

Matthew 26:36-46 Discussion Guide

Pray

Apart from God, we can do nothing. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion. Throughout your time together, continue asking God for help.

Read Scripture

Read Matthew 26 together with a special focus on 26:36-46.

Pray

- Take time to pray for one another and ask for His grace to apply His Word to our daily lives.

Open: Can you think of times when you have clearly failed Jesus—either by way of your actions or your words or by failing to speak truth or to show mercy? How did you feel? Which truths about God’s grace enabled you to move on from this experience once you remembered them?

Context: “We now come to the events toward which Matthew’s narrative has been steadily heading from the start. Leading up to Jesus’ death, we reach what the political and religious leaders do: they arrest, try, convict, flog, and crucify Jesus. We read about what his disciples do: Judas betrays him, Peter denies him, and all abandon him. We also learn what Jesus does: he predicts his death, explains its meaning, and willingly endures it. And then he defeats it. The end of Matthew’s gospel looks to the future, with the disciples’ commission to take the gospel to all nations.” (ESV Study Bible Notes)

Observing the Text:

- 1) What do you observe about the way that the Jewish leaders and chief priests treat Jesus throughout this passage? How would you characterize the behavior of his own disciples in it? Why is this disappointing?

Understanding the Text:

- 2) What are some ways that Matthew highlights the weakness and failure of Jesus’s disciples in 26:30-46? How will Peter fail Jesus? How do the disciples fail him in the garden? What are we learning about the uniqueness of Jesus—the Son of God and the Savior of the world?
- 3) Why is it ironic that an armed crowd gathers to confront Jesus in the garden, given the nature of his life and ministry (26:47-56)? How does Jesus interact with them? What do you learn about the power and authority he has—even as he is being arrested?
- 4) How do the chief priests and guards mock and mistreat Jesus (26:57-68)? How does Jesus respond? Why is this scene such a striking picture of human sin and rebellion against the Creator?

Bible Connections:

- 5) In Acts 1:15-20, Peter speaks to the apostles about Judas’s betrayal of Jesus and the way in which it fulfilled Scripture. Read the speech that he delivers in those verses. How does Peter tie Judas’s behavior to Old Testament Scripture? What does this teach us about God’s sovereign plan?

Theological Connections:

- 6) It shocks us that Judas Iscariot could follow Jesus as a disciple for three years, only to hatefully turn on him and betray him. This does teach us, though, about the reality of the *visible* and the *invisible* church of God—which is a way of describing both those who appear to belong to Jesus,

based on outward appearances, and those who truly belong to him by faith. What warnings might we in the visible church do well to heed, as we read and study the account of Judas?

Applying the Text:

- 7) A cloud of deep sadness looms over Jesus's final night not only because he will soon be arrested by his enemies, but also because of the failures of his own friends. What do we learn about the weakness or sinfulness of humans from Judas's betrayal (26:14-25), the abandonment of Jesus by his disciples (26:31-35), and the weariness of his closest friends in the garden (26:36-46)? How does this relate to each of us and our need for Jesus's sinless life, death, and resurrection?

- 8) What words are most appropriate to describe what Jesus is experiencing in the garden of Gethsemane? The reason for Jesus's current state is the prospect of a "cup" that he must drink (Matt. 26:39, 42). How do Psalm 75:7-8; Isaiah 51:17-23; Jeremiah 25:15-16; and Ezekiel 23:31-34 shed light on what this cup represents? Why does this "cup" even exist? What does it say about Jesus's willingness to drink this "cup" for us?

PRAY:

- Take time thank God for sending Jesus to be the Promised Savior and King.
- Take time to thank Jesus for His great love for you that drove Him to obey the Father and choose to drink the "cup" for you.
- Ask God for grace to not take His love for you for granted or to treat it as common.
- Ask God for power to obey Him regardless of your desires or longings.

NOTE: most questions taken from *Matthew: Making Disciples for the Nations Volume 2* by Jon Nielson and Daniel M. Doriani.