

How “Won’t” Becomes “Can’t”

Three Strange (And Sad) Realities

John 12:37-50

1. Some people **CAN’T** believe,
because they **WOULDN’T** believe.

John 12:39-40 & 12:37/ John 12:36 & Isaiah 55:6/ Hebrews 6:4-9

2. Some people **BELIEVE** in Jesus,
but try to **KEEP IT A SECRET**.

John 12:42-43/ Proverbs 9:10 & 29:25/ Matthew 10:28/ John 19:38 & 2 Kings 5:18-19

3. Some people will **CHOOSE HELL**,
but will **BLAME** God.

John 12:46-47/ John 3:17-18/ Matthew 25:41 & 2 Peter 3:8-9/ Galatians 2:21

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Food for Thought for the Week of July 23, 2023

This weekend, we saw that some people believed in Jesus, yet because of their desire for status among others, they failed to acknowledge Him publicly. One of Jesus' followers, Peter (at other times known as Cephas), struggled with this very same thing. As we look at passages regarding Peter's life, let us look for similarities in our own lives.

1. Read Galatians 2:11-14. Have you ever been afraid to do something different than what was expected of you? Why do you think it's so easy to go with what the masses do? Is there a group or person whose opinion of you is one you place a lot of value in? Does that group or person strengthen your relationship with Jesus or hurt it?

Galatians 2:11-14 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹ When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³ The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

¹⁴ When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

2. As you read Matthew 26:69-75, you'll notice Peter was afraid for his life by identifying with Jesus. Are there any groups, situations, or areas of your life in which it's harder for you to identify with Christ or make your faith known to others? What could be the consequences that might happen if people found out?

Matthew 26:69-75 New International Version (NIV)

⁶⁹ Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said.

⁷⁰ But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

⁷¹ Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

⁷² He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

⁷³ After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away."

⁷⁴ Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!"

Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵ Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

3. We later see a resurrected Jesus restoring Peter after Peter's denial of Him. Check out John 21:15-19. Maybe you've never denied Jesus publicly, but most of us have denied Him at some point with our choices. Have you ever wondered if Jesus would forgive you even after doing something you knew you shouldn't have done? As you look at what Jesus calls Peter to do in John 21:19, do you believe it's that simple for you as well? What then might it look like for you to walk in that simplicity this week?

John 21:15-19 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"