of sins." Even though the disciples likely did not understand its full significance of this at the time, this message would become central to the Gospel message they would later proclaim to the world. It's Jesus blood that covers our sins making eternal life possible for all who believe.

The evening in the Upper Room ended with Jesus and His

disciples singing a "hymn" (vs. 30). As was the custom at the end of the Passover feast, those gathered together would sing Psalms 115-118.



This 6th century Rossano Gospels illustration shows the disciples reclining at the table for the Last Supper.

8. What's the significance of partaking in the bread and the cup as Jesus instructed in these verses?

Corrine's Loyalty Returns

Corrine, a recovering addict, was nervous about attending church with her grandparents. She did not know how everyone was going to accept her. It had been over eight years since she had been in church. She was once the choir president and director. She grew the choir from 15 members to 75 in a few months. She loved God and wanted the world to know. Corrine had most of her college classmates in church. It was glorious—until things changed.

Corrine had fallen in love with a young man who did not want to have anything to do with church, no matter how hard she tried to convince him otherwise. Dominique was loyal to the streets, and he wanted Corrine on his turf. Before she knew it, Corrine had stopped attending college and church and was on drugs. Her loyalty to Dominique had put her heart out of alignment with her first love—Jesus!

Everyone who knew Corrine tried and tried to bring her back to God and the church, but even after she decided that Dominique was no good for her and she needed to come back, she was too embarrassed and full of guilt to return. It was her son, who was now seven years old and living with her grandparents because she couldn't take care of him, who said he wanted her to attend church with them. His little eyes were filled with tears.

"I know you never stopped loving God," he said one day while hugging her. It was at that time she examined her wayward heart and chose Jesus again. That day she entered the church with her grandparents and son. The people—and her Lord—received her with joy.

9. *Has your loyalty to Jesus wavered? If so, why did it happen?*

10. *What brought you back to Him?*

11. *How can remembering His sacrifice help you remain loyal to Him?*

'In Remembrance of Me'

Jesus gave the ultimate sacrifice for us, and He asks us to give our all to Him. We must remember that when times get tough and our loyalty to Him might waver. Especially when we have Communion, we need to examine our hearts and renew our undying loyalty to Him.

► *If your congregation is celebrating Communion this week, it's a great time to examine your heart and your loyalty to the Lord. But anytime is the right time to examine our hearts and our loyalty to Him. You may write here a current situation where your loyalty is being tested, then pray that your heart remains with Him.*

KEY VERSE

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. —Matthew 26:29, KJV

"I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." —Matthew 26:29, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of April 11 through April 17

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** John 1:29-36—John Proclaims the Lamb of God.
- Tue.** Matthew 26:36-46—Jesus Prays in Gethsemane.
- Wed.** Matthew 26:47-56—Jesus Is Arrested.
- Thu.** Matthew 27:35-43, 45-50—Jesus Is Crucified.
- Fri.** Psalm 22:1-9, 14-19—Why Have You Forsaken Me?
- Sat.** Psalm 118:14-17, 19-29—God Is My Salvation.
- Sun.** Matthew 28:1-10—Jesus Is Risen!