
Next Week's Life Group: Follow Me: To New Life
Next Week's Story: Mary Magdalene - John 20:11-18

Our Church's Definition of a Biblical Disciple of Jesus

A person who is committed to *following, being changed by,* and *on mission* with Jesus (taken from Matthew 4:19).

The Purpose of Life Groups

Life Groups are where we connect with God and with others through relationships - growing in spiritual maturity as biblical disciples of Jesus and inspiring a culture of discipleship as we do life together. Life Groups are loving, safe, and interactive places where people can be authentic and vulnerable as they explore, experience, serve, and grow in relationship with Jesus, the Word, and others. Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 3:12-13, 10:23-25; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.



FOLLOW ME

"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

Luke 14:27

GETTING STARTED

When has someone traded places with you in order to help you in some way (place in line, seat on the bus, etc.)?

STORY BACKGROUND

On the day Jesus Christ died, three crosses had already been prepared for the execution of convicted criminals. One cross was intended for a rebel nicknamed "Barabbas." (Bar-abbas means, "son of the father" and may indicate he was the son of a notable rabbi. Theologian Origen and some early Caesarean manuscripts refer to him as "Jesus Barabbas" which would shed light on why Pilate repeatedly clarified between him and "Jesus who is called Christ" in verses 17 and 22). Barabbas was an insurrectionist and murderer who had attempted to incite a Jewish rebellion against Rome. In the eyes of many of the people, he would have been a hero. It was likely that the two criminals who were crucified with Jesus were co-rebels with Barabbas.

As the gospel accounts confirm, it was customary in Judea for the local magistrate to release one prisoner on Passover. The Jews were permitted to slaughter a Passover lamb in place of the one who was released from prison. The crowd which gathered before the palace was not a crowd of Jesus' accusers but of those trying to influence the selection of the prisoner who would be given amnesty. It is unlikely that the crowd had much, if any, knowledge of Jesus' arrest and trial. Both Jesus and Barabbas were widely popular and when Pilate offered a choice between the two the crowd evidently vacillated. The Jewish rulers succeeded in casting doubt on Jesus' innocence and swayed the crowd to demand that Pilate choose the nationalist hero over the Son of God. The Person who hung on the cross prepared for Barabbas, and for every guilty person, was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).

TO THE CROSS



STORY: Luke 23:18-25
(Matthew 27: 15-26, Mark 15:6-15)

MEMORY VERSE:

Acts 2:39 - *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.*



Head Level: These questions help us to examine what the Word tells us.

- What did Pilate understand about the guilt of Jesus and the motives of His accusers?
- Describe ways Pilate was given a warning or an opportunity to take a different course of action toward Jesus.
- How was the declaration of the crowd in verse 25 fulfilled? (See Acts 2:23b, 36-37)



Heart Level: These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

- Put yourself in Barabbas' place. What do you think/feel about having Jesus suddenly take your place on the cross? Who does Barabbas represent? When have you been the recipient of another's attempt to deflect their guilt? How did you handle it?
- Explain the importance of owning and confessing your own sin.



Hands Level: These questions help us commit to a next step and live it out in our everyday lives.

- What is the only real way to be washed clean of guilt before God? How would you explain this to curious non-believer?
- What have you done with "Jesus who is called the Christ?"