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# The Last Supper , Jesus Shares the New Covenant

*Scripture: Matthew 26:17-30, Luke 22:7-20*

**Theme: Jesus' body was broken and His blood was shed for us**

*High School (Ages 15-18)*

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Free curriculum for small and rural churches

## Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: "The Last Supper, Jesus as the Ultimate Sacrifice of the New Covenant" For high school students, this lesson invites critical reflection on Jesus' sacrificial death through the lens of covenant theology. By tracing the shift from the Old Testament's blood sacrifices to His own broken body and shed blood (Exodus 12, Leviticus 17), we explore how Christ fulfilled, rather than just fulfilling, Israel's eschatological promises (Hebrews 9:11, 14). Real-world application emerges when students consider how this truth reshapes their stewardship of time, talents, and relationships, as Christ's sacrifice invites radical trust and service in a broken world. (Encouragement for volunteers: Frame it as a "what does this mean for us?" moment, e.g., "How do we participate in the covenant Jesus inaugurated?") Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

## Bible Story

The Last Supper: A Covenant of Love, Sacrifice, and Transformation (Matthew 26:17, 30 / Luke 22:7, 20)

The night before his crucifixion, Jesus gathered his disciples for a meal that would forever redefine faith. In the Upper Room, the twelve sat around a table, their faces tense with fear and confusion. The Jewish Passover was near, and Jesus knew this meal would not just be another celebration but the inauguration of something new, something radical. He took bread, broke it, and said, "Take and eat. This is my body, given for you." His words were not mere symbolism but a concrete act of sacrifice, a foreshadowing of what was yet to come. He then took a cup of wine, passed it among them, and said, "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out for many." Unlike the old covenant, which

was given through blood on the altar (Exodus 24:8), this new covenant was not just about law but about love, selfless, redemptive love that would not end in death but in resurrection. For the disciples, this was shocking: Jesus was not just offering a ritual but a promise that his death would not be the end of their relationship with him.

Jesus' words carry deep theological weight. The phrase "this is my blood" suggests that the new covenant was not just a renewal of the old but its ultimate fulfillment. The old covenant was temporary, contingent on human compliance; this new covenant was eternal, tied to Christ's sacrificial death. The disciples, who had just betrayed him within the next few hours, would later recall this meal as a moment of profound betrayal, but Jesus turned it into a moment of mercy. His command to "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19) was not just about memory; it was a call to participate in the covenant's reality. In the breaking of bread and drinking of wine, they were not just observing an event but becoming part of what he was establishing. This was not passive faith but active discipleship, a participation in God's work through the Spirit.

Yet, the story is not just about Jesus' words but about the disciples' response. Peter, ever bold, declares he will never deny him (Matthew 26:33), yet in the very next moment, he does so three times (Matthew 26:69, 75). This tension, between promise and failure, between faith and sin, is real. The Last Supper is not just a historical event but a mirror held up to the human condition. Jesus does not condemn them for their weakness; instead, he forgives them, offers them the same mercy he extends to all. His covenant is not about perfection but reconciliation, a broken relationship healed by a broken body. The real question, then, is not whether we understand this story but whether we live it. How do we, like the disciples, participate in the new covenant not as passive observers but as active participants in God's love?

Theologically, this passage speaks to the nature of faith itself. The old covenant was law-based, demanding obedience; the new covenant is grace-based, offering freedom. Jesus does not abolish the law but transforms it. His sacrifice is not just a one-time event but the pattern of the Christian life, self-giving, broken for the sake of others. In the breaking of bread, we see a symbol of how faith is not abstract but practiced. We are called to break ourselves for the sake of the world, just as Jesus broke himself. The challenge is not to believe in this story but to live it, through love, sacrifice, and trust. The Last Supper is not just about the past; it is about our future, where every time we gather, we are reminded that God does not reject us but invites us into his own broken life.

Why does this story matter? Because it challenges us to see faith not as a private devotion but as a communal, sacrificial act. Jesus does not leave us alone; he leaves us with a meal, a promise, and a command to keep. The new covenant is not about what we do for God but what God does for us, through his Son. In the end, the disciples' greatest failure becomes their greatest opportunity: to learn that mercy is stronger than sin, and love is stronger than betrayal. The Last Supper is not just a story; it is a call to table fellowship, with God and with one another.

## Key Verse

**Luke 22:19b-20 , 'This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of me. This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.'**

This passage (Luke 22:19b, 20) is a profound declaration of Christ's sacrificial love through bread and wine, representing His bodily suffering (the "given for you") and the new covenant (the blood poured out for redemption). Theologically, it reveals God's radical, atoning love, where death itself becomes life, while practically urging believers to reflect on Christ's example in service, suffering, and communion with Him. Real-world tie-in: The verse challenges us to imitate Christ's self-sacrifice (e.g., in relationships, activism, or personal sacrifice) while recognizing His blood as the source of our forgiveness. It's not just about remembrance but transformation: how we honor Him in daily choices.

## Activities

### Activity 1:

Students role-play Jesus' betrayal and follow Jesus' words ("Do this in remembrance of me") to explore the theological weight of covenant renewal and the challenge of radical discipleship in high-stakes situations.

1. Theological Reflection (5 min)
2. Distribute the Bible excerpts. In pairs, ask students:
3. "How does Jesus' use of bread and wine in the Last Supper differ from the Jewish Passover tradition (Exodus 12) or the early Church's Eucharist? Write down 1, 2 key differences on an index card."
4. Symbolic Analysis (5 min)
5. Divide the class into small groups (3, 5 students). Hand each group a printed chart comparing:
6. Old Covenant symbols (e.g., animal sacrifices, unleavened bread).
7. Jesus' new covenant symbols (bread/wine, blood of the Lamb).
8. Ask: "Which symbol carries greater weight today? Why?" Use the Bible verses to support their claims.
9. Creative Application (5 min)
10. Assign each group a modern context: For example, a student might explore how:
11. Fast food (symbolic of communion in secular culture).
12. Social justice (e.g., bread as a metaphor for economic fairness).
13. Ecumenism (how different Christian traditions interpret Jesus' words).
14. Groups sketch a symbol (e.g., a broken bread chain for justice) on their paper plate, gluing it down with their reflection.
15. Real-World Tie-In:
16. Debate in pairs: "If Jesus were alive today, would he still use bread and wine? Why or why not?"
2. ACTIVITY: "The Betrayal & the Choice: Ethical Dilemmas of the Last Supper"
18. Role Assignment (2 min)
19. Assign roles (3, 5 students):
20. Jesus (speaks the words, eats with the disciples).
21. Judas (asks, "Will I betray you with a kiss?").
22. Peter (denies Jesus three times, per Matt. 26:31, 34).
23. 1 disciple (asks a question about the covenant).
24. Distribute a script excerpt to each actor; the rest listen as observers.
25. Theological Debate (7 min)
26. After the scene, in groups of 3, 4, ask:
27. "What does it mean to 'do this in remembrance of me' beyond just eating? How might this apply to modern forgiveness or reconciliation?"
28. "Jesus says he will not drink wine again until he drinks it new in the Kingdom. What does this imply about suffering, faith, and the afterlife?"
29. Encourage students to reference the Bible's themes of eschatology (end times) and covenant renewal.
30. Personal Reflection (5 min)
31. Each student writes or draws (using markers) a "covenant oath" inspired by Jesus' words. Examples:
32. "I will not betray love for those I love, even if it is hard."
33. "I will remember the Kingdom's justice, even in small acts of kindness."
34. Share 1, 2 with the class.
35. Real-World Tie-In:
36. Challenge students: "How can you renew a covenant today? For example, with a friend, your community, or even yourself?"
37. Theological & Pedagogical Notes:

38. Matthew 26:26, 28 highlights Jesus' declaration of a new covenant with blood ("This cup is the new covenant in my blood"), contrasting with Leviticus 17:11's sacrificial blood. This activity forces students to grapple with redemption vs. merit and the meaning of sacramental signs.
39. Luke 22:19 emphasizes shared memory, the disciples' confusion and Jesus' command to remember (not just perform). The role-play captures this tension between tradition and transformation.
40. Real-world applications tie to:
41. Ecclesiology (how churches interpret communion).
42. Ethics (e.g., should Christians "break bread" with those in conflict?).
43. Eschatology (what does the Kingdom's "new wine" mean for faith today?).
44. Both activities prioritize critical engagement over passively memorizing text, using minimal supplies to maximize theological depth. Would you like adjustments for cultural contexts (e.g., adding questions on interfaith perspectives)?

## Discussion Questions

- Here are four intellectually engaging, open-ended discussion questions designed to encourage deep reflection on The Last Supper, its theological implications, and its real-world applications:
- 1. Covenant, Sacrifice, and Love: A Radical Redefinition of Relationship
  - The Last Supper marks Jesus' establishment of the New Covenant (Matthew 26:28), replacing the old Mosaic covenant with blood. How does this shift in covenant language, from law to grace, from ritual to relationship, challenge or reshape our modern notions of faith, obligation, and human connection? Consider:
    - How might Jesus' use of wine and bread symbolize the spiritual food of grace in ways that feel counterintuitive today?
    - In a culture obsessed with performance or "earned merit," how does the idea of covenant as an unconditional gift (e.g., "This is my body... this is my blood") force us to rethink what it means to be in community?
- 2. Power, Disarmament, and the Eucharist: Breaking Rituals of Control
  - Jesus turns the Passover meal into an act of radical nonviolence, passing around bread and wine without physical force. How does this act critique systems of power in both ancient and modern contexts?
  - The Passover meal itself was tied to the liberation of Israel (Exodus). How does Jesus' reenactment of it expose or subvert the political and religious structures (e.g., the Sanhedrin, imperial oppression) that seek to control faith?
  - In a world where faith often functions as a tool for domination (e.g., political ideologies, economic systems), what does it mean to participate in a ritual that disarms power? How could the Eucharist be reimagined as an act of resistance?
- 3. Faith, Memory, and the Cost of Tradition
  - Jesus' words to the disciples, "This is my body", are both a sacred claim and a call to participation. Yet, the ritual of communion often feels detached from its original meaning. How does the Last Supper force us to confront:
    - The tension between literal faith (believing in Christ's bodily presence) and metaphorical faith (understanding the Eucharist as an expression of Christ's life in us). Which do you lean toward, and why?
    - How might the passover meal itself (a celebration of remembrance) be transformed into a ritual of shared suffering? For example, how could a modern church service invite participants to reflect on the cost of freedom, whether personal, political, or spiritual?
- 4. The Church as a "New Israel": Body and Community
  - The disciples' confusion ("Lord, we don't know") echoes the broader human struggle to grasp how faith reshapes identity. How does the Last Supper invite us to rethink the role of the church as the "New Israel"?

- If the church is both a covenantal community (e.g., united in the Eucharist) and a discipling institution, what does that mean for how we practice faith? How might a church that celebrates communion as a political act (e.g., advocating for justice) differ from one that treats it as a private devotion?
- In a world where isolation is often normalized, how does the idea of breaking bread together, even in a symbolic act like communion, challenge our culture's preference for individualism? What would it look like for modern faith communities to embody the radical inclusion of the Last Supper?
- Theological & Real-World Application Notes:
  - Theological Depth: Encourage students to tie answers to broader themes like agape love, sacrificial love, or theosis (deification in Orthodox Christianity). For example, the wine/blood imagery ties to martyrdom, atonement, and the Eucharist's role in theosis.
  - Real-World Connection: Invite them to explore parallels in secular traditions (e.g., how rituals of solidarity, like potlucks or service projects, mirror the Eucharist's call to sharing).
  - Critical Lens: Push them to ask: Who benefits from the traditional interpretation of communion? Who is excluded? (E.g., how do economic systems shape access to church services?)
  - Would you like these adapted for a specific theological tradition (e.g., Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or ecumenical) or to include a focus on social justice?

## Prayer Focus

*"Lord Jesus, as we reflect on Your institution of the Lord's Supper, where You broken body and spilled blood became the sign of Your ultimate sacrifice and a new covenant for all who trust in You, teach us to approach this mystery with humility: to recognize that every word of Scripture, every command of faith, and every covenant You've sealed is not merely tradition but the living testimony of Your love that transcends time and space. Grant us the courage to engage Your Word with open hearts, the discipline to study it with sincerity, and the grace to apply it to lives marked by both brokenness and hope, knowing that our deepest longings for meaning, purpose, and connection are fully satisfied in You. May we never take this sacred meal lightly, but embrace it as a perpetual reminder that the kingdom You began is one where truth, justice, and eternal love are indissolubly bound." (Theological connections: Covenant theology, Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, the role of sacraments as signs of grace, and the tension between symbolic actions and divine reality. Real-world application: intellectual integrity in studying Scripture, discernment in faith, and the transformative power of covenantal love.)*

### >> Missions Spotlight

Among the Berber (Amazigh) people of North Africa, sharing a meal is a sacred act of community. The Last Supper story resonates deeply, Jesus shared a final meal with His friends before giving His life for them. Many Berber believers are discovering this truth.

### -> To the Cross

At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread and said, 'This is My body, broken for you.' He took the cup and said, 'This is My blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins.' The very next day, it all came true on the cross. The Last Supper and the cross are one story.