

Session 8: And Peter

Matthew 27:3-5, Mark 16:1-7, Luke 24:33-34 | 75 to 90 minutes | Young Adult Inductive Study

PART ONE: LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: The group answers last week's suspended question by comparing the two men who betrayed Jesus in one night: they discover the difference between godly grief and worldly grief, and then they discover mercy going out looking for the fallen man by name: "go, tell his disciples and Peter."

Catholic Touchstone: There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive; Christ died for all, and He desires the door of pardon open to anyone who turns back (CCC 982). The only wound mercy cannot heal is the one we refuse to bring, and mercy does not even wait for us to bring it: it sends messengers.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Handle Judas with the Church's exact care. The comparison at this session's center is real and biblical, but it is a comparison of griefs, not of eternal destinies. Matthew says Judas "repented" (the Greek is *metamelētheis*, he was seized with remorse), returned the silver, and confessed aloud: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" (Matthew 27:3-4). Look hard at that: remorse, restitution, verbal confession of sin, elements we would normally applaud, and then he "went and hanged himself." The Church has never taught that Judas is certainly damned; she canonizes saints and has never once canonized a damnation, and we entrust every soul to the just mercy of God. What the Church does teach, and what this session teaches, is the difference between the two roads the two men walked from remorse: one grief collapsed inward and ended, as the Church's tradition has soberly read it, in despair; the other stayed in the wreckage, reachable, until mercy arrived. Be precise about this in the room, because someone at your table has wondered whether their own sin is the unforgivable kind.

The diagnostic text is St. Paul's: "godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death" (2 Corinthians 7:10). Read through the two men, the definitions come alive. Worldly grief is self-referential: MY ruin, MY shame, MY unbearable new identity; it appoints itself judge, passes the sentence God has not passed, and carries it out, whether by rope or by the slower executions of self-hatred and hiding. Godly grief grieves the wounded relationship, faces the same facts, and stays turned toward the Person wounded, still reachable. Judas went to the priests, his partners in the sin, who offered him nothing ("What is that to us?"), and then went to himself as judge. Peter, so far as the record shows, went nowhere: he wept, and he waited in the

wreckage with the brethren. That waiting looks passive; it is the whole difference. He remained where mercy could find him.

And mercy came looking. Easter morning, the angel to the women: “But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee” (Mark 16:7). Two words, “and Peter,” preserved in the Gospel written, by the early Church’s testimony, from Peter’s own preaching. The man who assumes he has forfeited the title “disciple” is named separately so the message cannot miss him, and the message is the Galilee appointment made before the fall (Matthew 26:32): the prophecy’s reunion clause, now activated. Then the detail Scripture handles with astonishing delicacy: before any public restoration, the risen Lord met Peter alone. “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” (Luke 24:34); St. Paul preserves it at the head of the earliest creed: “he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve” (1 Corinthians 15:5). No Gospel narrates that meeting. Not one word of it. Some meetings between mercy and misery are too intimate for minutes, and among the first acts of the risen Christ, before He stood among the assembled apostles, was to find the friend who had denied Him, privately, before anything public was asked of him.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Hosea 11:8-9 (the live discovery text; do not preview it). God’s own interior monologue over a people who betrayed Him: “How can I give you up, O Ephraim!... My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender... for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst.” The group discovers that “and Peter” has been the shape of God’s heart all along: mercy that cannot bring itself to let go, precisely because He is God and not man.

Psalms 130. “Out of the depths I cry to thee, O LORD... If thou, O LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with thee.” The prayer of the man in the wreckage who stays reachable; supply it in the answer to Question 3 or in closing.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine / *The City of God, Book I, Chapter 17*

Weighing Judas’ end, St. Augustine renders the tradition’s sober judgment on despair: in destroying himself, Judas did not atone for the betrayal but compounded it, for despairing of God’s mercy he left himself no room for the saving repentance that was still possible. Augustine’s point is surgical: the final wound was not the betrayal, terrible as it was, but the verdict Judas passed on himself in God’s place. Mercy was not exhausted; it was pre-empted.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom / *Exhortation to Theodore After His Fall*

Writing to a friend who had fallen and believed himself beyond recovery, St. Chrysostom names despair as the devil’s favorite weapon: sin wounds, but despair kills, because it persuades a man to stop fighting before God has stopped forgiving. The enemy’s strategy, he says, is to make us careless

before the fall and hopeless after it, and both lies serve the same end. Against them Chrysostom sets the whole record of mercy: no wound is incurable to the Physician who wills to heal.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Faustina Kowalska / *Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, 723*

The apostle of Divine Mercy recorded the Lord's insistence, against every instinct of shame, that the greater the sinner, the greater his right to God's mercy: souls are not to measure His forgiveness by the size of their sin but by the depths of His goodness. Her whole message is "and Peter" written out at book length: mercy is not merely available to the worst moment of your life; it is especially addressed there.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

- **CCC 982:** There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive; there is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest. Christ desires the doors of forgiveness open to anyone who turns back from sin.
- **CCC 1864:** The only sin that cannot be forgiven is the one that refuses forgiveness: deliberately refusing to accept God's mercy by repenting rejects the forgiveness of sins. Hardness against mercy, not any particular act, is the fatal condition.
- **CCC 1847:** Quoting St. Augustine: God created us without us, but he did not will to save us without us. Mercy sends the message; the message must still be received, which is exactly what next week's shore will show.

THE WAY OF SALVATION (STUDY STRAND, LEADER ONLY)

MOVEMENT 8 OF THE KERYGMA: MERCY SEEKS THE SINNER

The Gospel is not that mercy is available; it is that mercy is in pursuit. Didactic texts: Romans 5:8 ("while we were yet sinners Christ died for us"); 2 Corinthians 7:10 (the two griefs, used openly tonight); Hosea 11:8-9. The order of Easter morning is the order of salvation: mercy's message goes out BEFORE Peter has apologized, confessed to the Lord, or been restored publicly; his bitter tears are already grief, but not one word has yet passed between him and the One he denied; his repentance, already begun in those tears, unfolds inside the encounter with mercy rather than being demanded as its entry fee. Guardrail both ways tonight: no sin out-runs mercy, AND mercy must be received (CCC 1847); presumption and despair are twin refusals. Do not teach this strand aloud.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY, NEVER REVEAL)

- **The names.** “And Peter” from the angel; “appeared to Simon” from the Eleven; “Cephas” in the creed. The name thread is converging; track it silently and let Session 9 cash it.
- **Galilee activated.** Mark 16:7 repeats Matthew 26:32 almost verbatim: the appointment survives the fall. Next session happens AT that appointment. Say nothing.
- **The unnarrated meeting.** Luke 24:34 and 1 Corinthians 15:5. Private mercy precedes public restoration; Session 9 is the public half. Do not connect them aloud tonight.
- **CRITICAL LOGISTICS.** Next session the sealed guesses are opened. Tonight's dismissal and Take-Home 8 both instruct participants to BRING their Take-Home 1 sheet next week, still sealed. Have a plan for anyone who forgets or has lost it (a quiet minute to rewrite from memory before the reveal). Do not say why the sheet is needed.

SESSION GOALS

1. The group resolves last week's question by comparing Judas and Peter through 2 Corinthians 7:10 and can define godly versus worldly grief in their own words.
2. The group states the Church's precise teaching: no sin outruns mercy; the only fatal condition is refusing it; and no one's damnation is ours to declare.
3. The group discovers Hosea 11 and connects God's ancient heart to “and Peter.”
4. The group registers the unnarrated private meeting between the risen Christ and Simon, and what its privacy says about how mercy handles shame.
5. Every participant leaves instructed to bring their sealed Take-Home 1 sheet next week.

TIME NOTE

Core session runs about 75 minutes. If long: cut one Win question and the second Dig Deeper. **Do not cut** the Hosea discovery, Question 5, or the Send questions. Pastoral note: this is the session where someone may privately believe they are Judas. Watch for the quiet ones and follow up personally this week.

PART TWO: DISCUSSION GUIDE

OPENING PRAYER

Father of mercies, two men betrayed your Son in one night, and both were seized with grief. Teach us tonight the difference between the grief that saves and the grief that destroys, and root out of us the lie that any of us has out-sinned your mercy. Send your word to find us the way your angel found the fisherman: by name, with an appointment already made. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS

Open questions; every answer is welcome. Gentle tone again tonight.

W1. When you fail badly, what does the voice in your head sound like in the first hour afterward? Whose voice is it, if you're honest?

W2. Has anyone ever come looking for you when you were hiding, literally or figuratively? What did it mean that they came first?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT

READ ALOUD: Matthew 27:3-5

1. Read Judas' morning like an auditor. Matthew says he “repented,” returned the thirty pieces of silver, and confessed out loud: “I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.” Remorse, restitution, verbal confession: on paper, that is more than we saw from Peter in the courtyard. So what is missing? Where does Judas take his confession, and what do they tell him?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

He takes it to the chief priests, the partners of the sin, and they answer with the coldest sentence in the Gospels: “What is that to us? See to it yourself.” And that is precisely what Judas then does: he sees to it himself. He appoints himself judge over his own case, passes the sentence God had not passed, and carries it out. What is missing from his remorse is not sincerity but a direction: it never turns toward the One betrayed, who was at that hour still alive, still in the city, and still the same Lord who had washed Judas' feet the night before. Remorse aimed at the self, or at accomplices, or at the mirror, has nowhere to put the weight down. The group should feel the tragedy precisely: mercy was not exhausted that morning; it was pre-empted.

2. St. Paul gives us the diagnostic for last week's homework question. Read 2 Corinthians 7:10 aloud: “godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death.” Now define both griefs, using only what you have watched Judas and Peter do. What makes grief “worldly,” and what makes it “godly”?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Worldly grief, read off Judas, is self-referential: its sentences all begin with I and mine: my ruin, my shame, the unbearable person I now am. It faces real facts but appoints the self as judge, and the self is a merciless judge. Its endpoint is death, sometimes by rope, more often by the slower executions: self-hatred, hiding, quitting the faith because we cannot face the room. Godly grief, read off Peter, faces the identical facts (he really did it, three times, with oaths) but grieves the wounded relationship rather than the wounded self-image, and therefore stays turned toward the Person wounded. Notice how little Peter does: he weeps, and he stays with the brethren in the wreckage. It

looks passive; it is everything. He remains where mercy can find him. The dividing line between the two griefs is not the size of the sin or the volume of the tears; it is which direction the grief faces and who is allowed to be judge.

3. The obvious fear under all of this, say it out loud for the room: is there a sin so serious that mercy will not cover it? Was Judas' betrayal simply too big? What does the Church actually teach, and be precise?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Be exact, because someone at this table needs exactness. First: there is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive; no one, however wicked, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness if his repentance is honest (CCC 982, nearly word for word). Peter's denial with oaths and curses is forgiven; Paul's persecution unto death is forgiven; the size of the sin has never been the variable. Second: the only unforgivable condition is the refusal of forgiveness itself; the hardness that will not repent and will not receive mercy (CCC 1864). It is not that God's mercy runs out; it is that mercy, refused to the end, cannot heal what will not be brought to it. Third, about Judas himself: the Church has never declared him, or anyone, damned. We know his acts; the tradition, following St. Augustine, has read his end as despair; his final state belongs to the just mercy of God, and we are forbidden the judge's seat he tragically climbed into. Then say it plainly to the room: if you are worried you have committed the unforgivable sin, the worry itself is evidence you have not, because hardness does not worry. The person still asking is still reachable, and the whole point of tonight is that mercy comes looking for the reachable.

READ ALOUD: Mark 16:1-7

4. Easter morning. The women come to anoint a corpse and meet an angel with a message. Read verse 7 twice and weigh every word: "But go, tell his disciples AND PETER that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." Why those two words? What does it mean that heaven's first Easter message singles out, by name, the man who denied Him?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Because the man who cursed and swore "I do not know him" would hear "tell his disciples" and assume, with the arithmetic of shame, that the word no longer includes him. Shame always resigns on God's behalf. So mercy names him separately, so the message cannot miss: yes, Peter, you. And weigh what the message IS: "he is going before you to Galilee... as he told you." It is the appointment Jesus attached to the very prophecy of the fall (Matthew 26:32), still standing, unrevoked by everything that happened at the fire. The fall did not cancel the appointment; the appointment had already accounted for the fall. One more weight for the scale: the early Church's consistent testimony is that Mark's Gospel preserves Peter's own preaching, which means "and Peter" is in the Bible because Peter himself would not stop telling people about the morning mercy called him by name.

5. “And Peter” is not a new mood in God. It is His oldest one, and He once let a prophet publish His interior monologue about a people who had betrayed Him.

Live discovery: say: “Read Hosea 11:8-9 in pairs. Israel has been faithless for chapters; this is God talking to Himself about it. What do you hear in His voice, and what reason does He give for not letting go?” Let pairs report before the answer box.

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

The pairs should hear something almost unbearable: God letting us overhear, in daringly human words, what mercy sounds like from the inside: judgment is deserved, and He will not deliver it. In God, mercy and justice are not rivals, but Hosea dares to voice the mystery as an argument God resolves in mercy's favor. “How can I give you up, O Ephraim!... My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender.” And the reason He gives is the deepest sentence in the prophets: “for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst.” We assume holiness means distance from betrayers; God says His holiness is precisely why He will not do what wounded humans do. A man gives up; God is not man. “And Peter” on Easter morning is Hosea 11 with a name filled in. The group should carry the connection out the door: the mercy that hunted Peter is not a New Testament personality change; it is who God has always insisted He is.

6. One more thing happened that day, and Scripture handles it with strange delicacy. The Eleven greet the Emmaus disciples: “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” (Luke 24:34). Paul puts it first in the earliest creed: “he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve” (1 Corinthians 15:5). The risen Christ met Peter alone, before the others, and no Gospel tells us one word of what was said. Why do you think that meeting is in the record but its contents are not, and what does the sheer order of events (this meeting FIRST) tell you about the risen Christ?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

On the silence: some meetings between mercy and misery are too intimate for minutes. Scripture confirms the meeting happened, twice, and then draws a curtain, and every soul that has ever knelt in a confessional understands why: what mercy says to a particular man's worst hour belongs to the two of them. The delicacy is itself a revelation of how God handles shame: He does not process Peter in front of the group. On the order: look at what the risen Lord did with the first hours of the greatest victory in history. Before He appeared to the assembled Eleven, before commissions and proofs offered to skeptics, He sought out the friend who had denied Him. Private mercy before public anything. Whatever restoration still needs to happen in front of the others (and something does; hold that thought one week), the wound between Jesus and Simon was sought out first, by Jesus. Mercy does not wait for the apology to be drafted. It knocks.

DIG DEEPER: TWO WORDS FOR REPENTANCE

Matthew says Judas “repented” with the Greek *metamelētheis*: regret, remorse, the anguish of wishing something undone. The New Testament's usual word for saving repentance is different: *metanoia*, a turning of the mind and heart toward God. The vocabulary is not a rigid code, but the

distinction it gestures at is tonight's whole lesson: remorse feels the wound; repentance turns toward the Healer. One can drown in the first without ever reaching the second.

DIG DEEPER: THE CREED BEFORE THE CREEDS

1 Corinthians 15:3-5 ("delivered to you... what I also received") is widely recognized as a formula Paul himself received, dating to within a few years of the events. Its witness list begins: "he appeared to Cephas." The private mercy shown to Simon Peter is not a devotional flourish added later; it stands at the head of the oldest summary of the Gospel the Church possesses.

SEND: TAKING IT WITH YOU

S1. Which grief is yours? When you fail, does your grief face the mirror or face the Lord? What is one concrete way to turn it around this week (naming it to God, to a confessor, to a trusted friend)?

S2. Whose "and Peter" could you carry this week: someone who has drifted or fallen and assumes the word disciple no longer includes them? What would it cost you to deliver the message by name?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray Psalm 130 once, slowly: the prayer of the reachable. If there is a courtyard in your past you have been seeing to yourself, Judas-style, bring it instead to the Lord this week, and if you are Catholic, consider bringing it to Confession, where the private meeting still happens and the contents are still sealed.

2. Deliver one "and Peter": reach out, by name, to one person who has drifted from faith or from your community, with zero agenda except that they hear the door is open.

3. BRING YOUR TAKE-HOME 1 SHEET NEXT WEEK, sealed guess still folded. Put it with your keys tonight. You will need it.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, risen from the dead, you spent the first hours of your victory looking for the friend who denied you. Find us the same way. Take from us the worldly grief that faces the mirror and appoints itself judge, and give us the godly grief that faces you and finds you already turned toward us. For those we love who think the word disciple no longer includes them: send your message by name, and if you like, send it through us. You are God and not man, the Holy One in our midst. Amen.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

“But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him,

as he told you.”

Mark 16:7 (RSV2CE)

Before you dismiss: hand out Take-Home 8 and give the instruction slowly, twice: “Bring your Take-Home 1 sheet next week, guess still sealed. Put it with your keys tonight.” Do not explain why. If someone has lost theirs, quietly tell them to come five minutes early next week.

PART THREE: LEADER REFERENCE CARD

EVERY PASSAGE IN THIS SESSION

Primary Texts

- Matthew 27:3-5, Judas' remorse, the priests' answer, the end
- 2 Corinthians 7:10, godly grief and worldly grief (read openly tonight)
- Mark 16:1-7, the empty tomb and “and Peter”
- Luke 24:33-34 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, “appeared to Simon,” the creed's first witness

Live Discovery Text

- Hosea 11:8-9, “How can I give you up... for I am God and not man”

Supporting Texts

- Matthew 26:32, the Galilee appointment made before the fall
- Psalm 130, out of the depths: the prayer of the reachable
- Romans 5:8, while we were yet sinners (strand)

Catechism

- CCC 982, no offense the Church cannot forgive
- CCC 1864, the only fatal condition: refusing mercy
- CCC 1847, He does not save us without us

Memory Verse

- Mark 16:7

Critical Logistics

- Participants must bring Take-Home 1 (sealed) next session. Contingency for lost sheets: arrive early, rewrite from memory before the session.