



Part 12 Intense Choice

Ever thought, “If only I could meet Jesus, my faith would be so much easier”? Yet many who met Jesus face-to-face at his trial did not believe-- for some of the same reasons we face today!

Five barriers to faith:

1. Religious leaders: _____

“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” John 11:48

“If you are the Christ,’ they said, ‘tell us.’ Jesus answered, ‘If I tell you, you won’t believe me.” Luke 22:67-68

2. Judas: _____

“When Judas... saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. ‘I have sinned,’ he said... he went away and hanged himself.” Matt. 27:3,4

3. Pilate: _____

“What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?” Pilate asked... Matt. 27:22

“Jesus: ‘Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.’ ‘What is truth?’ Pilate asked.” Jn 18:38

“Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barrabas...” Mark 15:15

“I am innocent of this man’s blood,’ he said. ‘It is your responsibility!” Matt. 27:24

4. People: _____

“The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, ‘Hosanna!...” Mt. 21:9

“They shouted all the louder, ‘Crucify him!” Mt. 27:23

5. Soldiers: _____
“They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.” Matt. 27:28,30

Which of these issues am I struggling with?

Daily Meditations

Here’s a chance to spend some time each day this week meditating on today’s topic!

This week’s memory verse: *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Rom. 5:8*

Monday

Read Matthew 26:57-68. After being arrested, where was Jesus taken?

What impresses you most about Jesus in this passage?

Recall a time in your life when you felt unjustly accused. What are two key words that described your attitude then?

Read 1 Peter 2:21-24, why do you think Jesus did not argue with his accusers? What do you learn from His response?

Thank God today for His willingness to go through so much to save you. Ask to help you follow His example when unjustly accused. Pray for wisdom to know when to speak and when to be silent today.

Tuesday

Read Matt. 26:69-75 & John 18:15-18, 25-27. Recall a time when you told a lie that caused you pain later. What were the consequences of that?

Describe Peter’s attitude in these verses. How do you think he was feeling? How can you relate to Peter?

When are you most tempted to downplay your Christian faith?

Think of the day ahead. How can you consistently acknowledge Jesus in your words and actions?

Thank God today for His mercy and forgiveness. Pray for boldness and strength to stand firm in your faith no matter who is watching.

Wednesday

Read Matthew 27:1-10. Write down three ways people try to deal with guilt.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Which of these are you most tempted to resort to? Why?

How did Judas feel when he saw that Jesus had been condemned to die?

How did Judas try to undo his crime?

How can you avoid getting trapped in the downward spiral of sin, guilt, depression, more sin, more guilt, etc.?

Thank God today for His never-ending love. Thank Him for the many "second chances" He's given you. Ask Him for the faith to accept His forgiveness. Pray that the choices you make today will not be ones that you regret.

Thursday

Read Matt. 27:11-26 & John 18:28-40. How did Pilate attempt to evade any responsibility in the condemnation of Jesus? What did Pilate want the Jews to do with Jesus?

What decisions have you been putting off for fear of the responsibility involved?

How would you describe Jesus' exchange with Pilate? What do you learn from Jesus' response to Pilate?

In what situation do you need to quit arguing and defending yourself? How can you begin that process today?

Thank God today for His patience with you. Ask Him for the grace to not defend

yourself at every turn. Pray that your restraint will heal relationships and point people to Jesus.

Friday

Read Matthew 27:27-31. Where did the guards take Jesus and what did they do to him?

How did the soldiers mock Jesus?

Why did Jesus put up with torture when He could have destroyed all His attackers?

How has Jesus demonstrated His mercy towards you when you've hurt Him? How has His mercy impacted your life?

Thank God today for His amazing grace. Thank Him for the painful price He paid to redeem your soul. Ask Him to help you reflect His mercy and love to those you encounter today.

Saturday

Today please finish any meditations you might have missed, and please pray for the services this weekend. Pray also for the Easter services coming up soon-- and be praying about who you can invite! Thanks!! Thank God today for His amazing love and grace for you.