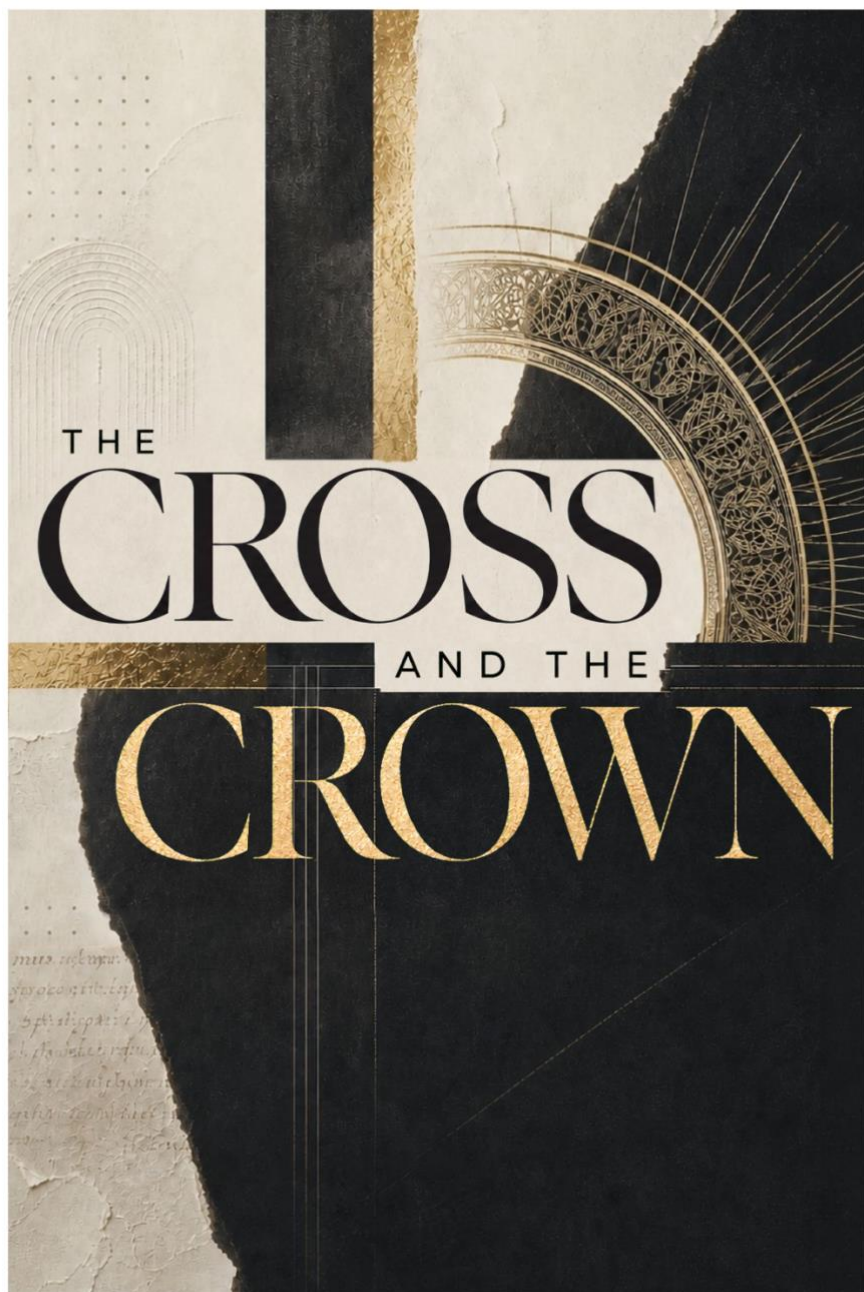


WORD TO LIFE // WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL



MATTHEW 26:30 - 75
WEEKS 9-12



Word to Life studies are sermon-aligned study guides, created to help the church dive even deeper into the passages we study together on Sundays.

Each week there will be five studies to help you prepare for the upcoming weekend sermon. This will also be a great discussion tool at your next LifeGroup meeting.

We hope you enjoy and grow deeper in your faith!

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WEEK 9

- ☐ OCT 05
- ☐ OCT 06
- ☐ OCT 07
- ☐ OCT 08
- ☐ OCT 09

WEEK 10

- ☐ OCT 12
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WEEK 11

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WEEK 12

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- ☐ OCT 30

Week 9: Matthew 26:30-46

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 26:30-46

Instructions: Spend time reading Matthew 26:30-46 and complete the activities and questions below.

Activity: While reading, include some observations in the space below.

Activity: Write down any thoughts you have on the fact that Jesus as the Son of God sang a hymn with His disciples.

Question: What do you think the main reason was that every single disciple abandoned Jesus?

Questions: Why do you think Peter was so confident that he would not fall away? Do you think his overconfidence is why he ended up denying Jesus or would that have happened anyway?

Question: Why do you think Jesus went off by Himself to pray?

Question: What do you think the significance is for Jesus asking the Father to let His cup pass?

Question: Why were the disciples so negligent in prayer despite Jesus telling them how sorrowful He was?

Question: What possible connection might Peter's earlier overconfidence have had with the fact that he was not watching and praying to be kept from temptation?

Activity: Write down all the prayers you can think of that God has not answered yes to directly. Pray over them again and end the prayer like Jesus. Make sure to recognize God's power and ability to do anything, yet that His plan is better than yours.

Week 9: Matthew 26:30-46

Day 2: A Willing Spirit

READ: Matthew 26:30-46; 1 Peter 4

EXPLORE:

In this passage we hear Jesus say to His disciples, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." It may be tempting to turn our focus to the weakness of the flesh and how short we fall to living in the righteousness and discipline the Lord has for us, but we see how gracious Jesus is to indicate that our spirit is, indeed, willing. Jesus lovingly points out that His disciples, through the power of the Holy Spirit, long to endure with Him to the end, even to death. We, too, must not forget that we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit who equips us and provides all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

While our spirit – our heart and mind empowered by the Holy Spirit – may be willing to endure until the end, our flesh – our bodies, feelings, and fears – is weak and shrinks from trials. Our natural self avoids struggle and difficulty even for a good cause. We must, therefore, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation!" Watching is about living with spiritual awareness. We are to pay attention to when and how temptation enters our hearts and recognize what pulls us away from Christ. It is the refusal of complacency as we consistently examine, confess, and obey. If we are not vigilant to grow and guard our faith, we will fall into the temptation of comfort. Our strength must come from the Lord, and we must be diligent to guard our love for Christ with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

1 Peter 4:12-13 says, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his

glory is revealed." This passage reminds us that struggles and trials will come and that it is our duty, honor, and joy to suffer with and for Christ. Sometimes our suffering comes as a direct result of following Jesus and other times it comes from living in a sinful world. Either way, we are to rejoice in faithful endurance. It is a constant spiritual battle to fight against the desires of our weak flesh and obey the higher call of our Holy Spirit indwelt nature, but it is a battle well worth waging. Watch out for the snares of evil, pray for God's strength to live in holiness, delight in obedience, and "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2-3).

BIG IDEA: Our flesh is weak, but our spirit is empowered by the Holy Spirit, so we must watch, pray, and rely on the Lord to faithfully remain obedient to Christ.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Where do you most clearly see the tension between your willing spirit and your weak flesh in your walk with Christ?
- **Question:** How are you intentionally watching and praying to guard your faith, or have you become spiritually complacent?

Week 9: Matthew 26:30-46

Day 3: Why Pray?

READ: Matthew 26:30-46

EXPLORE:

Why do we pray? An interesting question with a variety of answers. I think if you asked a very nominal religious person they may say something like, “You pray whenever you need something from God.” I think it’s actually a fair response. A more command-oriented religious person might say, “You pray because God commands you to pray.” There’s definitely truth in that statement. We are commanded to pray, in fact, we are commanded to pray unceasingly! A more relationally based person might say, “You pray in order to deepen your relationship with God in a similar way in which you would talk to a person.” I would not say there is a clear verse to back that specific claim up, but I think we understand the deeper meaning—our hearts grow closer to God as we pray to Him. R.C. Sproul, in congruence with John Calvin believes that the main purpose of prayer is that it changes us. Believe it or not there is truth in all of these statements about prayer. In fact, I think you can see all of them in our passage.

The first reason given for why we pray is in order to receive help from God. In our passage, the disciples were in trouble and needed to ask for help from God so that they would not abandon Christ. But they did not seek for God’s intercession and ended up abandoning Him. The second reason given for why we pray is because we are commanded to. Jesus actually commands Peter, James, and John to watch and pray not to enter into temptation (Matthew 26:41). This is actually a prayer Jesus commands to all of His disciples. We should always be praying, “*Lead us not into temptation.*” Not that God will be the one to lead us into temptation, but that we will be tempted to go toward sin if we do not ask for His help. We need to follow Jesus’ commands to pray

so we do not betray Him! The third reason given for why we pray is to deepen our relationship with God. Jesus throughout His life is said to have gone away on His own specifically to pray. Now, Jesus' relationship to the Father has always been perfect, but He displays the kind of intimacy with Him in the garden that we should all desire to emulate. We should all recognize that God is our Father and even in our most sorrowful days, we can bear our souls to Him and He will listen. The fourth reason given for why we pray is so that we can be changed. Again, Jesus was already perfect in character, but we learn from Him in this passage on how to grow in sanctification. Whenever we deeply long for something in our lives, we are called to ask for it—even continually, but in the end submit to God's will over our own. In that way, we grow in humility and Christlikeness.

Why do you think you primarily pray? Could it be that you have neglected one of these reasons for prayer? Do you at times not ask for help because you think you got it under control? Do you not think about the fact that you are commanded to pray? Do you not prioritize your relationship with God above all things? Do you not allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify you through submission and humility?

BIG IDEA: Prayer means much more than we often think.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Which one of those questions struck a nerve in the last paragraph that you can take to God today?
- **Challenge:** Spend time praying and asking God to reveal to you how you can have a more fruitful praying time.

Week 9: Matthew 26:30-46

Day 4: With Prayer and Petition

READ: Matthew 26:30-46; Philippians 4:6; Philippians 2:8

EXPLORE:

Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane is the epitome of one of life's greatest challenges: humble surrender. To be humble is to acknowledge our limited strength and control in anything and everything, and surrender is to yield, completely, to God's ultimate authority. I want you to think for a moment about the last time you did that. What comes to mind? What emotions stir up in your heart? Was it painful? Was it beautiful? Was it surprisingly easy, or was it surprisingly difficult? Let's try and step into Jesus' sandals as He prays to His Father about what He is aware is to come, death on a cross. He is most human, to me (Sarah Wilson) at this moment. His soul is "very sorrowful", He falls on His face to pray, and asks if it might be possible to let the cup pass from Him, but nevertheless desires His Father's will. I find this particularly interesting, Jesus asking God the Father if it is possible for the cup to pass from Him. Does He not know that anything is possible for God to do? (be aware the gospel of Mark frames this exact encounter with different words, specifically acknowledging that "all things are possible" with God; Mark 14:36, as well as Luke) Has He not been seeing miracle after miracle occur through the power of God through Him? He has raised the dead, cured leprosy, cast out demons, made the blind to see through God's power and might. But in this moment, He asks God if it is possible for there to be another way of what He knew was about to happen. I find this display of Jesus to be very encouraging. As we have watched Jesus' earthly ministry, He has done incredible things, taught crowds and disciples with truly incredible wisdom, faced adversity and challenges we could never imagine, much less, overcome sin. He has righteous anger, the deepest and truest compassion, who can relate? Not one of us. But here, in this moment of sorrow realized, it's as if He knew every reader needed to know about this very human moment. Importantly, how honest we can be in our prayers to God. Spend some time now reading the following

scripture in Hebrews: **Hebrews 2:17-18; Hebrews 4:15-16; Hebrews 5:2, 7-8.**

Jesus knew what was going to unfold, but His humanity allowed Him true sorrow. He knew that He could ask His Father anything. In the Gospel of Luke, it says that an angel visited Him and strengthened Him, but He continued to be in “agony” and prayed more “earnestly” to the point of sweating droplets (see Luke 22:44). In the Gospel of Matthew, He goes back a second time to pray, and then a third time. The second time He seems to have resolved to obey the will of the Father out of obedience and reverence. The third time, He repeats the same words and appears to have fully resolved to obey God’s will, evidenced as His next move was to walk toward His arrest with incredibly calm a demeanor. When you are experiencing sorrow, impossible grief, times of calamity, do you pray first, or do you panic and run every possible scenario? Do you yield your ways to God’s ways, or do you jump into action, drawing your proverbial sword? Do you calmly walk into what God has for you, or do you try to look for every escape route? We all could learn a great deal about what our mindset ought to be when we are faced with great trials and fear. Jesus Himself was well aware of what was coming. He made His request known to God, without fear of reprimand. We too, are free to make our supplications known to God, no matter the circumstance, no matter how seemingly impossible it is for God to grant you your request. Do you not know that with God all things are possible? Nevertheless, not our will, but His will be done.

BIG IDEA: The good and perfect will of our good and perfect Father is good and perfect for you and all things.

APPLY:

- **Challenge:** Spend some time in prayer for that thing or situation you are hesitant to pray for out of fear that you will be let down. God wants you to take it before His throne. Pray for your will, but nevertheless, His will be done.

Week 9: Matthew 26:30-46

Day 5: The Call To Watch & Pray

READ: Matthew 26:30-46; Ephesians 6:10-18

EXPLORE:

I was a student pastor for 15 years. One of the events I did almost every year was a “Lock-In,” which was an all-night event where the kids and adult sponsors would stay up all night at a large rec center. We did basketball tournaments, volleyball, swimming with a belly-flop contest that was always a big hit, movie time, pizza, etc. It was a ton of fun for the kids. However, I am one that requires some sleep. I just cannot stay up all night. By 4:00am my body is shutting down. So, after going through a few of these, I began bringing a sleeping bag and a pillow to get in a couple of hours of sleep during the movie time. It was a huge help to me getting through the night.

In our final study for this week, we will look at the request from Jesus to His disciples to “watch and pray” (vs. 41) during the night. It appears that the disciples were exhausted and, as well-intended as they might be, simply could not stay awake to watch and pray, even while Jesus is “sorrowful and troubled” (vs. 37).

There have been many seasons in my life in which getting up 30 minutes early to pray and be in the Word was a real challenge. I wanted to do it. I would even set an alarm with the intent, only to snooze too many times and miss it. What was my issue? Why was I so undisciplined? I don’t know of a better answer except to say that I was just that – undisciplined.

I think that’s what Jesus is getting at here. We are in a spiritual battle (read Ephesians 6:10-18) and the stakes for Jesus, the Church, our families and our very lives are at risk. 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Did you catch that? The devil wants to devour your family, the church – your very life! This is real and yet we seem to be very passive about it. Imagine that I knew that an adversary of my son’s was

scheming to attack him tomorrow at 11:00pm and he was going to kill him. What would I do? Anything within my means to protect my son! This is the mindset that we need to take on when it comes to the spiritual battle for our families, the church and our very lives. We are too passive and undisciplined and Jesus is calling us to “watch and pray.” It takes discipline. Turn off the phone. Stop scrolling. Put away the distractions, pick up the Word and get on your knees. Truth is that if you’re reading this, you’re probably in the choir I’m preaching to. If so, remain “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor, 15:58).

I’m happy to say that in the last 9 years of my life, I have been more disciplined in this area of my life than ever before. It took me having to go through a really difficult season in my life to get there. Now, there is very seldom a day that I am not in prayer and in God’s Word as a part of my morning routine. I exhort you to make “being watchful and praying” a priority in your life. This is Kingdom living.

BIG IDEA: To be watchful and pray is a spiritual discipline of vital importance.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Do you have a strong consistency in the spiritual disciplines of praying and being in God’s Word on a daily basis? If not, why not?
- **Question:** What would it look like for you to make that a steady habit in your life?
- **Challenge:** Ask the Lord to give you a hunger for time alone every day with Him in His Word and in prayer. Also, ask someone to pray for you regarding this.

Week 10: Matthew 26:47-56

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 26:47-56

Instructions: Spend time reading Matthew 26:47-56 and complete the activities and questions below.

Activity: While reading, include some observations in the space below.

Question: Why do you think Judas chose to reveal who Jesus was through a kiss?

Question: Why do you think Jesus called Judas friend?

Question: Why do you think one of Jesus' disciples struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear?

Question: What do you think Jesus means when He says that, “all who take the sword will perish by the sword”?

Question: What Scriptures do you think Jesus was speaking about in verse 54?

Question: Why do you think Jesus pointed out that the crowds were behaving cowardly?

Activity: Read Psalm 88 and write down ways in which Jesus can identify with the Psalmist.

Week 10: Matthew 26:47-56

Day 2: Peter and Judas

READ: Matthew 26:47-56

EXPLORE:

In your Bible, the events found in Matthew 26:47–56 may have a heading that says something to the effect of ‘the betrayal and arrest of Jesus,’ however, another important aspect of the passage are the roles of Judas and Peter. It is no surprise to the reader that Judas betrays Jesus, because it is mentioned in Matthew 10:4. However, in 26:14–16, Judas’ motivation became evident when he approached the chief priests and they gave him thirty pieces of silver for betraying Jesus. Finally, in this passage we see how the betrayal and arrest unfolded. In each of the Gospel accounts, Peter is one of Jesus’ loyal disciples who often made bold statements of having faith in Jesus, but he often faced challenges and eventually gave in to fear and denied knowing Jesus. Both of these disciples walked closely with Jesus for three years, but each failed him when they should have stood by him. Verse 47 begins by saying Jesus was still speaking to the disciples when Judas approaches Jesus to betray him. Matthew tells us that Judas did not come alone but came with a crowd holding swords and clubs prepared to seize Jesus. To identify Jesus, Judas used the greeting of “Rabbi” and kissed him. While it was not an uncommon greeting, it is odd that Judas used a formal greeting rather than a personal one for a man he spent the past three years with. Instead of resisting arrest, Jesus calmly tells Judas to “do what you came to do” and as soon as he said this, they arrested him. Jesus’ response shows His obedience to the Father’s will despite asking Him to take it away. After Judas and the crowd seized Jesus, Matthew describes one of the people who were with Jesus reaching his hand out and using his sword against one of the high priest’s servants. This act of defending Jesus resulted in the cutting off of the servant’s ear. In John’s Gospel account both Peter and the high priest’s servant, Malchus, are

named. In verse 52, Jesus tells Peter to put away the sword, heals the man's ear, and then reminds Peter he has the ability to ask the Father to send legions of angels who would defend him. Jesus points to how the events leading up to His crucifixion and resurrection were so the Scriptures of the prophets would be fulfilled. After hearing this, Peter and the rest of the disciples fled, leaving Jesus alone.

Matthew 26:47–56 offers a contrast between two disciples of Jesus in the midst of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus. First, we have Judas who betrays Jesus. Second, we have Peter who attempted to defend Jesus by attacking one of the high priest's servants, only to later leave Jesus and scattered with the rest of the disciples. It is clear neither Judas nor Peter are examples of how we as Christians should remain faithful during difficult times. Instead, we should look to Jesus as the example. During His betrayal and arrest, Jesus understood the events of His death and resurrection were only going to be accomplished because of His obedience to the Father. We as Christians should also seek to use our difficult times to point people to the message of the gospel and the faithfulness of God.

BIG IDEA: We should continue being faithful during difficult times.

APPLY:

- **Question:** What lessons do you take away from this passage?
- **Challenge:** Identify areas in your own life where you can grow in faithfulness during hard times.

Week 10: Matthew 26:47-56

Day 3: Succeeding Where All Had Failed

READ: Matthew 26:47-56; Genesis 3:15; Deuteronomy 30:11-20

EXPLORE:

It's hard to imagine a time before Jesus. Jesus fulfilled so much of the questions of the Old Testament. What's up with the sacrificial system and all these rituals? How come God seems to only be worried about this small nation named Israel? What about the rest of the world? What is this strange prediction about the woman's offspring and a serpent? How could a servant of God both suffer on behalf of their people and also rule the entire world? Jesus answers all of those strange questions that are raised when reading the Old Testament. While there are explicit passages predicting the coming of a future Messiah for Israel, Jesus' greatest fulfillments actually have to do with the grand narrative of Scripture. Jesus was necessary because of how messed up everything had gotten both in the world and in Israel. In Matthew 26:54 we see that Jesus submits to being arrested when He did not have to because the Scriptures needed to be fulfilled. Which ones was He talking about?

In Genesis 3:15, there is a strange verse where God says that the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring will do battle, ending up with her offspring being bitten but ultimately triumphing with a blow to the head. In a straightforward literal reading it seems to point to snake and human interaction, but considering the tempter was a talking evil snake there seems to be a greater fulfillment. Jesus was killed by the Roman and Jewish authorities, which acted as instruments of Satan. Jesus was killed but He rose from the dead and conquered the grave, sin, and the devil all at once. He fulfilled this ancient prophecy!

In Deuteronomy 30:11-20, God lays out the conditional covenant that He established with Israel. He tells them that if they obey all

these commands by loving God and walking in His ways that He will give them life, otherwise they will perish. He even says that what He wants from them is not too hard, but is possible for them to do. Yet, they fail to keep God's covenant and to walk in His ways and God has the right to destroy them. Yet, Christ comes and fulfills that covenant perfectly and offers inheritance to us Gentiles as well! Because not only was Israel supposed to keep God's commandments, they were called to be a light to the nations so that all could worship Yahweh. Jesus fulfilled both of these responsibilities of Israel. He was the greater Israel!

In Isaiah 53:6, we see that all people end up forsaking and abandoning God. So, as the disciples abandon Jesus, so do all of us as well. We each go our own way and have no way of having our sins atoned for. The entire sacrificial system was established to show the seriousness of sin and that the end result of sin should be death, however, God's mercy is greater than our offenses. God's ultimate mercy was fulfilled on the cross where Jesus died to show us the true seriousness and how far God would go to show His mercy to us. Jesus fulfills so much more than what was even discussed here. His life was dedicated to fulfilling where others had previously failed. He is the greater Adam, the greater Moses, the greater Israel, the greater David, He is our Lord and Savior. How can we not live our lives in gratitude knowing all that Jesus accomplished for us? Let us recognize His greatness and live a life worthy of His sacrifice for us.

BIG IDEA: Jesus fulfilled everything that those before Him could not.

APPLY:

- **Question:** What would it look like today for you to honor Christ and what He did in His life and death?

Week 10: Matthew 26:47-56

Day 4: The Unseen Battle

READ: Matthew 26:47-56; Ephesians 6:10-20

EXPLORE:

Despite a potentially epic battle scene that Jesus could have created, calling down over twelve legions of angels (somewhere around 50,000), when Peter makes a move to the realm of physical fighting, Jesus immediately shuts him down. Jesus quickly explains that He does not need help with a physical fight (He could win it handily if that were the goal). Instead, Jesus has been asking His disciples to enter spiritual war with him. Jesus, through His teachings, His plea to the disciples to pray in the garden, and eventually, in a few chapters, His sending them off with the great commission, has been imploring the disciples to take up their spiritual sword for Him.

We are all familiar with a physical sword, but what exactly is the spiritual sword? Scripture answers in Ephesians 6, discussing the full armor of God. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Where the physical sword is an inanimate object, the Word of God is alive and active. As such, the spiritual sword does not depend on the soldier. It cannot be manipulated to fight for either side or made more or less useful depending on who wields it. The Word of God has power in and of itself. The spiritual sword also differs from the physical sword in the conflict it addresses. The physical sword works in the present time, but the spiritual sword addresses eternal matters. It may, in a sense, appear to “lose the battle to win the war” at times.

This week's passage, and our world still today, present two very real realms. Viewed from the physical realm, things are not looking good for Jesus or any of His disciples (especially Peter, who probably could have been arrested or worse for the little stunt he just pulled). However, viewed from the spiritual realm,

the Word says this is exactly where they are supposed to be. The Word says that although Jesus will be arrested and crucified, He will rise again in three days, conquering death and sin. Viewed from the spiritual realm, this is a hard but necessary and ultimately good thing that is taking place.

In this passage, Jesus is speaking to His disciples, but it is certainly true today that these two realms are still very real and active. So we too should abide by what Jesus said and fight any battles we face with the spiritual sword of His Word rather than any material means. Physical means are not limited to actual weapons. Maybe there are cuts at work, and you are in a battle to keep your job. Do you work night after night of overtime and spend extra hours researching and studying to improve your performance, or do you get on your knees and turn to the Word and prayer? Or perhaps you are arguing with an unbeliever over a sin and are using logic rather than turning to the Word that addresses their bigger need: a Savior. Or maybe you're searching every parenting resource you know to help raise your children before turning to the Word as your guide. It is natural to fall back to the physical sword when we are desperate, but we must repent of this and continually turn back to the spiritual sword we have been given.

BIG IDEA: We should not rely on ourselves and the physical means we have to fight battles in our lives, but rather look for the underlying spiritual battle to be fought with the Word.

APPLY:

- **Question:** What battles are you currently facing? Even for those that may not seem spiritual (potty training anyone?), seek the Lord in prayer and study His Word for wisdom in these things.

Week 10: Matthew 26:47-56

Day 5: Betrayal and Second Chances

READ: Matthew 26:47-56

EXPLORE:

Jesus had been praying with His face on the ground, drenched in sweat and drops of blood. He returned to His sleeping disciples for the third time. Judas showed up with a gang of armed men right when Jesus was saying, “Rise. Here comes my betrayer.” Judas leaned in and called Jesus “rabbi” as his beard must have brushed the beard of Jesus. Judas may have felt the soaked skin of Jesus’ cheek as he kissed Him. Maybe they locked eyes for a fleeting second as Jesus spoke to him personally for the last time. Perhaps a chill went up Judas’ spine when he heard Jesus call him friend.

This scene in Gethsemane reminds us of the true nature of betrayal, but also the true nature of second chances.

If we are brutally honest, we’d have to admit betrayal is not only leading an armed crowd to arrest a friend at night. No, sometimes our betrayals are done in broad daylight and dressed up in Sunday-morning respectability. We betray each other by pretending we’re “all good” when we’re not. Maybe we smile to someone’s face while running them down behind their back. Maybe we act supportive while quietly hoping they fail. Maybe we use spiritual-sounding excuses to cover the fact that we’re protecting our pride or comfort. Those are modern versions of Judas’s kiss—friendly on the surface but carrying a sting underneath.

Christians today might justify harmful choices with spiritual clichés like “God’s in control,” using His sovereignty like a get-out-of-jail-free card. But every little compromise chips away at faithfulness just the same. Those are some things that we can take away about betrayal from this scene in Gethsemane. But

what can we take away regarding second chances? We might imagine Jesus using the word “friend” in a slightly ironic tone. Possibly He did. But have you ever thought that Jesus calling Judas “friend” was Him giving Judas one last chance to turn back? A lot of us struggle here. We betray the heart of Christ when we give up on people quicker than He does—when we cut folks off, hold grudges, or decide someone’s not worth forgiving. Sometimes the betrayal isn’t that we hurt someone; it’s that we don’t offer the kindness Christ would’ve offered.

Betrayal grows slowly, in moments when we choose convenience over integrity, comfort over honesty, self-interest over sacrificial love. But Jesus’s use of the word “friend” also reminds us that He still calls us back—inviting us to be loyal, loving, and real with each other. And if we can do that—we’ll be a whole lot less like Judas and a whole lot more like the One who called him “friend.”

BIG IDEA: Modern Christians can betray others just like Judas did when we hide selfish motives behind friendly faces or choose convenience over loyalty and grace. Jesus calling Judas “friend” reminds us that real faithfulness shows up in honest hearts, steady integrity, and the courage to love others even when it’s hard.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Which affects your heart more: the fact that Jesus might have used the word “friend” in a way that gave Judas one more chance to do the right thing, or the fact that Judas chose to walk away from that grace?
- **Challenge:** Write down some upcoming decisions you must make. Evaluate whether your heart is leaning toward loud loyalty or toward quiet betrayal.

Week 11: Matthew 26:57-68

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 26:57-68

Instructions: Spend time reading Matthew 26:57-68 and complete the activities and questions below.

Activity: While reading, include some observations in the space below.

Question: Why do you think that Jesus was brought all the way to the high priest?

Question: What do you think Peter was thinking/doing when he was following Jesus?

Question: Why do you think that the council had to resort to lying when seeking to condemn Jesus to death?

Question: Why do you think Jesus chose to remain silent during this sham of a trial?

Question: Why do you think Jesus answers with “You have said so,” where else does Jesus say those words?

Activity: Read Daniel 7:9-14 and write down thoughts on what you think offended the Jews enough to condemn Jesus.

Question: What is the significance of their abuse of Jesus?

Question: What do you think Peter thought after seeing all of these things take place?

Week 11: Matthew 26:57-68

Day 2: Judged to Judge

READ: Matthew 26:57-68

EXPLORE:

The Sanhedrin served as the religious and internal governing authority over the Jewish community, developing between the 4th and 2nd centuries B.C. They made efforts to preserve unity and uphold Scripture while their people lived under foreign rulers. The term *Sanhedrin* comes from the Greek word συνέδριον (*synédriōn*), meaning “council,” “assembly,” or “sitting together.” Its structure reflects Numbers 11:16, where the Lord instructs Moses:

“Bring me seventy of Israel’s elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you.”

Just as Israel had Moses and 70 elders, the Sanhedrin consisted of the High Priest and 70 elders from the community. Its members were primarily Sadducees, Pharisees, and scribes.

During the time of Jesus, the Roman Empire ruled a vast territory including Judea and often struggled to maintain stability within its empire. To bring stability, Rome allowed the Sanhedrin to function as an internal government responsible for community affairs and religious matters in Judea. Interestingly, shortly before Jesus’ trial, Rome revoked the Sanhedrin’s authority to carry out capital punishment (John 18:31). Due to this limited power, the Sanhedrin could not execute Jesus themselves, so the Sanhedrin handed Jesus over to Rome to be executed. As a result, Jesus was tried by the earthly government and hung on the tree instead of being stoned and thus the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled. (See Psalm 22, Zechariah 12:10, and Isaiah 53). In this passage, the Sanhedrin sought false testimony against Jesus, primarily to protect their political influence within the

Jewish community. Fulfilling Isaiah 53:7, Jesus remained silent before these false accusations. However, when the high priest asked whether He was the Messiah, Jesus answered with a solemn, decisive declaration in verse 64:

"I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Jesus, the true Judge, will return to judge all earthly authorities, and the chief priests along with the members of the Sanhedrin will be judged by Him.

BIG IDEA: Jesus allowed Himself to be judged, but He will return as the King who will judge the world with the power and authority of God Almighty!

APPLY:

- **Question:** Have you been tempted to compromise the biblical teachings and principles for worldly gain such as money, power, or reputation?
- **Question:** Are you ready to stand before Jesus on Judgement Day?
- **Challenge:** Ask the Lord to show you lies and judgment that call for silence in the coming week but also ask Christ for wisdom and fearless words and always remember Matthew 10:28 *"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*

Week 11: Matthew 26:57-68

Day 3: The Glory of the Son of Man

READ: Matthew 26:57-68; Matthew 24:29-30; Matthew 25:31; Daniel 7:13-14; Isaiah 42:8; John 17:1; Revelation 1:13, 14:14

EXPLORE:

Any careful reader of the Synoptic Gospels will have observed that the title ‘Son of Man’ is Jesus’ favorite self-designation. Its origin is found in Dan. 7:13-14 where Daniel has a vision in which he caught a glimpse of the heavenly court where ‘one like the Son of Man’ was presented before the Ancient of Days (God the Father) and was given ‘dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.’ This heavenly scene is akin to that of a conquering king entering a city to receive the accolades and glory because of his great victory in battle.

Just a chapter earlier, in Matt. 24:29-30, we read, “Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” And at the final judgment, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.” So at the very least in Jesus’ own mind, the title Son of Man had to do with His deity, because glory belongs solely to God (Is. 42:8 – “I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other”). And here associated with the Son of Man are the clouds of glory – the shekinah glory of God! So at the very least, the title, Son of Man – and it is a title, is associated with glory – is a pointer to Jesus’ deity. And here in our passage, the religious authorities are looking for a charge serious enough to warrant the death penalty, but they have found none (Matt. 26:59-60), so their last ploy is to allow Jesus’ own words to convict himself. They place him under oath. Notice the three titles that are in immediate proximity: Christ, Son of God and Son of Man. Jesus’ next words contain all they need for a conviction on the charge of blasphemy:

“from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” They immediately conclude that, based on Daniel 7, that he is claiming to be God – and they were right! But at this time the Son of Man was not there in judgment – He was there to be judged and bear the judgment of God for His people’s sin. Interestingly this connection of the Son of Man with glory is fulfilled immediately, though not in a manner that anyone could fathom. In the hours before His death, Jesus said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you” (John 17:1). What hour? The hour of His passion, death and resurrection. Amid the odium and opprobrium and shame of the Passion, the Son of Man was glorified on the Cross. The Son of Man was glorified by being the Lamb of God that God Himself provided (Gen. 22:8). Even in His suffering He was sovereign, for earlier He said, ‘Do you not think that I cannot appeal to my Father and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?’” As Son of Man, Jesus was sovereign over everything -- even to the moment of His death!

The book of Revelation begins with a vision of the Son of Man (Rev. 1:13) where during John’s vision we read: “Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head” (Rev. 14:14).

BIG IDEA: In Jesus’ first coming as the Son of Man, He came as the Suffering Servant; in Jesus’ second coming as the Son of Man, He will come as the Judge of Heaven and Earth.

APPLY:

- **Challenge:** Reflect on the various facets of Jesus being the Son of Man who comes in glory. He is seated at the right hand of God.

Week 11: Matthew 26:57-68

Day 4: So He Opened Not His Mouth

READ: Matthew 26:57-68; Isaiah 53

EXPLORE:

I love a good corny Christmas movie, but I will freely admit, if you've seen one, you've pretty much seen them all. The classic love interest she never saw coming (even if everyone else did). Then, just as they are about to admit their love to themselves and to the world, something disastrous happens. He finds out she's secretly a reporter, or she finds out he's from a rival Christmas tree farm, and one accuses the other of faking their love. And if you're like me, in your head you're screaming at the characters, "Just go to her! It wasn't really your fault. Explain yourself, and it'll all be fine!" And usually they do just the opposite and go away to be lonely and depressed (at least for a time, until fate brings them back together to live happily ever after, of course). Now, part of that voice may be the sappy romantic in me that wants them to end up together, but I think there is a deeply universal human desire to defend ourselves. To tell our side of the story, especially when we feel we've been unfairly represented.

We know Jesus was fully human and dealt with the same very real feelings, emotions, and temptations we do today. So, I think it can be assumed that there was something in Jesus that, being wrongfully accused, tempted Him to speak up, to defend Himself, to stop the proceedings that He knew would lead to His crucifixion. And yet, He remained silent. Why? It's possible Jesus simply didn't answer because He knew it would do no good. Many details about this trial indicate it was rushed and not in accordance with the laws in place, so why defend yourself if you know the trial is rigged from the beginning? Additionally, and I would argue more importantly, Jesus knew His Father, knew the plan, and accepted His part in it. He was intimately in tune with the Father and listened to His guidance. He also knew the

prophecy spoken in Isaiah 53:7: *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.* As a sheep whose purpose was for shearing, He knew His role and walked obediently in it. He did not set His eyes on His earthly well-being, but on the eternal mission of the Father. As Christians, we should seek to do the same. This is not an easy ask. We are bombarded not only by our innate desire to be right and to defend ourselves or our position, but also by a culture that glorifies fighting for yourself. From dystopian series to Disney, we cheer for heroes and heroines who rebel to defend their rights. This may not sound like a bad thing, but technically correct or even biblical positions can be fought for with selfish ambition, leading to pride and potential tarnishing of the name of Jesus. How can we know then, when we are called to stand silent or when we are called to action? After all, this is the same Jesus who flipped temple tables just a few chapters earlier. We must learn from Jesus' intimate knowledge of and submission to the Father. The Holy Spirit can help us to recognize whether our heart is motivated by righteous anger at an offense against God or selfish desire to protect or promote ourselves. We can more easily lay aside these selfish desires by recognizing our identity in Christ: how precious a child we are and how mighty a God we serve. This can bring great comfort as we lay down our defenses and recognize that God will provide any defense we need as we walk in obedience to Him.

BIG IDEA: We need not attempt to defend ourselves, we serve a loving & faithful God that will do so when necessary.

APPLY:

- **Challenge:** Ask the Lord to convict you of any areas that you have spoken when you should have remained silent or vice versa.

Week 11: Matthew 26:57-68

Day 5: Why Can't We Have Nice Things?

READ: Matthew 26:57-68

EXPLORE:

It's an amazing truth that every system and society that humans create is eventually destroyed by humans. Occasionally people are conquered by outside forces that destroy them, but most often systems and societies are destroyed from within. Communism was thought to be the answer to solving the problems that stemmed from inequality but always led to power vacuums filled by tyrants. The Soviet Union was not destroyed by another nation but destroyed itself. Communism would work if not for sin. It's a nice idea that everyone just gets what they need but the ones who distribute the wealth will never do it honestly. What about pure democracy? Majority rule sounds the fairest until you realize that the majority loves to oppress the minority. If 51% of people want to get rid of the other 49% of people, then you have a serious problem! The problem with democracy is that people are sinful. The greatest society to ever exist has to be the Roman Empire. It existed for arguably 1500 years and made great advancements for humankind, but eventually it collapsed on account of economic decline, civil wars, and yes, foreign invaders. It truly collapsed because of sin. Why can't humans have the perfect society where everyone just gets along?

In our passage for this week, we see the abuse of our Lord. The utter shameless humiliation of an innocent man. What could make human beings act in such cruel ways? Why humiliate a man condemned to death? Well, because of sin. It's easy to forget the true sinfulness of humanity if you live in a relatively nice and friendly neighborhood. However, the news gives us reminders about how bad things can get. Mothers can kill their children, predators can kidnap and sell women for money, tribes can sacrifice human beings as a tribute to the gods for a better crop

season. The list of horrendous atrocities is limitless. I could spend the rest of this WTL just talking about horrific crimes that people have done, but I won't because you get the point. People are sinful and continue to sin. We are all sinners. Sin does not just exist in far away places in the back alleys at night. It exists in the hearts of us all. We all have a sin problem and we all need a sin solution. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins has so many consequences that it is hard to list them all, but one important one to mention is that it can slowly redeem a culture one soul at a time.

What kind of culture did the Jews have in which they could treat Jesus in that disgusting way? One in which pride and religious authority trumped righteousness and compassion. Jesus changed that mentality. It's not that the Jews were ever supposed to behave like that according to the law of God, but they could not understand the lengths of God's grace. On the cross, Jesus showed us the extent of God's grace. He showed us what it means to love from a place of humility. That's where a culture becomes transformed. It's not that we will ever have a society with no sin, but we can have a society that recognizes its sin and trusts in Jesus to change it. For now, we should recognize the sin around us and how those that sin egregiously are under its power. We should seek to have grace and love toward them as you would for a slave under bondage. The best thing you can do for a slave in bondage is to point them to the liberator rather than yell at them for being in their current state!

BIG IDEA: Have grace with those that sin around you.

APPLY:

- **Question:** In what way today can you show grace to someone who has sinned against you?

Week 12: Matthew 26:69-75

Day 1: A Day to Explore

READ: Matthew 26:69-75

Instructions: Spend time reading Matthew 26:69-75 and complete the activities and questions below.

Activity: While reading, include some observations in the space below.

Question: Why do you think Peter was just sitting outside in the courtyard?

Question: What do you think were the reasons that Peter denied Christ?

Question: How significant do you think it is that Peter denied Jesus to those with very low status in society as opposed to those with more sway in society?

Questions: Why do you think that Peter didn't really understand that he was denying Christ until he heard the rooster crow? What can that tell us about our lack of awareness at times?

Question: Why do you think that Peter denied Christ with an oath?

Question: What does Peter's weeping tell us about his heart posture in that moment?

Question: What is the significance of Peter denying Christ three times?

Activity: Write down all of the similarities and differences between Peter and Judas.

Week 12: Matthew 26:69-75

Day 2: Liar Liar

READ: Matthew 26:69-75; Matthew 5:33-37

EXPLORE:

Today we will delve into Peter's three denials and how they become worse with each subsequent denial. Peter's first denial in verse 70 is simply that. The servant declares in front of everyone standing in the courtyard that Peter was with Jesus when He was arrested, and Peter simply plays dumb. Picture that typical moment in the classroom when the student gets busted by the teacher and he shrewdly looks around at all his classmates with that classic 'who could she be addressing because I'm obviously not doing anything wrong' technique. Sadly it never worked for me (Michael), and it probably didn't work for Peter either.

In verse 71, Peter is similarly accused in a different, public setting by a different servant. This time Peter declares that he does not know Jesus and doubles down with an oath. Recall when we studied Matt 5:33-37 and Jesus instructs the crowds during the Sermon on the Mount to stop the common, deceptive practice of making oaths for the purpose of convincing people to accept lies. In this situation Peter clearly takes his betrayal up a notch by lying about knowing Jesus, and also defying a direct instruction he had received from Jesus to stop using these disingenuous oaths. Lastly in verse 73, another person comes up and declares that Peter must have been with Jesus because of his accent. This time Peter responds with a denial, an oath and adds a curse for extra emphasis. The Greek word *katathematizō* that is translated as cursed, is not used anywhere else in the New Testament and normally indicated that the user was cursing someone else. That along with the fact that the words for "himself" are not found in the Greek at least indicate the possibility that Peter went so far in this last denial as to curse Jesus along with another false oath denying his association with Jesus.

Our tendency when we read of Peter's betrayal from our post-resurrection point of view can be one of judgment. How could he betray the man who he had seen conducting numerous miracles, just witnessed supernaturally speaking with Moses and Elijah and acknowledged as the Messiah himself? Why didn't he recall his conversation with Jesus during supper that evening where Peter promised he would never deny Jesus and course correct after the first or second denial? We will likely never know what it would have been like to be Peter in that situation, but we all certainly know what it feels like to sin. Just like Peter's sin escalated with each denial, our sins tend to snowball on us as well. Any type of sin can grow out of control, but there are those categories of sin that left unchecked can more easily snowball; lying, lust, complaining, and gossip just to name a few. If you have seen the 90's film *Liar Liar*, you are presented with a very real portrayal of how lying can become an escalating habit and your word can become worthless. When the character is magically prevented from telling any sort of lie, it is over the top Jim Carrey physical humor for sure, but is also very revealing how often we "bend" the truth each day. Through "innocent" lies we can easily fall into a habit of lying or deception to avoid any sort of discomfort or negative consequences, and it can snowball on us just like it did for Peter. Therefore, we need to be vigilant about fighting the urge to lie or sin in the lower consequence situations to avoid slipping into increasingly consequential, sinful habits.

BIG IDEA: Sin WILL snowball so don't trivialize seemingly harmless sins.

APPLY:

- **Challenge:** Lying is easy. Telling the truth is hard. Today focus on only telling the truth, "white-lies", and then reflect on how hard that is.

Week 12: Matthew 26:69-75

Day 3: Resting in Redemption

READ: Matthew 26:69-75; John 21:15-19

EXPLORE:

Have you ever done something that just made you think, “how can I ever undo this?” Maybe it’s been an action done behind someone’s back or words that just can’t be unspoken, but our lives are filled with moments we can’t take back. In this passage in Matthew, the apostle Peter has just had one of these moments. If you’ve been with us in our series in Matthew, you’ll know that Peter was Jesus’ right-hand man. He was in Jesus’ close circle, and he was always speaking up and asking questions. This would make you think that out of all the disciples he would have it down the most. However, when Jesus was arrested Peter had what could have been the defining mistake of his apostleship.

He sat outside in the courtyard, and denied his savior. Out of all the things that feel like they could never be taken back or redeemed, denying the messiah you had walked with and lived alongside for three years feels like it could never be undone. We see how three times Peter denied Jesus, and then in the end remembered how Jesus had foretold those same denials. This is where Matthew’s Gospel account of Peter stops; however, it is not where his story ends. The moment that could have defined Peter was transformed into redemption on the other side of the cross.

Peter’s story is continued in the Gospel account of John. Jesus asks Peter repeatedly if he loves Him. Peter says again and again “yes Lord, I love you.” Three times Jesus asks and three times Peter responds. Jesus is extending to Peter redemption for denying Him in the courtyard. We have all done things that cannot be taken back in our lives. Sometimes the consequences of our actions cannot be taken back, but that doesn’t mean that they

have to define us. Christ was merciful to Peter despite even these serious denials. When we have saving faith in Christ, we have eternal redemption from our faults and mistakes. While we might not be able to undo our actions or unsay our words, we ought to see Peter's example and chase after redemption like he did. He did not make his mistakes his identity. Instead, after his sin he gave it to Christ and rested in His redemption.

BIG IDEA: As Christians, our mistakes should not define us. Although we might deal with the consequences of our actions, Christ is where we should place our identity.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Do you have mistakes in your life that you feel define you? Does Peter's example change that?
- **Question:** What are ways that you can rest in Christ and not your mistakes?

Week 12: Matthew 26:69-75

Day 4: Sitting in Sorrow

READ: Matthew 26:69-75

EXPLORE:

This well-known story of Peter's denial, the rooster crowing and a remorseful Peter is one that reveals the depth of godly sorrow. Early on in this passage we see the case of Peter overpromising and under delivering. He assures Jesus he wouldn't do something, and yet when the pressure is on, he caves. Each opportunity to deny Jesus is met with betrayal, and each time he doubles down on his response. His rejection intensifies until it is met with the very sign that Jesus warned him about. Earlier in this chapter, he is the only one Scripture says followed closely as Jesus was arrested and delivered to the high place. Yet, here we see him the only one approached about his affiliation with this man accused of blasphemy.

The cry of the rooster produces a sorrowful response from Peter that shows both an internal reaction and an external act. Peter doesn't just tear up a little. The Scripture says he leaves and weeps bitterly. Overcome with his sin, Peter flees the place where he denied Jesus and his heart responds with deep sorrow for what he has done. The Greek word here is sometimes used in Scripture to mean expressed poignant grief. He doesn't feel bad that he got caught. He understood the depth of his actions. Thankfully this isn't the end of Peter's story, and his godly sorrow results in his reconnection with Jesus. What amazing grace there is to be found when we truly repent.

Peter never intended to deny Jesus in the garden. It wasn't something he thought he was capable of. Ask someone who finds themselves making sinful choices that seem so far from who they believe they really are. They will tell you, "I don't know how I got here." That's the thing about sin. It can take us further than we

ever wanted to be. When we allow it to creep in, it disconnects us from the Lord. Thankfully, Scripture says in I John 1:9, “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” There is no sin that can separate us from His love, and He is always ready to forgive. We just need to take a minute and view our sin rightfully. There can be a temptation to experience a worldly sorrow that feels bad for getting caught, but godly sorrow understands that our sin stands between us and our Heavenly Father and desires to live rightly before Him.

BIG IDEA: Sin can take us where we never thought we’d go, but godly sorrow can produce true repentance.

APPLY:

- **Question:** How are you allowing your own sin to produce godly sorrow that leads to repentance?
- **Challenge:** Wherever you are on your journey with the Lord, take a minute to repent for any areas of your life you have not fully surrendered to Him.

Week 12: Matthew 26:69-75

Day 5: Subtle but Deadly

READ: Matthew 26:69-75

EXPLORE:

This story about Peter is a hard one to read, especially when we use it as a lens to examine our own lives. Peter directly, audibly denies Christ out of fear for his life. Many of us have never been in that situation. It's possible we've never even directly been asked about our faith, so we might be tempted to say, "check" I have not denied Jesus. However, there are more subtle ways we can deny Christ. It's worth taking a day to examine our hearts to repent of any areas we may have done so. There are several ways we can deny Christ. In Peter's case, he is directly asked and denies being associated with Christ. Today this would mean directly being asked if you are a Christian or if you believe "xyz" Christian doctrine and answering no. We can also deny Christ through our actions. If we are outwardly portraying sinful behaviors, we are failing to differentiate ourselves from nonbelievers and identify with Christ. Scripture calls us a living sacrifice, so even those sins that are hidden are a denial of who you are called to be as a son/daughter in Christ. We can also deny Christ by failing to speak when obvious opportunities to do so present themselves. I work as a PA in family medicine, and more than once I have found myself in conversations (outside of work) with someone who is denouncing the whole medical system and all the nefarious providers who never listen and instead just throw medications at people in order to charge them a bunch of money. And more than once, I have completely stayed silent or even nodded my head along in agreement. Had I been directly asked if I was one of those icky providers, I would not have lied, so I can say I did not directly deny my profession. However, I did pretend I was not associated with the profession when an obvious opportunity came up to disclose my identity. We can see the parallel to our Christian walk. When people bring up religion, spirituality, Jesus, God, the church,

etc. (whether good or bad), and we fail to say, “I am a Christ-follower, and here is how He has changed my life,” we are missing an opportunity to identify with Christ.

It's worth looking at the underlying reasons we deny Christ to tackle them head-on with truth. The first we see is the likely motivator for Peter: fear. Peter feared the consequences of identifying with Christ, and though we are likely not faced with the consequence of imprisonment or death, fear can certainly still motivate today. Fear of a lost relationship, disciplinary action at work, or even just awkwardness can keep us from boldly proclaiming Christ. The truth is, no matter how big these fears seem, even death itself is an earthly fear that has no power over a believer who has been made alive in Christ (Romans 8:38-39). Sinful desires and temptation can also keep us from proclaiming Christ with our lives. Whether caused by people around us, by our circumstances, or by lies we are believing from the enemy, we can often feel stuck in our sin patterns. Especially if we have already “messed up” our witness to a particular group, it can feel impossible to repair it. However, the truth is that we have been set free from our bondage to sin and, through Christ, have the power to live righteously (Romans 6:6-7). It is not our job to worry about how others respond to our living or whether our reputation is already too tarnished. We are called simply proclaim with our life and trust the Lord with the outcome.

BIG IDEA: We should broadly proclaim Christ with our lives.

APPLY:

- **Question:** Are there any areas in your life you have denied Christ, whether directly, by your actions, or by omission?
- **Question:** Are there any ways that people (or you) subtly deny Christ that you would add to those listed above?



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