

the road to the cross

Week 4 - Denial

mark 14-16

1. When have your parents or a close friend done something embarrassing and you decided to pretend that you didn't know them?

A starter question to get them thinking about the idea of denying that you know someone for one reason or another.

So far in the series we've seen various responses that people have made to Jesus; that Jesus has been betrayed and arrested; and that Jesus has been found guilty by a trial of the Sanhedrin. This week we go back to a part of the story we skipped over, to look at how Peter responds to the situation...

Read Mark 14:27-31

2. Jesus declares in verse 27 that all of the disciples will fall away. How does Peter respond to this suggestion?

In verse 29 he claims that even if everyone else does, that he will still remain true. Then in verse 31 he more strongly states that he would never do this, and would be willing to follow Jesus to the point of death.

3. Why do you think that Peter is insisting so strongly that this would never happen?

He knows who Jesus is, and feels that he is completely strong in his faith. When things are going well in our faith it can be very easy to say that we will never doubt or stumble.

4. What other important thing does Jesus say that seems to go unnoticed by his disciples?

In verse 28 he again tells them that even though he is going to die that he will rise again. Yet we see that the disciples are still failing to understand what he is telling them.

5. In thinking about your own faith, how confident are you that you will always remain a Christian?

A question to get them thinking about their own faith. Get them to consider and to share how strong they are in their faith, and why they think this is the case. It is quite possible that many of them may have doubts in this area – reassure them that they can be confident in what Jesus has done for them.

We now jump forward to catch up to where we were at last week, and we see Peter taking the focus of the story once again...

Read Mark 14:66-72

6. Look at the three times Peter denies knowing Jesus. Why do you think this happened?

Suddenly Peter has found himself in a difficult situation, surrounded by people who have a harsh attitude towards Jesus. It is much easier for him to simply deny that he knows Jesus in this situation.

7. Peter was one of the first people to recognise Jesus for who he truly is (see Mark 8:27-29). What can we learn from Peter therefore about difficulties in our own faith?

*We can see from the Mark 8 passage that Peter is genuine in his faith. From his response in Mark 14 we can learn that even those who follow Jesus closely, and have a good and strong relationship with him will at times struggle with temptations and difficulties in their faith. It is quite normal for a Christian to experience this, and in fact it is something that we should **expect**. It means that we need to be prepared for it.*

8. Look at your answer to question 5. What are some things in your life that do / may cause you to struggle to remain true to your faith?

Get them to be specific here in thinking about the situations or things that are likely to cause them to deny Jesus, or to have doubts, or to struggle to remain true to what they believe.

9. What are some ways in which we can ensure that we don't deny Jesus in our own lives?

Think through some practical application for how we can do better at remaining true to Jesus when things get tough. It could be individual things, or ways in which they can be helping each other.

<p><i>Pray as a group that we would be able to remain true to Jesus in our faith, even when things get tough. Pray to thank God that he is forgiving, and that even though we stuff up we are able to have a relationship with him.</i></p>
