



MARK: Jesus' Model of Suffering and Strength

Pastor Derek Sanford

March 2, 2025

Life Group Discussion

CONNECT: *Make time for encouragement, relationship-building and prayer.*

- Share about a time someone prayed with you about a hard situation/season. How did that feel? What impact did it have on you going forward? How do you think it may have impacted *them* to share that experience with you?

GROW: *Engage with God's word, one another, and the Dream Disciple tools and practices.*

Scripture: [Mark 14:27-42](#)

Observation:

- In Verse 27, Jesus confronts His disciples with a hard truth. How did they respond? How did Jesus respond to the hard truth He faced later in this passage?
- Compare verses 31 and 40. What changed between these two moments?
- What is the primary mood of this passage? Where can you see glimpses of hope?

Interpretation:

- Read [Mark 13:33-37](#). How does this bring deeper meaning to today's passage? Why is it significant that Jesus had previously warned them to 'stay awake'?
- Jesus is fully man *and* fully God. How does this passage illustrate Jesus' human nature? Why is it important for us to see Him this way at this moment?
- Read [Romans 5:19](#). Pastor Derek compared and contrasted Adam's response to temptation in [Genesis 3:1-13](#) to Jesus' in today's passage. How did Adam's choices set him up for failure? How did Jesus' choices help Him remain obedient to God despite the incredible weight He was about to bear?
 - o Adam chose blame/avoidance and isolation; Jesus chose prayer and community.
- What do you find surprising or interesting about how and what Jesus prayed in Gethsemane? Read [Psalm 13](#). How does Jesus' prayer resemble this psalm of lament? What do you think Jesus' lament reveals about His character and His relationship with the Father? (See *The NIV Application Commentary* pp.539-540)

Application:

- How do you typically respond to times of temptation or pressure? (Do you tend to turn inward and isolate yourself or reach out to trusted friends/family and approach God?)
 - o How does that tendency help or hinder you in remaining obedient to God?
 - o What steps can you take to grow in obedience going forward? ([Hebrews 5:7-8](#))
- How does honestly expressing your fears demonstrate strength?



Dream Disciple Tool/Practice: [My Chair](#). Share about your 'chair time' practice this week. Have there been any struggles or challenges? Who is walking this journey with you, holding you accountable and encouraging you, praying with and for you?

PRAY: Encourage each group member to share about one hard thing they are facing this week. Take time to pray with and for each person. Leave space/time to listen for what God may be speaking.

GO: *Put your learning into practice and hold one another accountable.*

- What is God saying to you?
- What are you going to do about it?
"I will..."

Digital Fast: Find the digital guidebook and more resources at whoisgrace.com/digitalfast

Leader- consider using some of these questions throughout Lent to check in with your group:

- What commitment have you made to detox and declutter your digital life?
- How can this group help hold one another accountable?
- What are the biggest pain points for you during this fast?
- When we eliminate something, we need to be intentional to fill the void- what are you filling your time with?
- How is the fast helping you focus on God?
- What are you discovering about yourself? About a loved one? About God?



MARK: Why People Abandon Jesus

Andrew Silbert

March 9, 2025

Life Group Discussion

CONNECT: *Make time for encouragement, relationship-building and prayer.*

For newer groups: Consider a person who gave you the encouragement you needed to take a next step. How did you respond to this person?

For established groups: Share about a time when a family member or friend gave up on your relationship. How did you respond? How did you recover?

GROW: *Engage with God's word, one another, and the Dream Disciple tools and practices.*

Scripture: [Mark 14: 27-52](#)

Observations:

- Contrast the actions and responses of Jesus and his disciples in this passage.
- Make a list of discipleship failure moments. (preconceived expectations, fear, or self-absorption)

Interpretation: [see *The NIV Application Commentary* pp. 538-556]

- Prayer- God is our greatest need in life, and since prayer is how He communicates with our heart and we talk with Him, prayer is a fundamental component of Christian life. It is where we experience the depth and fullness of God's love for us.
 - o Consider verses 29-31. How might Peter's story have taken a different turn if he had stayed and prayed with Jesus?
- Fear- there were many aspects of Jesus' and the disciples' situation and our own difficult situations, which could result in a state of denial or being frozen in fear.
 - o Which reaction do you tend to experience when afraid: fight, flight or freeze?
 - o How does Jesus conquer his fear?
 - o Choose 1-2 of these additional scriptures to explore how they give us some tools to conquer fear. [Psalms 27:1, 34:7](#); [Matthew 10:26](#); [Luke 1:50](#), [Luke 12:32](#); [1Peter 3:14](#)
- Power- Jesus, both man and God, stood in a position of power to choose his own destiny. He chose what is humanly counterintuitive. Jesus did not run from his situation, Jesus did not give into paralyzing fear, nor did he rely on his own human capability to change the situation. He chose God's way over giving into fear- Jesus prayed to his Father. The result of his obedience is life changing, Jesus selflessly gave his life so that we can have peace with God and eternal life with Him. Jesus did not quit on us.
 - o How does this encourage you to not "quiet quit" on Him?



Application:

- As pastor Andrew stated “The incomparable love and sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf as he walks broken-hearted but steadfast into life’s ultimate mission” provides an example of praying and asking for help. Choose to lean into the power of God in your prayer time to overcome fear.
 - o What situations are you facing right now that might tempt you to turn away from Jesus, whether big or small?
 - o As you walk through a difficult situation this week, how can you use the tools Jesus gave you?

GO: *Put your learning into practice and hold one another accountable.*

- What is God saying to you from these passages?
- What are you going to do about it?
“I will...”

PRAY: Pray for each person’s love of Jesus to grow. Pray the Holy Spirit will give you guidance on who in your group needs you to step alongside them in their struggles. If a person is feeling like giving up and doubting’ God’s love of them, pray they have the courage to ask for help in knowing the Truth rather than believing the lies Satan is planting in their heart. Pray for the group members to be willing to step out of their comfort zone and help each other.



MARK: The Claims that Got Jesus Killed

Pastor Sarah Burt

March 16, 2025

Life Group Discussion

CONNECT: *Make time for encouragement, relationship-building, and prayer.*

For newer groups, One Word Check-in:

- Ask each person to think of one word that describes how they're feeling today (or how their week has been). Have each person share their word (no explanation needed unless they want to share more.)
- After everyone has shared, take a moment to pray for the group or offer a general word of encouragement.

For established groups:

- Split into small groups and give each group a real-life accusation scenario (e.g., being blamed for something at work, being misjudged by a friend, or facing criticism for faith).
- Discuss the typical human response and hypothesize how Jesus might respond differently.

GROW: *engage with God's word, one another, and Dream Disciple tools and practices*

Scripture: [Mark 14:53-65](#)

Observation:

- Observe Jesus as he endures accusations and attacks. How does he respond (or not respond)?
- Look closely at verses 60-62. In response to what questions does he remain silent? In response to what question does he answer and even provide an explanation to his accusers?
- Read verses 63-64. The high priest is confident in his assessment of Jesus. How does his attitude/response contrast with Jesus'?

Interpretation: [See *The NIV Application Commentary* pp. 557-574]

- Why do you think Jesus remains silent in the face of some accusations, but chooses to respond to one question?
- What do His silence and response tell you about his confidence in who He knows himself to be and to whom He belongs?
- What about the high priest? Considering all that you have learned in the book of Mark, how does his response fit with Mark's story? (For example- Mark has repeatedly emphasized that those who should see Jesus clearly are the ones who are blind. See the Markan "sandwich"- healing the blind men in 8:22-25 and 10:46)



Application:

- Think about a time when you were accused of something. How did you respond, and what did you learn from the experience?
- Jesus entrusted Himself to the will and plan of God when faced with his accusers. As a savvy follower of Jesus, how could you have responded differently when you were accused?
- The high priest appears to wholeheartedly believe he is on the right side of justice, but we know he was completely wrong in his assessment of Jesus. How can you cultivate a mindset that seeks truth rather than simply defending your own perspective?

GO: *Put your learning into practice and hold one another accountable.*

- What is the primary truth the Holy Spirit has brought to your attention today?
- What is one step you can take to act on what has been brought to your attention?
- Write down a simple “I will...” statement to act upon.

PRAY: Ask for the Holy Spirit’s guidance to know how to respond the next time you are tempted to defend yourself. Humbly acknowledge and repent for the times you have ignored wise correction from others in your life.



MARK: Caving to the Pressures of Public Opinion

Pastor Derek Sanford

March 23, 2025

Life Group Discussion

CONNECT: *Make time for encouragement, relationship-building and prayer.*

- For newer groups: Share about a time when you started something new or made a resolution but failed to continue.
- For established groups: How have you seen a failure in yourself or in someone else result in growth?

GROW: *Engage with God's word, one another, and the Dream Disciple tools and practices.*

Scripture: [Mark 14:66-72](#) (parallel accounts: [Matthew 26:69-75](#); [Luke 22:54-62](#); [John 18:15-18, 25-27](#))

Observation:

- Look carefully at each of Peter's denials. How did they become progressively more intense?
- What was it about Peter that identified him as being with Jesus? (consider his appearance, his speech, etc.) What did he need to do to deny he was a Jesus follower?

Interpretation:

- The rooster crowed twice. What do you think Peter was thinking or feeling after each of these sounds? What are the warnings we sometimes experience before or after denying Jesus? (See *The NIV Application Commentary* pp. 566-568.)
- Read [John 21:15-19](#) to see how Jesus restored Peter. (Though each of the four gospels records Peter's denials, only John records his restoration.) Why did Jesus ask Peter, "Do you love me?" three times? How did He ask Peter to show that love?
- How does Jesus ask you to show your love for Him?

Application:

- Alistair Begg said, "With God, failure is never final. Because the tears that Peter shed are more than matched by the joy that he experienced in being restored to usefulness." How did Peter's failure help prepare him for future leadership? How can God use our failures or denial to write a 'future story' that brings Him glory?
- The 'back story' for Peter's denial included pride, complacency, and cowardice. What are some sins or attitudes in your life that could lead to the slide down to denial? As a group, how can you strengthen each other to help avoid future failure?

GO: *Put your learning into practice and hold one another accountable.*

- Prayerfully decide who you will share your story of failure and restoration with this week, following the format: "I failed. Jesus didn't. Yea, Jesus!"
- As a group, commit to pray for the conversations you will have this week.



MARK: The Horrible and Holy Substitution

Pastor Derek Sanford

March 30, 2025

Life Group Discussion

CONNECT: *Make time for encouragement, relationship-building and prayer.*

Digital Fast check-in:

- What have you given up for the digital fast challenge?
- What are you doing in place of your usual screen time?
- What has been your experience so far? (highs and lows)

GROW: *Engage with God's word, one another, and the Dream Disciple tools and practices.*

Scripture: [Mark 15:1-20](#), [2 Corinthians 5:21](#), [Romans 3:23](#), [Romans 5:8](#), [Romans 10:9-10](#)

Observation:

- What Jesus experienced before Pilot can hardly be called a trial from our modern perspective!
List all the things that point to injustice in this story.
- What did Jesus do for Barrabas? What might this experience have been like from Barrabas' perspective?

Interpretation:

- Throughout Mark, we have seen Jesus confound his accusers and those who wanted to trap Him. Jesus always had the right word for every situation. But in today's reading, Jesus speaks only four words and makes no effort to defend Himself. What is the purpose of His silence?
- What is your reaction to the idea that Barrabas represents every one of us?

Application:

- In your own words, how has Jesus become your substitute; taken your place? What have you escaped? (see [Exodus 12:1-13](#); [Isaiah 53:7](#); [John 1:36](#); [Romans 5:1-11](#); [1 Corinthians 5:7](#))
- What does the gift that Jesus has given you compel you to do?

Pray: Take time to pray for the Salvation of people in your circle (Where you live, learn, work, and play).

Pray for opportunities during the Easter season to share the good news of Jesus!

GO: *Put your learning into practice and hold one another accountable.*

- What are you going to do about what you learned today? Write a simple "I will..." statement that is something you can focus on until the group meets again. Share your statements with each other.