

Personified: Meeting Jesus on the Way to the Cross

Week 4 – March 7, 2021

Scripture: Matthew 26:17-29 and John 13:23-26

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Have you ever “judged a book by its cover”? Perhaps there was a person whom your first impression was based on their exterior only, and not their interior.

Read Matthew 26:20-25; John 13:23-26; Matthew 5:43-44; Luke 23:43 together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

This series looks at 7 very real and human moments in Jesus' life. When Jesus was on this earth He was fully God and fully human. We have a tendency to emphasize the divinity of Jesus but in this series, we focus on His humanity and how it relates to our own experiences. We looked at how beauty moved His heart; how He stood against enormous pressure and expectations; and how He loved and served others. Today we see Jesus loving those who hurt and betrayed Him. This is not only countercultural, but it goes against our human nature. If we choose to live this way, it will allow us to experience a more beautiful life, have more beautiful relationships, and create a more beautiful world for those around us.

Share your thoughts about following questions:

1. Jesus spent 3 years investing in and caring for His disciples. These twelve men were the people on this earth closest to Jesus. Judas was about to betray Jesus yet, Jesus allowed Judas to be at this special meal. He even seated Judas in one of the best seats. Jesus chose to love and honor Judas. (Matthew 26:20-25 and John 13:23-26)
 - a. The closer we are to someone, the more we open ourselves up to be hurt. How have you experienced hurt by someone you trusted?
 - b. Jesus is living out what He commands His followers to do (Matthew 5:43-44) when He loves and honors Judas. What hope does it give you seeing Jesus live this out on His way to the cross?
2. Jesus was able to love Judas because He understood that Judas was not His true enemy (John 13:1-2). Judas wasn't innocent in this because he had to accept it and then act on it, but it was ultimately Satan who prompted him.
 - a. Have you ever mistaken who your enemy was? Read Ephesians 6:12.
 - b. People can act terrible, but they are not the enemy. How can understanding this change the way we see and act toward others?
3. We can choose to love people by refusing to retaliate when we are hurt. There are no winners in retaliation; often it leads to hate and greater division. What is a healthy way to respond in that moment when our intuitive response is to retaliate?
4. One of the most powerful things we see Jesus do is pray for His enemies (Luke 23:43). Anger and hatred are slowly replaced with compassion and love when we pray for those that hurt, betray or abandon us. What else happens when we pray for our enemies? How can we make this a daily practice?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. C.S. Lewis says, “prayer doesn't change God, it changes me”. Thank God for that He shows us ways to love those that hurt us; that He shows us ways to change our own hearts. Ask God for eyes to see people in a new way, for the strength and courage to love instead of hate. We desire a beautiful life for ourselves and those around us.