

*Lessons
from the
Upper
Room*

*The Heart
of the Savior*

SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON

“As I began reading this superb book, I was constantly reminded of Martin Luther’s comment that ‘in Scripture, every little daisy is a meadow.’ Many believers will have read through John 13–17 more than once and may even feel they have a pretty good grasp of its meaning. I was one of them—until I read Sinclair Ferguson’s *Lessons from the Upper Room!* As he wisely says, ‘Our minds are far too finite to understand fully what the infinite Lord of all is doing,’ but the more I read, the more I felt drawn into that amazing upper room, listening, learning—and loving what the Savior was saying. Crystal-clear illustrations and warm-hearted applications permeate these pages—and I will never forget the author’s allegory that he calls ‘The Stranger in Smokeland!’ *Lessons from the Upper Room* is Ferguson at his finest. Get two copies—and share the treasure with someone else!”

—DR. JOHN BLANCHARD
Preacher, teacher, apologist, and author
Banstead, England

“Few passages in Scripture are as influential as John’s Farewell Discourse, but its message is often elusive. Sinclair Ferguson helps us put the pieces of the puzzle in place in the light of the whole Bible. Pull up a chair and listen as Ferguson helps us understand what we overhear from Jesus’ speaking to His disciples and praying to His Father. This book unpacks the drama and meaning of the last night of Jesus’ life and richly explains how this is good news for us today. This is vintage Ferguson—a sensitive reading of the biblical text in light of the whole Bible, with consummate focus on our Savior and His work. Whether you’re familiar with

this passage or have never read it before, this book is sure to be encouraging, edifying, and enlightening. Pick up this book—you'll be glad you did!"

—DR. BRANDON D. CROWE
Professor of New Testament,
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia

"Sinclair Ferguson is one of the few writers in this or any generation of whom it can be said that anything he writes is a must-read. In this book, he transports us to the upper room with Jesus to witness the last hours of His earthly ministry. You will feel like you are there, sitting next to the Lord, savoring the meal, hearing the anxious inquires of the disciples, listening to words that will change everything. Whether you have walked with Christ for many years or have just become a Christian, Dr. Ferguson's years of meditation on these chapters, combined with his unequaled pastoral wisdom, make these pages uniquely accessible to a variety of readers. It is the finest nontechnical treatment of John 13–17 in print."

—DR. GABRIEL N.E. FLUHRER
Associate minister of discipleship,
First Presbyterian Church
Columbia, S.C.

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Upper The Heart
of the Savior
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Tintoretto, *Two Apostles*, late 16th century. Image courtesy of The Barnes Foundation.

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Now before the Feast of the Passover,
when Jesus knew that his hour had come
to depart out of this world to the Father,
having loved his own who were in the world,
he loved them to the end.

—JOHN 13:1

To

My Dorothy
and
Ruth

Loving Helpers
Wise Counselors
Devoted Homemakers
Best Friends

With Love and Gratitude

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Introduction

Lessons from the Upper Room is an invitation to spend a few hours with Jesus' disciples, listening to His teaching and over-hearing Him pray—both for them and for you. It is based on John's gospel, chapters 13 through 17. Here, in five chapters, in only 155 verses, and in less than four thousand words we are given what the Puritan writer Thomas Goodwin called “a window into Christ's heart.”¹

This section of John's gospel has meant a great deal to me since my student days, and I have often thought of writing a book on it simply for my own benefit. But the immediate stimulus behind *Lessons from the Upper Room* came from recording a series of twelve short messages on these chapters for Ligonier Ministries in 2014.

In a sense, these pages are “the book of the movie.” As is often the case, the two are not identical. In this instance, the book has been written several years after the recordings were made and it is probably more than 50 percent longer than a transcript of the original messages. Anyone present at the recording sessions, or who has watched them, will find echoes of them in these pages. But the book is a fuller exposition of these wonderful chapters, and so I hope that even those present at the recording, or who have watched or listened to them, will find it rewarding.

Even so, *Lessons from the Upper Room* is by no means a complete exposition of John 13–17. If that were attempted—to adapt some words of John himself—an entire bookcase could not contain the books that would be written!

Nor are these pages a commentary in any technical sense. They are, perhaps, more like the “audio description” function on my “smart” TV set. This facility provides a running commentary on the action taking place on the screen to help those who can follow the dialogue but are too visually handicapped to see it. So I hope that there will be moments in reading these pages when readers will feel—as I have in writing them—that they are “there” in the upper room itself, meeting with Christ, watching Him, and listening to Him teach and pray.

It is always a privilege to serve alongside Ligonier Ministries and its publishing arm, and I am indebted especially to the audio-video production team and to the editorial team, who, over the years, have become not only guides but friends. I am also grateful to those who joined me for two intensive days of filming during which we worked our way together through Jesus’ Farewell Discourse. And as with everything else in life, my chief debt under God is to my wife, Dorothy, and to the family we love.

The Mind of Christ

John 13:1–12

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus

answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?"

In our imagination, let us climb the stairs leading to an upper room on a house in Jerusalem. Here we can eavesdrop on what transpired during the late afternoon and evening of the day before the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.

Thirteen men have come together for a Passover meal. One will leave early on a mission of betrayal. The remaining twelve will later make their way to the garden of Gethsemane.

From there they will be scattered. One will be taken by force on a nightmare journey.

It will bring Him first to the deposed high priest Annas. From there He will be taken to the house of Annas' son-in-law Caiaphas, now the high priest. He will then be taken to the Judgment Hall of Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, then to King Herod and back to Pilate before finally being led along the Via Dolorosa to the cross of Calvary. There He will be crucified.

By this time tomorrow, Friday, the lifeless body of Jesus of Nazareth will be carried to a garden tomb.

But this is not the end, just the end of the beginning. For early on Sunday morning, He will rise again from the dead. He now lives forever as a Prince and Savior. All this is still to come. For now, we have arrived at the upper room.

In less than twenty-four hours, the Savior will be dead—crucified. Well aware that this is His certain destiny, He wants to show His disciples that He loves them to the end.

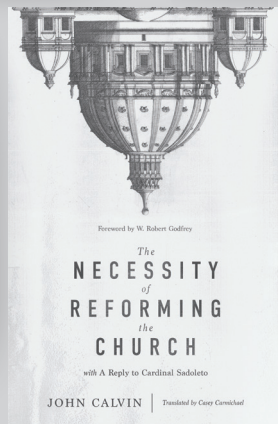
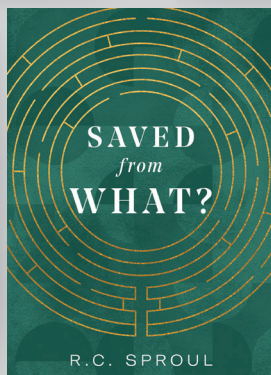
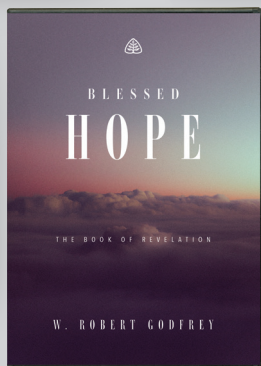
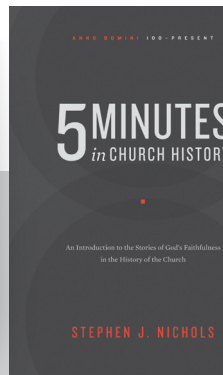
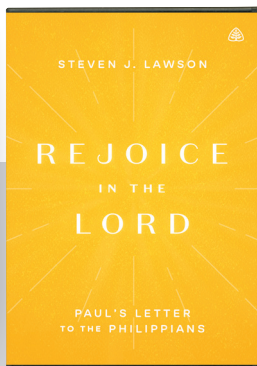
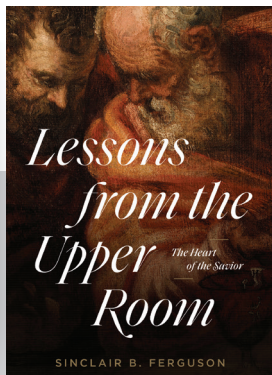
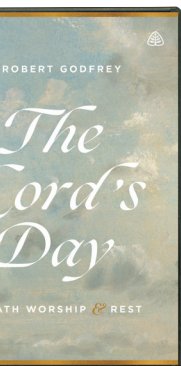
Soon He will dismiss one of them—Judas Iscariot—from the room to betray Him. Shortly afterward, He will tell another of them—Simon Peter—that before a new day dawns, he will have denied Him three times. Before they leave, He will pray the longest prayer recorded in the New Testament. It is truly “the Lord’s Prayer.” In it, He will disclose the intimacy of His relationship to His heavenly Father and His disciples will overhear expressions of His love and care for them, but also for all those who—like ourselves—will become His disciples in the future.

These are dramatic moments.

But first, let us listen to John’s account of how the evening began:

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come

We want to see men and women around the world connect the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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