

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, March 22- Friday, March 26

Monday, March 22- Read Luke 22:7-34. As with his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus arranged in advance for the Passover meal. With hope-filled words, he changed the annual Passover Supper into a Last Supper. He asked us to do this to recall his sacrifice (verses 14-20). How much he loved Peter, even knowing (as Peter did not) his disciple's human weakness! Jesus said he eagerly desired to eat this special meal with his disciples. With how much eagerness, or lack of it, do you take part in the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist? What experiences or beliefs lead you to feel the way you do? How can you take in Jesus' love and restoring power more fully and receive him through this meal? At the Last Supper the disciples argued about which of them would be greatest. Jesus said, "I am among you as one who serves." In which relationships is it hardest for you to be a servant? How do you sense spiritual growth in your view of yourself when you give up power so that you can serve another person?

Tuesday, March 23 – Read John 14:1 – 15:17. Only John's gospel records what Jesus said after the Last Supper ended. In this first section, Jesus declared that he is the central revelation of God. His earthly time was nearly over—but that did not mean he was abandoning the disciples. The presence of the "Advocate" (or "Comforter") would bring Jesus' peace to their hearts. John's gospel uses the Greek word *paraklétos* for the Holy Spirit. The word meant "one who walks with," and could apply to anyone from "defense attorney" to "friend." How does John 14:16-18 show that the Holy Spirit does not replace Jesus, but rather, in a way beyond our full understanding, is Jesus' presence with us? Jesus used the image of a vine and its branches to illustrate how we relate to him. What spiritual practices have helped you most to live into Jesus' invitation to stay constantly linked with him? In what ways has your connection with Christ led you to bear fruit for God's Kingdom?

Wednesday, March 24 – Read John 15:18 – 16:33. Though Jesus is sure God's Kingdom will win out at last, he offers no glib promises of an easy life. In fact, he ends the passage by promising troubles in the world! That's one reason the Holy Spirit's presence is so important. Then Jesus adds, "Take heart." Why? Because, he says, "I've already overcome the world." This passage, like 1 Corinthians 13:9 ("we know in part"), reminds us that our vision of God is limited. How have you seen God's power work in ways beyond human strength and wisdom at times of grief or loss? How can God's presence help you to trust even at the times when you don't "get it"? John reports that Jesus said, with his arrest imminent, "I have overcome the world." Not "I will overcome the world," but "I HAVE overcome it." How could he have such confidence? How can you develop the same confidence, in the face of whatever problems and challenges the world throws at you?

Thursday, March 25 – Read John 17:1-26. This great passage reaches its peak as John shows Jesus at prayer. Even at this time of crisis, Jesus focuses most of his prayer on the spiritual well-being and safety of his followers. Be sure to note that he was not just praying for the group around him on that evening. Jesus prayed for you that night, too (verse 20). Twice (verse 11, verses 20-23) Jesus prays that his followers may be one. He asks God to unite us with each other as he and the Father are united. What issues or practices create the most division in your heart between you and other believers? How can God help you to live more fully into the unity Jesus prayed for? In this prayer, Jesus says, a bit surprisingly, that his followers are "not of the world" any more than he is. In what ways are you most interested in, and attentive to, this world? In what areas, if any, do you sense your energy and focus shifting beyond this world to God's Kingdom?

Friday, March 26 – Read Luke 22:39-54. The Final Week nears its climax. Jesus prays on the Mount of Olives. He had resolutely come to this moment—but still, he agonizes over the awful suffering just ahead. Crucially, he tells God, "Not my will but yours be done." The pace quickens as the rulers and Judas set their dark plot in motion. Sooner or later, we all face a situation in life that seems unbearable. What does Jesus' time in the Garden teach us about the value of honestly facing and expressing our feelings in those times of anguish? To what extent have you learned to say, "Not my will but yours be done"? "This is your hour—when darkness reigns," Jesus told those who arrested him. Are there things you think you need to do "in the dark," to hide them from others? From God? From yourself? If so, prayerfully lay those things before God (who sees even "in the dark"). Only God's light creates a joyous, whole life.