

Small Group Discussion Guide — February 14, 2021

- Series: Way, Truth, Life
 - Sermon: Tough Love
 - Scripture: John 13: 31-38 (NLT)
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FOLLOW-UP FROM LAST WEEK:

Last week's sermon featured a quote from John Perkins, who said, "We do not give people dignity; God gives it to them, but we must work to affirm it in others and ourselves." Can you think of any opportunities you had this week to interact with people with this in mind?

CONNECT:

1. What stood out to you from this past week's service, and why?
2. Is a snow day more of a delight or an inconvenience to you? What was your experience with snow days as a child?

ENGAGE:

1. Read John 13:31-35.
 - In verse 31, Jesus said it was time to "enter into his glory." What do you think this means? How would what is coming (Jesus' humiliation, beating, and brutal crucifixion) ever qualify as glory?
 - Jesus calls his disciples "dear children" in verse 33. How do you think the disciples felt to hear him say that? Why do you think he chose "children" instead of "friends" or "students"?
 - What is the "new commandment" that Jesus gives? Why is it new? What does Jesus say following this commandment would do?
2. Read verses 36-38.
 - How does Peter's declaration strike you? In what ways can you relate to him in this situation?
 - How do you think Peter felt hearing Jesus predict his coming betrayal?

APPLY:

1. In his most difficult moments, Jesus is betrayed by Judas, abandoned by all the disciples, and denied by Peter, one of his closest friends. Think about how the total abandonment of family and friends at a time of crisis would feel in your life. Now think about what Drew called "the most powerful thing in the universe" - unconditional love. Can you describe a time when someone showed you that kind of powerful love during a difficult time? How did it affect your circumstances, and more importantly, your heart?
2. Difficult circumstances, personal disappointments, and relational betrayal are just a few reasons that make it easy for us to close off our hearts from others. Jesus showed us in this passage what "tough love" looks like - love that doesn't close up, blow up, or give up when everything is hard. Describe a time you have faced the decision of whether to live with a closed heart (to protect yourself) or live with an open heart (thereby making yourself vulnerable). What is an area in your life now that invites you to live with an open heart and let the strength of God's tough love carry you?

3. The idea of “loving one another as I (Jesus) have loved you” can feel warm and fuzzy, but putting this commandment into practice is harder than it sounds. What are some obstacles that get in your way of truly loving others? What are some ways you can actively love the people around you - especially the difficult ones - in the days and weeks ahead? How might you also love yourself better? (As you think through your response, remember the “long game” that David spoke of last week and how meaningful change and growth are often very incremental.)

PRAY:

Jesus, you said that the world would know that we are your disciples by our love. Teach us to make loving one another a conscious daily choice until it becomes a lifestyle that speaks clearly to others that we belong to you. Help us to be bearers of your love to those around us, not to impress them, but to gratefully serve you - for you are the Creator and giver of all love. Amen.

GOING DEEPER

In the verses preceding today’s scripture passage, Jesus revealed that Judas would betray him. Now, he also says that Peter will deny him, yet he had just shared a meal with them and washed their feet anyway. How does this connect to Jesus’ “long game” as he showed them love and care in these practical ways? What do you think Judas was thinking, even as he contemplated an evil plot against Jesus? In what ways can you relate to Judas here? How does Jesus’ example encourage you to love an unfaithful friend or even an overt enemy?

SUPPORTING VERSES

Friendly reminder: Download one of the Bible apps on your phone or tablet to have quick access to the many different versions of scripture available.

Leviticus 19: 17-18

John 13:21

Romans 5:10

Revelation 3:20