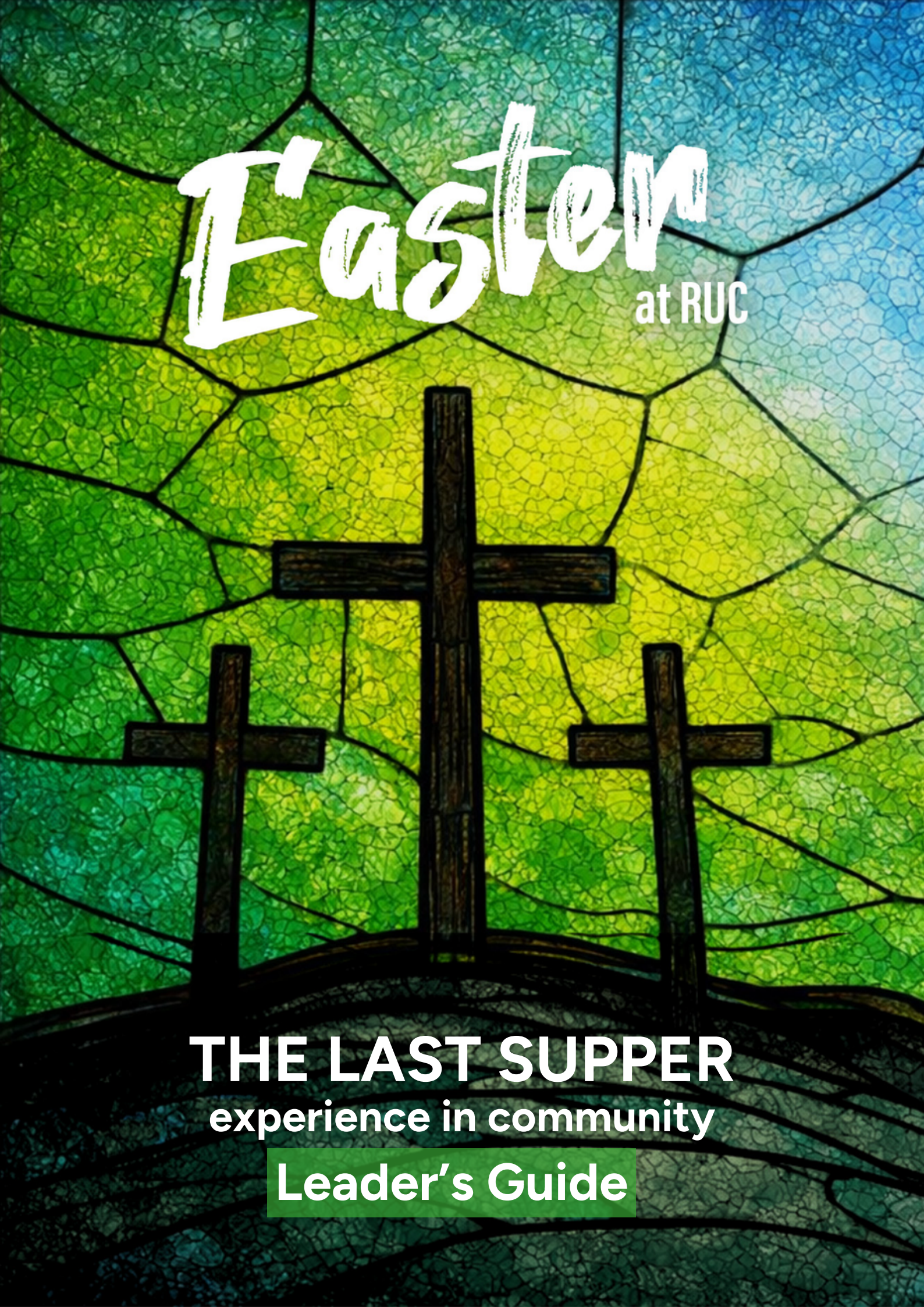


The background is a stained glass design featuring three wooden crosses of varying heights. The central cross is the tallest, flanked by two shorter crosses. The background is composed of various shades of green and blue, with a cracked, mosaic-like texture. The crosses are dark brown and stand on a dark, wavy base.

Easter

at RUC

THE LAST SUPPER
experience in community

Leader's Guide

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A guided experience of the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples, for small group communities to reflect on the significance of Jesus's fulfilment of the Passover symbols through his death.

A NOTE TO HOSTS

We're so glad you have decided to gather as a community to experience the Last Supper! We see in Exodus 12, where the Passover celebration was first described, that it was to take place in households. The Last Supper of Jesus was specifically to commemorate the Passover, and indeed we see Jesus celebrating it with his close group of disciples.

We hope and pray that within close relationships in our homes, we will experience deep fellowship with one another, as well as the significance of this important event. As we gather in our separate homes, let's not forget our wider Church community and pray for it too!



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help you successfully host a Last Supper experience in community. You will need this guide on the evening, but there is also a bit of preparation required beforehand.

Before the evening, we recommend that you:

- **Pray** for the evening and everyone joining you!
- **Read** through the whole guide from start to finish, so that you become familiar with its content.
- Decide which **format** you would like to use for the **teaching elements**. We have made available **teaching videos** (scan the QR code or visit www.ruc.org.za/easter-2026) and the **transcript** for each teaching element (found in this guide). You can use whichever format would be most suitable for your group and setting. However, if you choose not to use the video, please read the teaching sections as they appear in this guide.
- Choose **who in your group** will be doing the readings and prayers. It is a good idea to let them know beforehand so they can also prepare.
- **Prepare the elements** for the meal (see the list below). You can also ask members of your group to help you with this.
- Encourage your group to bring their **own Bibles** (preferably paper).

If it would be easier, you can use a printed copy of this guide on the evening. Just be sure to have the **video playlist open** on a device.

All Scripture references in this guide have been taken from the ESV translation. If you have children with you, consider using the NIRV/ICB translations. **There is a summary of the teachings in the Appendix that you could use to help children understand and engage with the content.**

ELEMENTS IN THIS GUIDE

There are various elements woven into this experience:

- Teaching – A short teaching on relevant passages from Scripture.
- Prayer – A time to pray together as a group.
- Sing – A time to sing together, declaring and meditating on truth through song.
- Do – An action or hands-on activity for the whole group to participate in. There will also be times to say a phrase together.
- Reflect/Share – A time to reflect and discuss, applying the teaching to our own lives.

Additional notes to guide you as facilitator/host appear *in Italics*.

TO PREPARE BEFORE YOU MEET WITH YOUR GROUP

This is what you would need to prepare before meeting with your group:

- This guide (for you as leader), printed or accessible on a device.
- The video playlist open on a device.
- A Bluetooth speaker (or other) will be useful for the teachings and songs.
- A printed/online copy of the participant's guide.
- The elements needed for the table:
 - a. **Unleavened bread:** Enough for each person to eat. You can use Matzos crackers or any flat bread made without yeast or raising agent.
 - b. **Bitter herbs:** A small amount for each person. Plants like chicory, endive, sorrel, dandelion, and even wild lettuces were likely used. Radicchio, a red leaf lettuce could also be used. If you really can't find any of these, parsley or rocket could be used instead.
 - c. **Roast lamb:** You can cook lamb yourself or buy ready-made rolled lamb roast and follow the cooking instructions.
 - d. **A bowl with water:** One for the table.
 - e. **Cups:** One cup per person, that will be drunk from **four times** throughout the evening. **Plates and cutlery** will also be necessary.
 - f. **Wine or grape juice** for the cups.



THE LAST SUPPER

experience in community



TEACHIING

Watch the video (Teaching 1) or read the text below.

Welcome to the start of Easter! Our hope for you and your group as you meet together tonight is that God, by his Spirit, will focus your attention and prepare your heart for the rest of Easter. What we will be doing tonight is experiencing the Last Supper that Jesus had with his disciples. This took place on the night before his crucifixion, along with preparation for burial, betrayal by Judas, and later events in the garden of Gethsemane.

This is more than a “warm up” for Easter – it’s a way for us to grow a deeper understanding of the significance of Jesus’s death. In Matthew’s gospel, we read that Jesus predicts his death three times (Matt 16:21-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19). However, he only explains his death once. In Matthew 20:28 we read that “...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” We know that Jesus will “save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21), but we only have this one hint that his death would have meaning... until the Last Supper!

The Last Supper is where Jesus takes symbols, connected to the Passover, and interprets them regarding his upcoming death, and what his death will accomplish. In other words, this is where Jesus most fully explains the significance of his death! Jesus uses symbols – food to be precise – to teach his disciples and help them make sense of all the events to follow in the next few hours. That said, Jesus didn’t just want us to understand symbols, he wanted us to participate in these regularly together in remembrance of him (Luke 22:19). So, that’s what tonight is about: participating in and experiencing rich symbols that communicate foundational truths of Easter weekend. Let’s start by reading the account of Jesus’s Last Supper from Matthew’s gospel.



READING

Ask someone in your group to read Matthew 26:17-30.



TEACHING

Watch the video (Teaching 2) or read the text below.

The first and one of the most important things to notice is that at the Last Supper of Jesus, Jesus and his disciples are celebrating the Passover. Three times in verses 17-19 we read about the Passover! The meal that he is eating, and the symbols that he is using to teach about his death, are symbols taken from the Passover Celebration. This was not *just* a last meal with his friends. They are obeying the Old Testament laws concerning the observances of seven prescribed feasts (Ex. 12, Lev. 23, Num. 28, Deut. 16).

The Festival of the Passover, or the Festival of Unleavened Bread, was the first of the seven prescribed feasts, and undoubtedly the most important. The other six feasts allude to and are fulfilled by Jesus in some way. But the Passover is most clearly fulfilled by Jesus, which means it is an important feast for Christians today to understand. Because we are doing tonight what Jesus was doing – celebrating the Passover – we will take some time to look at what Passover celebrations meant in Jesus's time and what they mean for modern Jews today. This will provide the foundation for our celebration of the Last Supper.

Let's begin by talking about what we are *not* doing tonight: we are not doing something similar to the Seder meal that modern Jews observe. This meal consists of a number of foods with symbolic significance, along with four cups of wine. There is quite an elaborate ritual involving various blessings being said, the order of foods being eaten, and singing. Some Christians today will do something similar, and interpret a lot of the elements in the meal in relation to Jesus. We are *not* doing this tonight, simply because it's likely not what Jesus was doing with his disciples. This observance was only written down in the 3rd century, and while it was handed down orally sometime prior to that it is highly unlikely that the elaborate Seder meal is what Jesus was doing.

Instead, what we have on the table are elements that we know would be present for Jesus, because he did obey the law, and the laws about Passover in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy are relatively clear.

What we know would have been on the table are the five things you have prepared before you:

1. Unleavened bread
2. Bitter herbs
3. Lamb
4. A bowl with water
5. Cups

Exodus 12 mentions the first three of these (unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and lamb) clearly and the great Rabbi Gamaliel says the basics of any Passover are those three elements. We also know there was a bowl for dipping bread, because that was part of exposing Judas as the betrayer. Finally, we know there was a cup because Jesus took a cup.

That's what we have on the table, but Scripture also guides us as to what we will do. We will sing because Jesus and his disciples sang before departing. We will pray. We will connect and tell stories. This was done in households with families. Those who trust in Jesus are all part of his family, and so this is something special we get to do in a home as members of God's family!

Now, even though this is not a Seder observance, we have borrowed one element from the Seder meal. In a Seder meal, there would be four cups. We only have one cup, but we will drink from it four times and say a blessing when we do. The reason this is done four times is based on the four saving actions of God to his people in Exodus 6:6-7:

*"Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the LORD, and **I will bring you out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and **I will deliver you** from slavery to them, and **I will redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. **I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God**, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians"*

The actual blessing itself, which we will say four times, is: **"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine."** The reason we 'bless God' before we eat or drink (as we see Jesus do in Matt. 14:19) is to express our gratitude for the one who extends the blessing of food and drink to us.



DO

Read Exodus 6:6-7 together. Highlight/mention all the saving actions of God in the passage. What is God promising to do? Each of the four blessings we'll focus on is based on each of the four promises of God!

Then say to your group: To summarise:

1. We are experiencing the Last Supper, which is Easter Thursday.
2. The Last Supper was a Passover meal, in accordance with the scriptures.
3. The Last Supper is a meal that Jesus used to explain his upcoming death.



PRAYER

Say: *The Passover meal would start with a prayer of blessing. The mother in the family would say a blessing and light a candle. We are just going to have an opening prayer.*

Ask someone to open in prayer:

- thanking God for the opportunity to come together and reflect on Jesus's death,
- thanking God for each person around the table,
- asking God to help us, by his Spirit, to gain a deeper understanding of the significance and meaning of Jesus's death, and
- prepare our hearts together for the rest of the Easter weekend.



DO

The Cup of Blessing ("I will bring you out...")

Everyone say together (we will repeat this another three times, so it might be helpful to memorise this.):

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine."

Do: Drink from the cup.



TEACHING

Watch the video (Teaching 3) or read the text below.

The event of the Passover is the fundamental redemption story in the Old Testament, which gets celebrated throughout, is referred to in the New Testament and is fulfilled in Jesus in a special way. It is a recounting of the Exodus event, where God delivered his people from hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt.

They were in Egypt because the 12 tribes had relocated there from Canaan during famine when Joseph was sold off by his brothers and became prince of Egypt. As Pharaohs changed, the Israelites no longer enjoyed favour with the Egyptian ruler. Instead, he wanted to eradicate non-Egyptians and use them for labour. This was the case for 400 years, until God sent a man named Moses to deliver them. Moses confronts Pharaoh who refuses to let them go, and we have a series of 10 plagues that come on Egypt, each representing Yahweh's authority over the gods of Egypt. Through the first nine plagues, Pharaoh keeps the Israelites, until the time for the last one: the death of every firstborn living thing in Egypt, both human and animal. For God's people to be spared this final act of judgment, they were to perform an elaborate ceremony. We read about this ceremony in **Exodus 12: 1-13**:

1 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, **2** "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. **3** Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. **4** And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbour shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. **5** Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, **6** and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. **7** "Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. **8** They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. **9** Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. **10** And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. **11** In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand.

*And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. **12** For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. **13** The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.*

This is Israel's moment of truth! Would God come through for them and save them? They would have had to exercise faith that God would spare them and deliver them. They would have had to trust God and follow his instructions to be saved from his judgment of death. The blood of the lamb that died instead of them is a testimony of their faith. God commanded that this action was to be commemorated every year afterwards. In Ex. 12:14-17 we read:

"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast...Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever".

So, Jesus kept the law, and he would have done exactly this.



READING

Ask someone to read from 2 Timothy 2:11-13.



TALK & SHARE

From the story of the first Passover, we see that God remains faithful to his promise to save those who trust in him. The Israelites were commanded to commemorate the Passover every year as a reminder of God's faithfulness.

Take a moment to share around the table, reflecting on these questions:

- Why were the Israelites commanded to remember their deliverance yearly?
- What would have motivated them to trust God and show their faith by following his instructions to be spared from death?
- How has God shown his faithfulness to you?
- How are you tempted to forget God's faithfulness and what can you do to remember?

- If you have children around the table, ask them if anyone has ever made a promise to them. Did they keep it or not? How did that make them feel? Encourage them that God will always do what he says. We can trust him to keep every promise he has made. Just as God kept his promise to save the Israelites from death, everyone who trusts Jesus will have eternal life with God.



SING

Sing together *Jesus Paid It All*, praising God that he keeps his promise to save through Jesus Christ.



DO

The Cup of Plagues ("I will deliver you...")

Everyone say together:

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine"

Do: Dip your fingers into your cup and flick it onto the table. Do this ten times, reciting each of the ten plagues each time (blood, frogs, gnats, flies, pestilence, boils, hail locusts, darkness, and death.) This represents the cup of God's wrath (Isaiah 51:22).

Then, drink from the cup.



TEACHING

Watch the video (*Teaching 4*) or read the text below.

Reflecting on the Exodus story earlier, we looked at how God remained faithful to his promise to save his people. But, we also need to reflect on the fact that the Israelites were no less deserving of God's judgment than the Egyptians. All people are guilty before God and deserving of the punishment for sin, which is death (Romans 6:23a). God's wrath is often connected with the imagery of a cup (Jer. 25:15, Is. 51:17, Rev. 14:9-10). And Jesus confirms this connection when he prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, with the cross looming ahead, "My Father, if it be

possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39). So, the cup we just drank from reminds us of God's anger over sin.

The Israelites were not only slaves to the Egyptians, but they were enslaved to sin. They did nothing to earn their position as God's chosen people or to deserve to be rescued from the judgment of death. They needed a way to escape God's judgment. Death passed over those who had the blood of an unblemished, male lamb on their doorpost (Ex. 12:5). God provided a substitute - the lamb that died instead of God's people.

This points forward to how God would save the whole world from the punishment for sin. We'll get more into that later tonight, but for now, just hold onto this idea: **God made a way for his people to be spared from his righteous judgment of sin.**



SING

Sing *Nothing But The Blood* together.



TEACHING

Watch the video (*Teaching 5*) or read the text below.

When we get to the eating of the meal, we know there were these three elements for Jesus and his disciples:

- Unleavened bread – signifying the haste in which the Israelites left Egypt (Deut. 16:3) and leaven also representing sin.
- Bitter herbs – representing the affliction of God's people in Egypt (we read in Ex. 1:12-14 how bitter the lives of God's people were while in slavery).
- Lamb – representing the Passover lamb, the sacrifice by which people were spared from the judgment of God.

Let's pick up where we left off in Matthew's account of the Last Supper: Matthew 26: 26: "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my Body.'"

We are familiar with this from partaking regularly in Holy Communion, but think about how the disciples would have experienced this. Jesus is taking a tradition –

1500 years old by then – and saying that now, this bread is his body. It's without leaven, that is, without sin! Other gospels say "this is my body given for you..." So, Jesus is taking these sacred symbols and saying their full meaning is his body that will be broken for others.



DO

Reflect on the bitterness of sin, and the judgment we deserve as a result of it. Reflect on the truth that Jesus's body – though he never sinned – was broken for sinners like us to restore us to relationship with God for eternity.



Play The Passover Song while everyone reflects on the above together.



TEACHING

Watch the video (Teaching 6) or read the text below.

Jesus goes on in verse 27, "And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matt 26:27-28).

"Blood of the covenant" is a unique phrase only found in Exodus 24, where Moses takes the blood of atonement sacrifices and 'pours it' over people!

*"And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold **the blood of the covenant** that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." (Exodus 24:6-8)*

In a moment, for the third time tonight, we will get our cups. This is the cup of redemption ("I will redeem you..."). This cup symbolises a price being paid to buy back something that belonged to you. Through Jesus, we are redeemed – bought back – by God to belong to him forever. Romans 3:24 tells us that all who trust in Jesus are "justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus". So, through faith in Jesus, we are no longer slaves to sin and death, but redeemed and free to live for Christ.

DO The Cup of Redemption (“I will redeem you...”)

Everyone say together:

“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine”

Do: Drink from the cup.

TEACHING

Watch the video (Teaching 7) or read the text below.

We’ve seen now how Jesus used the symbols of the bread and the cup – elements of the Passover meal – to connect the Passover to his death and explain what it means. But, let’s take a moment to reflect on why the gospel accounts of the Last Supper don’t mention a lamb.

The lamb was the centerpiece of the Passover meal. We presume it was part of the meal Jesus had with his disciples. But, the gospels don’t connect the lamb and the Lord’s Supper. Why?

The reason is that Jesus Christ himself is the Passover Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36; 19:36; 1 Cor. 5:7). The annual Passover lamb pointed to and finds its meaning in the ultimate Passover Lamb – Jesus. Unblemished (free from sin), perfect, he dies on the cross, shedding his blood to cover the sin of his people (Romans 3:25).

Just like God passed over the Israelites with the lamb’s blood on their doorposts, God’s judgment passes over all those who have put their trust in Jesus. Just as the lamb died instead of the firstborn male Israelites, Jesus was punished as a substitute for sinful people.

Just as the bread was broken, Jesus’s body was broken for you.

Just as the cup was poured out, Jesus’s blood was shed for you.

Just as a lamb died, Jesus – the Passover Lamb of God – died for you.



READING

Take turns reading the following Scriptures, reflecting on how the yearly Passover lamb points forward to and finds its meaning in Jesus Christ, the ultimate Passover Lamb of God:

- John 1:29, 36
- John 19: 36
- 1 Corinthians 5:7
- Romans 3:25
- 2 Corinthians 5:21
- 1 Peter 1:18-19



DO

Time for the feast!

Do: Eat the bread, herbs and lamb together.



TALK & SHARE

Listen to the reading of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (found also on the video playlist) while reflecting on all we have experienced together tonight. Think about the fact that Isaiah prophesied about the Lamb of God hundreds of years before he would be born!

Then, let everyone discuss these questions:

- What does this show us about God?
- How does this impact your daily life?



TEACHING

Watch the video (*Teaching 8*) or read the text below.

Let's finish the account in Matthew:

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying,

"Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt 26:26-29)

Here, Jesus is speaking of the future. Somehow, despite his blood that was shed and his body broken, he will prevail and return to fellowship with his disciples. So, the Last Supper has an element of looking back, but also a looking forward in hope!

When we drink from the cup for the fourth time – the cup of praise – we remember God's promise "I will take you to be my people...". God was faithful to the Israelites, and he will be faithful to all who trust in Jesus. One day, we will all – people from every tribe, nation, and tongue – will be gathered before the throne of God, praising Jesus, and free from sin and death forever!



DO

The Cup of Praise ("I will take you to be my people...")

Everyone say together:

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine"

Do: Drink from the cup.



TALK & SHARE

Share around the table how you think we ought to live in light of God's promise to gather his people to be his treasured possession. What difference does this make to our daily lives? What hope does this provide?



READING

Say: In Matthew's account of the Last Supper, we read that Jesus and the disciples sang a song before going out to the Mount of Olives. We know from Jewish tradition that they would sing or recite Psalms 113-118, so we will read Psalm 116 and then sing. (Ask someone to read **Psalm 116**).



SING

Sing *Christ and Christ Crucified* together.



PRAYER

Either let everyone take turns praying or ask someone to end the evening in prayer.

Appendix

SUMMARIES FOR CHILDREN

Use this summary from “Messiah in the Passover” by Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser to explain **the first Passover** to children.

- The Israelites were slaves in Egypt and they wanted to be free so they could go live in the Promised Land.
- Moses kept asking Pharaoh to let the people go and Pharaoh said no, even after nine plagues.
- The people prepared for Passover night by getting rid of leaven/yeast. The New Testament says that leaven, or yeast, represents sin in our lives. Yeast is the ingredient that makes bread puffy. We don’t want to be “puffed up” with pride, making fun of other people and thinking we are better than them (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7-8).
- Just like the lamb that was sacrificed to be perfect, Jesus (who is called the lamb of God) was also perfect and sinless. The blood of the Passover lamb saved the people from death in Egypt, and Jesus’s blood saves us from eternal death and gives us eternal life!

Use this summary adapted from “The Jesus Storybook Bible” by Sally Lloyd-Jones to explain **the Last Supper** to children (Luke 22:7-20; Mark 14; and John 13-14).

The night before Jesus died when he shared a meal with his closest friends (his disciples). He picked up some bread and thanked God for it. He broke it and gave it to his friends. Next, he picked up a cup of wine and thanked God for it. He poured it out and shared it.

‘My body is like this bread. It will break’, Jesus told them. ‘This cup of wine is like my blood. It will pour out. But this is how God will rescue the whole world. My life will break and God’s broken world will mend. My heart will tear apart - and your hearts will heal. Just as the Passover Lamb died, so now I will die instead of you. My blood will wash away all your sins. And you will be clean on the inside - in your hearts.’

Jesus told his friends to keep sharing the bread and wine; and – whenever they eat and drink – to remember him and how he rescued people.