



from the Market Harborough Methodist Circuit

Session 1.2: BETRAYAL

INTRODUCTION: THINKING ABOUT BETRAYAL

A dictionary defines **betray** in four different ways...

transitive verb

- 1: to lead astray, especially: seduce;
- 2: to deliver to an enemy by treachery;
- 3: to fail or desert especially in time of need;
- 4: to reveal unintentionally (e.g. *betray one's true feelings*) or to disclose in violation of confidence (e.g. *betray a secret*).

In this session we will be mainly thinking about points **2** and **3**. We'll be using the story of Jesus "on the night he was betrayed", but also thinking about how we deal with betrayal in our own lives. For some people, this might be very hard, or very current, bringing up painful emotions. The group needs to be as supportive as possible, allowing people space to share or withdraw as they feel they need to.

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Group leaders: Before the start of the session, you might like to prepare a circle of **twelve tealight candles, with one larger candle in the middle**. These candles represent Jesus (in the middle) and the twelve disciples. You could light all of these before you do the opening prayer, and then see the reflective activity later.

For everyone: **Praying before the session starts:**

A **breath prayer** is one that you can incorporate throughout your day, when you may feel fear, as slow, deep breaths are particularly useful during these times. Today, you might like to use these words:

(Breathe in) **Lord, you are my Light;**

(Breathe out) **My Light and Salvation;**

(Breathe in) **In you I trust;**

(Breathe out) **In you I trust.**

STARTING THE SESSION: OPENING PRAYER

(You might light the candles at this point.)

Faithful God,
as we gather for this time with you,
help us to understand your steadfast love for us.
Though the world can be evil or filled with pain,
and people can hurt us or let us down,
your love for us is everlasting,
you are steadfast and true,
and we can trust in you to hold us
even as we explore some difficult things.
Be with us today, and with all who are suffering,
in the name of Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

FINDING OUR ROOTS

Ask yourself or explore with others:

- what does **betrayal** mean to you?
- what do you associate with the word betrayal?
- do you already feel this topic is a bit too 'close to home'?
- have you ever felt betrayed by someone you trusted?
- have you been able to 'move on' since then?

READING THE SCRIPTURES (1)

In this session, we will think the arrest of Jesus, as told by Luke, and the part played in the story by his disciples; in particular Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter. Our story begins in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus had spent hours praying and waiting.

The Temple authorities in Jerusalem had been looking for an opportunity to get to Jesus and question him, especially following the events of Palm Sunday – his provocative entry into the city and then overturning the tables in the temple courts. The political situation was tense, and Jesus was winning a lot of support among the people, many of whom believed him to be the Messiah-King sent from God.

We will look at this in **two parts**:

Luke 22: verses 47-53

*While Jesus was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; ⁴⁸ but Jesus said to him, 'Judas, is it with a kiss that you are **betraying** the Son of Man?'*

⁴⁹ When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, 'Lord, should we strike with the sword?' ⁵⁰ Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus said, 'No more of this!' And he touched his ear and healed him.

⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? ⁵³ When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!'

DIGGING DEEPER TOGETHER (1)

What do you make of this part of the story?

How do you think Jesus might have felt to see Judas coming with the arresting party?

Judas was one of the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus. Every one of the four gospels mentions him (usually naming him last of all). But Jesus chose him.

In many places, Jesus shows that he knows what is in Judas's mind, what he will do and how he will betray him. And yet he still chose him, and kept him in the group until the end. *What do you make of this?*

What do you think Judas's motives may have been? Did he know it would end in Jesus' death, or was Judas in some way also 'betrayed'?

When we look at the original Greek of the word "betraying" in verse 48, it means literally 'handing over'. As the story progresses, we see Jesus *handed over* several times to several different people or groups of people, with higher and higher authority, leading to his death.

Who are the people Jesus is 'handed over' to as the story goes on?

Eventually, Jesus was handed over to the people in the crowd who decided his fate. Traditionally, these people represent 'all of us' – and our part in the sin of the world, which Jesus died for. *What do you make of this?*

Where in the world today do people feel betrayed by nations or governments?

How hard is it to forgive when a promise or relationship has been betrayed?

READING THE SCRIPTURES (2)

Luke 22: verses 54-62

Then they seized Jesus and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance.

⁵⁵ When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶ Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, 'This man also was with him.' ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, 'Woman, I do not know him.'

⁵⁸ A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, 'You also are one of them.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not!'

⁵⁹ Then about an hour later yet another kept insisting, 'Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean.' ⁶⁰ But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are talking about!' At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, 'Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.' ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly.

DIGGING DEEPER TOGETHER (2)

What do you make of this part of the story?

Simon Peter was the only one brave enough to follow on. The other ten disciples fled from Gethsemane. This abandoning Jesus in his hour of need is another form of betrayal. None of the twelve appear very faithful or brave at this point in the story.

Peter followed on, though. He had shown his courage or boldness in other stories too. *But how do you think he felt after this episode?*

Have you ever felt like Peter? How easy or difficult do we find it to stand up alongside or speak up for those who are persecuted?

What other thoughts or feelings does this story bring up for you?

Both stories show a dark side of human nature. Compare this with the faithfulness Jesus shows to his friends, and the faithfulness of God for his people in the Bible.

ACTIVITY: EXTINGUISHING THE LIGHTS

See the 12 small candles burning. They represent the 12 disciples.

See the central candle. It represents the Lord Jesus Christ.

One by one, blow out the twelve smaller lights. Think about Jesus becoming more and more isolated as his friends turn against him (Judas), abandon him (the 10 others), or deny knowing him (Peter). *How does this make you feel?*

But look at the light still shining brightly. Still his light goes on, with faithfulness and hope. His light is never extinguished, though the others fall away. From this light, soon, many more lights will be lit, and the other candles given a new chance. But for now, we wait with the One. *Where are you in this picture? Can you draw close to the one who is the central light, and know his steadfast love?*

LISTEN TO A SONG

Faithful God – song by I AM THEY

Available on YouTube using the link below:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzNOSrtWwIE>

PRAYING TOGETHER

- Bring to God any prayers for the group, or for the church;
- especially pray for anything that has been difficult for anyone in this session;
- Pray for the world – especially for places of war and refugees;
- Pray for the week to come, and the challenges you face;
- You might like to **say the Lord's Prayer**:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

A CLOSING PRAYER

Father God,
Thank you for this time spent together, with you,
and the opportunities to reflect on the events experienced by
your Son, Jesus.
Be with those who feel betrayed today,
and enable us to go from here knowing your love
and the support of each other.
Help us to remain faithful to you, as you are to us.
You know us all by name and what is in our hearts
and we ask that you continue to develop and strengthen our
faith, so that we may help others today and always.
Thank you, Faithful One.
Amen.

MORE TO EXPLORE

Psalm 55 explores some of the feelings experienced when betrayed by a friend or lover. It is written in a situation of battle, but could be imagined in other situations too. The writer asks for justice, and contrasts their enemy's unfaithfulness with the steadfast and unchanging love of God. You might like to read and meditate on these words if you are feeling betrayed. Perhaps try to read it in different translations, which might bring out different aspects in a new light.

WHAT IS GOOD SOIL ?

When Jesus told the Parable of the Sower, he indicated that for the seeds of God's Kingdom to take root, grow strong and bear fruit, they needed to be planted in **good soil** (see *Matthew chapter 13, Mark chapter 4, and Luke chapter 8*). Christians have always realised that in order to grow in faith that is lasting and strong, we need to encourage and support one another, and find a place or a pattern that enables us to go deeper, ask questions and pray together, learning from each other and the traditions of the church.

We hope that these '**Good Soil**' resources will help and equip you to grow and be nurtured in faith, as part of the family of the church, in addition to weekly worship. They are meant to be flexible and optional, and to work in small groups, fellowship groups, families, with a friend, or can also be used as individual personal devotions. You do not need to use everything suggested. As you choose what is right for you, know that God is with you.

*These three sessions through **Lent** cover some difficult emotions that Jesus experienced as he approached his death. Make sure that you have someone you can talk to about any difficult feelings this may bring up for you. Please do ring your minister or lay worker if you want to talk or pray about anything, or speak to your pastoral visitor.*