

CrossWise Living | Bible Study Series

Jesus' Farewell: LOVE TO THE UTTERMOST

*A study of John 13-17
The Upper Room Discourse*

Dr. Gail Bones

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Dedication

To Janis and Ed Nelson,
humble servants,
whose daily lives demonstrate
what Jesus meant when he said,

*“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet,
you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an
example that you should do as I have done for you.”*

JOHN 13:14-15

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About the Author

Gail Nelson Bones, Ed.D., is the founder of CrossWise Living, a ministry devoted to helping people at all stages in life navigate change through cross-generational relationships. She has been engaging audiences as a speaker, songwriter, and worship leader for over thirty years. Formerly a professor of education at San Diego Christian College, Dr. Bones is the award-winning author of *Living Cross Wise: Hope and Help for Navigating Transition* (2013).

Gail and her husband Jeff have been married for over 30 years and together have recorded seven albums of original Christian music. Along with their now-grown children, they spent many years presenting family concerts at churches across the United States. Gail is currently a women's ministry leader at her home church, a worship leader, and doting grandmother.



Suggestions for Weekly Sessions

1. **Continue to invite participation** during the whole group sessions. You will note that most of even the informational, textual questions require critical thinking.
2. **Ask the Holy Spirit to guide** you each week as you choose the questions you want to emphasize in your whole group lesson since you will probably not have a chance to go over each question.
3. **Ask participants to mark the italicized application questions** they are most interested in discussing in their small groups before they come to class. You may rotate the facilitation of discussion within the small groups each week.
4. **Prayer Requests.** As the leader, monitor the time. When you have about 15-20 minutes left for your session, announce that it is time to transition to prayer requests. Space is provided in the back of the book for recording these in the workbook. Have a plan for those times when someone needs some extra TLC or prayer—does your church have a counseling or prayer ministry? Is there someone who is willing to stay late to meet with ladies who might need extra support?

About the Study

Welcome, Fellow Travelers! I pray that this Bible study of Jesus in the Upper Room will be as life changing for you as it has been for me in the writing of it. My desire was to create an in-depth tool for discipleship to serve mature Christians, kindred spirits who want to keep growing and going deeper in faith each passing year. We are the ones with shelves full of completed Bible study workbooks, the ones who've heard hundreds and hundreds of sermons over the years, the ones who find that our thirst for the Lord and his Word is never quenched.

This study is for you if you want to know Jesus more intimately. There is no more tender portrait of our Lord in all of Scripture than that which the Apostle John depicts in these five chapters of his gospel. I found myself captivated anew by the reality of Jesus' humanity displayed in the depth of his emotion and loving compassion for his beloved band of brothers on the last night they were together. I immersed myself as well in the stories of the disciples who were gathered there that night and found myself deeply moved as I considered the events of that evening from their perspective.

If you are ready to face challenging questions head-on and are willing to invest time in serious study of God's Word, I welcome you to join me on this exciting journey.

Practically Speaking

There are 6 lessons in all, which can be completed in 6 weeks of intensive study, or, if you want to slow it down, you can stretch it to 12.

For a **6-week study** each lesson will have 5 parts which correspond to 5 days of study. There is an optional sixth part that will incorporate some creative Bible journaling ideas. You officially have permission to buy a new journal and colored pencils.

For a **12-week study** you can do parts 1-3 one week and parts 4-6 the following week.-

Quite often you will be cross-referencing topics in both the Old and New Testaments. Don't feel the need to write out each verse! It would be better to read the verse and then answer the related question with a paraphrase or summary of the verse that best addresses the question.

For discussion leaders

You will not be able to go over each question during your group time. I have italicized the personal application questions so you can make sure to include some of those in your discussion. Expect that there will be questions that will remain unanswered. Leave room for participants to share their "lingering questions." As your group members combine their knowledge and insight with a reliance on the Holy Spirit as your teacher, you will likely come to understand sections of Scripture you have always wondered about. Pray for the Holy Spirit's enlightenment!

I leave you with one of my favorite promises in Scripture:

"Then those who feared the LORD spoke with each other, and the LORD listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name." Malachi 3:16 (NLT)

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LESSON 1

An Overview

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

JOHN 20:31 (NIV)

INTRODUCTION

If you knew today would be your last day on earth, who would you want to gather around you? What would you want to say or give to each one?

John 13:1 declares that “Jesus knew his hour had come to leave this world,” and it is in this context that he draws his dearest friends, the 12 apostles, those who’ve walked with him daily for three years, close to his heart. His tenderness, compassion, and manifest love are unmatched in this passage that one commentator called the “Holy of Holies of the New Testament.”

The five chapters of John’s Gospel we will study over the next weeks provide a detailed account of what Jesus taught and prayed on his final night as the horror of his betrayal and crucifixion loomed before him. What Bible scholars have called the Upper Room Discourse comprises the largest body of teaching in the New Testament. It is noteworthy that while John’s gospel omits key events covered in the synoptic gospels, such the temptation in the wilderness, the transfiguration, the institution of the Lord’s Supper, and the Sermon on the Mount, nearly one quarter of his book is devoted to a detailed retelling of what Jesus said and did on his final night with his inner circle.

Study Outline

Before we launch into our close reading of the Upper Room Discourse, we’ll spend our first week reviewing relevant events from each of the gospels. Think of this as the flashback sequence in a movie that helps us to grasp important facts about the background of each of the key characters. This important preliminary step will help us to understand what the individuals present that night—especially Judas and Peter—had experienced during their three years of ministry with Jesus. What had they seen? What were they expecting? How did they differ from one another? How were they feeling? What did they misunderstand?

For the first week we will be doing “big picture” reading. You’ll be surveying large sections of Scripture that you most likely have read many times before. Looking again at these familiar passages fairly quickly will help us to understand the context and the individuals involved in this intimate scene, one of the most beautiful in all of Scripture.

Later, in the weeks ahead, we will slow way down and do “close reading,” wherein we will read and reread small portions of our text, analyzing, looking for detail, annotating shorter passages, jotting in the margins our questions and observations about that which we find significant, or surprising, or even puzzling. At that time I will encourage you to print out a double-spaced copy of the chapter we are studying so you can read with a pen and colored pencils in order to draw the most meaning possible from each precious verse of God’s Word.

PART ONE

1. Read Matthew 4:18-23. Who are the first disciples Jesus calls to follow him?

2. Read Mark 3:16-19.
 - a. From this list, what nickname does Jesus give to John? What does this tell you?

 - b. From this list, what nickname does he give Simon? What does his new name mean? (See Matthew 16:18 in the NLT) What does this tell you?

 - c. What does it tell you that Jesus gives nicknames to his friends?

Application questions are written in italics. They invite you to take the third step, to ask not only what the passage says and what it means, but what does it mean to you specifically? How is the Holy Spirit showing you to apply this truth in your life today?.

- d. *What nicknames have you been given by friends? How does it make you feel when a friend gives you a nickname?*

 - e. How is Judas identified in this list?

3. Skim Luke 4:31 through 6:11 for the main ideas. We're recalling events that directly preceded Jesus' choosing of his 12 apostles from among the many disciples who'd been following him.

Jesus has just returned from his temptation in the wilderness and returned to Galilee, the region in the north of Israel where he'd been raised in a town named Nazareth. After teaching in their synagogue regularly to the praise of all, one day he announces that he is the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy found in Isaiah 6. They still seem fine with that (maybe they didn't quite grasp what he was saying) until he begins to criticize them for their lack of faith. The crowd then turns on him and tries to kill him by pushing him off a cliff. He therefore leaves Nazareth, saying "no prophet is accepted in his hometown" and moves to a fishing village named Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

- a. What is his first recorded act as he teaches at their synagogue? How do the people respond?

- b. Describe his healing ministry as recorded in these chapters. List the healings he performed. What was the scope of his healing ministry at this point?

 - c. Keeping in mind that we are viewing these events from the vantage point of his disciples, what kinds of interactions with the religious leaders had they witnessed?

 - d. In these chapters (esp. Luke 5:1-11), by his words and actions, what had Jesus already revealed about himself?
4. What details do you find in Luke 6:12-13 about Jesus' choosing of the Twelve Apostles? Why is this significant?

 5. *What is your practice with regard to prayer when you have an important decision to make? Do you have any such decisions upcoming?*

 6. From Luke 6:17-19, what do the newly-appointed apostles see and hear when they come down from the mountain?

 7. *Ponder all of the above events that have led to this day. Imagine you are Peter, or John, or Judas. Write in your creative journal an entry summarizing your observations, emotions, and anticipations as you stand at the bottom of the mountain after having been called by Jesus to be one of his twelve apostles.*

LINGERING QUESTIONS

Do you have any lingering questions? Passages you have just never understood? Ideas you want to delve into? This is a place to jot ideas for further study or discussion.

PART TWO

1. As you read **Luke 6:20-49**, put yourself in the place of one of the apostles hearing these words. You have been personally called by Jesus and have agreed to abandon all to follow him. You have seen the crowds swell and gather to watch in amazement as he does miracles of healing and deliverance. You have been summoned to a mountaintop and hand-picked by the Son of Man to be a member of an elite ministry team that will live and travel with him. In this passage, Jesus begins to train you for your mission. What does he say to equip you for what lies ahead? Summarize the main ideas for each section below. Write out any key verses or phrases.

vv. 20-26

vv. 27-35

vv. 37-42

vv. 43-45

vv. 46-49

Next, using colored pencils, code your list above as follows:

Yellow: warnings about the future.

Blue: encouragements and blessings.

Red: commands.

Green: reversals in which Jesus' teaching is the opposite of what they'd thought or been taught) .

2. Jesus is training his disciples in what to expect as they begin their full-time ministry with him.
 - a. What do you think shocked or surprised them? From this list, what is Jesus training his disciples to expect as they begin their full-time ministry with him?

 - b. What does it say about them that they stayed with him after hearing this? Why did they?

- c. Which of these sayings from Luke 6:20-49 do you find most challenging?
- d. Which of these sayings do you find most encouraging?
3. *Which of these sayings of Jesus would it be most helpful for you to memorize? What is Jesus asking you to do in response to his Word today?*

LINGERING QUESTIONS

PART THREE

1. What had the apostle John uniquely experienced as a member of Jesus' inner circle? Read and summarize the following:
 - a. Mark 5:35-43
 - b. Matthew 17:1-9
 - c. How might this have affected him as he watched and listened to Jesus on that final night?

2. We see John in a less than favorable light in Matthew 20:17-28.
 - a. Briefly describe what happened.
 - b. What had Jesus told the twelve immediately prior to Mrs. Zebedee's request? Does her request seem strange or understandable based on what Jesus had revealed?
 - c. How do we know John was standing there when his mother made this request?
 - d. *How does this illustrate a temptation we face as parents, especially of adult children? Does any particular personal experience come to mind?*
 - e. How do the other ten react to what James and John had asked? Try to imagine Peter and Judas in particular.
 - f. How does Jesus respond and what is the final principle he emphasizes?

LINGERING QUESTIONS

PART FOUR

1. As Judas and the other 11 walk with Jesus for three years, they witness countless miracles. To refresh your memory, **skim** the text of each of the following and indicate the kind of miracle Jesus performs in each case. What does each demonstrate?

John 2:1-11

John 6:1-15

Mark 8:22-26

Luke 4:31-36

Luke 7:11-17

Matthew 17:24-27

John 11:40-43

2. What should Judas have concluded?
3. What other dramatic experience as an apostle of Jesus does Judas have? See Mark 6:6-13. How should this have affected him?
4. What sad commentary do we find in John 12:37? Do you find this is true today? What have you observed?