

The Story Adult Study Guide

For the Week of April 6, 2020

Chapter 26: "The Hour of Darkness"



Key Events: Jesus washes the disciples' feet, Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion

Key Characters: Peter, Judas Iscariot, Pilate (see pages 492-493 for descriptions)

Bible Reference for this Chapter: Matthew 26-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 13-14, 16-19

THEME: GOD'S UPPER STORY MEETS THE LOWER STORY

1. Why did Jesus choose the Passover celebration as the time to institute the Lord's Supper?
2. During their final hours together in the upper room, Jesus comforted his disciples. (pages bottom 369-top 371) Share some of his words that are of great comfort for us today.
3. Notice Jesus' intimacy with the Father. (He prayed in the upper room, in Gethsemane, and on the cross.) Why was his High Priestly Prayer (middle page 371) so important?
4. Consider the episode in Gethsemane and Jesus' statement, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." (pages 372-373) What grief and agony did Jesus experience at this time?
5. Jesus was arrested immediately after his Gethsemane prayers. Find examples on page 373 that showed Jesus triumphed in prayer and was completely ready to follow through with his sacrificial mission.
6. Many people played a role leading to the crucifixion of Jesus. Agree or disagree: *Since God used all these events to fulfill his plan of salvation, we really can't hold these people responsible.*
7. Pages 378-380 contain excerpts from all four of the New Testament Gospel books describing Christ's suffering and death on the cross. What amazing demonstrations of the Savior's love strike you on these pages?

Study Guide Helps

1. The Passover was a major Israelite celebration of God's goodness and deliverance under the old covenant. Here, Jesus is marking the start of the new covenant of grace with a new celebration of God's goodness and deliverance in the form of the Lord's Supper. The Passover was intended to point ahead to Christ and his mission – the sacrifice of a lamb offered as a substitute and the shedding of blood to redeem people from death. Christ was the Passover fulfillment, and on the eve of his sacrifice on the cross, he bestowed on Christians a means of grace to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in him. Passover included a festive meal, and the Lord's Supper is another festive meal in which believers receive the true body and blood of the Savior (*This is my body . . . This is my blood*) which was given and shed on the cross.

2. Participants can select and share comforting Bible passages and their meanings. *My Father's house has many rooms . . . I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am* (369-370). *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me* (370). *You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it* (370). *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth* (370). *In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world* (371). *Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent* (371). *Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory* (371).

3. The closeness between Jesus and his Father is evident in these three prayers. His High Priestly Prayer in the upper room is often considered the greatest prayer in the Bible. Here Jesus prayed for himself, his disciples, and believers throughout the world. Noting this intimacy, one can sense his sorrow when he cried out on the cross, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" We can also then appreciate his relief after it was over with his words, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

4. Jesus was moments away from his arrest and hours away from his crucifixion, and he was feeling the full intensity of the burden of the world's sin and guilt. Imagine how one sin on our consciences bothers us, and multiply that by every sin we have ever committed, and then multiply that by all the sins of the world – that's the weight Jesus carried. Jesus was not only God but true man, and his prayers showed how deeply the struggle was felt. Luke records Jesus' bloody sweat, which was the result of extreme emotional distress. People may downplay sin and its effect, but Jesus experienced the crushing burden of the world's guilt, which is impossible for the human mind to fathom. The anticipation of suffering hell itself had to be overwhelming as well.

5. In his Gethsemane prayers, Jesus wasn't expressing unwillingness to go to the cross. He struggled with the human trauma of his situation and poured himself out in prayer for strength according to the Father's will and plan. During his arrest, we see Jesus fully committed to carry out his mission in these examples on page 373: 1) *Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out* – the omniscient Savior knew full well what was about to happen and stepped forward; 2) *I am he* – Jesus boldly announced his identity so they could arrest him; 3) *they drew back and fell to the ground* – this miracle demonstrated Christ's power and control of the situation and his ability to stop the arrest if he so chose; 4) *Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away!"* – Jesus did not allow an uprising to gain his release; 5) *Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?* – Jesus knew and was committed to the cup of suffering he was about to drink.

6. Disagree. God used these events to serve his plan and purpose, but God does not will or tempt anyone to sin (James 1:13). People like Judas, Pilate, and the Jewish leaders were responsible for their sinful actions, for *each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed* (James 1:14). It is a testimony to God's glory and wisdom that he uses man's sinful actions for his own purposes, but that does not excuse the sin nor remove man's responsibility. It's a testimony to God's grace that these sins are paid for through the cross of Christ. Really all people are responsible for Christ's death.

7. Participants can share Christ's demonstrations of love. *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing* – he loved and forgave the very people who caused his suffering. *Today you will be with me in paradise* – right up to the end, Jesus announced forgiveness and salvation on lost souls. *Woman here is your son . . . Here is your mother* – in obedience to the 4th Commandment he provided for his mother; his perfect obedience remained intact to the end. *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me* – he suffered hell and eternal separation from God that mankind deserved. *It is finished* – in Greek, this term carries the meaning "paid in full"; the debt of our and mankind's sin had been paid.