

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	SEPTEMBER 12	21

# JESUS BEFORE PILATE

JOHN 18:28-40

SEPTEMBER 12, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

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## PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 18:28-40. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastor, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**TAKEAWAY: THE LEADERS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE BROUGHT JESUS TO PILATE FOR TRIAL, THOUGH JESUS HAD DONE NOTHING WRONG. PILATE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEFEND TRUTH, BUT HE FAILED, CAVING IN TO THE SCREAMING CROWDS STIRRED UP BY AGENTS OF THE HIGH PRIESTS.**

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**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WHILE PILATE HID BEHIND INDECISION, JESUS STOOD FOR TRUTH AND DECISIVE ACTION.**

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**GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. (SEE JOHN 14:6.)**

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## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

### Notes:

- 1 Would you describe yourself as a decisive person? Why or why not? In what situations or circumstances are you most prone to indecision?
- 2 Ask those who are comfortable to share the most difficult decision they have ever made. What made that decision so difficult?
- 3 How might the situation have turned out differently if you had remained indecisive?

We all struggle with indecision at times. Indecision seems harmless when trying to determine where to go out to eat or what show to watch on television. However, when facing some of life's biggest questions, indecision can be crippling. Whether it's where to go to college, what job to take, whom to marry, or where to live, life's most difficult decisions require action. When Pilate encountered Jesus, he was presented with an opportunity to take decisive action and to do the right thing. Pilate should have immediately released Jesus, as he had full knowledge that Christ was innocent. However, Pilate hesitated to do what he knew to be right. He listened to the lies of the religious leaders, ignored warning signs, procrastinated, and eventually caved into the demands of the crowd.

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## UNDERSTANDING

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

### Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 18:28-32.

- What specific charges did the Jews levy against Jesus before Pilate? Was Pilate eager to get involved? Why or why not?
- Why were the Jews insistent that Roman authorities deal with Jesus by means of Roman law? Why did John say this happened?

Pilate would have expected the Jewish authorities to provide a charge specific to Roman law, yet he was also of the opinion that the Jewish legal system was sufficient for handling Jesus' case. The Jews were not interested in legal justice: They wished for Jesus' execution and expected the Romans to provide this for them.

- What does verse 32 communicate to us about the reason behind all that was happening to Jesus? Why is it important to realize this truth?
- What changes about our outlook when the truth of verse 32 rests in our hearts?

Jesus' trial was a great injustice, but John wanted to make sure His audience understood none of what happened was outside of God's sovereignty, as verse 32 explains. Jesus' trial and execution were not unfortunate events that could have been avoided, but necessary steps toward the redemption of God's people. God's providence and control can seem like distant theological doctrines but they are necessary for our

faith. God's providence means that He is able to do all that He purposes. When things seem at their darkest, God is still in control and guides all of human history in such a way that it glorifies Him.

**Notes:**

- What was the law designed to do for the Jews?
  
- What did this group of Jews use it for? How did they miss the whole point?

The law of God is meant to point people to God so they can have a relationship with Him. If they had been paying closer attention, they would've realized the fulfillment of the law stood before them in Jesus. Yet, Jesus threatened their ability to rule, so they rejected a relationship with the living God in favor of a law that does not and cannot save.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 28:33-39.

The direct examination of Jesus by the Roman governor highlights one of the major themes of Jesus' trial and crucifixion in John: Jesus is the King of the Jews. John's rendition of Jesus' final hours demonstrates how the King of the Jews willingly died as the Lamb of God.

- How did Jesus answer Pilate's question (v. 34)? What did Jesus' question reveal about Pilate's heart?
  
- What does Jesus' response to Pilate teach us about His kingdom and His role as King?
  
- What does it mean that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world (v. 36)? What implications does this have for the nature and impact of His kingdom on this world?

Jesus' question in response to Pilate's question revealed that the governor had been influenced by the Jewish religious leaders' unjust accusations. Pilate's response indicates that as a governor who was responsible for the "just" conduct of trials, he recognized the defendant's challenge, and he also found it ironic that Jesus' own people turned Him over to the Romans. What kind of king is rejected by His own people? The fundamental attribute of Jesus' kingdom is that it is not derived from this world. Jesus' kingdom came in a form people did not expect—He established His kingdom not through military conquest but through humble self-sacrifice.

**Notes:**

- What are the implications today of Jesus' words, "Everyone on the side of truth listens to me"? What kept Pilate from listening to Jesus? What keeps people today from listening to Jesus?
- Why do you think Pilate responded the way he did in verse 38?
- How do we avoid truth in our own lives?

For politically motivated people, truth can be inconvenient. Therefore, it is frequently sacrificed on the altar of expediency. Many politically oriented people pretend they are interested in truth. But Pilate summarized his politically oriented life pattern with the haunting question: "What is truth?" The implications of that question are far-reaching for any person. For Pilate, that question was an attempt to resist taking Jesus' statement seriously in his own life.

- Why did Pilate introduce Barabbas into the situation?

- How did Pilate's indecision stand against Jesus' decisive actions?

**Notes:**

Pilate found Jesus innocent. Instead of simply dismissing the case as a good judge interested in integrity, Pilate devised a scheme using Barabbas to deal with any potential fallout that might result. Pilate's scheme involved giving the people a predetermined choice he thought they could not refuse. He was clearly wrong.

## APPLICATION

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

### Notes:

- What did Jesus accomplish for us through His decision to die on the cross?
- What can we learn from His example in terms of taking action in our own lives?
- What are some ways our culture tries to obscure truth to appease the crowd? What are a few ways we can help one another live in light of God's truth?

## PRAY

Thank Jesus for taking action to save us. Confess your desire to hold onto the truth of His Word and live it out. Pray that you would be able to decisively cling to truth even against the tides of popular opinion.

## FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

**Notes:**

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - When have you been pressured to compromise on truth?
  - Why is holding onto the truth more valuable than other's acceptance?
  
- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
  
- > The challenge to memorize John 18:36.
  
- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 19:1-16.

## JOHN 18:28-40

18:28-32. By now it was approximately 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning. John was about to introduce the longest trial narrative in the Gospels. It began with the charges. Jesus had already been charged with blasphemy (Mark 14:60-64), but on this occasion his enemies offered no charges against him. Instead, we have one of the classic lines of the New Testament: If he were not a criminal. . . we would not have handed him over to you.

**Notes:**

Pilate had no intention of meddling in Jewish religious affairs, though we should hardly consider him a gentle fellow. On five occasions Pilate slaughtered Jews, earning such a violent reputation in Jerusalem that the emperor Tiberias finally yanked him back to Rome. The New Testament identifies seven different charges against Christ.

1. He threatens to destroy the temple (Matt. 26:61).
2. He is an evildoer (John 18:30).
3. He perverts the nation (Luke 23:2).
4. He has forbidden the Jews to pay taxes (Luke 23:2).
5. He is a revolutionary agitator (Luke 23:2)
6. He makes himself king (Luke 23:2).
7. He claims to be the Son of God (John 19:7).

All this happened early Friday morning, with the beginning of the Passover less than twelve hours away. But Pilate could not get a Roman handle on the charges. It must have been a confusing situation. And this dialogue regarding who should carry out the execution seems like political buck-passing between the Romans and the Jews until we read John's comment in verse 32: This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled. Had the Jews taken him, he would have been stoned. But repeatedly he had talked about being lifted up to die—an exclusively Roman execution.

Where did this discussion take place? Some have suggested in Herod's palace, a magnificent building with three towers located north of Caiaphas' palace. Another suggestion is the Tower of Antonia at the northwest corner of the temple, a fortress that Herod the Great had used as his headquarters before his own palace was built.

## Notes:

18:33-37. The incredulous Pilate could not imagine this broken and beaten man before him was the king of the Jews. But Jesus would not give him the satisfaction of claiming or disclaiming such an office. All this turned Pilate's disdain for the Jews up another notch in verse 35. He characterized this entire trial as petty religious bickering among these Jews whom he was authorized to control.

Verses 36-37 offer poignant truth from the lips of the Lord. All earthly kingdoms find their source with sinful humanity, but Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. It needs no human defense. Jesus was not referring to the ultimate millennial kingdom; his spiritual kingdom of truth represents the lordship of the King over the lives of his people. Who forms this kingdom? Everyone on the side of truth listens to me, said Jesus.

Once again Jesus set truth as the dividing standard for right and wrong. But if truth was all he cared about, he posed no threat to Rome. Pilate would have to weasel out of this situation in some other way.

18:38-40. In effect, Pilate declared Jesus innocent: I find no basis for a charge against him. Nevertheless, to appease the Jews, he let them select a prisoner of choice for release at the Passover. He seemed to be saying, "Let's be done with all this foolishness. You don't seem to care much for this king of the Jews fellow, but you certainly don't want Barabbas back out on the streets, so let's make that choice and get on with life."

But one should never underestimate the popularity of a folk hero, even a guerrilla who had participated in a rebellion against Rome. Pilate got caught in his own trap.

In this chapter we see intelligent and religious people warped by hate, much like the Nazis and neo-Nazis perverted the minds of their followers. We also see a fascinating play on the name Bar-Abbas, which means “son of the father.” One son of a father was released, and the other, Son of the Father, went to death row.

As we look at these four characters, we may ask ourselves where we find a personal likeness. Do we see ourselves in Malchus, an innocent bystander watching the proceedings? Like Peter, who denied the Savior and warmed himself at the enemies’ fire? Like Annas, who illegally put Jesus on trial? Or like Pilate, confused and wanting to be rid of religious hassles as quickly as possible?

One thing is clear from these four witnesses and their four decisions: there is no place to hide when it comes to Jesus. We either decide for him or against him.

**Notes:**