**Live in Community**

 Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Stand Firm**

Put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. ([Ephesians 6:13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Eph6.13))

*The world thinks of power as action. Powerful people are able to take control, able to change things. But Jesus blessed the meek, the hungry, and the poor. There is a power this world overlooks. There is power in standing firm in faith. Christians have long stood their ground, not to gain this world’s power but as witnesses to a better world to come. So we stand strong, committed, and bear witness to the world.*

**Session Overview**

**Remain Strong**

**Biblical Encounter:** Pilate Gives In to the Crowd and Orders Jesus’ Crucifixion ([Luke 23:1–25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk23.1-25), [44–48](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk23.44-48))

**Outcome:** Stand against pressure from others and follow God, not the crowd.

*In this session, we’ll explore how to stand firm in our faith even if the world pushes back. Publicly proclaiming to be a Christian is not always easy or popular in our society. We feel pressure to conform and go along with what everyone else is doing and saying. The Bible has a lot to say about people who stood their ground and refused to give in to the culture around them. They knew something we can learn—that our faith rests on a Power much higher than anything else in the world.*

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| First time leading *Live* for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**Who is your favorite superhero and why? |

Our culture has rediscovered its love for superheroes. Every year, several new movies are released based on favorite characters from comic books and legends. People can’t seem to get enough! We love to think about someone with supernatural abilities who can show up at the perfect moment to save us. Of course, there’s a reason this idea stirs us so deeply. We really do know Someone like that. His name is Jesus! As we walk with Him, we learn and grow in our faith. We begin to understand that we can trust Him, no matter what the rest of the world is pushing us to believe.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to these questions: When it comes to speaking up publicly for what you believe, are you as bold about your faith as you are about your other convictions? Why or why not?



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**Consider What the Bible Says**

In the Bible story we’ll discuss, some religious leaders had banded together to get rid of Jesus once and for all. He had been disrupting their idea of religion for more than three long years, and they’d had enough. So, they decided to bend the truth to get the Roman governor to take action for them.

King Solomon once said that there’s nothing new under the sun ([Ecclesiastes 1:9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ec1.9)). Our sinful world has always seen power struggles. Corruption has always been a temptation. And the crowd has often tried to bully and intimidate individuals into doing what it wants. Today, our culture tells us that truth is whatever the “group” decides it is. This group thinking makes it difficult for anyone to go against the crowd’s ideas and stand up for biblical truth.

**The Crowd Gathers**

Read [Luke 23:1–12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk23.1-12).

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor responsible for the region of Judea and its major city, Jerusalem. This was a tough assignment because the Jewish people didn’t want to be ruled by Rome or anyone else. Frequent tensions were a result. On this particular day, the religious leaders twisted Jesus’ actions and words to make it sound like He was working against the government. As the crowd gathered, Pilate was eager to calm things down. He was trying to keep the peace and keep his job.

Pilate wasn’t committed to the truth. He just wanted to make the drama of the day go away. Seeing his chance to get out of this situation, Pilate sent Jesus to be questioned by the ruler of Galilee, Herod who was technically over the Jews in that area. Surprisingly, he was excited to see Jesus almost as if He were a magician on tour who did the miraculous on demand. But when Jesus didn’t go along with Herod, his demeanor changed. Herod went from inquisitively questioning Jesus to mocking Him as did Herod’s soldiers. These two government leaders, Pilate and Herod, came so close to Jesus, but they didn’t take the time or energy to really get to know Him.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Jesus stayed silent rather than defend himself to Herod or take this opportunity to influence these leaders? |

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| **QUESTION**What would you have done with Jesus if you had been Pilate in this situation? |

**The Crowd Makes a Demand**

Read [Luke 23:13–25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk23.13-25).

The religious leaders shouldn’t have wanted anyone to be punished by Roman law. They shouldn’t have been in Pilate’s courtyard at all. But Jesus was a threat to their religious system. Everything He said and did revealed that their system was built on what gave them power and position.

Pilate basically told the Jewish leaders that they were making trouble where there wasn’t any. Neither he nor Herod could find any of Jesus’ actions worthy of punishment because He hadn’t broken any laws. But the religious leaders and the crowd wouldn’t stand for it. Every time Pilate tried to reason with them, they grew even more furious.

Just like people today, the crowd was determined that their way was best, and they didn’t really care about alternatives to their perceived truth. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, but he was too afraid of losing the peace and then his job. He backed down as the crowd revved up and gave in to their demands for Jesus’ blood and life.

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| **QUESTION**If you had been in Jerusalem at that moment, how would you guess the story would end? |

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| **QUESTION**If Pilate had asked you for advice before this second encounter with Jesus and His enemies, what would you have told him? |

**The Death of Jesus**

Read [Luke 23:44–48](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk23.44-48).

The religious leaders who stirred up trouble and the angry crowd thought they’d won. They thought they’d shown everyone who was really in charge and what happened to people who challenged them. It certainly looked like that was true when Pilate gave in and ordered Jesus’ death.

Crucifixion was a painful way to be killed and was used to send a message to everyone watching: don’t cause trouble or else. But nothing about this crucifixion was normal. The sky turned black in the middle of the day. The enormous curtain in the Jewish temple, which separated sinful people from God’s holy presence, ripped down the middle all by itself. And Jesus, instead of gasping and struggling for breath, shouted out in a loud voice, “Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!” And then He died. The soldiers had crucified people countless times before, but Jesus’ death was so unusual that their commander began worshipping the true God. The crowd went away deeply sorrowful for what they had done.

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| **QUESTION**What do you imagine Pilate thought when he heard about what had happened at the crucifixion site? |

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| **QUESTION**How can we stand firm in our faith and not give in when the crowd is pushing against us? |

**Did You Know?**

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| *Pontius Pilate served as the prefect of Judea for the Roman Empire from 26–36 AD. As prefect, Pilate was a military commander who was appointed over a volatile region of the Roman Empire. Archaeology has uncovered two inscriptions referencing Pilate. The first is a signet ring from his reign over Judea, which would have acted as his signature for official documents. The other is a dedication stone for a temple he had built in honor of Caesar Tiberius. Additionally, written accounts of Pilate’s reign include the New Testament as well as both Roman and Jewish accounts from the first century AD.* |

**Reflect**

**Stand against pressure from others and follow God, not the crowd.**

Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, but he wasn’t willing to pay the cost to put that truth into action. He was too wrapped up in protecting his position to seek truth and real power. Because of this, Pilate let the crowd push him around.

The story of Pilate still has meaning today. We live in a time and world that is increasingly hostile toward those whose faith is in Jesus. But instead of giving in to the crowd as Pilate did, we can learn to trust and depend on Jesus. God’s power is greater than anything in this world, and nothing can separate us from His love ([Romans 8:38–39](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro8.38-39)). Instead of being afraid of what the crowd might do to our reputation, career, and family, we can turn to God and find the power to stand firm and remain strong.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**What do you think Pilate learned from his encounter with Jesus? |

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think so many people are willing to join in with an angry crowd? |

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| **QUESTION**How do you think you would react if faced with an angry mob for something you said or did? |

**Activate**

This Bible story deals with a situation we find increasingly common today. Many people have found themselves the target of a mob, similar to what Jesus experienced. Jesus was falsely accused by a prideful and angry group. What He had said was twisted to make Him look like a rebel in front of important leaders. The crowd was ready to do anything to embarrass and harass Him into silence and submission.

In the same way, we might find ourself faced with an angry crowd of our own. The best way to prepare for a situation like this is to practice being bold in the meantime. We don’t want to go looking for trouble or to stir up a crowd for no reason, but we do want to become comfortable in sharing our faith in Jesus with confidence and boldness.

**Challenge**

This week, watch for an opportunity to share your faith, especially with someone you haven’t yet shared your story. It might be at home, at work, or during everyday activities. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recognize a time when a conversation or situation would be meaningful for you to testify to God’s goodness. Practice sharing your faith with others.

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and pray together. Also remember to pray for them during the week. |

As we walk with Jesus, we can consistently learn and grow in our faith. Continuing to learn from God’s Word helps us become stronger, and studying on our own is a great way to reinforce our faith. This week’s devotions will focus on what it looks like to stand firm in our faith and to remain strong in the face of pressure.

**Live on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: Pilate Gives In to the Crowd and Orders Jesus’ Crucifixion**

Read [Luke 23:1–25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk23.1-25), [44–48](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk23.44-48).

Look back over Live in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**What is God saying to you about standing against pressure from others as you follow Him? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 2: God Is Stronger**

Read [Exodus 7:1–13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ex7.1-13).

The Lord mightily delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, and He used Moses to lead them out. But it took some time for Moses to be convinced and ready to fulfill his part. Understandably, Moses was intimidated by Pharaoh and his power. By God’s hand, Moses was an Israelite who had grown up in the palace ([Exodus 2:1–10](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ex2.1-10)). He knew that whatever Pharaoh wanted or commanded would happen. And Moses wasn’t sure that he could stand against Pharaoh and his magicians.

God told Moses and Aaron what to do when Pharaoh demanded to see a miracle. Aaron did exactly what God said and threw down his staff, amazed to watch it become a serpent. Moses and Aaron may have felt discouraged when the Egyptian magicians were able to do the same thing. But did you notice what happened to the magicians’ staffs? No matter what the enemy can muster, God is stronger still. No matter the level of power that earthly kings, leaders, or magicians have, God’s power is far superior. We can trust that God is able to save and deliver us just as He delivered Moses and the Israelites.

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| **QUESTION**What do you think Moses and Aaron might have been thinking as they watched Aaron’s staff become a serpent? |

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| **QUESTION**How does this event in Moses’s life challenge or strengthen your perspective of God’s power? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 3: We Are Not Alone**

Read [2 Kings 6:8–23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Ki6.8-23).

Elisha the prophet had a strong and unshakable faith. He had been mentored by another great man of God, Elijah, and had become Elijah’s spiritual heir. Elisha submitted himself to God and was a faithful prophet to Israel throughout his life.

During the situation we read, Elisha repeatedly warned the king of Israel of danger from a neighboring army before it happened. No matter what the king of Aram did, his attacks against Israel weren’t a surprise. So one day, the king of Aram had had enough of Elisha and sent an army to take him out. Elisha’s young servant was terrified to see the enemy army surrounding them the next morning. But Elisha remained calm. He walked so closely with God and was so in tune with His Spirit, that he was fully confident that much more help was available.

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| **QUESTION**If you had been Elisha’s servant, what would you have said or done when you saw the heavenly army? |

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| **QUESTION**How does this example apply in your own life? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 4: Standing Firm under Family Pressure**

Read [2 Samuel 6:12–23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Sa6.12-23).

David had not been king of Israel for very long at this time. But he wanted to bring the ark of the Lord, which represented God’s covenant with Israel, back to Jerusalem where it belonged. David was grateful for God’s help and deliverance. He knew from experience that God could help them in the face of any enemy, be it a wild animal, a giant, or an army. So, he danced and celebrated before the ark as it was brought back into the city.

His wife Michal, however, thought David’s behavior was disgraceful. She had definite ideas about what serving the Lord ought to look like. David’s over-the-top worship embarrassed her, and she mocked him. In the same way, pressure in our own life can often come from people close to us. Many people have strong opinions about what is and isn’t appropriate. They often can’t understand strong devotion to God. But like David, we can know that walking with God is worth any amount of pressure, no matter who disapproves.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Michal was so embarrassed by the way David acted? |

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| **QUESTION**How does David’s reaction to her inspire you in your own situation? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 5: Caught Up in a Riot**

Read [Acts 19:23–41](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac19.23-41); [20:1](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac20.1).

This passage of Scripture gives us a lot of insight into the way angry crowds work. One person was really angry. He said he was defending his goddess, but in reality, he didn’t want to lose his very comfortable way of life. Demetrius was able to rile up others in his trade, and they spilled out into the streets, shouting and causing a commotion. Before long, the whole city was in confusion. Everyone got swept into the crowd, and most people didn’t really have any idea what was even happening.

We have angry mobs still today and we can learn a couple of things about them from this reading. First, we have to be careful not to be swept along with just any crowd. Demetrius caused the trouble that day, all because he was afraid to lose the wealth and power he had gained from his trade of building idols.

Many people can incite trouble when they’re afraid, and we have to be cautious not to do the same or get caught up in their fear. Second, we can learn from what happened with Paul and the other followers of Jesus. They didn’t lose heart, but instead trusted God and made it through the crisis. The gospel continued to spread throughout that region, and today the worship of Artemis has almost disappeared. Following Jesus doesn’t guarantee that we will never be the object of the crowd’s anger. But we can see that He is faithful to help us stand strong as we bear witness to the world.

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| **QUESTION**What do you think it felt like for Gaius and Aristarchus to be dragged into that amphitheater to defend Paul? |

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| **QUESTION**What is God speaking to you about enduring pressure in your own life? |