



NG Study Guide: Mark 14:43-72 “Who would forsake Jesus?” [9.12.21]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: Many of us have confidence in what we believe, and that what the Bible says is true. We have faith in Jesus. But at times we find ourselves making decisions out of our own pride and what we think is best. These decisions are often misaligned to God’s desires. We must humbly trust in Jesus.

1. The betrayal of Jesus (43-45)

⁴³ *And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely.” ⁴⁵ As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.*

“And immediately, while he was still speaking” [43]. This is referencing back to verse 42, where Jesus is informing the disciples that the hour has come and His betrayer is at hand. Looking back at verses 32-42 we see that Jesus was with the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, just outside Jerusalem. Jesus was secluding himself after the Passover meal to spend time with the Father. He was near the disciples and asked them to watch and pray [33, 38]. The time has come. Judas and a great multitude has come with clubs and swords to arrest Him [43].

Judas’ has preestablished a sign with the religious leaders to designate who Jesus is: a kiss. Now you may be wondering why they would need to establish a sign to show who Jesus was, but remember this is taking place at night. Also, many of those coming to arrest Jesus may not have actually ever seen him. We know those who have heard him teach in the temple would likely recognize him in daylight, but not in the middle of a dark garden at night. This was at a time where the only way you’d know how someone looked was by a description of others. According to Isaiah 53:2 he was a very common looking man, with nothing to draw us to his appearance. Therefore, Judas had to premeditate how this arrest was going to take place.

How ironic is it that a kiss (the greeting of intimate friends) and the term ‘Rabbi’ (or master) is used by Judas [45]? Judas is in the process of betraying Jesus, the man that he has followed so closely for 3 years. But the contrast of Judas’ words and actions are so starkly different than the act that he was actually performing: betrayal. We see that Jesus had shifted away from being his Lord and King. Jesus had become something for Judas to use for his own gain. Someone that he could use for his own benefit.

Judas did not possess a humble trust in Jesus. His faith was placed either in the finances that he could receive, the approval of the religious leaders, or he was disappointed that Jesus didn’t reign and rule in the way that Judas wanted him to.

His faith was not placed in Jesus, in who Jesus had proven Himself to be, or in who Jesus stated that He was. But rather he lost sight of the King of Kings for the gain of earthly things. His faith was misplaced.

But Judas is not the only one who forsakes Jesus here.

2. The forsaking of Jesus (46-51)

⁴⁶ Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. ⁴⁷ And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? ⁴⁹ I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." ⁵⁰ Then they all forsook Him and fled. ⁵¹ Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, ⁵² and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

They laid their hands on Jesus and took him [46]. Jesus has been taken into custody as a result of the betrayal of Jesus. Verse 47 then tells us that someone (Peter, according to John 18:10) struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. The motivation for Peter's actions would seem to be based on protecting Jesus, but also, Peter has already been told in Mark 14:30 that he will deny Jesus twice. This seems to be a pride issue. Moments before this crowd arrives to arrest Jesus, He observes Peter (and James and John) sleeping 3 times when he's asked them to watch and pray [38]. So Peter may be fueled by a desire to prove that he will not deny Jesus, or try to earn some honor back for falling asleep 3 times, but from the account of this instance in Luke 22:51, prior to being taken Jesus heals this man's ear. He demonstrates that this is not the way to display your humble trust in Jesus. It is not Jesus' intent for his followers to act violently against others. And this was even further illustrated by His statement "Have you come out, as against a robber (or insurrectionist), with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled" [48].

Jesus' predictions were beginning to be fulfilled: Mark 9:12 – the Son of Man should suffer many things; Mark 14:21 – "For the Son of Man goes, just as it is written." But also what Jesus is beginning to face in the following verses will fulfill the messianic prophecies that we see in Isaiah 53 of the suffering servant.

"Then they all forsook Him and fled" [50]. Humble trust in Jesus does not forsake and it does not flee. This is an incredibly challenging verse for me to read. The disciples, when they were faced with adversity, when faced with fear, all fled. They have given their lives to following Jesus. They have witnessed the miracles, they have heard the teaching first hand. They have eaten and traveled with Him, and all fled.

Mark 14:23 – "Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it."

Mark 14:31 – "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all said likewise."

Mark 14:50 – "Then they all forsook Him and fled."

How confidently we can sit here and sing praises to our God and King, but in moments of fear, in seasons of trials, in hours of difficulty, are we still willing to humbly trust in Jesus?

I have great news, He is trustworthy. The one that we trust, has proven Himself to be trustworthy, and we see that in the following verses.

3. Jesus is trustworthy (53-65)

⁵³ And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. ⁵⁴ But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none.

⁵⁶ For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.

⁵⁷ Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, ⁵⁸ "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'" ⁵⁹ But not even then did their testimony agree.

⁶⁰ And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" ⁶¹ But He kept silent and answered nothing.

Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

⁶² Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

⁶³ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?"

And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

⁶⁵ *Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.*

In verses 53-59 Jesus is arrested, brought before the chief priest (whom John identifies as Caiaphas in 18:13-14) and brought before the Sanhedrin [55]. This seems to be a very expedited process in hopes that they could convict and execute Jesus quickly. They did not see Him as the Messiah and fulfillment of the Old Testament, or someone that they were willing to humbly trust, but rather as a threat to Judaism as a whole.

We see Peter follow at a distance and warm himself by the fire [53]. He followed at a distance that was safe for him. It was not necessarily the distance that Jesus was asking him to follow. But in his pride, he follow Jesus at a distance that wasn't going to cost him.

They seek any charge that they can muster up against Jesus, even bringing in false witnesses to try to indite Jesus, but we are told that they "found none" [55]. Finally, the high priest asks Jesus point blank, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" [61]. "The Blessed" was a Jewish term for God's name. The question was explicit. There was no confusion about what was being asked here. The Greek arrangement of this question was an inquisitive statement that can be better interpreted as: "You are the Christ? The Son of the Blessed?"

Jesus' response is powerful: "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Those familiar with the Old Testament would read these words, "I am" with a direct connection to Exodus 3:14 where Moses is speaking to God in the burning bush. God has asked him to be the leader of the Israelite nation out of captivity in Egypt. Moses ask, "who shall I say sent me?" and God's response is "Tell them I AM has sent me to you." So this could be seen as a direct connection to that statement, but we also see Jesus stating that "you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right have of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. This is a direct reference to Daniel 7 of the Messiah coming to judge. Jesus statement is agreeing with the high priests statement, then claiming that he will be the one who will judge them (contrary to the present judgement in front of the Sanhedrin). There are people who believe that Jesus never claimed to be God or the Son of God, but there is absolutely no confusion about Jesus' claims here. And we see the evidence of this in the response of the high priest: he tore his clothes and exclaimed "You have heard the blasphemy!" [63]. And immediately we begin to see the fulfillment of Is. 53 and the suffering servant [65].

All of these men, in their pride, have decided to condemn Jesus, rather than humbly trust Him. But Jesus truly is who He claimed to be and he is trustworthy!

And while all of this is happening in the upper room of the chief priest's house, something else is happening in the courtyard.

4. The denial of Jesus (66-72)

⁶⁶ *Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. ⁶⁷ And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth."*

⁶⁸ *But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.*

⁶⁹ *And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them." ⁷⁰ But he denied it again.*

And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it."

⁷¹ *Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!"*

⁷² *A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And when he thought about it, he wept.*

Peter is recognized as a disciple of Jesus by the servant girl [66]. But he claims that he has no understanding of what she is saying. This is Peter's first denial. In his pride he lies to protect himself, rather than humbly trusting Jesus.

And the servant girl saw him again and surely claimed that Peter was a disciple [69], and again he denies it out of pride and self-preservation [70].

And later a group of those standing by him noticed that he spoke like a Galilean, and claimed that surely he was with Jesus [70]. And at this he cursed and swore he never knew Jesus [71]. In that moment the rooster crowed from a second time, just as Jesus had promised and his response was that of weeping [72].

Our confidence may be high in what we believe, but our actions and words need to model what Jesus has asked us to do. He's asked Peter to watch and pray, yet he falls asleep. He follows Jesus, but at a safe distance that to protect himself. When others, who are not on Jesus' side, ask him if he's a disciple he denies it three times. His pride and self-preservation caused him to forsake humbly trusting and following Jesus. The pressure of those around him has caused him to forsake humbly trusting and following Jesus.

If in our pride we think that we are doing just fine, we think that we are okay, we think we've done enough, and that pride keeps us from listening, obeying, and following Jesus then we are totally missing out on what God has in store for us. I'm sure we can all think of times in our lives where our pride has gotten in the way of following the commands of Jesus. And my encouragement to us today is to humbly trust in Jesus. He has proven Himself to be trustworthy! We have not arrived, we are not okay where we're at, we have not already done enough, every day we have to decide to humbly trust in Jesus, no matter how difficult or confusing our circumstances get our need never changes: humbly trust in Jesus.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. What are some reasons that Christians may forsake Jesus in moments of difficulty? And how does this impact their ability to love neighbors and make disciples?

Q2. Unlike Peter with the sword, how can followers of Jesus be sure that their actions are aligned with Jesus' desires?

Q3. Jesus is worthy of our trust. In what ways has Jesus proven Himself trustworthy in your life?

Q4. To be prepared for future challenges, how can Christians daily practice humble trust in Jesus?

"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is additional insights on the betrayal of Judas:

https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_245.cfm

2. Here is some commentary on Peter's denial:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Peters-denial.html>

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationships with their neighbors inside or outside the group?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?

2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

Strive to make disciples this week by humbly trusting Jesus and talking about Him with someone new.

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. **Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to

answer them all.

3. The “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.

As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.