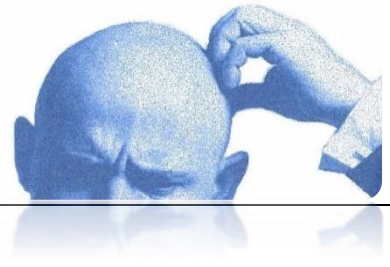


The Trials of Jesus

Small Group Questions



The following questions are intended to start conversations. Use only the ones your group finds helpful. Explore others as they come up.

Please note these questions are intended for the next TWO weeks.

Our preaching series during the season of Lent will pick up stories in John 15-19 (*Light in Dark Places*). Questions will be provided each week to help you think about these stories *BEFORE* you listen to the sermon. It is our hope that this will encourage your own study and prepare you for the upcoming sermon.

- Read **John 18:1-14**. What details stand out in this text
- When the soldiers come to arrest Jesus and he identifies himself, they draw back and fall to the ground. What does suggest about his authority? How does this detail shape our understanding of Jesus' suffering?
- Peter (in a moment of madness?) uses his sword to defend Jesus. Jesus clearly tells him to stop. What does this reveal about the kingdom of God? Is violence ever justified in defending what is good?
- Despite initially defending Jesus, why does Peter eventually deny him? Have you ever needed to stand firm for your convictions? What makes this so difficult?
- Read **John 18:19-24**. The trials of Jesus can be difficult to sequence across Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Look at the "Chronology of Trials" handout (see Sermons+). What stands out to you? What do the Gospel writers want to communicate?
- Who was Pontius Pilate? What do you know about him?
- Read **John 18:28-19:6**. Pilate repeatedly seems unconvinced of Jesus' guilt. What pressures are influencing Pilate's decisions? What does this reveal about the nature of political power and moral compromise?
- What fears or theological convictions might be driving the religious leaders? Are they acting purely out of malice, or something more complex?
- What kind of king does Jesus claim to be?
- Pilate famously asks Jesus, "What is truth?" Is Pilate being cynical, intellectually curious, or morally evasive? What does this say about how people respond to truth when power is at stake?

- Who is Barabbas? Why does John include this narrative detail?
- Read **John 19:4-16**. Notice that the same religious leaders who feared ritual impurity (see 18:28) now push for an unjust execution. What does this tension reveal about the dangers of religious legalism?
- What is the relationship between human authority and God's sovereignty (19:11)?
- What does Jesus mean when he says, "the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin" (19:11)? Does this imply a hierarchy of sin?
- Pilate seems to know what is right but chooses what is politically safe. What pressures today tempt believers to compromise truth?
- Throughout his trial, Jesus appears both vulnerable and in control. What does this tell us about Jesus? What does this suggest about his impending crucifixion?
- Looking back over this story, where do you see yourself—Peter, Pilate, the religious leaders, the crowd? Why?
- Looking back over this story, what stands out most to you?