

JESUS & THE COWARD

JOHN 18 & 19

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Pilate's judgment reveals how it is impossible to be undecided about the person and purpose of Christ. Jesus is the truth, and His followers are called to offer compassion without compromise.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the difference between a hero and a coward? Share an example.

A coward lacks the courage to face difficult or painful things; cowardice chooses comfort over conviction. How did this message encourage you and strengthen your conviction about Christ?

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 18:28-38

***The Prefect meets the Perfect.* Pontius Pilate was the highest-ranking official Jesus spoke with during His earthly ministry. How would you summarize their interaction? What does it reveal about Jesus (v.36-38)?**

What is ironic about Pilate's question (v.38)? How would you answer this question?

***Jesus came to bring truth.* Why is it important to clarify that Jesus is not "a" truth but "the" truth (John 14:6)? How have you come to know Jesus as the truth?**

***To be undecided is to be decided* (Matthew 12:30). Why doesn't Jesus give the option of being considered a good person or moral teacher? In what way does truth divide? How do you see this in our world today?**

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 18:39–19:6

Pilate blinks. How did Pilate choose comfort over conviction? Why did compromise fuel the mob instead of calm it?

Barabbas was guilty, but Jesus was innocent. How is the exchange of Jesus for Barabbas a picture of the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:21)? How did the greatest injustice in the world lead to the greatest hope?

To compromise on who Jesus is, is to invent another Jesus. How does society or religion invent another Jesus? Why does only the *real* Jesus save?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 19:7–16

Pilate judges the Judge. How did the fear of man outweigh the fear of God? How is this interaction the ultimate irony?

How will this false judgment—and all other sins—be judged at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11–15)? How does this give perspective about injustice?

Pilate symbolically washed his hands of Jesus. Pastor Jonathan said, “Pilate’s appeasement of the crowd is not just a political failure—it’s a picture of what happens when leaders, Christians, and churches try to compromise truth to satisfy the demands of culture.” How have you seen this happen? How can God’s people grow in conviction and avoid compromise?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Pastor Jonathan said, “We cannot untether empathy from truth; we are called to offer compassion, not compromise.” How have you learned to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15)? How do you have conviction and compassion?

How does the courage and conviction of Christ encourage you (Hebrews 12:3)?

PRAYER

Give thanks for Christ’s courage and compassion. Rejoice in the great exchange of your sin for Jesus’ righteousness. Pray for courage and compassion as you follow Jesus and share the gospel.