Reader

Jesus's Farewell Message

Session 1: Christ Prepares His Disciples

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

The truths of God are both an invitation into the fullness of life Jesus promises and a challenge to leave behind all our comfortable half-loves.

Head Change

To know that Jesus loves you beyond what you could hope or imagine.

Heart Change

To love others in the way that Jesus loves us.

Life Change

To practice the truths Jesus teaches, specifically in lovingly serving others in the way that Jesus serves us.

OPEN

What is the best invitation you have ever received? Did you accept the invitation? Why or why not?

Invitations are exciting. They let us know that someone wants to spend time with us and give us access to a party, event, or experience we may not have been able to otherwise attend. But there are times when scheduling conflicts or personal reasons keep us from accepting the invitations we are offered.

Jesus has an invitation for us, but we have to decide if we will accept that invitation to follow him or choose to stay behind in our comfort zones. In this series, author and speaker Francis Chan will show us what it means to follow Jesus and the radiant new life that comes from trusting God. All you have to decide is if you will follow where he leads.

To start our study of John 13–17, also known as the Upper Room Discourse, Francis will dig into John 13 and Jesus's example of loving one another.

READ

Read John 13:1–17, 34–35.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Francis Chan's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What is the significance of Jesus washing his disciples' feet?

What attitude should we have toward one another?

What can cause us to live like Judas instead of trusting Jesus?

Watch Session 1: Christ Prepares His Disciples (15 minutes).

DISCUSS

Francis started this session with a challenge: God wants to take you deep into the riches of truth, growing your faith and giving you a greater taste of his presence in your life. But we often prefer to stay in places of spiritual comfort. Why do you think it can be difficult for us to live in uncertainty or "by faith"?

What do you think it could look like for you to trust God as you go through this series despite the discomfort following Jesus might cause?

Before we dive into Jesus's message to his disciples, we need to understand the context of this passage. First, let's examine Jesus's heart toward his disciples. Read John 13:1.

[Note: John 13–17 takes place during the Last Supper, the basis of our modern celebration of the Eucharist, also known as communion or the Lord's Supper. If you would like to learn more about the Lord's Supper and the passage Francis cited in the video, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.]

The first thing we notice about Jesus is his love for his disciples. Whom in your life do you love "to the very end"? Do you believe that God's love is at least that strong for you? Why, or why not?

God loves you more deeply than we often dare to think. We know God loves us as a piece of trivia but, deep in our hearts, we can doubt that he really loves us, flaws and all. What do you think God sees when he looks at you? Do you imagine him as disappointed and angry or as loving you? Why?

God is holy and glorious; he is also abounding in love and mercy. To show the depth of his love, Jesus assumed the role of a servant and washed his disciples' feet.

Read John 13:2–17.

Peter initially refused to be served by Jesus because he misunderstood what Jesus was trying to teach him. First, Jesus was showing his disciples that he came to serve humanity. Though his disciples might not have understood service to them on the cross. Jesus loves us so deeply that he humbled himself as a servant so that we could be forgiven and spend eternity with him. **In what ways does Jesus's service reveal the depth of his love for you?**

When Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he was also modeling how we should love one another. Love is more than a fluttering feeling; it should push us to serve one another. **Do you think it is possible to love someone without serving them? Why, or why not?**

It is easy to say we love people, but serving others is difficult. Take a moment to answer the questions Francis asked us in the video. Are you a servant? Would the people that are watching this with you say that you are a servant? Would the people closest to you talk about how you serve them?

We shouldn't serve one another because we feel guilty or simply to check a to-do off our spiritual list. Just as love motivated Jesus, so also should it motivate us to serve others. As Francis said, "There's no greater motivation for us to serve one another other than [knowing] God, the Creator, washed the feet of his disciples." When can it be difficult for you to serve others? In what ways does love overcome our excuses for not serving others?

Love is not an option for Christians; it should be our hallmark. When the world looks at the church, they should see our love in action above anything else. What do you think non-Christians see when they look at the church? What would it practically look like for you to make love the hallmark of your small group?

[Note: If you would like to learn more about community and the Greek word koinonia, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.]

After Jesus washed his disciples' feet, Judas left the upper room to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Francis challenged us to think of what "silver"—the alternative sources of peace, security, or comfort—we might choose over fully trusting Jesus. What kinds of things do we turn to when we feel like Jesus's promises aren't worth waiting for? What "silver" might we need to give up so that we can faithfully follow Jesus?

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more about these events, go to **Go Deeper Sections 3 and 4** at the end of this study.]

Jesus's commands feel weighty, but all he asks is that we love others and look for ways to serve one another. What's more, he promises that we will be blessed if we do what he says. What is the first step you could take in loving the people in this group? What immediate needs in your church could your small group meet?

LAST WORD

God loves us deeply and showed us his love in Jesus, who served our ultimate need, dying in our place so that we might be redeemed. He asks that we love each other in the same way that he has loved us, serving each other with eagerness and humility.

It is time to step out of comfortable faith and to actively love one another. God is waiting with arms full of blessings, eager for you to live in his deepest truths and know him better. Will you trust him?

GO DEEPER

This section has two potential functions:

1. It can supplement your small group discussion with topics your group may be interested in. We've highlighted where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide. As the leader, it would be good to familiarize yourself with this section just in case your conversation turns to one of these topics.

2. These sections can also function as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider using these sections to deepen your group's study of the John 13–17.

1. The Lord's Supper

John 13–17 is a long and dense block of teaching filled with some of the richest and most mysterious truths in the Bible. It can be easy to think of it academically, like facts we should memorize. But what Jesus shared with his disciples the night before he was crucified aren't bits of trivia but a reality we share in.

As we walk through this series, it is important to remember that this teaching happens during the Last Supper, which we now commemorate by taking the Eucharist, or Holy Communion. Read Luke 22:14–20.

What is the importance of the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper?

Communion is more than a remembrance of Jesus's sacrifice for us. As Francis said, it is an outward symbol of our faith. Read 1 Corinthians 10:16–17. What do you think it means to "share" or "participate" in the body of Christ, or the community of Christians?

In what ways does communion symbolize our collective commitment to Jesus?

Why do you think it is important to commit to Christ as a community?

Communion is not an individual experience. It is a communal commitment to Jesus, to remember his death and resurrection, and a corporate vow to live for him. And **Fights simple meal** is the context of John 13–17. As you walk

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through this series, the truths Jesus shares in his teaching are rooted in his sacrifice for us, meant to build our lives together, and show us how we should live as his people.

As you continue in this series, prayerfully commit to participate, as a small group, in the truths Jesus shares in these chapters.

2. Koinonia

Francis mentioned the importance of the community of the church, citing the Greek word *koinonia*. It can most simply be translated as "the assembly" but, as Francis pointed out, it means much more than that. Before we study this word, think of your church gathering. **What does your church's "assembly" look like? In what ways do you participate in each other's lives?**

Koinonia is used forty-three times in the New Testament, and it refers to much more than a group that gets together once a week. To get an idea of the depth of this word, read Hebrews 2:14. What do you think it means for all people to share in humanity? What do you have in common with every person you meet?

We all have similar bodies, age in a common way, struggle with similar emotions, suffer with similar pains, laugh over similar joys—there is an endless list of commonalities we share with other people. But we have fellowship or share in much more than common humanity. In Christ, we have *koinonia* with:

- God and his divine nature (2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 1:3, 6)
- · Jesus's suffering (Philippians 3:10)
- · Jesus's future glory (1 Peter 5:1)
- Jesus's blood and body when we take communion (1 Corinthians 10:16)
- The suffering of fellow Christians (2 Corinthians 1:7)
- Evangelism (Philippians 1:5)
- The gospel (1 Corinthians 9:23)

We are knitted together in the work and blessings of Jesus, called to live as a unified and supportive community. God's people are meant to be a part of each other's lives beyond attending church on Sunday. What do you think a *koinonia* community looks like outside of Sunday morning?

rigid wants his people to entwine their lives together, sharing in the joys and pains of life, meeting each other's https://reader.rightnowmedia.org/1924/740761 4/17/23, 1:46 PM

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needs, and sharing the gospel together. What could you do to take a step toward creating deeper fellowship in your church community?

3. Judas's Betrayal

It is easy to think of Judas as a uniquely evil person, but he was part of Jesus's inner circle, a believer. His fellow disciples never suspected he was a traitor. They trusted him so deeply that they put him in charge of their money bag. To the disciples, Judas's rejection of Jesus was a shocking turn of events.

But when we look at Judas's life, we don't see a man who suddenly decided to turn on Jesus. We watch Judas take small, quiet steps away from God until betraying his Lord was an easy decision. Read John 12:1–8.

In this passage, what does Judas care about the most?

What secret sin defined his character?

Judas appeared trustworthy. He looked like the kind of guy you would have wanted to be your treasurer. But in his heart, he loved money more than anything else. Stealing from the disciples and Jesus became normal behavior for him. In what ways do secret sins deceive us and change us? Why do you think it is so easy to ignore our own sins, even as they grow into character-defining traits?

Judas was used to taking opportunities to feed his greed. So isn't surprising he monetized his relationship with Jesus. Read Luke 22:1–6.

Judas made a premeditated decision to betray Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Judas accepted thirty pieces of silver for turning Jesus over. That's worth about \$600 in today's money. At some point, following Jesus became a low priority in Judas's life. When he looked at Jesus, all he saw was an opportunity to get paid. **In what** ways do you think sin changes our desires?

When have you seen sin start to turn a person's life upside down?

Judas's sin escalated from taking a coin or two from his rigriends to publicly betraying his Lord for a relatively small amount of money. For this reason, Francis warned us to https://reader.rightnowmedia.org/1924/740761 let go of our small sinful desires so that we may follow Jesus. What small, secret temptations should you be aware of in your own life?

What safeguards or accountability could you put in place to protect yourself from the deceitfulness of sin?

4. Peter's Over-Confidence and Denial

We have a lot of reasons for being confident in our relationship with Christ. But, on this side of heaven, we need to cultivate a healthy humility toward our own sinfulness. Peter was one of the most loyal and vocal disciples but, despite his protests, he publicly denied Jesus three times in one night. Read John 13:36–38.

In what ways is Peter's confidence praiseworthy? Do you ever wish for confidence like his? Why, or why not?

Peter had good intentions, but good intentions aren't enough. In John 18, mere hours after professing he would die for Jesus, Peter hastily denied any association with Jesus three separate times. Circumstances change, and what is easy to profess in comfort becomes difficult to claim in times of trouble. Read 1 Corinthians 10:12–13.

Why is it important to be humble concerning our weaknesses?

According to these verses, what should we trust during times of temptation?

We are more prone to sin than we often care to admit. Temptation can sneak up on us and turn our confidence into denial. If there is one thing we can be confident in, it's the faithfulness of God. After his resurrection, Jesus returned to Peter and forgave his denials (John 21:15–19). He was faithful even when Peter was faithless. In the same way, God is faithful when we deny him (2 Timothy 2:13).

What do you think it looks like to be cautious of your sin while being confident in God?

Take a moment to pray. Thank God for his thankfulness, repent where necessary, and rejoice in his unending faithfulness.

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