Leader’s Guide

Following Jesus
Responding to Betrayal
John 13:18-30
Pastor Sebastiano Rosa
October 18, 2026

Sermon Synopsis

Immediately after washing His disciples' feet, Jesus reveals that one of His closest followers will betray Him. Although Jesus knows what Judas is about to do, He continues to demonstrate love toward him. Jesus' response reveals both the depth of His love and the pain of broken trust.

Betrayal is something most of us experience in one form or another. Whether through dishonesty, broken confidence, abandonment, or a deeper violation of trust, betrayal can leave wounds that shape how we see ourselves, others, and even God. When those wounds remain unaddressed, bitterness, fear, and self-protection can begin to influence our relationships and spiritual growth.

Jesus offers another way. His example invites us to respond to betrayal without allowing it to harden our hearts. And for those who have betrayed others, His grace offers the possibility of repentance and forgiveness. Whether we have been wounded by betrayal or have caused wounds ourselves, Jesus invites us to bring those experiences into His presence and allow Him to begin His healing work.

Discussion Goal

Help participants recognize how betrayal and broken trust can influence their relationships and spiritual growth, consider what Jesus' response reveals about His character, and identify a next step toward healing, forgiveness, or reconciliation as the Holy Spirit leads.

A Word of Guidance for Group Leaders

This week's discussion has the potential to become more personal than usual. Some participants may be processing relatively minor disappointments, while others may carry wounds from abuse, abandonment, infidelity, or other significant violations of trust.

Keep these considerations in mind:

- Don't pressure anyone to share personal experiences. Participants can engage meaningfully by discussing the principles without revealing their own stories.
- Avoid quick fixes. Statements like "You just need to forgive" can unintentionally minimize someone's pain. Listen well and allow space for healing to be a process.

- Distinguish forgiveness from reconciliation. Forgiveness does not require someone to return to an unsafe relationship, overlook wrongdoing, or immediately restore trust.
- Be attentive to the Holy Spirit. A participant may need prayer, encouragement, or a private conversation rather than more discussion. If someone discloses abuse or ongoing harm, respond compassionately and follow appropriate safeguarding and reporting procedures.

Discussion Questions

1. Betrayal can take many forms, from seemingly small breaches of trust to deeply painful experiences. What makes betrayal especially difficult to experience?

FOLLOW-UP PROMPTS

- How is betrayal different from other kinds of hurt or disappointment?
- Why does betrayal often have a lasting impact on our ability to trust?
- What are some ways people respond when someone they trusted lets them down?

TEACHING POINT

Betrayal is especially painful because it damages trust within a relationship. The closer the relationship, the deeper the wound can be. Recognizing that pain is an important part of healing, rather than minimizing or ignoring it.

2. The sermon described how unresolved betrayal can influence the way we think and respond to others. What are some ways past hurts can shape our present relationships or spiritual growth?

FOLLOW-UP PROMPTS

- How might someone become overly guarded or self-reliant after experiencing betrayal?
- What is the difference between establishing healthy boundaries and allowing bitterness to take root?
- How might the belief that "I can't trust anyone" influence the way someone relates to God or others?

TEACHING POINT

Pain that goes unaddressed can begin to shape our beliefs and behavior. While appropriate boundaries can be healthy and necessary, fear and bitterness can keep us from experiencing the relationships and freedom God desires for us. Healing begins as we honestly acknowledge our wounds and invite God into them.

3. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, yet He still washed his feet and shared a meal with him. What does Jesus' response reveal about His character, and how might His example challenge the way we respond when trust is broken?

FOLLOW-UP PROMPTS

- What stands out to you about Jesus' actions toward Judas?
- How does Jesus demonstrate both love and an awareness of the reality of betrayal?
- How can we extend grace without ignoring wrongdoing or pretending that trust hasn't been broken?

TEACHING POINT

Jesus' love was not dependent on Judas' faithfulness. Even as Jesus experienced the pain of betrayal, He continued to act from His own character rather than allowing another person's actions to determine His response. Following Jesus means learning to extend grace while still recognizing the reality and consequences of sin. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean immediate reconciliation or restored trust.

4. Whether we've experienced betrayal or have broken someone else's trust, Jesus invites us to respond to His grace. Where might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to take a next step?

FOLLOW-UP PROMPTS

- Is there a hurt you need to begin acknowledging rather than continuing to carry alone?
- Is there a relationship where you need to take responsibility for something you've said or done?
- What might it look like to invite Jesus into an area where you've become guarded, fearful, or bitter?
- Who could help you take a healthy next step toward healing or reconciliation?

TEACHING POINT

Healing and reconciliation are often processes rather than single moments. Our responsibility is not to manufacture a particular outcome, but to respond faithfully to the Holy Spirit's leading. That might mean seeking forgiveness, extending forgiveness, asking for prayer, talking with a trusted person, or taking the first step toward addressing a long-standing wound.

Additional Scripture

Scripture	Connection to the Discussion

Psalm 55:12–14, 22	David describes the pain of betrayal by a close companion and the invitation to bring our burdens to God.
Ephesians 4:31–32	Paul encourages believers to put away bitterness and extend forgiveness as Christ has forgiven us.
Romans 12:17–21	We are called to resist retaliation and overcome evil with good.
Psalm 147:3	God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.
1 John 1:9	Confession opens the way to receive God's forgiveness and cleansing.