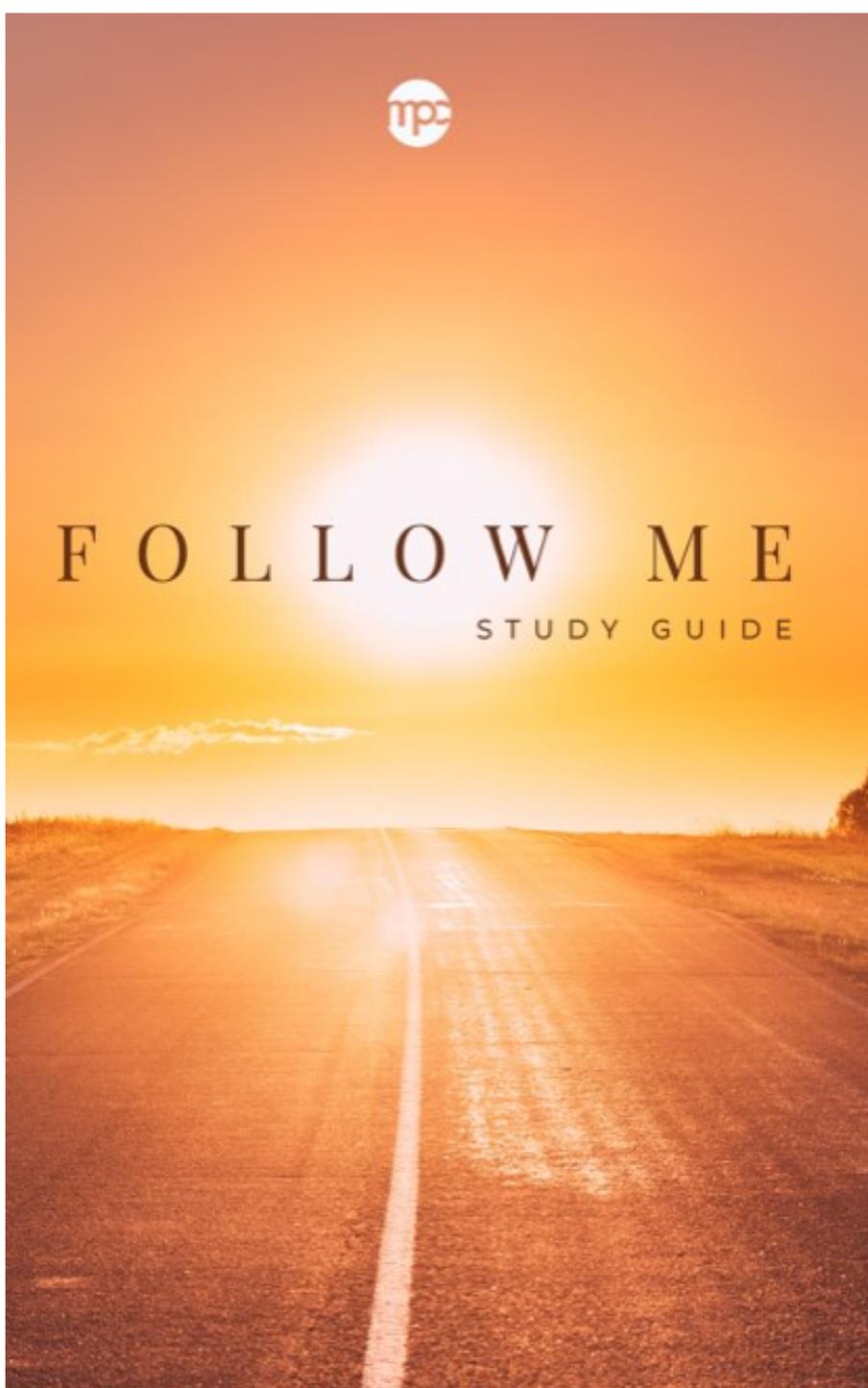




FOLLOW ME

STUDY GUIDE



Dear church family,

I am so excited you are joining us for the “Follow Me” study!

A while back someone told me they grew up as a CEO Christian. I had never heard that term before and they explained it means “Christmas and Easter Only!” Maybe that describes a lot of your experience with church. While Christmas and Easter are really important holy days for the church, I began reflecting on what a CEO Christian misses out on the rest of the year. Every Christmas they hear the story of Christ’s birth. Every Easter they hear the story of Christ’s death and resurrection. What they miss is everything in the middle: the life of Christ! And that middle stuff is really good and really important. That’s why I’m so excited that you are with us for “the stuff in the middle.”

From Christmas until Easter, the MPC family will study the book of Mark, tracing the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. What did he teach? What did he do? Why did he do it? What does it all mean? In particular, we will study what Jesus invites us to do: “follow him.” What does that mean exactly? What does it look like in today’s world?

The studies in this book will correspond with the preaching at MPC on Sundays. We would love to have you join us in person or via the livestream (either on our website or via facebook) to hear the Sunday message. Then you can use this book as a study guide to reflect, dig deeper and to discuss with friends, family, or a small group bible study. If you would like information on joining a small group, please email Jessica at jkonker@mandarinpres.com. She would love to help you connect!

I pray this will be a season of deep spiritual growth for you as you seek to respond to your Lord’s invitation: “Follow me!”

Matt Robbins

Senior Pastor, Mandarin Presbyterian Church

Session 1

Jesus by the River

Opening Question: If your group is new introduce yourself (share your name, where you are from, and about your family). Have each person share what it means to you that Jesus is King.

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 1:1-8

Discuss:

1. How does John's ministry prepare the way for Jesus?
2. What does this tell us about the situation Israel and the world were in, and what kind of King they would need?
3. In what way is our present world captive or stuck? How have you experienced this captivity or 'stuck-ness' personally?

Read Mark 1:9-13

4. What happens at Jesus' baptism?

5. The quote in verse 11 references two Old Testament passages—Psalm 2, about God’s King, and Isaiah 42, about God’s Suffering Servant. Matt talked about how Jesus is both the Anointed King *and* the Suffering Servant.

How is Jesus a different king from the king we might expect?

6. Biblical scholar N.T. Wright says: “The whole Christian gospel could be summed up in this point: that when the living God looks at every believing Christian, he says to us what he said to Jesus on that day. He sees us, not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Jesus Christ. It sometimes seems impossible, especially to people who have never had this kind of support from their earthly parents, but it’s true: God looks at us and says, “You are my dear, dear child; I’m delighted with you.”

What would it mean to hear God say that to you?

Closing Prayer: Share a Praise and Prayer for how you can remember your identity as a child of the King this week. Take time to lift these up in your group.

Session 2

Jesus in Capernaum

Opening Question: If your group is new, introduce yourself (share your name, where you are from, and about your family). Have each person share what is an important characteristic of someone who follows Jesus?

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 1:16-20

Discuss:

1. What does Jesus say to these fishermen? What is their reaction?
2. In the New Testament, when a Rabbi would call a new disciple by saying, “follow me,” it meant that their life would drastically change. They would leave their home town and begin to follow their new teacher wherever he went. If you were called to follow a Rabbi, you would be taking on their set of rules and their teaching. As one would leave, people would say, “May you be covered with the dust of your Rabbi.” The students would follow their Rabbi so closely that the dust from the road that came from the feet of the Rabbi would cover them.

How does this idea of following differ from how some might see being a Christian?

3. When you look back at your life, what has intrigued you to follow Jesus? What things have gotten in the way?

Read: Mark 1:32-39

4. What do you learn about Jesus' ministry from this passage? Why do you think Jesus took time to pray in solitude?
5. How might taking time in solitude and prayer be a blessing to your life? How might you be intentional about this?

Read: Mark 2:1-12

6. Describe how the friends of the paralyzed man were acting as followers of Jesus?
7. How might you need healing (spiritual, physical, emotional, relational) How might you bring this before Jesus this week?

Closing Prayer: Share a Praise and Prayer for how you can follow Jesus this week. Take time to lift these up in your group.

Session 3

Jesus in the Synagogue

Opening Question: If your group is new, introduce yourself (share your name, where you are from, and about your family). What parts of Jesus' teaching and following him are easy to adopt? Which are more difficult?

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 2:18-22

Discuss:

John the Baptist was an austere man, often fasting, and somewhat of a recluse. Jesus, in contrast, accepted invitations to meals, played with children and enjoyed social gatherings. Jesus is referencing how God's people have often been seen as a bride and God as the bridegroom. When they are joined together, this is a joyous occasion. As Christians, we believe (like marriage), we are committing ourselves to Christ. Saying "I do" when we make that commitment, we are blessed with the benefits of salvation from sin, sharing Christ's wealth, power, love, protection, and one-day living with Christ forever. Life with Christ becomes a wedding feast.

1. How do you see joy as an important part of a Christian's life? How does Jesus' presence affect our joy?

2. In vs. 21-22, Jesus is saying he came to bring a new ministry, not to patch up an old ministry. The Pharisees would have liked to take some of Jesus' teachings and add them to their own, but to take parts of Jesus' teachings and keep the old ones too, would be like trying to patch new cloth on old clothing. It won't work. In a similar way, some religious leaders have suggested we can take the best of all religions and manufacture a synthetic faith acceptable to everybody, but the Christian faith is exclusive in character; it will not accept any other faith as it's equal or superior.

What are the consequences of picking and choosing how we follow Jesus? How can we steer clear of this?

Read: Mark 2:23-3:6

3. The Sabbath was a cherished institution. It was meant to be a gift, but Jewish tradition during Jesus' time stated that there were 39 rules that must be followed making it a burden of rule keeping instead of the day of rest and worship. In contrast to this, what does Jesus mean in vs. 27, when he says, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath?"
4. What words or phrases stand out to you from Mark 3:1-6?
5. What cultural rules or pressures keep us from finding rest?
6. Part of following Jesus means finding regular rhythms of rest and worship. Where are you seeking rest in your life? How might you make plans and preparations for regular rest and worship in your life?

Closing Prayer: Share a Praise and a Prayer request for how you can follow Jesus this week. Take time to lift these up in your group.

Session 4

Jesus by the Sea

Opening Question: Check in and share a high and low from your week and how you might follow Jesus in the midst of this.

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 3:20-34

Discuss:

1. What arguments does Jesus use to prove he is not working with Satan?
2. “The crowds wanted Jesus to behave like a loyal Jew and honor his family, but Jesus established a ‘new family’ made up of all those who trusted him and did the will of God. The crowds wanted him to establish a new earthly kingdom, but he came to announce a new spiritual kingdom.” - Biblical commentator, William Wiersbe

How do you see Jesus not following the crowd’s wishes, but setting a new path for the people to follow?

3. What does it look like for you to follow Jesus in a way that is counter cultural in your relationships? With your time and treasure?

Read Mark 4:1-20

4. The word parable comes from two Greek words “para” which means “alongside” and “ballo” which means to “throw or cast.” A parable is a story Jesus placed alongside a teaching. It is a mirror in which we see ourselves. It can be a window through which we can see God and His truth. As you read this parable where do you see yourself? Where do you see God?

Read Mark 4:21-33

5. An ancient lamp consisted of a wick in a dish of oil. The wick would be used up but the oil would need to be replenished in order to light the house. Christians are to be lights revealing God’s love and truth, but we need to be filled up. We must take in God’s Word in order to be refueled to shine God’s light. What are some things that help fill you up in order to help you shine and be a light to others?
6. These final parables about the seeds and mustard seed remind us that we cannot make the seed grow. It is a mystery that takes faith, patience and perseverance. Why is this surrender and waiting so much harder than activity? Why is this also a comfort?
7. How do these two last parables of seeds in vs. 26-33 give you hope?

Closing Prayer: Share a takeaway from the Scripture today and how your small group can pray for you to follow Christ this week. Take time to pray for each other in your group.

Session 5

The Other Side of the Sea

Opening Question: Have each person share about a situation in your life that felt hopeless and how you emerged from it.

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 5:1-8; 21-43

Discuss:

1. What does Jesus do in these passages, and what does this tell us about his authority?
2. Why does the woman with internal bleeding touch Jesus' clothes instead of speaking directly to him?
3. These stories all show us that Jesus is more powerful than people thought. They also show us that he uses this power in surprising ways. What surprises you about the people he heals?
4. Are there some things in our lives, some people in our lives, some things about ourselves or our circumstances that we think are futile, beyond God's ability to heal, and not even worth praying about?

5. A hospital chaplain has written: “Sometimes there’s no physical cure, but there’s evidence of spiritual renewal or relational reconciliation, or other evidence that God is still at work. Sometimes the miracle is that we don’t lose hope, that we reach out, and we hold onto Jesus and we hold onto our faith even in the midst of our pain and our struggle.”

Where have you seen God at work in this way?

Closing Prayer: Share a Praise and Prayer for things that may seem hopeless. Take time to lift these up in your group..

Session 6

Jesus in the Villages

Opening Question: Have each person share about a time when your plans were interrupted and how you responded.

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 6:7-13; 30-31

Discuss:

1. What do Jesus' instructions to his disciples tell us about the kind of ministry they were to have?
2. Describe what you think it felt like for a disciple to be given these instructions and then to see how it turned out.

Read Mark 6:32-38

3. How does Jesus' approach to the crowd differ from his disciples' approach?
4. Why do you think Jesus had his disciples feed the 5,000 when he could just as easily have sent the people home?

Read Mark 6:39-44

5. What does Jesus do with the bread and fish?

6. Jesus did something marvelous with what this boy just happened to have with him right there at that moment. How does this teach us to think about the things we happen to have with us at any given moment?

7. When have you seen God use meager resources to meet a challenging situation?

Closing Prayer: Share a Praise and Prayer for how God can use your 'five loaves and two fish' this week. Take time to lift these up in your group.

Session 7

The Winding Route

Opening Question: How did your parents complete this sentence when you were a child: “How many times do I have to tell you. . . ?

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 8:1-13

Discuss:

1. Whom do you relate with most in this story—someone in the crowd, the disciples, the Pharisees? Why?
2. Jesus had previously fed 5,000 people in a similar situation in (Mark 6:30-44). Why was it important for Mark to include both of these accounts?
3. What sign from heaven did the Pharisees want? Why wouldn't Jesus give them a sign? What “sign” would help your faith?
4. Do you sometimes doubt Jesus ability to meet your needs? How so? How are you discovering that he really can shepherd you? In what areas are you still unsure about that?

Read Mark 8:27-38

5. If your closest friends were asked what one word best describes you, what might they say?
6. Who did the people of Jesus' day think he was (vs28)? Who do people today say Jesus is? What about you, and how has your answer changed over time?
7. Why is the question, "Who do you say I am?" so important?
8. What four things does Jesus prophesy about himself in vs. 31-32?
9. How did Peter go from "star pupil" (v.20) to being in the doghouse (v.33)? What do you do when you are angry at God? Why does Jesus react so strongly to Peter?
10. According to vs. 34-38, what is involved in being a follower of Christ?
11. How has your relationship with Jesus affected your life-style? Relationships? Priorities? Politics?
12. Where does Jesus' way conflict with your way?

Closing Prayer: Take time to lift up prayers for your group as each one follows Jesus' way.

Session 8

The Road to Jerusalem

Opening Question: Have each person respond to this question—If your house were on fire, what three items would you try to save?

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 10:17-31

Discuss:

1. How do you feel about the rich young man?
 - a. Sorry for him—he couldn't help it that he was rich
 - b. Disappointed in him—he walked away from God
 - c. Upset for him—Jesus shouldn't have been so hard on him
 - d. Frustrated—do I have to give up everything too?
2. What is Jesus teaching us in this passage?
3. If Jesus were to evaluate your life, what would he say holds you back from being totally committed to God?
 - a. Wealth
 - b. Apathy
 - c. Family or friends
 - d. Habits or temptations
 - e. Doubts about issues of faith
 - f. Fear of being labeled a fanatic
 - g. Other _____

Read Mark 10:35-45

4. What best summarizes Jesus' teaching in this passage?
 - a. If you want to be my follower, you must be prepared not only to serve but also to suffer.
 - b. If you want to be ambitious, be ambitious about the kingdom of God.
 - c. If you want to be great, follow my example.
 - d. If you want to be my follower, it will not be about seats of honor.
 - e. Other _____

5. Who has been an example to you of a Christlike servant? What effect has that person had on your life and others lives?

Read Mark 10:46-52

6. How does the blind man get Jesus' attention?

7. In what area of your life would you like Jesus to open your eyes so you could "see" more clearly?

8. How is Bartimaeus different than the rich young man in Mark 10:17-31 and different from James and John's request in Mark 10:35-45?

9. If Jesus asked you, "what do you want me to do for you?" what would you say?

Closing Prayer: Take time to lift up these requests specifically for each person in your group.

Session 9

Jesus in the Temple

Opening Questions: What is something important you had to prepare for? How did you prepare?

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 11:1-6

Discuss:

1. Being prepared helps us to accomplish things that we may feel unsure about. In this passage, how did Jesus prepare the two disciples he sent out? As you follow Jesus, how does he prepare you?

Read: Mark 11:12-14

Discuss:

2. Jesus was hungry when he approached the fig tree. What he found was the tree's outward appearance was a masquerade for it had no fruit only leaves. Have you ever wanted something to happen and it didn't? What was your response?
3. How does preparing our hearts for the day and spending time in prayer allow us to bear fruit and have our inward life match our outward actions?

Read: Mark 11:20-26; 1 John 5:14

Discuss:

4. After the disciples saw the results of his words (Mark 11:14), Jesus spoke to them about faith and prayer. He spoke of the power of belief and forgiveness and of how the forgiveness of others comes before God's forgiving (Mark 11:24-26; 1 John 5:14). How does forgiving others help us to understand and appreciate the power of God's forgiveness for us?

Read: Mark 11:27-33

Discuss:

5. In the temple the chief priests pose a question to Jesus in an attempt to trick him into saying something that may be used against him. Instead of responding to the challenge, Jesus' response is to counter a question with a question. What does Jesus' way of responding here teach you about relating to others?

Read: Mark 12:1-7

Discuss:

6. Who do the different characters in this parable represent?
7. The renters did not want to let go of what had been lent to them. They convinced themselves that what they desired would happen. Ever had difficulty letting go of something? What helps you to surrender?

Closing Prayer: Take time to each share a praise and a prayer request together or in prayer partners and then pray for one another.

Session 10

Jesus in the Temple, part 2

Opening Questions: How did Jesus show his love for God? How can we follow his example?

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 12:28-34

Discuss:

1. What does this teacher want to know and how does Jesus answer him?
2. What does with “all your heart, all your soul, all your strength” mean? Is there any difference between these three things? Why is it repeated three times?
3. What is the second greatest commandment? Why is this so important?
4. What can you do to love your neighbor? Read Philippians 2:3-4. How does this answer the question?

5. Why is this important if we are to follow Jesus?

6. What additional observation did the scribe make? What was Jesus' response to it? What does this show us about his motivation for this question?

7. What does it mean that he is not far from the kingdom of God? How can you love God and draw near to his kingdom this week?

Closing Prayer: Take time to each share a praise and a prayer request together or in prayer partners and then pray for one another.

Session 11

The Upper Room

Opening Questions: Share about a special meal you have had. What made it special?

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 14:12-25

Discuss:

1. Verse 12 mentions the Passover Feast and the Festival of Unleavened Bread—these feasts became one celebration that all Jewish people were to celebrate in Jerusalem. Unblemished lambs were brought to the temple as a sacrifice. **Read Exodus 12:12-13.** What is significant about this as Jesus, “the lamb of God” is preparing to suffer and die on the cross? How is he like the lamb that was sacrificed?
2. The recital of teachings and singing of Psalms about God’s faithfulness from the time of the Exodus were part of the celebration of these feasts. Four cups of wine were consumed at different times during the meal, each symbolic of what God promises in Exodus 6:6-7. **Read Exodus 6:6-7.** What is promised in these verses? Where do you find comfort as you read these promises?
3. In Mark 14:17-24, Jesus tells his disciples that one of them will betray him. What surprises you and stands out to you about Jesus in this moment of betrayal?

4. Jesus takes bread and breaks it and says, “This is my body which is broken for you.” When you take bread during communion and are drawn into God’s presence through this sacred moment, what is meaningful to you about Jesus’ body broken for your forgiveness?

5. Jesus takes the cup and says “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.” Blood, as mentioned before, was a significant symbol of cleansing, forgiveness, and protection from death. A covenant is a promise. Covenants in the old testament were finalized by the sacrifice of an animal. The two parties making the covenant would walk through the broken body of the animal saying, “May this happen to me if I do not fulfill my covenant.” Jesus says that his blood is a new covenant and new promise of salvation. How does this language impact you as you think about God’s faithfulness and salvation for you?

6. When Jesus speaks of not drinking of the fruit of the vine again, until the future in the Kingdom of God, he is referring to when believers in Christ will be with God at the end of time in heaven. How can communion be a foretaste and reminder of heaven?

7. How might your understanding of the Lord’s Supper be impacted by our study?

Closing Prayer: Take time to each share a praise and a prayer request together or in prayer partners and then pray for one another.

Session 12

Jesus in the Garden

Opening Questions: Have each person share how they handled failure when trying to follow Jesus.

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 14:26-31

Discuss:

1. In verse 27, Jesus predicts, ‘You will all fall away.’

How does this help us to be charitable in our judgment of other Christians? Ourselves?

2. In verse 29, Peter said, “Even if all fall away, I will not.” The apostle Peter did not think it possible that he would ever deny Jesus. Who was Peter relying on when he made his claim?

3. In verse 30, Jesus warns Peter that he will not be able to keep his promise. Do you think Peter believed this? Do you think you could have withstood the pressure Peter faced?

Read Mark 14:32-42

4. In verse 34, Jesus told his three trusted friends, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” Do you think the disciples understood the gravity of the situation? Why?

4. Jesus prayed for deliverance but surrendered himself completely to God's will. In this fallen world Jesus said we will have trouble. Why do you think it is so difficult to surrender to God's will and seek His glory in the midst of suffering?

5. In verse 38 Jesus said, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Jesus is reminding the disciples of the spiritual battle inside all of us between our spirit and our flesh. Read Romans 7:13-25, especially verse 17, where Paul describes his struggle between the flesh and the spirit. Describe in your own words how the Christian experiences this tension of two warring natures.

Read: Mark 14:43-52

6. Just as Jesus predicted, all the disciples deserted him and ran away. Jesus knew this would happen. Do you think He was disappointed by this?

7. How does the character of the disciples help us to see our own weakness and need for Christ's grace?

Closing Prayer: Take time to each share a praise and a prayer request together or in prayer partners and then pray for one another.

Session 13

Jesus on Trial

Opening Questions: Tell about a time you were falsely accused. How did you respond?

Opening Prayer: Open your time in prayer for your study today.

Reflect: What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

Read: Mark 14:53-59

Discuss:

1. In the middle of the night, the Jewish religious leaders interviewed witnesses for testimony to support their verdict. Those who aim to condemn, will condemn regardless of the evidence. How carefully do you examine the evidence before condemning others?

Are you prejudiced or impartial?

Read: Mark 14:60-65 and Isaiah 50:6-7

2. “Who do you say I am?” Jesus asked his disciples in Mark 8:29. Who is Jesus to you? What do you learn from his answer in verse 62? As Christians, how should we live in the light of Jesus’ return?

3. How does Isaiah 50:6-7 help you understand Jesus' response to suffering?

Read Mark 14:66-72

4. How is Peter different from Jesus?
5. How have I denied Christ in my thoughts or actions for fear of being identified with him or his people?

When have I, like Peter, wept over revealed sin in my life?

Read Mark 15:1-5 and Isaiah 53:7

6. How does Jesus respond to his accusers?
7. When is it best to remain silent and when is it necessary to speak up?

Read Mark 15:6-15

8. The Jews denied Jesus as their king, Peter denied Jesus three times, and now Pilate denies Jesus justice. Who was really on trial for his life?

When am I pretending I don't know God's will instead of obeying?

9. It is impossible to escape responsibility for making a decision about the Lord Jesus Christ. Regarding your own life, what will you do with Jesus?

Closing Prayer: Share a prayer for how you can declare Jesus this week. Take time to lift those up in your group.

Prayer Requests

Prayer Requests

