

A Special Meal for Jesus and His Disciples

PRESCHOOL



We are grateful to Patricia L. Nederveld for her work in developing *A Special Meal for Jesus and his Disciples*. The author of the *God Loves Me* series of books for young children (www.faithaliveresources.org), Patricia attends Grace Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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A Special Meal for Jesus and his Disciples: Preschool Session on the Lord's Supper © 2015 Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508-1407.

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SCRIPTURE

Luke 22:7-8; 14-23








FOCUS

Jesus gave his friends, the disciples, the bread and wine to help them **remember** him.

FAITH NURTURE GOALS

- Children will be able to tell why the bread and wine are special.
- Children will feel sure that Jesus love us and wants us to be at his special meal.
- Children will look forward to joining God's people at the Lord's Supper and feel eager to participate.

A NOTE ABOUT LEARNING STYLES

In the chart below and beside each *Easy Extra* activity, you will find one or more of the following descriptions: **Aa** Word Smart,  People Smart,  Music Smart,  Number Smart,  Earth Smart,  Self Smart,  Body Smart, and  Picture Smart—with an icon beside each one. Those descriptions refer to “multiple intelligences,” a term developed by Dr. Howard Gardiner to describe the different ways in which people learn. We’ve used them here to indicate to you which learning style(s) each step/activity taps into the most. For example, some people are visual learners, others are musical, some learn best when they are physically engaged, some are a combination of several “smarts,” and so on. For more information on each of those learning styles along with a fun quiz you can give your students (and one you can take yourself!), visit <http://dwell.faithaliveresources.org/downloads>, click on “Topics for Leaders,” and open the “Learning Styles Quiz.”

REFLECTION

Jesus is eager to celebrate the Passover with his disciples. He sends Peter and John to make the preparations, and as he reclines at the table with his dearest friends he wants nothing more than for them to know that he loves them. Jesus is aware of the suffering he is about to experience. He knows that this will be his final meal with his disciples before his death. And he wants to use these final moments to show them his love for them.

Yet even as they gathered around this table, Jesus knew he would be betrayed by one of them. He knew that pain awaited him, both the pain of being betrayed and the pain of the cross. Still, Jesus wanted to be with them. His love for his disciples came before his concern for himself. He wanted, more than anything, for them to remember this moment.

Jesus wanted his disciples to remember his love, his sacrifice, and his promise. Jesus' love for his disciples would not end. Even when they would give up on him, Jesus would never give up on them. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, giving up his own life, would mean eternal life for all those who follow him.

And Jesus promised that this Supper represents a new covenant between God and people. This covenant is not about what we do or have done, but about what Jesus did on the cross. The Lord's Supper gives us an opportunity to remember this covenant.

The bread and the wine represent the very body and blood of Christ. When we take these elements around the Lord's Table, we both remember Christ's suffering and celebrate our salvation. The kingdom is coming, Jesus says. This means that, in spite of all of the pain and betrayal in our lives, we can rejoice because we have a Lord who will never betray us.

WONDERING







- Why is it important to remember?
- How can we remember Christ's suffering with joy at the Lord's Table?

TEACHING

- In this passage, you will notice that the disciples never doubted Jesus. When he told them that one of them would betray him, they doubted themselves. But they never doubted their Lord.
- Sometimes people read verse 19, where it says that Jesus broke the bread, and say that Jesus' body was similarly broken for us. But the Scriptures clearly say that not a bone on his body was broken (John 19:36). Jesus was bruised and battered for us, but his bones were not broken. The Lord's Supper is more than a memorial service, it's a celebration of the life we have in our resurrected Savior!
- If you convey to your little ones even the smallest hint of this miracle and mystery, you will surely deepen their sense of Jesus' great love as they participate in this memorial sacrament.

—Rev. Shannon Jammal-Holleman

SESSION AT A GLANCE

Steps	Time	Activities	Session-Specific Materials	Multiple Intelligences
Gathering for God's Story	10-15	Welcome, Remembering Jesus' love	<input type="checkbox"/> Baby picture(s) of yourself <input type="checkbox"/> song: "Jesus Loves Me"	Aa  
Entering the Story	10	Story	<input type="checkbox"/> Bible <input type="checkbox"/> Story pictures 1-4, reproducible pages 11 - 14	Aa 
Living into the Story	10	Crosses	<input type="checkbox"/> Lightweight drawing paper <input type="checkbox"/> Cardboard crosses (see pattern, reproducible page 15), one per child <input type="checkbox"/> Crayons with paper wrappers removed <input type="checkbox"/> Heart stickers, optional	 
Living Out of the Story	10	Sharing bread and juice	<input type="checkbox"/> Grape juice <input type="checkbox"/> Small loaf of unsliced bread or a large bread bun <input type="checkbox"/> Small pieces of bread in a basket <input type="checkbox"/> Napkins and cups <input type="checkbox"/> Dear Family letter (reproducible page 16), print or email one per child	 Aa

Step 1 Gathering for God's Story

Welcome the children and gather them around you. Tell them you're going to give them each a message. They should try to *remember* it so they can tell it back to you when the session is over.

Touch each child gently on the shoulder and whisper in each little one's ear: "Always remember Jesus loves you, [name]!" Put your finger to your lips and tell the group that you don't want them to say this message out loud yet, but you want them to remember it.

Spend a few minutes exercising your memories. Wonder aloud if the kids can *remember* what they ate for breakfast today. Give everyone a chance to share and tell them they're good "rememberers." Then ask a few more challenging questions:

- I wonder if you can *remember* something fun you did this week.
- I wonder if you can *remember* a time when you cried this week.
- I wonder if you can *remember* whether you had a birthday cake at your last birthday party. What did it look like?
- I wonder if you can *remember* one present you got for Christmas.
- I wonder if you can *remember* when you were baptized.
- I wonder if you can *remember* what you looked like when you were a tiny baby.

Show the children the baby picture of yourself and tell everyone that you were a baby so long ago that it's hard to remember what you looked like when you were tiny. Pictures help!

Music can help us remember important things too. Ask the kids if they remember the song "Jesus Loves Me." Challenge them to sing it to you without your help (you may want to get them started with the first phrase or two).

Again, compliment the children on their great memories and how glad you are that they remember the most important words in the whole world: Jesus loves us! Of all the things we need to remember, whether we're little kids or grownups, this is the most important.

Join hands around your circle for a short prayer thanking Jesus for loving us so much. Ask him to help all of you remember—forever and always—how much he loves you.

TIP

If this is your first meeting with the group, you'll want to begin with a time of introductions. Tell everyone your name; then go around the circle, giving the kids a chance to tell their names to the group. Make sure everyone knows how happy you are to spend this hour with them, learning more about how much Jesus loves us.

TIP

If some or all of the children in your group are unfamiliar with the song "Jesus Loves Me," teach it to them first. Then congratulate them on their excellent remembering as you sing it together a second time.

Step 2 Entering the Story

Show the children where the story of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples is found in your Bible (Luke 22). Tell everyone it's a story that will help us remember how much Jesus loves us. Have the story pictures ready to use as you begin.

The story follows:

It was almost time to celebrate—lots of people came to Jerusalem for a special feast called Passover. Everyone could feel the excitement in the air!

Passover was kind of like Thanksgiving, a special holiday when families gathered to remember God's goodness and to thank God for blessing them in so many ways. Eating the Passover meal together gave families a special way to tell their children the story of how God had saved them from their enemies many years ago. Families never, ever wanted to forget that story, so every year they gathered

to hear it again, to eat special food together, to sing songs, and to give thanks to God. They gathered to remember.

(Show picture 1.) Jesus and his friends, the disciples, were excited to celebrate Passover together too. Jesus asked two of his friends, Peter and John, to get everything ready for their feast. They set the table for Jesus and the twelve disciples, and on it they placed the bread and wine for their Passover feast.

(Show picture 2.) When everything was ready, Jesus and the others began arriving. Jesus knew this would be a happy time, but also a sad one. He knew that it would be the last time they would all be together for supper. It was nearly time for Jesus to die—and tonight he must tell his dear friends what was about to happen. Soon they were gathered at the table around Jesus.

(Show picture 3.) Jesus looked at his friends and smiled. “I’ve been so eager to eat this Passover meal with you!” he said to them. “It is time for me to suffer and die for you; this will be the last meal we’ll share until we’re together in heaven.” Jesus poured wine into a cup and held it up for them to see. He blessed the wine and before he gave it to them, he said, “This wine will help you remember that I love you. Every time you taste it, it will remind you that I suffered and died for you. Never forget!”

(Show picture 4.) Then Jesus held up the bread for them to see. He blessed it, broke it into pieces, and said, “This bread will help you remember that I love you. Every time you eat it, it will remind you that I suffered and died for you. Never forget!”

Jesus’ friends looked at each other, then at Jesus. Could this really be their last meal together? Was their Lord really getting ready to leave them? That night around the table, they drank the wine Jesus poured for them and ate the bread he broke for them. They never forgot Jesus’ words to them: “This will help you remember that I love you.”

Sit quietly for a moment; then wonder about the story together. Here are some prompts you might use:

- I wonder if Jesus’ friends cried when he said this would be their last supper together.
- I wonder if Jesus felt like crying.
- I wonder if the bread and wine helped Jesus’ friends remember his love for them.
- I wonder what helps you remember how much Jesus loves you.
- I wonder if tasting the bread and juice will help you remember Jesus.
- I wonder how happy it makes Jesus to see you taste the bread and juice—and remember him.
- I hope you’ll never forget how much Jesus loves you; I hope I’ll never forget how much Jesus loves me too.

Step 3 Living Into the Story

Note: Before your session you’ll want to do a quick inventory of your church sanctuary, noting various symbols used by your congregation to help people remember Christ’s sacrifice and love. Locate the baptismal font, crosses, communion table and elements, Bibles, banners, pictures, and other tangible reminders and worship symbols. If taking your kids to the sanctuary during this step is not possible, be sure to bring to the group as many of these items as you can, especially the utensils used to serve communion. Or take photos in advance of the symbols used in your congregation and bring those images to show the children, inviting them to describe where they’ve seen them and what they are used for.

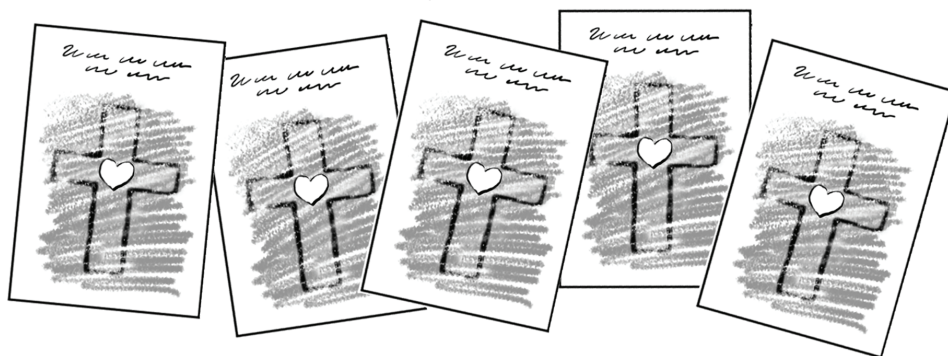
Time to move—you’ve been sitting long enough! Ask your group to stand up and shake out their wiggles before you take a walk together. Explain that you’ll be visiting the sanctuary to look for other reminders of Jesus’ love.

As you enter your worship space, gather around the baptismal font and ask the children what it is and what it helps us remember (that we have been baptized, we belong to Jesus, we’re part of God’s family).

Then gather around the communion table and look at the pitcher and cup displayed there. Recall the Bible story together and ask the kids what the table, the plate, and the pitcher help us remember. Look for crosses displayed in the sanctuary too. What does the cross help us remember? If you have Bibles and hymnals in racks or if you project Scripture/songs on a screen, check them out too—Bible stories and songs are wonderful reminders of Jesus’ love for us.

When you return to your room, gather the children around a low table to make their own reminders of Jesus’ love—crosses to take home with them. Show the children your supply of drawing paper, sturdy cardboard crosses, and crayons (with the paper wrappings removed). As the children watch, place a cross cutout (see pattern, page 15) underneath a sheet of paper and rub over it with the side of a crayon until the cross shape emerges. At the top of your drawing write JESUS LOVES [your name]. Ask the children where you could display your cross at home so that you’ll see it every day and always remember that Jesus loves you.

Help the children complete their own cross rubbings; write a caption at the top of each one. If you’ve brought heart stickers, help each child to attach a heart to the center of his or her cross. Your completed pictures should look something like this:



Step 4 Living Out of the Story

Give the kids an opportunity to wash their hands. As they do, replace your art supplies with a tray containing a pitcher of grape juice and the bread (plus a supply of napkins and small cups).

When you’ve gathered around the table again, ask a volunteer to retell the story of Jesus’ supper with his friends. Follow by holding up the pitcher of juice and asking the children to remember Jesus’ words to his friends. Emphasize that Jesus wants us to drink the juice to help us remember him.

Do the same with the bread, breaking a piece from the loaf and asking the children to remember Jesus’ words to his friends.

Tell your little ones that people who love Jesus—little kids, big kids, and grown-ups—drink juice and eat bread in church as a way to remember that Jesus loved us and died for us. It’s what Jesus wants ALL of us to do! Everyone who loves Jesus is invited to this special feast of *remembering*.

TIP

Before teaching this session, familiarize yourself with your congregation’s policies regarding when children are invited to participate in the Lord’s Supper and, if appropriate, include that information when you describe Jesus’ invitation to participate in the special feast of remembering.




Pass the basket of bread pieces around the table and give the children an opportunity to take a piece. As they do, pour cups of juice for the group. Then enjoy your feast together. Close with prayer, thanking God for giving you this special way to remember that Jesus loves us and died for us.

Before you dismiss, ask the kids to remember the words you whispered in their ears as you began your session: “Always remember that Jesus loves you!” Shout it out together!

Send the children home with their cross rubbings and a copy of the note to their families.

EASY EXTRAS

1. Can You Remember?

TIME 7-10 minutes	
 Picture Smart  Number Smart  Body Smart	SUPPLIES <input type="checkbox"/> See activities

If you have time and want to supplement step 1, here are a few additional activities the kids might enjoy as you talking about “remembering” together:

■ Creche

Bring a crèche with you and invite the children to help you unpack it and set it up in the center of your circle. Talk about what it helps you remember—that Jesus was born. Every year we look forward to Christmas because it helps us remember and celebrate this important event. Remembering Jesus’ birth is important—it reminds us that God loves us very much!



■ “What’s missing?”

Challenge the children’s memories by playing this simple memory game. Set a tray or low basket containing eight to ten familiar objects (a marker, a glue stick, one or two toys, an apple, and so forth) in the center of your group. Give the kids a few minutes to study the contents of your basket; then ask everyone to close their eyes tight—no peeking! Remove one of the objects and rearrange the others a bit before asking the kids to open their eyes. Can they remember the contents well enough to know what’s missing? Compliment them on their great memories.

■ “Memory”




Play a simple group version of the popular matching game Memory. Bring to class several pairs of memory cards from a commercial game for young children (at least one pair per child in your group). Spread one set of the pictures face up in the center of your circle and give the kids time to look at and name each picture. Then turn the pictures face down. Set the stack of matching pictures in front of you (face down) and give each child an opportunity to turn a card over, remember where its match is, and complete the pair. (Kids can ask for help from the group if they want to—it’s not a competition.) Compliment the group on their good remembering!

2. Bible Story Review

TIME 5-10 minutes	
 Picture Smart  Word Smart	SUPPLIES <input type="checkbox"/> Bible story pictures (reproducible pages 11-14)



If you have time to expand Step 2, invite the children to retell the story of Jesus' Last Supper with his friends. Give the four story pictures to four of the children and ask them to sequence the pictures in the right order. Then, one by one, ask the four to arrange themselves in the right order, hold up their pictures, and tell that part of the Bible story to the group. If everyone wants a chance to participate, repeat this activity as often as necessary.

3. "You're Invited!" Poster

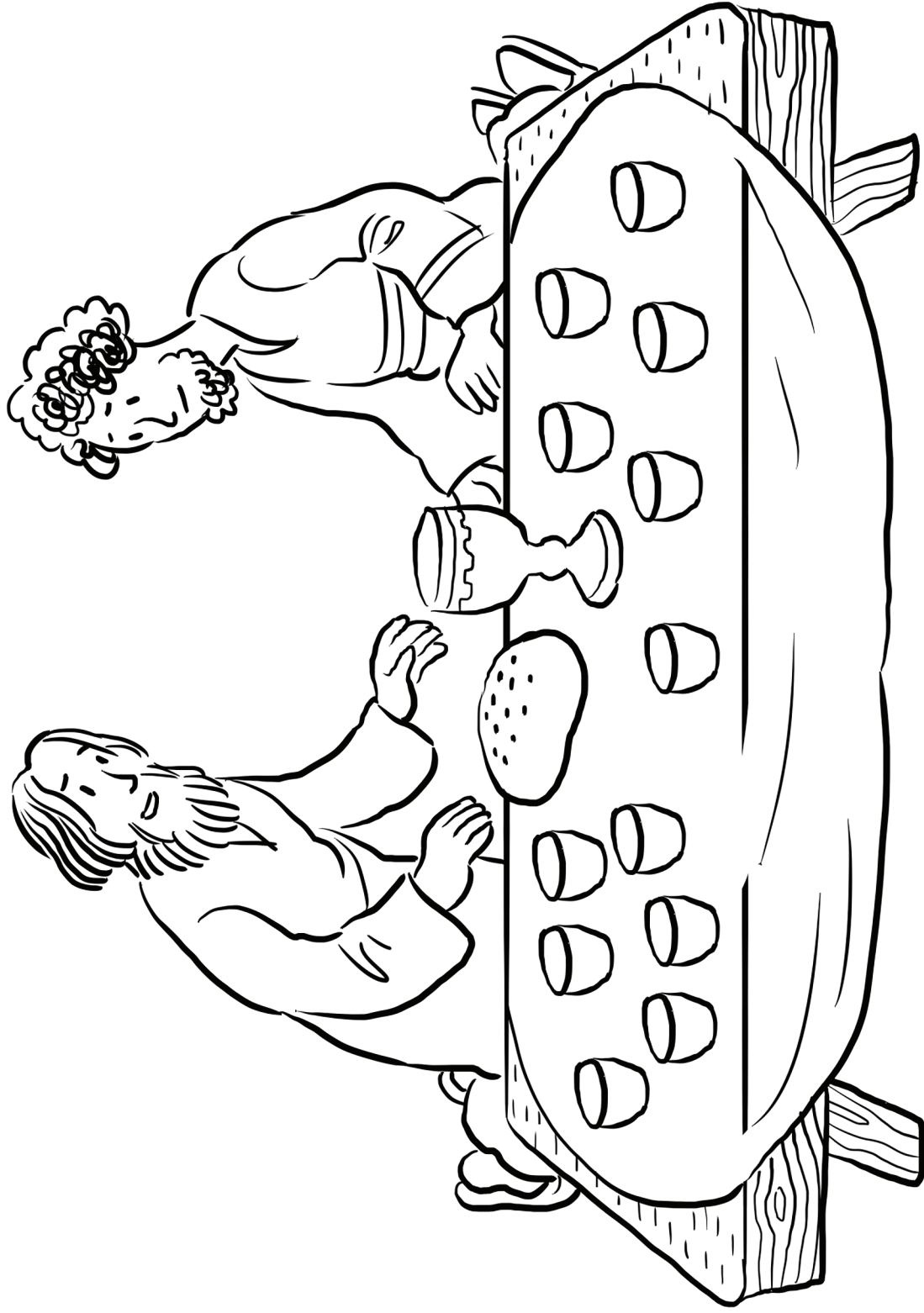
TIME 10 minutes	
 Picture Smart  Self Smart  Body Smart	SUPPLIES <input type="checkbox"/> large piece of posterboard, story pictures 3 and 4 (reproducible pages 13-14), child cutouts (reproducible page 17), markers, glue stick

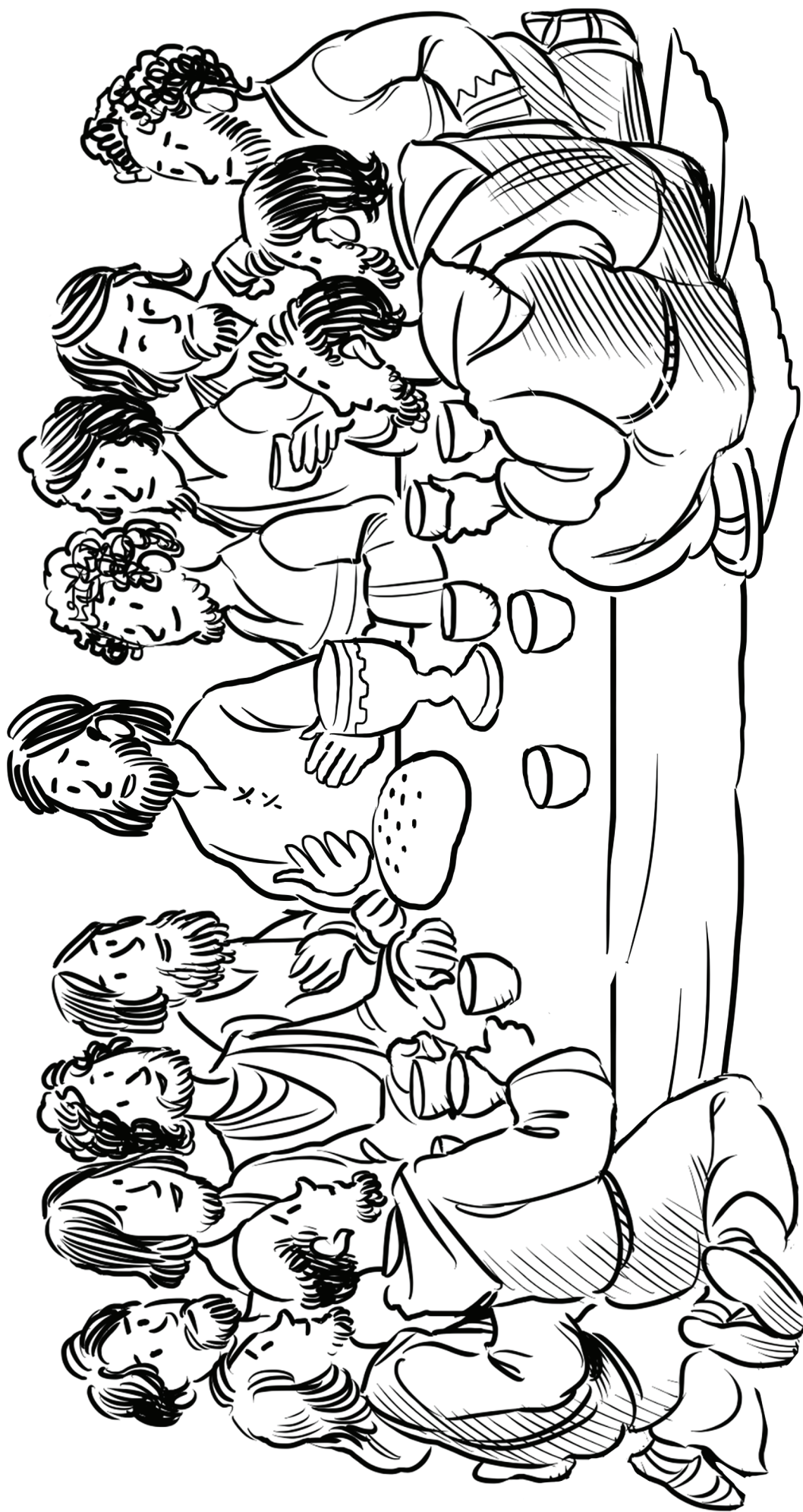
Here's another activity you might do in place of or in addition to making cross rubbings in Step 3. Attach a big piece of posterboard to a wall (at the kids' eye level). Ask the children to help you glue the pictures of Jesus holding the wine and the bread to the center of your poster. Then, in big letters, write the caption YOU'RE INVITED! Give the children cutouts and markers for completing self-pictures to glue to your poster around the pictures of Jesus. Help the children write their names below their pictures. Find a good place to display your poster in your room, or (better yet!) somewhere in your church for all to see and enjoy.

4. Special Guest

TIME 5 minutes	
Aa Word Smart  Body Smart  People Smart	SUPPLIES <input type="checkbox"/> guest

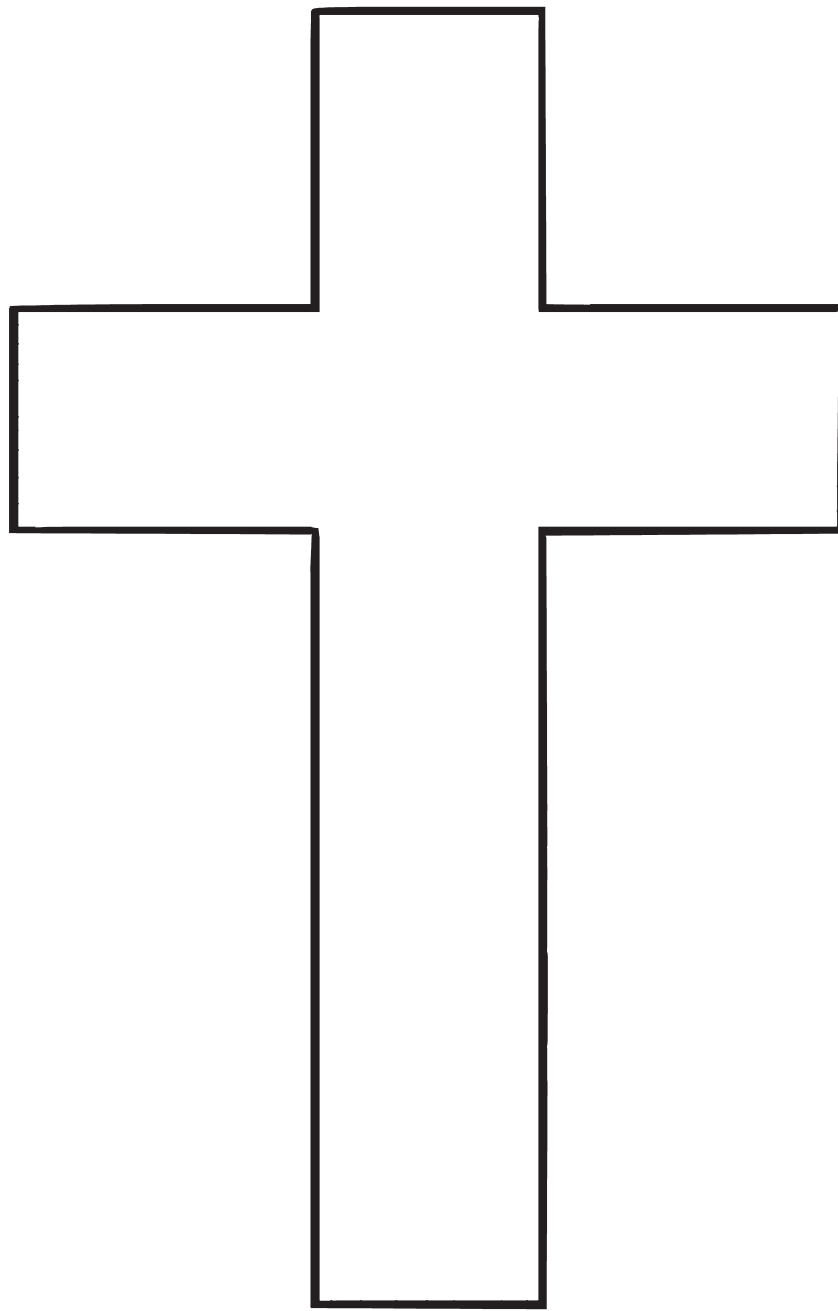
Invite your pastor or children's elder to join you for step 4 as a way of giving added emphasis to Jesus' invitation to the table. As you talk about and share the juice and bread, invite your guest to reiterate what you've learned together today—and to let the children know that it will please Jesus to see them gathered with their families when your church family celebrates the Lord's Supper together in the sanctuary.











Dear Family,

Can your preschooler beat you in a game of MEMORY? Probably! To give your little one another good memory workout, ask him or her to remember—and tell you—today’s Bible story. We listened to the story of Jesus’ last meal with his disciples and what Jesus asked them (and us) to do every time we gather at the table with God’s people—REMEMBER him. We also learned that Jesus invites ALL of us, whether we’re big or small, to remember his great love for us as we eat the bread and drink the juice together.

Remembering Christ’s sacrifice as we participate in the Lord’s Supper is important for us all. Talking about it with your preschooler will plant this truth (and this habit) deep in his or her heart, preparing the way for a lifetime of remembering and celebrating our Savior’s love.

Sincerely,

