

## Community Group Discussion Guide

### John 18:1–14

#### **Passage Summary**

John 18 marks a significant turning point in the Gospel. After listening to Jesus pray for His disciples in John 17, we now watch Him move deliberately toward the cross. Yet John tells the story differently than the other Gospel writers. Rather than emphasizing Jesus' anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane, John draws our attention to something else: the absolute sovereignty of Christ in the middle of what appears to be complete chaos.

The passage presents two very different kingdoms. The first is **man's kingdom**. Judas pursues money. The religious leaders cling to power. Rome seeks order and control. Peter reaches for a sword, convinced he knows how God's kingdom should come. Though their motivations differ, they all share one thing in common: each is trying to accomplish his own agenda. Rather than submitting to Jesus' kingdom, they seek to shape events according to their own desires.

This garden exposes a temptation that still lives within every human heart. We may not betray Jesus like Judas or arrest Him like the religious leaders, but we often attempt to recruit Him into our own plans. We ask Him to bless our ambitions, affirm our opinions, protect our comfort, or preserve our sense of control. Yet Jesus refuses to become a supporting character in our story. He is the King.

Against this backdrop stands **Christ's kingdom**. John repeatedly reminds us that Jesus is not a helpless victim. He knows exactly what is about to happen. He steps forward willingly. When He declares, "I am," the soldiers fall backward before Him, offering a brief glimpse of His divine authority. Every detail reminds us that Jesus is laying down His life voluntarily.

Perhaps nowhere is the contrast clearer than between Peter and Jesus. Peter reaches for a sword; Jesus reaches for the cup. Peter believes the greatest threat is standing in front of him. Jesus knows the greatest enemy is sin itself. The cup He speaks of is the cup of God's righteous judgment. Jesus willingly drinks the judgment His people deserve so that they might instead receive grace, forgiveness, and life.

In this garden we discover that what appears to be history's darkest moment is actually the unfolding of God's perfect plan of redemption. Human rebellion cannot overturn God's purposes. Through the obedience of the true and better Adam, Christ accomplishes what the first Adam failed to do. Our salvation ultimately rests not on our faithfulness to Him, but on His perfect faithfulness for us.

## **Theological Highlights**

### **1. God's Sovereignty Is Never Threatened**

Though betrayal, injustice, and violence unfold, Jesus remains completely sovereign. Nothing happens outside the Father's saving plan.

### **2. Every Heart Builds a Kingdom**

Sin is not merely breaking God's rules; it is attempting to rule life apart from God. The garden exposes our desire to remain in control.

### **3. Christ Is the Faithful King**

Where everyone around Him acts according to fear, ambition, or self-interest, Jesus remains perfectly obedient to the Father's will.

### **4. Jesus Drinks the Cup We Deserved**

The cup of judgment that belonged to sinners is willingly received by Christ so that believers might receive the cup of the new covenant and grace.

### **5. Our Hope Rests in Christ's Faithfulness**

The disciples fail. Peter misunderstands. Judas betrays. Yet Jesus remains faithful. Our salvation depends on His obedience, not ours.

## **Discussion Questions**

### **Recognizing Our Own Kingdoms**

1. Throughout the passage, every person approaches Jesus with an agenda.
  - Where are you most tempted to ask Jesus to support *your* plans rather than submitting to His?
  - What areas of life are hardest for you to surrender to His authority?
2. Peter reached for a sword because he believed he knew how God should work.
  - When are you most tempted to "take matters into your own hands" instead of trusting God's timing and purposes?
3. The sermon suggested that one of our deepest problems is our desire to remain in control.
  - Where do you most struggle with control: your future, your family, your finances, your reputation, your health?
  - What makes surrender difficult?

### **Trusting Christ's Kingdom**

4. John emphasizes that Jesus knew everything that was about to happen and still stepped forward willingly.
  - How does that shape the way you think about God's sovereignty in your own difficult circumstances?

5. Can you think of a season when life appeared chaotic, but later you were able to see God's faithful hand at work?

6. Jesus was never reacting. He was always leading.

- How might remembering that truth change the way you face uncertainty this week?

### **The Cup and the Cross**

7. Peter reached for a sword, but Jesus reached for the cup.

- Why is it often easier to fight our circumstances than to trust God's purposes through them?

8. The sermon reminded us that God's justice and God's love meet perfectly at the cross.

- Why is it important that the gospel gives us both rather than one without the other?

### **Resting in Christ's Faithfulness**

9. Every major character in the garden fails in some way. Jesus alone remains faithful.

- How does that encourage you when you become painfully aware of your own failures?

10. Is there an area where you've been trying harder to hold onto Jesus instead of resting in His faithful grip on you?

11. What "sword" might God be asking you to lay down this week?

12. What would practical surrender to Christ's kingdom look like for you this week?

### **Closing Prayer Points**

#### **1. Surrender Our Kingdoms**

- Confess areas where you have sought control instead of trusting Christ.
- Ask God to reveal hidden agendas that compete with His kingdom.
- Pray for willing hearts that gladly submit to His rule.

#### **2. Trust God's Sovereign Purposes**

- Bring before God situations that feel confusing or out of control.
- Thank Him that nothing surprises Him or falls outside His care.
- Ask for faith to trust His wisdom when His plans differ from your own.

### **3. Give Thanks for Christ's Faithfulness**

- Thank Jesus for willingly drinking the cup of judgment on your behalf.
- Praise Him that your salvation rests on His obedience rather than your performance.
- Rest in the assurance that He remains faithful even when you fail.

### **4. Grow in Christlike Humility**

- Ask God to help you respond to difficulty with trust rather than fear.
- Pray for the grace to exchange the "sword" of self-reliance for confidence in Christ.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to shape your heart after the humility and obedience of Jesus.

### **5. Live as Citizens of Christ's Kingdom**

- Pray that your life would increasingly reflect the values of Christ's kingdom.
- Ask God to help you love sacrificially, forgive freely, and serve humbly.
- Pray that others would see the beauty of Christ through the way you live.

## **Closing Reflection**

In the garden, everyone came with a plan. Judas sought money. The religious leaders sought power. Rome sought control. Peter sought victory on his own terms. But Jesus came with a cup. While everyone else grasped for their own kingdom, Jesus surrendered Himself to the Father's will - redemption. He willingly drank the cup of judgment so that His people might receive the cup of grace.

That is our hope. Not that we always remain faithful to Him, but that He has remained perfectly faithful for us. And because our King willingly went to the cross, we can entrust every part of our lives to His wise, sovereign, and gracious rule.