



BUILDING BELOVED COMMUNITY

Study Guide

Study guides for this video series were created by [The Ministry Lab](#), which collects and curates outstanding resources for all aspects of church life and provides free consultation for Minnesota United Methodist Churches.

Rev. Chad Setter

Grounding Prayer

This practice is intended to invite us to see more clearly the mosaic of God's Beloved Community. Guidance is intended to be suggestive, rather than demanding: allow space for practicing in whatever way is most accessible or comfortable for participants. Leadership suggestions are in italics; the practice, in regular font, can be read through like a script. Leaders may find listening to the recording helpful in establishing both content and mood. If leading in person, let leadership be gentle and inviting throughout.

Preparations

Invite people into a comfortable seated posture:

I invite you to find a comfortable posture of prayer:

Sitting upright with both feet on the floor, the chin slightly tucked, and hands resting gently in the lap.

If you are comfortable doing so, I invite you to close your eyes; let your focus be internal.

Name your intent:

Our intent today is to grow our capacity to love one another.

Notice your breath:

I invite you to begin to notice your breath:

Allow each inhale and exhale to lengthen and become even.

Allow awareness of the breath to settle and open the mind and heart.

Return to breath awareness any time the mind or heart wander.

Allow a few moments to settle into awareness.

Practice

Let guidance through the practice be gentle and invitational.

I invite you to develop in your mind's eye an image of a person you love deeply: someone you know well, someone with whom you share a mutual admiration and respect.

...

Let yourself feel the deep affection, the powerful bond of love that exists between you.

...

Let their image become clear and strong.

[Allow 30 seconds or so of silence.]

Continue to hold this beloved person in your mind and heart.

Picture you, and this person you love, standing in the Divine Presence.

...

Notice the loving gaze with which God sees you.

Notice the loving gaze with which God sees your beloved.

...

Allow yourself to experience God's love, filling you.

Allow yourself to experience God's love spilling out of you, into your beloved.

[Allow 30 seconds or so of silence.]

Allowing your loved one to remain in the Divine Presence, begin to develop in your mind's eye an image of an acquaintance—someone you do not know particularly well, or with whom you do not have significant or powerful emotional interactions, just someone you encounter from time to time, for whom you have no strong feelings one way or the other.

...

Let their image become real and clear.

[Allow 30 seconds or so of silence.]

Continue to hold this acquaintance in your mind and heart.

Picture you, and this person you barely know, standing in the Divine Presence.

...

Notice the loving gaze with which God sees you.

Notice the loving gaze with which God sees your acquaintance.

...

Allow yourself to experience God's love filling you.

Allow yourself to experience God's love spilling out of you, into your acquaintance.

[Allow 30 seconds or so of silence.]

Allowing your acquaintance to remain in the Divine Presence, begin to create an image in your mind's eye of someone with whom you disagree. Let this be someone you know—someone you encounter on a regular basis, someone for whom you have some form of challenging feelings or resistance.

...

Let their image become clear and powerful.

[Allow 30 seconds or so of silence.]

Continue to hold this person in your mind and heart.
Picture you, and this fellow human, standing in the Divine Presence.

...

Notice the loving gaze with which God sees you.
Notice the loving gaze with which God sees your fellow human.

...

Allow yourself to experience God's love filling you.
Allow yourself to experience God's love spilling out of you, into your fellow human.

[Allow 30 seconds or so of silence.]

Return

Allowing yourself, your beloved, your acquaintance, and your fellow human to remain in the Divine Presence, I invite you to gently return your awareness to the here and now by wiggling your toes and fingers, or giving your neck, shoulders or head a gentle roll.

...

Take a few deep breaths and rest for a few moments in silence.

Avoid rushing here. Allow space for several deep breaths and lingering in silence for several moments. Moving too quickly into speech or movement can be distressing.

After several moments of rest, proceed to reading the Bible text.

Bible Reading

The texts might be shared by a leader, a volunteer reader, or read by verse around the group.

John 13: 33-38 ([NRSV](#); [The Message](#), below)

³³“Children, I am with you for only a short time longer. You are going to look high and low for me. But just as I told the Jews, I’m telling you: ‘Where I go, you are not able to come.’

³⁴⁻³⁵“Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.”

³⁶Simon Peter asked, “Master, just where are you going?”

Jesus answered, “You can’t now follow me where I’m going. You will follow later.”

³⁷“Master,” said Peter, “why can’t I follow now? I’ll lay down my life for you!”

³⁸“Really? You’ll lay down your life for me? The truth is that before the rooster crows, you’ll deny me three times.”

Opening Questions

Encourage participants to share personal responses to the following questions:

- What from this scripture speaks to you today?
- What question does this scripture raise for you?
- How does Jesus define “discipleship” in this text? What does discipleship look like, according to Jesus’ new command?
- Why (or how) are Jesus’ disciples—then and now—not able to follow Jesus “now”? When is “later”?
- In what ways do Jesus’ disciples continue to deny him today?
- What does discipleship look like for you and in your context today?

Video

Watch Rev. Chad Setter’s video vignette.

Reflection Questions

Discuss together:

- In what way do you connect with Chad’s story?
- What from Chad’s experience is completely new or different from your own?
- What did you find surprising or new that you would like to learn more about?
- What is God calling forth from you after hearing this story?

Closing Prayer & Blessing

Close the discussion with the following prayer:

Let us pray:

God of Love, fashioned in your image, we are born to be in relationship with you and all creation. Through Jesus the Christ, you call us into beloved community. Fill us with your Spirit; ground us in your Love, that Love for one another, for neighbors near and far, and for all of your beloved world so that it might grow within and flow throughout all of our being and doing. Build us into your Beloved Community, God of Love. Amen.

