

the road to the cross

Week 5 - Condemnation

mark 14-16

1. Share a time when you have acted against your better judgment, possibly because other people were pressuring you to do something.

An intro question to get them thinking about the idea of the temptation we sometimes face to compromise what we know to be a better option.

In our series so far we have seen Jesus predict his betrayal and death. He was then betrayed by Judas; he was arrested and taken away; he was hauled before the Jewish authorities to explain himself, where he was judged worthy of death because he said that he was the Christ. Now we come to the point where Jesus is taken to Pilate (the Roman ruler), because under Jewish law they weren't allowed to execute anyone, and so they want Pilate to rule for them that Jesus should be killed...

Read Mark 15:1-20

2. As you read the passage, note down your initial reactions towards Pilate's actions at each stage.

Simply get them to note down their reactions to each part of the story as the passage is read out. This will also act as an effective way of helping them to understand what is happening in the passage.

3. What things in the passage indicate that Pilate was trying to free Jesus?

There are a number of clues. Firstly Pilate questions Jesus (v2) to see if the charges are accurate; he provides Jesus with good opportunity to defend himself (v4); he tries to have him released as part of the Feast celebrations (v6,9); he acknowledges that Jesus isn't worthy of death (v14); and he tries to appease them by simply having Jesus flogged (v15 – picked up more strongly in John 19:1-5).

4. Why do you think that Pilate eventually agrees to having Jesus crucified?

He eventually bows to the pressure of the crowd. It would seem that he is fearful of their response to him if he fails to meet their demands.

5. As you read this, how does it make you feel about the injustice done towards Jesus?

Some personal reflection – it is likely that they will feel angry about what has happened.

6. How does Jesus himself respond to the injustice? Why do you think he acts in this way?

Jesus himself willingly goes along with the process. He does not make much of a reply to the humiliating proceedings. He acts in this way as he is continuing to submit to his Father's will – knowing that this is what must occur.

Read Acts 3:11-20

In the passage directly before this one (Acts 3:1-10) Peter and John have healed a crippled beggar.

7. In this passage, Peter states that the Jewish people and their leaders acted in ignorance (verse 17). What is he saying they were ignorant about?

He is saying that they were ignorant about the significance of their actions in condemning Jesus and crucifying him.

8. In your own words, explain what verse 18 is speaking about.

Verse 18 explains that the actions which we have just read about in Mark 15 were a part of God's greater plan. This plan had been being told right throughout the Old Testament, and Jesus himself had said on many occasions that this is what would happen.

9. What does Peter urge the Jewish people to do? What is the effect of this?

*He urges them to **repent** (ie to acknowledge that they have been living in a way which does not please God), and to **turn to God** (ie begin living in a way which does please him) – verse 19. The effect of this is that they may have forgiveness of their past actions, and experience new life in Christ.*

10. In what ways in your life do you similarly act in ignorance (or perhaps intentionally) against God's will?

A chance for some personal reflection and application. Get them to think specifically of ways in which they notice that they are caught in sin. Sometimes we do these things unintentionally, and so need others to lovingly point us in the right direction.

11. What do these passages teach us about our sin, and how we must respond?

*We can see that sin is something that **all** people struggle with (even those with the best of intentions). It is something that needs to be dealt with, and the solution is found in Jesus himself. By repenting and turning to him we can have new life. This could be a good chance to challenge some kids about whether they have made this commitment or not.*

Pray to thank God for sending Jesus for all of us – no matter how badly we may have sinned against him. Pray for those family or friends whom you know have not turned to God.