



SERMON STUDY GUIDE

“JOHN 18:15–27”

WEEKLY QUESTIONS

- What stood out to you from the sermon?
- What stood out to you from the text?
- The main theme of John’s Gospel is that by believing in Jesus as God’s son we find life.
 1. How did you find life when reading this passage?
 2. Did you personally find life in a specific way from the sermon this week?
- How did the sermon or passage point you to Jesus?

DETAILS

The text this week divides into three scenes, depicting Peter’s denial of Jesus (18:15–18, 25–27) framing Jesus’s initial trial before the High Priest Annas (18:19–24). Although all four Gospels describe Peter’s denial and Jesus’s various trials, John’s story is unique in some ways that provide clues to his theology.

1. PETER FOLLOWING JESUS AND HIS INITIAL DENIAL (JOHN 18:15–18)

Peter and another disciple follow Jesus to the courtyard of the High Priest Annas. An account of Peter denying Christ appears in all four Gospels (Matt 26:69–75 // Mark 14:66–72 // Luke 22:56–62), but only John divides the denials up with Jesus’s trial before Annas. Consider some of the details of each version of the story:

Matthew – While Peter sits in the courtyard, a servant girl asks if he was “with the Galilean” (Matt 26:69). Peter denies it saying, “I do not know what you are saying” (Matt 26:70).

Mark – A servant girl saw Peter warming himself and asks, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus” (Mark 14:67). Peter denies it emphatically, “I neither know nor understand what you are saying” (Mark 14:68).

Luke – Seeing Peter as he sat in the light of the fire and looking closely at him a servant girl says, “This man was with him” (Luke 22:56). Peter denies the suggestion saying, “Woman, I do not know him” (22:57).

Each of the accounts describes Peter as “with” Jesus. One of the defining features of being a “disciple” of Jesus is being “with him,” that is spending time with him, knowing him, following his way, doing what he does (see Mark 3:14–15). The servant girl is asking if Peter is one of Jesus’s apprentices and for some reason, Peter denies it.

Peter’s denial is all the more striking in John when we learn that the only reason Peter makes it into the courtyard of Annas is because “another disciple” makes it possible. Notice the servant girl’s question in John, “You also are not one of this man’s disciples, are you?” (John 18:17). The servant girl seems to be saying, “Are you, like this other disciple, also a disciple?”

- Why do you think Peter denies being a disciple?
 1. Do you think he was afraid because of his actions in the garden (John 18:10–11)?
 2. Do you think he was ashamed of Jesus being arrested?
 3. Do you think he lost his nerve?
- Have you ever struggled to identify yourself as a follower of Jesus? Why was it difficult for you?
- The “charcoal fire” appears only two times in Scripture (John 18:18; 21:9). What connections do you see between Peter’s denials in John 18 and Jesus’s interactions with Peter in John 21?



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2. JESUS'S TRIAL BEFORE ANNAS (JOHN 18:19–24)

We know from Luke-Acts (Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6) and John that Annas was the High Priest prior to his son-in-law, Caiaphas, who was technically the High Priest the year Jesus was crucified (John 11:49). According to Jewish law, the role of High Priest is for a lifetime (Num 25:10–13), but by the Roman era it was a political appointment that changed hands. The Jewish historian Josephus indicates that Annas held the office from 6–15 AD and was succeeded by five of his sons and eventually his son-in-law Caiaphas who held the high priesthood from 18–36 AD (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.26, 34; 20.198). Only John describes Jesus's trial before Annas.

Annas asks Jesus about two things, disciples and teaching. In Jesus's trial before Caiaphas, described in the other Gospels the questions focus on Jesus's identity and charges against him (see Matt 26:57–68 // Mark 14:53–65 // Luke 22:66–71). John skips the trial before Caiaphas and the assembly of Jewish leaders, but mentions that Jesus was sent there for a trial (John 18:24, 28).

- Why did Annas want Jesus dead?
- The High Priest asks about Jesus's teaching, but John makes it clear earlier in the Gospel the people who reject Jesus do so with an abundance of information about him (John 7:1–4; 7:13–26; 10:24–30).
 1. Why do you think there was such an unwillingness to accept Jesus as the Christ (see John 9:24–34)?
 2. Why do you think people are hesitant to accept Jesus's claims about his identity as the "Son of God" today?

3. PETER'S SECOND AND THIRD DENIALS

John's retelling of the story frames Jesus's trial before Annas with Peter's denials. As a storytelling device, the interruption allows us as reader/hearers to think about the contrast between Jesus's faithfulness in the trial with Peter's denials. Moreover, it slows down the denials, inviting us to think about what must have been in Peter's mind. According to the earliest account from the pen of a Roman official, following Jesus was a crime, but it wasn't always clear how to prosecute the accusation. The Pliny the Younger, a governor over Pontus and Bithynia reports that he gives Christians three chances to deny Christ (Ep. 10.96.3). Peter's story is, perhaps, the story of every follower of Jesus.

- Do you see yourself in Peter's story? How? What ways do you identify with Peter?
- What do you think you would have done in his sandals? Why?

RESPOND

- How does this passage encourage you, challenge you, or change you in your efforts to become more like Jesus?
- What is one thing you learned about yourself from God's Word? How will you respond in obedience this week?
- Who is someone you can have a conversation with about what Jesus is doing in your life or invite to join you at a CU Church gathering.

PRAY

... for each other and spend time praising God. Pray that he will show you how to better love God and love people.