

Life Group Discussion Guide

No Greater Love: In the Upper Room with Jesus
Week 3: Urgent Hour, New Love • John 13:31–38

As we continue our study of Jesus' final hours with His disciples, we sense the urgency in His voice. His captors will soon be on their way. There's no turning back. The hour has come.

Throughout this week's passage, Jesus describes this time in three ways: the hour of glory, the hour of departure, and the hour of love.

1. The Hour of Glory

"When [Judas] was gone, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.'" John 13:31–32

Jesus describes how, by the same action, both He and the Father are glorified. What is this action? His crucifixion. But how could a crucifixion—designed for humiliation, torment, and death—bring glory? Here's how Jesus had explained it a few days earlier:

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." John 12:23–25

"This is what's going to happen to Jesus. His death becomes the hour of His greatest glory because, by it, many would receive life eternal. In other words, Jesus redefines glory as dying—as giving yourself for the benefit of another. And, because death is the path to glory for Him, He prescribes the same path for us. He says, 'Lose your life now, keep it forever.'"

- In a world that seeks glory through power, wealth, beauty, and achievement, how does Jesus' redefinition of glory challenge you?
- Jesus considered it His greatest glory to die for your sake. What does this mean to you, personally? How will you respond to such a spectacular show of love?
- What would it look like for you to lose your life now, so you can keep it forever? Be practical and specific.

2. The Hour of Departure

"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come'...Simon Peter asked him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.' Peter asked, 'Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' Then Jesus answered, 'Will you really

lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!” John 13:33; 36–38

Imagine how difficult it would be for the disciples to receive these words, even if they don’t fully understand them. We see this most clearly in Peter, who argues he would give his very life to remain with Jesus—only to disown Him just hours later.

One commentator writes, “Sadly, good intentions in a secure room after good food are far less attractive in a darkened garden with a hostile mob. At this point in his pilgrimage, Peter’s intentions and self-assessment vastly outstrip his strength.”

- Can you relate to Peter? To the spiritual vigor and clarity you may feel even now—when we’re all cozy and safe together—only to go out into the world and have a failure of nerve, or to go into a time of temptation and find out just how weak you are? Talk about it.

Like Peter, none of us are innocent of denying Jesus. And yet, the good news is, Peter is not Judas. Judas never changed, never received the Savior. But Peter, though far from perfect, loved Him. And he would lay down his life for Jesus some three decades later.

- If, like Peter, you know what it’s like to love Jesus yet fail Him, take time now to pray in repentance of your sin—the ways you’ve denied Christ in your own life—and receive His forgiveness.

3. The Hour of Love

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” John 13:34

Jesus devoted much of His earthly ministry to teaching and living what it looks like to love, so why does He now call this a new command? What’s new is not the command to love, but the expression of love that is now a possibility and a reality because of Him.

“Before Jesus, divine love was rather abstract and human love was always tainted with selfishness or mixed motives. When Jesus put on flesh and walked the earth, finally we knew what perfect love looks like. So when Jesus says, ‘As I have loved you, so you must love one another,’ that statement pulsates with life and power.”

- In what way did the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus create a new standard of love?
- What would it look like for you to love others as Jesus has loved you? Be specific.

One other way Jesus’ command is new is that it’s given to a new community: the Church. He says, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (13:35).

This has to be one of the most convicting statements Jesus made. If Jesus said the Church will be known by its love, why does it let so many of us down? Why do countless people leave the Church wounded, disappointed, convinced they'll never return? The answer to that question lies behind this week's **Big Idea: True love reckons with frailty and overcomes.**

The Church is made up of people—people whose idea of love is tainted by a world that preaches personal happiness at the expense of others. Even when we don't see it, each one of us is guilty of tracking our own sin-stained love, our own imperfection, through the doors of the church. And when you put us all together, you get the makings of a big, self-serving mess. So, what do we do?

We recognize our own frailty, and the frailty of our fellowship, and we reckon with it.

"There's a deep frailty in the fellowship, and only when we have reckoned with that frailty, and it has hurt us, and we've not run but accepted it, can we begin to love the way Jesus loves. Only then will true love, the kind that Jesus has planted into the community of His followers, grow in and among us."

- Have you reckoned with your own frailty, acknowledging your failures and desperate need for the Savior? If not, take time now to do so among this family of believers.
- Have you reckoned with the frailty in the body of Christ—not running from it, but overcoming it in love? Talk about it.
- Take time now to pray together for Oak Pointe Church and the greater Church that spans the globe. Pray we would live out the love Jesus has called us to.