



Discipleship Guide

Sermon: Empathy

Speaker: Pastor John Zayas

Date: July 13, 2025

Small Group Guide: Empathy

Opening Prayer: Begin the session with a prayer, asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word and guide the discussion.

Key Takeaways

- Dying to self is a daily practice necessary for following Christ.
- True empathy involves connecting with others in their emotional language.
- Forgiveness and love are not optional for Christians, even when it's difficult.
- We are called to bear one another's burdens and rejoice with those who rejoice.
- God's consuming fire can purify us and prepare us for growth.

Discussion Questions

1. The pastor talks about "dying to self" daily. What does this mean to you practically? How can we practice this in our daily lives?
2. How do you think empathy relates to our Christian walk? Can you share an experience where someone showed you true empathy?
3. The sermon mentions the challenge of blessing those who have hurt us. How do you struggle with this? How can we grow in this area?

4. Reflecting on the statement: "I would rather be weak in love than right in nonsense." How does this challenge your approach to relationships and conflicts?
 5. The pastor confessed his struggle with rejoicing and celebrating. Why do you think it's important for Christians to both mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice?
 6. How does the image of God as a "consuming fire" impact your understanding of spiritual growth and transformation?
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Practical Applications:

1. This week, identify one area where you need to "die to self." Write it down and pray about it daily.
 2. Practice active listening with someone this week, focusing on understanding their emotional language rather than just their words.
 3. If there's someone you need to forgive, take a step towards forgiveness. This might be praying for them, writing a letter (even if you don't send it), or reaching out if appropriate.
 4. Look for an opportunity to "bear someone's burden" this week. How can you practically support someone who is struggling?
 5. Challenge yourself to genuinely celebrate someone else's success or joy, especially if it's in an area where you might typically feel envious.
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Closing Prayer: Close by praying the "anchored prayer" from the sermon: "Not my will, but yours be done." Encourage group members to surrender areas of their lives to God's consuming fire.

5-Day Devotionals

Day 1: Dying to Self

Reading: Galatians 2:20, Luke 9:23

Devotional: Paul's words in Galatians 2:20 remind us that the Christian life is one of constant surrender. Just as Jesus taught in Luke 9:23, we are called to "take up our cross daily." This isn't a one-time event, but a daily choice to put aside our own desires and align ourselves with God's will. Today, reflect on areas of your life where you're holding onto control. What would it look like to truly surrender these to God? Remember, dying to self doesn't mean becoming inactive or numb, but rather allowing Christ to live through you. As you go about your day, consciously choose to respond to situations as Christ would, setting aside your own impulses and embracing His love and grace.

Day 2: God's Consuming Fire

Reading: Hebrews 12:28-29, Isaiah 6:1-7

Devotional: The image of God as a consuming fire can be both awe-inspiring and intimidating. Yet, this fire isn't meant to destroy us, but to refine and purify us. Just as Isaiah experienced God's cleansing fire, we too are invited into this transformative process. Consider the areas of your life that need refinement. Are there habits, attitudes, or relationships that are holding you back from fully experiencing God's presence? Invite God's holy fire into these areas, trusting that His purpose is to make you more like Christ. Remember, sometimes growth requires letting go of what's familiar. Embrace the discomfort of change, knowing that God's consuming fire is ultimately an act of love.

Day 3: Empathy and Compassion

Reading: Colossians 3:12-14, 1 Peter 3:8

Devotional: In a world often marked by division and self-interest, we are called to put on compassion, kindness, and love. These qualities aren't just nice additions to our faith; they're essential characteristics of those who follow Christ. Reflect on a recent interaction

where you struggled to show empathy. What barriers prevented you from truly understanding and caring for the other person? Ask God to soften your heart and open your eyes to the needs and struggles of those around you. Today, make a conscious effort to listen more deeply, to withhold judgment, and to respond with kindness, even in challenging situations. Remember, showing empathy isn't about agreeing with everyone, but about reflecting God's love to all.

Day 4: Forgiveness and Freedom

Reading: Matthew 6:14-15, Ephesians 4:31-32

Devotional: Forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel, yet it's often one of the most challenging aspects of our faith to live out. Jesus makes it clear that our own forgiveness is tied to our willingness to forgive others. Today, bring to mind someone who has hurt you deeply. What emotions surface as you think about them? Now, imagine Jesus standing beside both you and this person. How does His presence change your perspective? Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting or excusing harmful behavior, but it does mean releasing the burden of bitterness and trusting God with justice. Take a step towards forgiveness today, even if it's simply praying for the person who hurt you. Remember, forgiveness is a process, and God is with you every step of the way.

Day 5: Light in the Darkness

Reading: Matthew 5:14-16, John 1:5

Devotional: As followers of Christ, we are called to be light in a world often shrouded in darkness. This light isn't something we generate on our own, but rather it's a reflection of Christ living in us. Think about the environments you'll encounter today - your workplace, your home, your community. How can you intentionally shine Christ's light in these places? It might be through an act of kindness, speaking words of encouragement, or standing up for what's right. Remember, even the smallest light can make a significant difference in deep darkness. Don't underestimate the impact of your faithfulness, even when you can't see immediate results. Trust that as you allow God's light to shine through you, He is working in ways you may not even realize.