

Series - On Your Mark!

Date/s - 4 November 2018

Topic - The Trial of Christ (Mark 14:53 – 15:15)

Speaker/s - Pastor Ernie Song

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like “Glorious One”, “I Have A Song”, “Worthy Of It All”, “How Great You Are”, or “Shekinah Glory”.

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Understand and feel the depth of rejection Jesus felt
2. Look to Jesus when we face trials of our own
3. Respond in a Christ-like manner when unfairly treated.

Word [45 min]

We are coming to the last stretch of Jesus’ life on earth. In the last few chapters of Mark, Jesus faces a series of heart-breaking rejections from both friends and foes. Although Jesus is fully God, He still feels the agonising pain of rejection from the disciples He loves and the Jews who hate Him, as He is also fully man, just like us. From Mark’s passage in Pastor Ernie’s sermon, Jesus is grievously rejected by three groups of people.

1. The Disciples Reject Him (Mark 14:50)

The disciples have been following Jesus closely for three years. ***Why then do they reject their Master? Because they are spiritually weak and they do not even realise it.*** Jesus endures the ultimate rejection when His own disciples reject Him. Despite declaring they will never desert Him, they all flee at the first sign of trouble. Peter even denies Jesus, not once but thrice! And Judas betrays Jesus for a few silver coins! Nothing exposes fleshly pride and self-love like a crisis!

God in His grace allows the disciples to be sifted like wheat to refine their faith. In their pride, they leave an open door for Satan to set a foot in. This results in a demonic stronghold that blows up when they are tested. All the disciples underestimate the power of the flesh and the devil. While Peter recognises his failure and repents, Judas regrets his sin and kills himself.

2. The Jews Reject Him (Mark 14:53-65)

Jesus is a Jewish rabbi who teaches from the Torah. ***Why then do the Jewish religious leaders reject Him? Because His spiritual authority outweighs the leaders’ physical authority.*** Jesus hence becomes a threat to their Temple system. Also, unlike them, Jesus befriends the outcasts of society – the very people the religious leaders reject. Jesus has little respect for traditions made by men that depart from the living Word of God.

As a result, the religious leaders persecute Him through a series of mock trials. First, they force Him through

the secret Jewish trials led by the corrupt former high priest Annas, the current high priest Caiaphas (Annas' son-in-law) and the Sanhedrin (a council of biased Jewish leaders). Needless to say, they convict Jesus of a capital crime despite a complete lack of evidence.

3. The Gentiles Reject Him (Mark 15:1-5)

On the same night, they push Jesus through the hastily-assembled Roman civil trials involving Pontius Pilate (the prefect of Judea) and Herod Antipas (the governor of Judea). To their credit, the Roman rulers find no evidence against Jesus. **Why then do the Gentiles reject Him? Because they cave in to the demands of the Jewish people.** Pilate knows Jesus is innocent, but he chooses his career over doing the right thing. He is afraid to lose his position if he does not concede to the Jews. Instead of appealing to justice, the gentile rulers appease the masses for political and selfish reasons.

Jesus' illegitimate trials show how everyone involved (including the disciples) chooses to save their own skin and betrays Jesus, rather than stands up for Him. Despite His innocence, Jesus remains silent and "humbles Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8)

Lessons from the Trials of Jesus

1. Do not let sin become a demonic stronghold in your life (Proverbs 4:23)
2. Be humble. Humility is key to faithfulness (1 Peter 5:5-8).

Final exhortation: *Always look to Jesus in every trial we face!*

"Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

Discussion Questions

1. **Pastor Ernie recalled a couple of incidents in his life where he felt rejected by people he knew. Can you share situations in your own life where you have felt the pain of rejection in the past – or perhaps even in the present?** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: *A recap as well as an ice-breaker question. Most of us, if not all, will have some experience with rejection, whether it is as innocent and mild as being ignored by classmates, or as painful and traumatic as being abandoned by a spouse or parent. Between such a spectrum, you may have felt rejected when you did not get that promotion or that place in university, or in a church context when your pastor did not choose you for that ministry role!*

Encourage members to be honest and transparent with their personal experience without fear of being judged. We are all in a community of love and acceptance because God loves us and has already accepted us, despite our failures. Reassure members that no pain is wasted as God can and does redeem every pain and heartache. If there is time, read Romans 8:18-28 and 2 Corinthians 1:3-8 aloud together. Set aside extra time after discussion to pray for those who may still be struggling with rejection. As a choice, forgive all the people who caused you to feel rejected, and receive God's forgiveness for holding on to this hurt.

2. **Read Mark 14:53 – 15:15. After sharing our individual experience with rejection, let's turn our attention to Jesus and His disciples in this Scripture. Use your imagination to place yourself into the following scenario and respond as honestly as you can: You are one of the disciples and you watch Jesus arrested and taken away. What will you do?** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: *A reflect and relate question. Ps Ernie spoke about the 'flesh' (self-love) being exposed in a crisis. Whatever level of faith we are at currently, there will come a time when our faith will be tested. It is easy for us to overestimate our own faithfulness. We may perhaps assume that we will be able to stand for Christ during a trial, believing that even if everyone else falls away, we will stay committed to Jesus. Too often we assume we are better equipped to remain on the narrow path than 'that other Christian.' The disciples learned this lesson on the night their Saviour was betrayed. Surely none of the disciples considered himself to be the betrayer whom the Lord said would turn away from Him. At the very least, we know that Peter was sure that he would not be the one to deny Christ or leave His side. Peter trusted in his heart but underestimated his flesh. But as we see in the passage, when the moment of truth came, not even Peter was bold enough to stand by Jesus. At the hour of Jesus' arrest, all the disciples fled the scene. Ps Ernie exhorted us to deal with the sins in our lives so that they do not become open doors that lead to demonic stronghold that can manifest itself in a crisis.*

The Bible was written not only to reveal truths about God but also about ourselves. Therefore we dare not think it is impossible for us to show similar cowardice and faithlessness. Sound biblical interpretation means asking ourselves not how we are better than the sinners we read about in the Bible but how we are prone to be like them. When we do that, we will remember that we have no strength in ourselves to follow Jesus and that we must look to Him alone to sustain our faith. If there is time, read 1 Peter 5:8-9 and Hebrews 10:23 aloud together.

[Adapted from The Fleeing Disciples, Ligonier Ministries]

3. **Read 1 Peter 2:20-23 which is another account on the rejection of Jesus Christ. This Scripture describes Jesus' attitude towards unjust treatment, giving us an example to follow in our own suffering at the hands of others. How will you respond in light of this teaching when you next face your 'persecutor,' be it a coworker, a family member, a friend, etc.?** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: *This is a response question. There are a variety of ways we may respond to unjust treatment. Pride is one of them. Pride will certainly trigger a desire for revenge if a coworker takes credit for our work or a family member repeatedly says unkind words. Yet we are not to "repay evil with evil or insult with insult" but should instead give a blessing (1 Peter 3:9). Bitterness is another. Bitterness starts as a tiny root that grows up to cause trouble and defiles many (Hebrews 12:5). How can we keep pride and bitterness from obstructing our righteous response?*

In daily practice, the form a righteous response takes depends on the situation. We may need to ignore the other person's actions, walk away from the abuse, or confront our enemy. Instead of trying to get even, we should seek to understand that person and the reason for any animosity toward us.

God has lessons for us to learn in these difficult situations. When we endure unjust treatment, we are following in Christ's footsteps. No one was more unjustly treated than the sinless Son of God. Yet He "did not revile in return" and "uttered no threats" but kept entrusting Himself to His Father, knowing that He judges righteously. Surely God can also handle our grievances if we'll respond as Christ did. If there is time, read James 1:12 and Psalm 31:5-15 aloud together.

After the sharing by members, leaders can wrap up by getting members to pray in twos or threes for God's guidance and strength to follow through on the commitment for Christ-like responses when

“persecuted.”

[Adapted from Turning The Other Cheek, InTouch.org, and How To Respond To Mistreatment, CrossWalk.com]

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Every RiverLifer will look unto Jesus in times of persecution or trials.

Announcements

1. PASIR RIS CHURCHES COMBINED PRAYER MEETING

Fri, 09 Nov | 8-10pm | Victory Chapel

2. BAPTISM SERVICE

Sun, 11 Nov | 2:30-5pm | Victory Chapel

29 RiverLifers will be getting baptised. Come and show them your support!

3. THE WAR ROOM

Fri, 16 Nov, 8-10pm, Worship Centre

A place we contend for faith of those dear to us

Church Vision Statement:

“A vibrant family where sons and daughters mature and reveal the Father’s glory from generation to generation.”