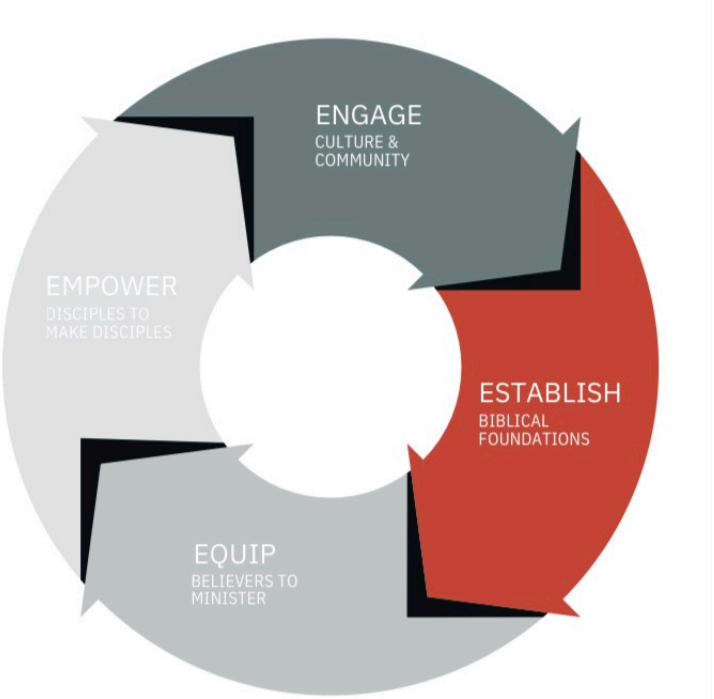
The mission of Rise Up Church is to raise disciples, empower families, and revitalize neighborhoods by the transformational power of the gospel. At Rise Up Church, our discipleship rhythm shapes how we live and expressed in four key movements that we call the 4E's. It is all about following Jesus and helping others do the same.



The purpose of our Koinonia Gatherings is to establish people in biblical foundations by building Christ-centered connections. We believe the Scriptures teaches that life change happens best in community, as we grow together in God's Word and are led by the Holy Spirit.

Below, you'll find a sermon-based guide from the most recent sermon to help lead a Rise Up Church Koinonia Gathering, along with a five day devotional designed to help you apply the sermon throughout the week.

Small Group Guide: Love in the Face of Betrayal

Based on John 13:21-38

Overview

In John 13, Jesus faces one of the most painful moments of his earthly ministry -- betrayal by a close disciple and denial by another. Yet in the middle of this, he issues a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you. This guide will help your group wrestle with what that kind of love looks like in real life and what it costs to actually live it out.

Key Takeaways

- Betrayal rarely happens overnight. Judas did not betray Jesus in a single moment -- it was a gradual process of small compromises that led to a devastating choice.
- Jesus' love did not wait for people to deserve it. He washed Judas' feet, fed him, and honored him even while knowing what Judas was about to do.
- The new commandment raises the standard of love. Loving others as Jesus loved us shifts the focus away from our own feelings and conditions and places it on Christ as the model.
- Without receiving Jesus' love, it is nearly impossible to give it. Peter's failure to follow through on his bold promises reveals that human strength alone cannot sustain this kind of love.
- Glorification can come through betrayal. When Judas left, Jesus spoke of glorification -- a reminder that what the enemy intends for harm, God can use for his purposes.

Discussion Questions

Opening (Choose One)

1. Without going into too much detail, can you describe a time when you felt genuinely let down by someone you trusted? How did that experience shape the way you think about trust or love?

2. The pastor made a distinction between loving others based on how they treat you versus loving them based on how Jesus has loved you. Which of those feels more natural to you, and why?

Going Deeper

3. The pastor described Judas' betrayal as a process -- small compromises over time that eventually led to a complete turning away from Jesus. What kinds of small compromises do you think are most common for people today? What makes them easy to overlook in the moment?

4. Read John 13:34-35. Jesus calls his commandment to love one another "new." The pastor explained that the newness is in the standard -- love as I have loved you, not simply love your neighbor as yourself. Why does that distinction matter? How does it change the way you approach difficult relationships?

5. The pastor pointed out that Jesus released Judas rather than stopping him, and that sometimes love means releasing someone rather than holding on. Do you agree with that? What does it look like to release someone in love rather than in anger or indifference?

6. Peter boldly declared he would die for Jesus, yet Jesus told him he would deny him three times. The pastor suggested that Peter had not yet received the fullness of Jesus' love -- that the Holy Spirit would later transform him from a coward into a martyr. What role does receiving Jesus' love play in our ability to love others well? Have you experienced that kind of transformation in your own life?

7. The pastor referenced 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, noting that most of us fall short of love's description pretty quickly. Which characteristic of love described in that passage is the hardest for you personally, and why?

8. The pastor said, "You will look at betrayal a lot differently if you knew God was about to get glorified." How does that perspective change the way you respond when someone hurts you? Is that a perspective that comes naturally, or does it require intentional effort?

Personal Reflection

9. The pastor asked the group to consider: have you fled into the night away from Jesus? Is there an area of your life right now where you have drifted away from him -- perhaps because of hurt, disappointment, or the temptation of a shortcut?

10. Is there a specific person in your life -- a fellow believer, a family member, a friend -- toward whom you are withholding love or forgiveness? What is one concrete step you could take this week to move toward them?

Practical Applications

This Week, Choose at Least One:

- Identify one relationship where you have been loving conditionally -- based on what the other person does or does not do for you. Pray specifically for that person each day this week, asking God to help you love them the way Christ loves you.
- Reflect on whether there is a temptation in your life that Satan is using to pull you away from Jesus. Write it down privately, confess it to God, and if you are comfortable, share it with a trusted person in your group or a mentor who can pray with you.
- If you have been withholding forgiveness from someone, take one step toward releasing them this week. That step might be a conversation, a letter you write but do not send, or simply a moment of prayer where you choose to hand that bitterness over to God.
- Spend time this week meditating on how Jesus has loved you specifically. Before you can love others the way Jesus commands, you need to be grounded in the reality of his love for you. Consider journaling about what his love has looked like in your own story.
- Find a practical way to serve someone in your church community this week without any expectation of recognition or return -- in the spirit of Jesus washing his disciples' feet.

Closing Prayer Points

- Ask God to reveal any area of your heart where bitterness, unforgiveness, or self-reliance is blocking you from loving others well.
- Pray for anyone in the group who is walking through a season of betrayal or hurt.
- Thank God that his love does not depend on our performance -- that even when we have acted like Judas or Peter, his love remains.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Love in the Face of Betrayal: Walking in the Love of Christ

Day 1: When Love Meets Betrayal

Reading: John 13:21-30

Devotional: Jesus knew Judas would betray him, yet he washed his feet, fed him, and honored him with the dipped morsel of bread. This is a staggering picture of love that does not wait for worthiness. Betrayal did not cancel Jesus' love -- it revealed the depth of it. Consider the people in your life who have hurt you. Now consider how Jesus responded to the one who hurt him most. His love set the standard, not their behavior. Ask God today to show you one person you can honor despite the pain they have caused you.

Day 2: The Darkness We Choose

Reading: James 1:13-15; John 8:44

Devotional: Judas did not betray Jesus in a single moment. It was a slow drift -- small compromises, quiet thefts, a heart gradually hardened. Scripture reminds us that temptation follows a process: desire, deception, and then death. Satan does not announce his intentions. He offers shortcuts, substitutes, and counterfeits that look remarkably close to what God has promised. The question is not whether temptation will come, but what you will do when it arrives. What has the enemy been offering you lately that looks good on the surface? Bring it honestly before God and ask for the strength to release it.

Day 3: Glorified in the Darkness

Reading: Genesis 50:19-20; Romans 8:28; John 13:31-32

Devotional: Immediately after Judas walked into the night to carry out his betrayal, Jesus declared that the Son of Man would be glorified. Not eventually. Not after the pain passed. Right then. God has a long history of turning what the enemy intends for destruction into the very instrument of his glory. Joseph said it plainly to the brothers

who sold him -- what you meant for evil, God meant for good. When life feels like it is falling apart around you, that is not a sign that God has stepped away. It may be the very moment he is about to show up most powerfully.

Day 4: A New Standard for Love

Reading: John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Devotional: Jesus did not simply say love one another. He said love one another as I have loved you. That single phrase changes everything. It removes every excuse rooted in how you feel, how you were treated, or what the other person deserves. The standard is no longer self-love or cultural affection -- it is the cross. First Corinthians 13 describes this love as patient, kind, not self-seeking, and enduring all things. Most of us are disqualified by verse four. That is precisely why Jesus had to model it first. You cannot manufacture this love on your own. Ask the Holy Spirit to produce it in you today.

Day 5: From Coward to Faithful

Reading: John 20:19-22; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 2:14

Devotional: Peter declared he would die for Jesus. Hours later, he denied him three times. Yet this same Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood before thousands and proclaimed the gospel without fear. The difference was not willpower or resolve. It was the presence of God living within him. You cannot love as Jesus loves, forgive as Jesus forgives, or endure as Jesus endured through your own strength alone. The Holy Spirit is the power that closes the gap between who you are and who God has called you to be. Surrender your self-reliance today and ask God to fill you with the same Spirit that transformed a coward into a martyr.