

# The Farewell Address

## Helpful Resources

The Passion Week: The Last Seven Days of Christ's Ministry

## Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

In 1796, as he neared the end of his second term in office, President George Washington opted to retire rather than to seek re-election. While he had already established numerous precedents for future presidents, as "the Father of our country," he desired to leave behind some encouragements and warnings before his departure. Thus, with the help of James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, Washington wrote and published a Farewell Address to the American people. His words were carefully chosen and wise, thoughtful concerns to enable national health and unity. His address is still read annually in the Senate.

Likewise, as Jesus neared the end of His earthly ministry, He too will memorialize the occasion with a special meal with His disciples and some final words of wisdom. Scholars refer to His parting message as the Upper Room Discourse. We might call it Jesus' Farewell Address. Whatever He said or did in that moment would set precedents for Christ-followers for centuries. Therefore, such an occasion warrants a closer look. In this review, we will reconsider the Upper Room Discourse. What did Jesus impart to us in His Farewell Address?

- The Upper Room

1. **Washing the Disciples' Feet** (*Jn. 13:1-17*): One of the precedents that Jesus set in the Upper Room was servant-leadership. To show the extent of His love, Jesus took a towel and water basin and washed the disciples' feet (even Judas). He said, "Since I, the Lord, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you" (*v.14, 15*). Christ's followers are to serve others.

2. **The Lord's Supper** (*Mk. 14:22-26; Matt. 26:26-30; Lk. 22:15-20*): Another precedent that Jesus established in the Upper Room was the first of two church ordinances — the Lord's Supper (the other being baptism). Jesus used the Old Testament seder meal to transition to the New Testament. The broken bread symbolizes His body, and the cup of wine symbolizes His shed blood. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." We are to look back at His sacrificial death on the cross and look ahead to His return for us.

3. **The Farewell Address** (*Jn. 13-17*)

**A New Commandment** (*Jn. 13:31-38*): As the disciples continued their intense competition regarding who among them was the greatest, Jesus offered His thoughts. "Love one another," He said, "even as I have loved you" (*v.34*). In other words, look outside of our needs and desires and, instead, look to others. "By this, all men will know you are My disciples — that you love one another" (*v.35*). Are we marked by love?

**Do Not Let Your Heart Be Troubled** (*Jn. 14:1-31*): Though circumstances would grow troublesome after His departure, Jesus comforted and encouraged His disciples with thoughts of heaven. He also promised to be with them through the presence of His spirit, and He reminded them that they could always speak to Him through prayer.

**Abiding in Christ** (*Jn. 15:1-16:4*): Jesus gave His disciples a measuring stick to determine who was truly saved (or abiding in Him) — those who bear fruit. Fruitless branches are pretenders and will be removed and burned. However, those who bear fruit will be pruned so that they can bear more fruit.

**The Helper** (*Jn. 16:5-33*): Though Jesus would soon depart His disciples, He did not leave them alone. He promised to send another Helper to enable them to fulfill His work. That person is the Holy Spirit, who would indwell believers forever.

**That They May All Be One** (*Jn. 17:1-26*): When Jesus prayed for His disciples (present and future), He prayed that they would be “perfected in unity.” In a fallen world, achieving unity is not easy, but it is evidence that God is at work in our lives. The best unifying force in history is Jesus Christ. People of different walks of life find common ground in Him. Likewise, we have a common mission, to share His gospel with others.

- Prophetic Passage (*Mk. 14:32-42; Matt. 26:36-46; Lk. 22:39-46*)

Our week ended with a scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus dealt with the intense pressure of His imminent suffering and death, what He referred to as “the cup.” God’s wrath and judgment against sin were portrayed in the Old Testament as a cup (*Isa. 51:22; Jer. 25:15*). Jesus would drink the cup on our behalf. Still, it was a painful decision, so much that Jesus sweat drops of blood.

This moment was a flashback to the Garden of Eden, where the first Adam was tempted to disobey God. His disobedience brought the wrath and judgment of God on mankind. However, Jesus obeyed God and drank the cup for us. Though He asked the Father that this cup might pass Him, He was willing to do the Father’s will no matter what. Are we?

### **The Bottom Line**

At the Last Supper, Jesus left behind important precedents and promises for us to remember.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. Why was it important for the disciples to see Jesus washing their feet? What does it look like today to wash others’ feet?
2. Can you remember the first time you took the Lord’s Supper? What does this ordinance mean to you? How often should we eat it? Should you eat it alone or in a church setting?
3. Why would Jesus choose love as the mark of His disciples? What does love require of us?
4. Which of God’s promises encourages you most when your heart becomes troubled?
5. Is it easy to tell who is and is not abiding in Christ? What are some ways that the Lord prunes His “branches”? How does pruning us produce more fruit?
6. Can you sense the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life? How so?
7. If unity is so important to Christ and His followers, the enemy (Satan) will do whatever he can to disrupt it. How has he been successful dividing us? How do we overcome him?
8. Can you point to a “Yes even though” moment in your life when you obeyed the will of God despite the difficulty of the decision? What was the result?