SESSION 9

I Am He

Jesus is always in control and committed to the redemption of humanity.

JOHN 18:1-11

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 18:11

STUDY John 18:1-11, noting Jesus's authority in the middle of His betrayal. From Herod's edict to murder male babies in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:13-18) to the Jews' plot to kill Jesus in Jerusalem (John 5:18), Satan was determined to destroy the Messiah. Let Explore the Text (pp. 95-99) guide your study of this passage.

CREATE a teaching plan for your group using the ideas on pages 100-102. Focus on helping group members grasp the fact that Jesus, as the divine Son of God, was in complete control of this threatening situation. Review Options on page 102 and consider using one or more methods that you have never tried or have not tried recently.

GATHER the following items:

- ☐ Extra *Personal Study Guides* (PSGs)
- ☐ Index cards and pens

Prepare to display:

- ☐ **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*)
- ☐ **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*)

CONSULT the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional commentary and biblical insights related to the key passages (available for purchase from Lifeway.com).

REINFORCE the session by contacting the group during the week, encouraging them to remember that Jesus is always in control, even when Satan attacks. Ask how you can pray for each person and let them know that you are looking forward to seeing them in Bible study.

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KEY DOCTRINE

God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. (See Ps. 110:1-4; John 1:1-4.)

FIRST **THOUGHTS**

Most of us have mistaken someone for another person. Once we discover they are not who we thought they were, we may be amused, embarrassed, or relieved. In the garden of Gethsemane, there was no way to mistake Jesus for someone else. Not only did Judas identify Him with a kiss, but Jesus also boldly stated, "I am he." He was not afraid of Judas or the mob. This was His hour. Jesus is still in control of every situation, even the ones we find overwhelming.

(In PSG, p. 82) **When you have mistaken someone for another person, how did you react once you realized their identity?**

BIBLE SKILL

Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.

Read Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-50; and Luke 22:35-38,49-53 as well as the session passage. Write out a timeline placing each event in order as much as possible. How does the timeline help you get a better picture of what happened? How does Jesus's rebuke of Peter produce deeper insight into Jesus's understanding of His mission and the fulfillment of the Father's will?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JOHN 18:1-11

The events that led to Jesus's arrest were set in motion well before that night in the garden. After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God told the serpent One was coming to destroy the works of sin and redeem humanity (Gen. 3:15). Jesus being arrested was part of the serpent's attempt to strike the Messiah's heel.

Satan was determined to destroy the Messiah, even when Jesus was an infant (Matt. 2:13-18). A plot to kill Jesus as an adult began to gain momentum after He healed a man on the Sabbath (John 5:16,18). Throughout His ministry, religious leaders attempted to capture and kill Him. Even His own family thought He was crazy and tried to restrain Him. His time, however, had not yet come.

In the upper room, Jesus acknowledged that His time finally had come (John 17:1). No man was going to take His life, though; He was going to give it willingly (see John 10:18). After ascending the Mount of Olives, Jesus resorted to the garden of Gethsemane for prayer. This was a normal part of His Jerusalem routine, but this night had a different feel. The heaviness of His impending death weighed on the group, especially Jesus.

Familiar with this mountain retreat, Judas knew exactly where to bring the soldiers to arrest Jesus. John's Gospel does not include Jesus's intense prayers in the garden (Matt. 26:36-56). Instead, John focused directly on the betrayer's approach. The torch-bearing mob shattered the peace, even as they moved cautiously to seize the Lord.

John also did not mention Judas's kiss (Matt. 26:48-50). Still, Jesus knew exactly what was happening. He asked those in the mob who they were seeking. When they told Him, Jesus firmly confessed "I am he." The

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power of His presence and the authority of His manner sent the crowd falling backward. When He affirmed a second time that He was Jesus, the soldiers moved forward to take Him. He did not try to flee or struggle. His earthly mission was about to be fulfilled.

At first, Jesus's disciples were not so quick to give up. Peter drew a sword and apparently tried to cut off the head of a servant. Slicing off the man's ear could have resulted in Peter's arrest or worse, but Jesus healed the man and rebuked Peter. If He wanted to resist, Jesus could have called angelic armies to His defense (Matt. 26:53). Rather, He was willing and ready to drink the cup of suffering that would provide salvation.

Jesus basically told the mob that His disciples were free to go. Again, He demonstrated His authority and control. Plus, He was determined that none of them should be lost to violence. Meanwhile, He submitted to the arrest in obedience to the Father's plan.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

SHOW OF FORCE (JOHN 18:1-3)

Verse 1

A long night was about to get much longer. The Passover feast, the institution of the Lord's Supper, and the Farewell Discourse lasted into the evening. The violent events in the garden were yet to come. John's phrase ***these things*** included not only His intercessory prayer but the entire discussion. Some writers suggest that part of Jesus's discourse took place as the group traveled from the upper room to the Mount of Olives. If so, ***went out*** referred not to leaving the upper room but to their departure from the city. The difficulty with this approach is that the streets of Jerusalem would not have been the natural place for Jesus's intimate prayer in John 17.

Whenever He finished His teaching, Jesus led the disciples across the •***Kidron Valley***. The *valley* ran north to south on the east side of Jerusalem. It lay between the temple and the Mount of Olives, which is also called Olivet (Acts 1:12). The name *Kidron* referred to cedar trees that are found around the area. The brook running through the valley had a significant flow of water, especially during the winter rainy season. On occasion, unclean ashes and waste from the temple were thrown into the brook (2 Chron. 29:16; Jer. 31:40).

As Jesus and the group walked up the mountain, the temple was clearly visible behind them. Further up the slope lay a ***garden***, identified as Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36). Jesus and the disciples ***went into*** the garden, suggesting a defined part of the mountain was set off by a stone wall. The name "Gethsemane" depicts an olive press. Given the name of the mountain, the presence of an olive grove was not surprising. This peaceful setting rested in quiet contrast to the shattering events that would take place later that night.

VERSE 1

1 After Jesus had said these things, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

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VERSES 2-3

2 Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. 3 So Judas took a company of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees and came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.

Verses 2-3

As John wrote his Gospel years later, he looked back with full knowledge of everything that happened. At the time, though, none of the disciples knew that ***Judas*** was going to be the one ***who betrayed*** Jesus. *Judas* had been one of the Twelve (Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19) and had gone out with the others to preach, heal, and cast out demons (Mark 6:7). He also held a position of responsibility as treasurer of the group, although he stole funds from time to time (John 12:6; 13:29). Despite these advantages Judas conspired with the priests against Jesus (Matt. 26:14-16).

Although he had left the Passover early, Judas ***knew the place*** where Jesus took the disciples. Jesus may have mentioned that they would be going to the garden; even if not, He ***often met there with His disciples***. So, Judas was familiar with Gethsemane.

Judas accepted thirty pieces of silver to lead the temple police to Jesus. Gethsemane was a perfect place for the betrayal because it was away from Jerusalem. The leaders faced less chance that a crowd would protest His arrest (Matt. 26:3-5). The term ***took*** means that Judas led the ***company*** of ***soldiers*** and ***officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees***.

The *soldiers* probably included guards who protected the temple. However, some commentators think Roman troops accompanied temple police, indicating the Roman authorities had been brought into the conflict. The *chief priests* also sent representatives to supervise Jesus's arrest.

The term *company* could refer to a cohort, which numbered around 600 soldiers in the Roman army. Some scholars estimate the company probably numbered around 200. In any case, the forces arrayed against Jesus were overwhelming compared to Him and eleven disciples.

The mob arrived with ***lanterns, torches, and weapons***. They may have anticipated resistance by Jesus and His followers. In their minds, they not only were doing their job but they also were serving God by seizing this man who claimed equality with God (John 16:2).

Believers can expect enemies of Jesus to oppose them just as they did Jesus. Rather than repenting and trusting Christ for salvation, those who disregard the gospel cling to their wickedness. Since the world persecuted Jesus, we should anticipate similar treatment as we testify for Christ.

(In PSG, p. 85) **What does the presence of armed soldiers tell us about the expectations of Judas and the accompanying officials?**

VERSES 4-5

4 Then Jesus, knowing everything that was about to happen to him, went out and said to them, "Who is it that you're seeking?" 5 "Jesus of Nazareth," they answered. "I am he," Jesus told them. Judas, who betrayed him, was also standing with them.

POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION (JOHN 18:4-9)

Verses 4-5

Jesus understood ***everything that was about to happen***, yet he responded to the approaching mob with calmness and authority. He was not caught unaware by the arrival of Judas and the soldiers. At the Passover supper

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He told Judas to act quickly (John 13:27). In His High Priestly prayer, He said He had lost none of the disciples except the "son of destruction" in fulfillment of the Scriptures (John 17:12).

Jesus woke the sleeping disciples who were supposed to be praying (Matt. 26:36-46). As His enemies drew near, it was time to be alert. To say He ***went out*** meant Jesus moved past the disciples and moved toward Judas and the approaching mob. Although He knew why they had come, Jesus asked, ***"Who is it that you're seeking?"*** He insisted they reveal their purpose, not for His knowledge but to confront their conspiracy.

Judas had arranged a predetermined signal of a kiss on the cheek to identify Jesus (Matt. 26:48). John did not specify when this took place, but Judas perverted this customary greeting and transformed it into a means of treason. John merely noted that Judas ***was also standing*** with the crowd. Recording the scene years later, John wrote in the past tense as if the betrayal had already occurred.

Whether before or after Judas's kiss, the officials answered Jesus's inquiry: "***Jesus of Nazareth***." They offered Him no title of respect. He was simply a man from Nazareth. Combining Jesus's name and hometown was the typical way the chief priests, Pharisees, and others in Jerusalem referred to Jesus. Even in his sermon at Pentecost, Peter called Him "Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 2:22).

Jesus did not hesitate, but simply stated, "***I am he.***" Some read Jesus's self-identification as another "I am" statement in John's Gospel (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7-9,11-14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1,5). God was known as I AM (Ex. 3:14), and one major conflict with between Jesus and the Jewish leaders erupted when He declared "before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58).

Verse 6-8

The effect of Jesus's statement was profound. Instead of surging forward to arrest Him, the mob ***fell to the ground***. If the troops anticipated resistance, this phrase could mean they moved into a defensive posture. However, the Greek word rendered *fell* means to drop from one level to another. Jesus stepped forward while the crowd fell backward, highlighting His authority and their weakness. His words overwhelmed them.

Jesus did not pursue His advantage but simply asked the same question. Again, Jesus was not seeking information but was challenging their purpose. The officials and troops came for Him with drawn weapons (Matt. 26:47), but Jesus was the one truly in charge.

Perhaps with more hesitation, the leaders of the mob replied, "***Jesus of Nazareth.***" Some commentators observe this phrase affirms the historicity of Jesus. He was not a mythic figure of mystical origins. Jesus actually lived and was associated with the city where He was raised. Still, He was so much more than a mere man. Although this crowd did not recognize His deity, they could not ignore His power.

Again, Jesus told them, ***"I am he."*** Jesus did not gloat over their feeble reaction to His power and authority. He knew what was about to happen and submitted to the Father's plan. He placed Himself into their custody with complete comprehension of the suffering to follow.

VERSES 6-8

6 When Jesus told them,
"I am he," they stepped
back and fell to the
ground. 7 Then he asked
them again, "Who is it
that you're seeking?"
"Jesus of Nazareth,"
they said. 8 "I told you
I am he," Jesus replied.
"So if you're looking for
me, let these men go."

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At this point, Jesus was more concerned with the safety of His disciples than His own well-being. Pointing out that the officials were ***looking for*** Him, not His followers, Jesus basically ordered His captors to ***let these men go***. The eleven disciples were vastly outnumbered, and the armed troops had the authority to take them if they wanted. From a human perspective, Jesus had no right to make such a demand. As God's Son, though, He held all authority.

VERSE 9

9 This was to fulfill the words he had said: "I have not lost one of those you have given me."

Verse 9

As he often did in his Gospel, John interjected an explanation. Jesus made a point of seeking the disciples' release to ***fulfill the words he had said***. Commentators observe that John equated Jesus's prayer in 17:12 with Scripture. Jesus told the Father that He had ***not lost one*** of the followers God had placed under His care. Confronted by an armed host, He took the initiative to preserve their safety. He was willing to lay down His life for them.

Of course, all of them would eventually suffer for Him. And all but John would end up dying as a martyr for Him and the gospel. On this night, though, they were spared such violence because of Jesus's authority.

The Christian life is not without danger. Following Jesus does not mean we will never suffer for our faith. But it does mean we can face whatever challenges come with the confidence that we are not alone. He is with us, and He is in control of everything.

(In PSG, p. 88) **How did John's portrayal of the conversation between Jesus and the group point to Jesus's being in charge?**

REBELLION SNUFFED (JOHN 18:10-11)

VERSE 10

10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

Verse 10

Whether Jesus's words prompted ***Simon Peter*** or not, the disciple's rash actions put the other disciples in immediate danger. He had a ***sword*** with him. Scholars believe this weapon would have been a short sword that could be concealed beneath his cloak. In the upper room, Jesus told the disciples to acquire weapons. *Peter* said they had two swords, and Jesus replied that it was enough (Luke 22:36-38).

Some of the disciples asked Jesus if they should use their swords (Luke 22:49). Faced with overwhelming forces, their question showed courage, but it also revealed a misunderstanding of Jesus's mission. Later, in the garden, Peter did not wait for a response but ***struck the high priest's servant***, a man identified as ***Malchus***. Commentators point out that only John's Gospel names both the servant (*Malchus*) and the assailant (Peter). Since John likely wrote some time after Peter's death, he could mention these details without endangering anyone.

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Although Peter only ***cut off*** the man's ***right ear***, he likely was aiming for Malchus's head. Earlier that evening, Peter declared he would die for Jesus (Matt. 26:35). In this moment, he was in danger of doing just that. Jesus stopped Peter's attack and healed Malchus's ear (Luke 22:51). If Jesus had not intervened, the soldiers probably would have responded with deadly force or at least by seizing Peter and the other disciples.

Verse 11

Jesus's response to Peter confirms that He never intended to use weapons in His defense. Jesus rebuked Peter and said, ***"Put your sword away."*** It's amazing that the soldiers did not disarm Peter at this point. Jesus's healing miracle may have stopped them from further action.

Peter and the other disciples still did not understand Jesus's purpose. He did not come to start a war. He came to ***drink the cup*** of His ***Father*** to suffer and die for the world's sins. The syntax of His question implies a positive response: Yes, He would *drink*, regardless of the cost.

In the garden, Jesus prayed earnestly that this cup of suffering might be removed from Him. He understood the physical suffering was only part of what was to come. Theologically, the cup included not only bodily pain but also spiritual horror. On the cross, He who had never sinned took on the sins of every human to provide salvation (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). Jesus embraced the Father's will and accepted the sacrifice.

Jesus's response to Peter went further. Those who live by the sword are likely to die by the sword (Matt. 26:52). The big fisherman's small weapon would have been no match for soldiers arresting Jesus, but that was not the point. If Jesus wanted to escape the cross, He could have summoned an army of angels (Matt. 26:53). Jesus refused to allow Peter or anyone else to interfere with His messianic mission.

Believers can obediently involve themselves in God's redemptive plan. If we use worldly ways to escape suffering, we risk missing out on being Jesus's witnesses. Only by yielding to the Father's will and accepting His plans can we demonstrate His redeeming love to a lost world.

(In PSG, p. 89) **Why was it important for John to note Jesus's response to Peter?**

_____

_____

VERSE 11

11 At that, Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword away! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?"

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LEAD **GROUP BIBLE STUDY**

ENGAGE

BEGIN: Prior to the group time, write these words on the board: *doppelganger*, *twin*, *clone*, *spitting image*, and *replica*. As the group arrives, ask: ***What do all these words and phrases have in common?*** Affirm that they all refer to look-alikes. Encourage individuals to add words to the list.

DISCUSS: Share a situation where you mistook someone for another person. Allow a few volunteers to share similar situations in their lives. Talk about how those situations felt.

INTRODUCE: Enlist a volunteer to read aloud the paragraph on page 82 of the *Personal Study Guide* (PSG). Encourage the group to respond to the question: ***When you have mistaken someone for another person, how did you react once you realized their identity?*** (PSG, p. 82)

TRANSITION: *Jesus was used to crowds that recognized Him. In John 18, though, a crowd came looking for Him for a different reason. They didn't recognize Him at first, but they soon found that there was no one like Him.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Guide the group to locate the outline of John on page 9 of the PSG or refer to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*) displayed on a focal wall. Highlight that John 18 moves the Gospel into a new section on the outline, a section focused on Jesus's suffering and death.

ASK: ***Where do you go when you need to prepare yourself for a stressful time?*** Guide the group to think in terms of their personal and work lives. Share that Jesus had a place near Jerusalem where He would often go to be alone with the Father.

TRANSITION: *Known as Gethsemane, this was where Jesus took His disciples after the upper room. It's also where the mob found Him.*

READ: **Direct a volunteer to read aloud John 18:1-3**, as the group listens for words describing where Jesus and the disciples had gone.

EXAMINE: Point out the Kidron Valley and Gethsemane on **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*). Encourage the group to read the content for verse 1 (PSG, pp. 84-85) to learn more about Gethsemane. Remind the group of some key things Jesus had taught the disciples and how those topics would have weighed on their hearts. ***What do you think the disciples were thinking as they walked with Jesus?***

SHARE: Remind the group that Judas was not with them because He had left the Passover meal earlier that night. Point out that he had gone to the religious leaders to plan how he could betray Jesus. Emphasize that he knew exactly where to lead the crowd to find Jesus.

ASK: ***What motivated Judas to betray Jesus?*** Discuss responses, pointing out he may have been hoping Jesus would take the opportunity to finally lash out and take charge. Use information from verses 2-3 (PSG, p. 85) to explain the mob Judas brought with him. Ask: ***What does the presence of armed soldiers tell us about the expectations of Judas and the accompanying officials?*** (PSG, p. 85)

TRANSITION: *It was one thing to find Jesus. It was another thing to actually take Him into custody. While Jesus would never oppose the Father's will, His enemies would come to experience His power and authority before all was said and done.*

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READ: **Read John 18:4-9**, guiding the group to note how the situation affirmed Christ's knowledge and power.

EXPLAIN: Lead the group to circle the words "I am he" (twice) in the verses printed on page 86 of the PSG. Ask: ***What is the significance of that phrase?*** Direct a volunteer to read Exodus 3:14 and identify "I am" as God's personal name for His people. *John records several instances in his Gospel where Jesus used "I am" to describe Himself. Each time, He was affirming His deity, and each time His enemies understood exactly what He was claiming. That's why they wanted to kill Him.*

ASK: ***After Jesus identified Himself, what happened to the crowd?*** Emphasize that their falling to the ground was a demonstration of His power and authority. Ask: ***What order did Jesus give them in verse 8? Why would that have seemed unusual?*** Point out that prisoners are rarely in a position to negotiate, much less make demands. Share that even though He was vastly outnumbered, Jesus was still in control.

READ: **Call for a volunteer to read aloud John 18:10-11**, as the group identifies Peter's rash reaction and Jesus's response.

EXAMINE: Direct the group to work in pairs as they read the content for verses 10-11 (PSG, pp. 88-89). Give each pair an index card and a pen. Instruct them to summarize Peter's reaction in one word and Jesus's reaction in one word. After a few minutes, allow each pair to share what they wrote.

ASK: ***How did Jesus rebuke Peter? Why did Jesus refuse to let anyone defend Him?*** Emphasize that Jesus had already shown that those who came to arrest Him were powerless against His word. Point out that He also could have called legions of angels to come to His aid, but He didn't. Note Luke's Gospel shares that Jesus actually healed the man's ear (Luke 22:51).

SHARE: Direct the group to the question at the bottom of page 89 in the PSG: ***Why was it important for John to note Jesus's response to Peter?*** Use information from page 89 of the PSG and page 99 of the Leader Guide to explain that the disciples still thought of Jesus as a military or political leader. Emphasize that He was committed to the cup (v. 11) that His Father gave Him to drink. *That cup was His suffering and death, and He wasn't about to shirk back from it now.*

CONCLUDE: *Jesus surrendered to the crowd, but He did so on His terms. He was in complete control the whole time. He's still in control of every situation we face. That should help us stand strong, even when things feel out of control in our world.*

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Point out the summary statement for this session: *Jesus is always in control and committed to the redemption of humanity* (PSG, p. 82). Call attention to the application statements under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 90). Invite the group to select one statement that they most need to remember. Challenge them to revisit this point several times during the week.

DISCUSS: Using the first set of questions under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 90), name ways Jesus is opposed today. List the weapons Satan uses. Describe ways to encourage each other in spiritual warfare.

PRAY: Encourage the group to think of a difficult situation in their lives. Close in prayer, asking for God's guidance in those times and for His strength to remain faithful. Ask God to remind each person that He is in control of every situation.

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OPTIONS

Use these options to supplement and enhance the group plans on the previous pages.

MUSIC

Lead the group to sing or say the words to "His Name Is Wonderful" (1959) by Audrey Mieir. Encourage the group to point out the names attributed to Jesus and write them on the board. Share that though it was inspired by Isaiah 9:6, a traditional Christmas text, the song remains a favorite of Christians throughout the year. Encourage the group to reflect on who Jesus is and what He does for each believer as they study today's verses.

REFLECTIVE

Write the following question on the board: *Is there ever a time when a Christian should be aggressive?* Allow a few volunteers to share their answers and why they feel that way. Lead the group in a brief discussion about times when people who identified themselves as believers chose aggression instead of following God's plans. Affirm that believers have the right to defend themselves. Ask: ***In what situations should we submit to God's plan instead of fighting back? How can you discern the difference between one situation and the other?*** Encourage the group to use Jesus's example as the standard for their choices and to seek His will when faced with that choice.

ROLE PLAY

Enlist two volunteers for a role play where one is a Christian and one is not. Set the stage, suggesting that the volunteers are friends in a casual setting. Instruct the non-Christian to ask "Who is Jesus really?" and the Christian to respond based on today's verses. After the role play, allow volunteers to share how they would respond to the non-Christian's question.

OBJECT LESSON

Gather a dog training product.

Ask: ***How does this product help teach a dog to obey?*** Shift to the idea of Jesus's calm obedience to the Father when He spoke of the cup. Contrast this to Peter's wild attempt to defend Jesus. Emphasize that God does not see us as dogs to be trained, but individuals to love. Ask: ***What can help you in your obedience to God?*** Pray that whatever obedience issues are challenging the group that God will enable them to overcome them and submit to Him.

TIME LINE

Secure a whiteboard or paper and markers.

Lead the group to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 88 of the PSG. Place the group into three teams and assign one of the following passages to each team: Matthew 26: 47-56; Mark 14:43-50; and Luke 22:35-38,49-53. (For smaller groups, a team can be one person. For larger groups, more than one team can be given the same verses.) As the teams report, create a time line, starting with the Luke passage. Place events in order with additional details from Matthew and then the Mark passage. Suggest that the time line helps us get a better picture of what happened that night. Ask: ***What insight have you gained about Jesus's approach to following God's plan instead of what might have been safer or easier?***

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