



Discussion Guide

Date: 9/27/2026

Sermon Title: What do I do when I feel lonely?

Scripture: Mark 14:32-42

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, we come before you with the things we have named and the things we have kept hidden. Some of us come surrounded by people; yet some of us still feel alone. Jesus, you knew what it is to be deeply troubled, afraid and alone. We are thankful for not having to hide our pain from you. Help us to recognize the people you have placed around us. Give us the courage to receive their love and offer our own to others. May this time together become a means of grace as we listen, share, and remember that we do not walk this journey alone. Amen.

OPENING: WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

For the past several weeks, we have been naming some of the fears that can quietly shape our lives: What if I don't have enough? Why am I afraid to fail? Why is the future so scary? And now, what do I do when I feel lonely? Fear does not always look like panic. Sometimes fear looks like a withdrawal. Sometimes it looks like we're pretending to be doing fine. Sometimes it sounds like, "Nobody understands." Sometimes we can be completely surrounded by people and still feel profoundly alone. Loneliness is not simply being physically alone. We can experience loneliness in a marriage, in a family, at work, at school, in a church, or even while standing in the middle of a crowded room.

And that makes the story of Jesus in Gethsemane especially powerful. Jesus knows what loneliness feels like. He is not merely physically separated from his friends. He is experiencing the profound emotional and spiritual isolation that comes when we face something we desperately wish we did not have to face. Jesus is surrounded by people who love him, yet in this moment he experiences something profoundly lonely. The good news is not that Christians will never feel lonely. The good news is that Jesus knows what loneliness feels like and God meets us there.

OPENING QUESTION:

1. Describe a time you felt completely at ease and not alone — where were you, and who was with you?

BACKGROUND OF OUT TEXT:

Gethsemane comes immediately after the Last Supper. Jesus has already told his disciples that one of them will betray him. He has told Peter that he will deny him. He knows that arrest and suffering are coming. Jesus goes to Gethsemane with his disciples, but he does something significant: He takes Peter, James, and John with him. These are three of Jesus' closest disciples. They have been with him at significant moments

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throughout his ministry. Yet even these closest friends cannot stay awake with him. Jesus brings his fear, grief, desire and uncertainty into relationship with God.

DISCUSS THE TEXT TOGETHER:

Use these questions to unpack the scripture together.

1. What words or phrases stand out to you in Mark 14:32–42? Why?
2. Jesus tells the disciples, “I am deeply grieved, even to death.” What does it tell us about Jesus that he is willing to speak so openly about his emotional pain?
3. Why do you think Jesus asks Peter, James and John to stay with him?
4. What do you notice about Jesus' prayer?
5. What does Jesus ask God the Father for?
6. What do you think Jesus means by: “Yet, not what I want, but what you want”?
7. Jesus prays essentially the same prayer more than once. What does that tell us about prayer?
8. The disciples repeatedly fall asleep. How does Jesus respond to them?
9. What do you notice about the difference between Jesus' honesty about his suffering and the disciples' response?
10. Compare Mark 14:32–42 with Matthew 26:36–46 and Luke 22:39–46. What does each Gospel writer emphasize?

QUESTIONS ABOUT LONELINESS:

1. What is the difference between being alone and being lonely?
2. Can you remember a time when you were surrounded by people but still felt alone? What made you feel disconnected?
3. Why do you think loneliness can sometimes be difficult to admit?
4. What are some things people do when they are lonely that may make their loneliness worse?
5. What makes it difficult to tell another person, “I need you to stay with me”?
6. When you are hurting, do you tend to reach out or withdraw from people? Why?
7. What might it look like to follow Jesus' example and honestly name what we are experiencing instead of pretending we are fine?

A WESLEYAN UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY:

There is something particularly Methodist about the question: “Who are you walking with?” John Wesley organized Methodists into societies, classes and bands because he believed Christian discipleship was not intended to be lived in isolation. Christian faith is personal, but it is not private. We need one another.

1. If grace is God's presence already at work in our lives, where might you see prevenient grace amid loneliness?
2. What people, practices or circumstances have been God's means of grace for you?
3. Which spiritual practice is most difficult for you when you are lonely; prayer, Scripture, worship, Communion, Christian community, service or something else?
4. What might it mean to practice a means of grace rather than simply waiting until you *feel* connected to God?

5. Wesley understood Christian growth as something that happens through God's grace as we participate in practices that open us to God's transforming work. How might this change the way we think about spiritual disciplines?
6. How does Christian community become part of God's response to loneliness?

SERMON QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Scott describes loneliness not as a failure of faith but as a deeply human experience that even Jesus faced. How does knowing that Jesus was 'deeply grieved even to death' in the Garden of Gethsemane change the way you think about your own moments of loneliness or despair?
2. Jesus openly admitted his grief and fear to his disciples rather than hiding it, saying 'I am deeply grieved'. In what ways does our culture, or even our church culture, make it difficult for us to be honest about our emotional and spiritual struggles?
3. The sermon highlights that Jesus prayed 'Abba, Father'; an intimate, personal address to God; in his darkest moment, rather than offering a polished or formal prayer; what does this tell us about the kind of prayer life God actually invites us into?
4. The sermon presents a four-part pattern drawn from Jesus's experience in Gethsemane: admit it, bring it to God, receive God's grace, and share it with community. Which of these four steps do you find most difficult, and why?
5. John Wesley's Methodist societies were designed, as the sermon notes, to 'watch over one another in love' through small groups of accountability and support. Who in your life currently plays that role for you, and who might need you to play that role for them?
6. The cave illustration at the end of the sermon describes how a single lit match can fill a dark space with enough light to remind people they are not alone. In what specific ways can you be that 'lit match' for someone in your life who may be experiencing deep loneliness right now?

CLOSING PRAYER:

God of Gethsemane, thank you for meeting us in the places where we are afraid, grieving and lonely. When we feel alone, remind us that Jesus understands. When we are tempted to withdraw, give us courage to get help from others. When we don't know what to pray, teach us to bring our honest hearts to you. Help us to receive your grace through Scripture, prayer, worship, Holy Communion, and the people who walk beside us. Make us attentive to those around us who may be lonely and simply need someone to notice, listen, and stay. Give us the grace to carry one another's burdens, the humility to ask for help when we need it, and the love to remain present when someone else is hurting. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND:

Choose ONE of the following practices to focus on this week:

1. **Admit It** Take time this week to be honest with yourself about any loneliness you are carrying. Write it down in a journal or simply say it out loud to yourself. Naming what we feel is the first step toward moving through it.
2. **Bring It** Set aside intentional time to pray honestly this week; not a polished prayer, but a real one. Bring your loneliness, your questions, and your fears directly to God. Follow the pattern of Jesus: name what you are feeling, ask for what you need, and surrender the outcome.

3. **Receive It** Identify one truth from this week's sermon or scripture passages that speaks directly to your loneliness. Write it somewhere you will see it daily like on your mirror, in your phone, or in a notebook and return to it whenever the feeling of isolation creeps in.
4. **Share It** Reach out to one person this week either to share something you have been carrying alone, or to check in on someone else who may be lonely. A simple phone call or text can be the match that lights the lamp in someone else's darkness.