



**Faithful GOD**  
**COVENANT People**  
a Good Soil series for small group study

**#12: The Supper: Blood of the New Covenant**  
**Bible Readings: Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-25,**  
**Luke 22:14-23, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

**by Revd Andy Murphy**

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## PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

In this session, we will be thinking about **The Lord's Supper** and the significance of this 'covenant meal'. It may be appropriate and helpful for your group to **share in Holy Communion** as part of the session. This needs careful preparation. If desired for your group, **you should discuss this with your minister, and ensure that an ordained or appropriately-authorised person is available to lead the sacramental part of the session.** You will need to make arrangements for the bread and wine. It is the practice of the Methodist Church always to use non-alcoholic wine, and please also consider any dietary requirements. Please allow sufficient time for it (~20 minutes or so). *The next session, #13, will focus on the death of Jesus, so it would also be appropriate to have Communion then, if it is not possible with this one.*

## PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)

Since the very early days of the church, Christians have been gathering together to break bread, share wine, and participate in what became known as Holy Communion. As well as the famous 'Last Supper' before his death, it is reported that Jesus also broke bread with disciples after his resurrection (**Luke 24:28-35, John 21:9-14**), and the church believes that the unseen presence of the living Christ is a vital component every time we share the Lord's Supper together. *You might like to reflect on whether the meal Jesus shared in the upper room with his disciples should have ever been called 'The **Last Supper**' at all!*

The supper is recorded in three of the Gospels, but **the earliest known written account** of what Jesus did (and hence what we do and why) actually comes from St. Paul, writing to the church in Corinth, in one of his earliest and most important letters. **Please read: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.**

*Do these words sound familiar to you? When and why do we tell this story of the '**First**' Supper again and again? Why is it so important to us? How important is Holy Communion to you? Do you take it regularly? How does it make you feel? Can you recall a time when you were ever denied it? (Or is it all new to you?)*

## STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

**Almighty God,**  
**to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:**  
**cleanse the thoughts of our hearts**  
**by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,**  
**that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name;**  
**through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Collect for Purity, a traditional prayer, taken from *The Methodist Worship Book* (1999), p.185.

## FINDING OUR ROOTS

In small groups, discuss your reflections on the questions in the '**PREPARATION**' section above.

## READING THE SCRIPTURES – with background information

**The four gospels** have many similarities and many differences as they each give an account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are written from eyewitness accounts, and from the handed-down traditions of the churches as they told and retold the stories. All four are dated within 60 years of the events of Jesus' life (within living memory). It is thought that **Matthew** and **Luke** probably borrowed (and expanded on) some material from **Mark**, which is now widely believed to have been the earliest of the four. **John's Gospel** is remarkably different from the other three (which are known as the 'Synoptics') and is understood to have been the latest written. John does *not* include an account of the breaking of bread and sharing wine. Instead he focuses on **the washing of the disciples' feet** during the supper (which the others do not mention) and the long 'farewell discourses' as Jesus comforts and instructs his disciples. Apart from this, there is great similarity (and remarkable detail) in the gospels' telling of the 'Passion' story, from Maundy Thursday to the burial of Jesus. Our focus is on the short passages around the bread and the wine.

**Read together the Bible passages: Mark 14:22-25; Matthew 26:26-30; Luke 22:14-23**

While the focus of Jesus' teaching was often about 'Kingdom', these passages include the *only* time Jesus mentions 'Covenant'. It is in the setting of a Passover meal, during (or just before) the festival. Although the Passover then would be different to Seder Meal celebrated by Jews today, we can learn a lot about the symbolism from our Jewish friends. **The bread is unleavened bread** and, when broken, it symbolizes both the suffering of the Israelites and their liberation. **The wine** is drunk at four key moments in the meal, symbolizing: sanctification, freedom from affliction, redemption as God's people, and praise. (And there's often a fifth cup pointing to the future.) This is expressed in **Exodus 6:6-8** – the promises they celebrate being fulfilled. Jesus probably took the **third cup** (after supper) – **the cup of redemption or blessing**.

'**The blood of the covenant**' refers back to **Exodus 24**, with Moses and the former slaves now free to be God's people! Jesus makes it '**new**'. But, as with the Bible, 'New' will always be in continuity with the 'Old'.

## DIGGING DEEPER – some questions for you to consider in your group:

*What differences do you notice with the three readings? Are they important? Did anything surprise you?*

A Passover meal symbolizes sanctification, suffering, freedom, redemption, blessing, praise, belonging to God. *Which words would you use to describe the meaning of Holy Communion?*

The Lord's Supper points to the death and resurrection of Jesus – the true source of our hope and salvation.

*How can participating in this meal help us to feel more connected to Jesus, and give us assurance that we are safe forever in God's love? How do you think Jesus works 'through' the bread and wine?*

There is so much meaning and mystery encompassed in the Lord's Supper. *How important is it that it is always conducted with a sense of order, reverence and awe? (And also celebration!)*

*How does Holy Communion help us express our covenant relationship with God? And if God wants all people to be drawn into this covenant, how can we be as inclusive and welcoming as possible?*

## PRAYING TOGETHER

**If you are sharing in Holy Communion together, you could include your time of prayer within that.**

**Pray together** for the personal concerns of members of your group, and for your church. Pray that as we grow in understanding of the covenant meal of the Lord's Supper, we will grow in love for one another and for God, knowing that we are God's redeemed people, and overflowing in praise.

**Sing or read: 'God, whose love is all around us'** (*Singing the Faith*, 585). And include **The Lord's Prayer**.

## COVENANT LIVING: PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE (to think about afterwards)

All Christians are part of the same Covenant with God, and yet we usually feel more 'connected' when we share Holy Communion in churches we know and love. *Have you ever experienced the Lord's Supper in other places? Are there churches locally that offer Communion at other times? Could you attend one of these? Reflect on how it feels and what it means, the traditions and liturgies, the similarities, any barriers you might feel. Did you experience something new of Jesus?*

## Junior Good Soil, issue #12

### A SUPPER WITH JESUS -

### The Family Meal of the New Covenant

Written by Andy Murphy.

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Junior Good Soil is for children's and young people's groups in churches.  
It can be easily adapted and you can add your own ideas!



#### NOTES FOR LEADERS

**Our focus here is the Lord's Supper / Holy Communion.** It may be that this session takes place during a Communion service at your church, in which case it should be extra special for the children to go back into church and be part of it, receiving the bread and wine. (In any case, hopefully, there will be a Communion service soon, which the children can be part of.) **If you would like to share Holy Communion within your group, please do talk to the minister about how this might be possible.** It could be something which could be done after the service, or at another time, or there might be a minister or authorized person within the congregation who would be willing to come out into your session and lead it.

**Some of the suggestions below involve bread.** Please be careful with allergies or intolerances.

#### PLANTING THE SEED – what are we thinking about today?

Today we are thinking about the very special meal Jesus shared with his disciples on the night before he died, and three days before his resurrection. It's the meal that we remember every time we share Holy Communion together in church. **Ask:** *What do you think of Holy Communion; what does it mean to you?*

#### QUIET TIME – a prayer (for use at the start or end of the session)

Dear God, as we think about that special meal with your friends, may you be with us in this time together; as we think about the bread and wine you shared, help us to be ready to share with others; as we think about your body and blood – your life given for us – help us to know the depth of your love. In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

#### TELLING THE STORY – reading the Bible... Luke chapter 22: verses 7-20

Read the story from a Bible of your choice, or from the **International Children's Bible: Luke 22:7-20**  
Or for younger children, try the **Usborne Children's Bible**, pages 122-126.

#### WATERING AND GERMINATING – what can we learn? / what does it tell us?

It was around the Jewish festival of **Passover**. This is an important time for the Jewish people, when they remember how God rescued them from slavery in Egypt, and set them free to be in a special relationship (Covenant) with him. Passover is about God's love, and freedom, and remembering their suffering when they were slaves. They share bread and wine as signs of being God's people, and receiving God's blessing.

**Jesus gave this new meaning for his disciples.** He linked it with **his body and blood** – his life given up for us on the cross. Christians have been sharing Holy Communion ever since. (Also called Mass, Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper.) We believe that Jesus joins us for this meal, that we are united as one family, that we are fed with the Holy Spirit, and that we find forgiveness and a new start when we share the bread and wine.

#### LETTING IT GROW – ideas for activities and discussion

As you talk about these things, you could **bake some bread** to share with the congregation after the service. Or let the children try **unleavened bread** (*Matzah / Matzo*) which you can buy in many supermarkets. Perhaps they could **draw or paint a piece of art** depicting the Last Supper with Jesus and his disciples.

#### PRAISE AND WORSHIP – hymns and songs (can be used at the start or end, or whenever!)

**Jesus stand among us / Here is bread** (by Graham Kendrick) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hawG-biEf8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hawG-biEf8)  
(also found in *Singing the Faith* – numbers 30 and 586)