**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.

*Today’s Bible story takes us to the final hours of Jesus’ life on earth just before His crucifixion. Tensions were high because the hostile crowd wanted Jesus to be killed. Jesus’ fate rested in the hands of Pilate, a Roman governor of the day. As the crowd continued to pressure him, Pilate was faced with a decision: give in to the crowd and order Jesus to be killed or do what he knew to be right and release the innocent Jesus.*

*We’ve all been faced with decisions that are similar in nature to this. The voices around us call out for us to do one thing, while inside, we know we should do something else. This story challenges us to always follow the voice of the Holy Spirit, no matter how much pressure we face from others.*

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Jar full of multicolored candies* *• Small pieces of paper, one per student* *• Pencil or pen, one per student* *• Smartphone or timer****Getting Ready*** *• Count the multicolored candies and fill a jar with the candies.* *•* ***First time leading* Live *for Youth? Look here for 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**

**Welcome**

*Take this time to welcome everyone, introduce new students, learn names, and thank everyone for coming. Your friendliness here can create a comfort level that encourages student participation later.*

**Opening Prayer**

*Prayer thoughts: Thank God for the time you have together and for the freedom to study the Bible without fear. As you pray, be intentional about using regular, everyday language. Try to reinforce to students that you don’t need special or fancy language when you pray.*

**Introduction**

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| **QUESTION**What is the scariest thing someone has challenged you to do? Did you do it? |

Isn’t it interesting how much peer pressure can affect us? No matter how strong we think we are, we’re all susceptible to giving in when people push us to do something. Not all peer pressure is bad. Sometimes, it can push us out of our comfort zone and get us to try new things that are good for us. But pressure from the wrong people can get us into situations that we never wanted to be in. Today’s Bible story tells about a man who had to decide between what he knew was right and what the voices around him pressured him to do.

**Group Activity**

**Peer Pressure Guesser**

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Jar full of multicolored candies* *• Small pieces of paper, one per student* *• Pencil or pen, one per student* *• Smartphone or timer****Getting Ready*** *• Count the multicolored candies and fill a jar with the candies.* |

Today, I’d like to give away some candy to one lucky winner. All you have to do is guess how many pieces of candy are in this jar.

• *Hold the jar for the group to see.*

Whoever guesses closest to the actual number of candies will get the whole jar for their own! I’ll show you the jar, and you’ll have a chance to write your guess on a piece of paper. After everyone has a chance to guess, we’ll split into groups, and you’ll have two minutes to discuss your guesses and why you wrote that number.

• *Give every student a small piece of paper and a pencil or pen.*

• *Hold up or pass around the jar for each student to see.*

• *After everyone has written down their guess, divide group into small groups. (The number of students per group doesn’t matter. You can have as few or as many groups as you’d like.)*

• *Give the groups two minutes to discuss their guesses, and then have students return to their seats.*

There’s one more step before you turn in your final guess. You have one last chance to change your answer after hearing everyone else’s guesses in your group. Here’s how to do that. First, write your name on the slip. Then if you want to change your answer, put an X over your first guess. Write your new guess, and then circle it. You have ten seconds. Let’s go!

• *Let students have one final chance to change their guesses. Then collect all the papers.*

• *Read out every answer without naming the students, and then tell the group the correct number of multicolored candies.*

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| **QUESTION**Did you change your guess after meeting with your group? Why or why not? |

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| **QUESTION**If you changed your guess, was your new one guess closer to or further away from the correct answer? |

When we allow other voices to speak into our decisions, it has the power to change the outcome. Today’s Bible story introduces us to a man who gave in to immense pressure instead of standing firm on his convictions. If you’ve ever faced pressure to lower your standards, today’s story could be just for you. Before we jump in, let’s watch the video for today.

**Watch**

**Consider What the Bible Says**

*Ensure each student has access to a Bible, preferably the same version.*

Jesus knew that He was at the very end of His life on earth. Shortly before the events of this Bible story took place, Jesus had gathered His disciples together for a final, special meal together. He was also betrayed by one of His disciples, Judas, soon after that meal. That led to Jesus being arrested and having a trial before some religious leaders. Those leaders wanted Jesus to be put to death, so He was brought before Pilate, their Roman governor. With a crowd roaring and emotions rising, Pilate had to decide what to do.

**Pilate Confronted Jesus**

Read [Luke 23:1–6](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk23.1-6).

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think so many people wanted to kill Jesus? |

The religious leaders were frustrated with Jesus. He spent time with people they deemed unclean or unworthy to be around. Unlike other Jewish people, Jesus wasn’t afraid to break their man-made rules so He could help other people. And as the Son of God, He had God-given authority and power that the religious leaders didn’t have. They had no idea how much Jesus would turn the world upside down. They just wanted Him out of the way.

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| **QUESTION**What was Pilate’s initial response to those who accused Jesus of doing wrong? |

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| **QUESTION**Think of a time when you had to choose between what you knew was right and what other people were pressuring you to do. Which did you choose? |

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| **QUESTION**What might we learn from Jesus’ quiet submission in the face of the crowd’s accusations? |

Jesus knew His life was in God’s hands. His response shows us how He completely trusted God. It’s also clear that Pilate thought Jesus was innocent. Pilate knew the right thing to do, but the pressure from the crowd was too much for him to handle. He had the opportunity to let Jesus go free, but he didn’t. While it’s easy to judge Pilate now, there are times when we know the right thing to do, but we hesitate because of what we think others want us to do.

**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. |

**Pilate Tried to Hand Off the Responsibility**

Read [Luke 23:7–12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk23.7-12).

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Pilate chose to pass Jesus along to Herod instead of just letting Him go? |

Like Pilate and Herod, we’ve all faced tough decisions like this. And in those moments, it’s often easier to put off making a decision. In these moments, we have to trust the Holy Spirit to provide the courage and boldness to do the right thing.

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| **QUESTION**What might Herod Antipas’s response to the arrival of Jesus tell us about Jesus’ reputation? |

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Jesus chose to stay quiet rather than answer questions? |

As the story continued, Pilate was once again faced with the decision between what was right and what was popular with the crowd. Let’s keep reading to see how Pilate responded this time.

**The Crowd Got Louder**

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

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Pilate still wanted to have Jesus whipped before releasing Him rather than simply letting Jesus go free? |

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| **QUESTION**What is the danger of listening to the wrong crowd of people? |

There can be severe consequences when we give in to the crowd. There are times when people attempt to get us to do things that we know are wrong. It’s in times like these that we need to learn to stand firm against the crowd and follow what we know is right.

Pilate attempted to escape the pressure from the crowd by having Jesus flogged instead of killed. But, the crowd wouldn’t stop shouting. They wanted Jesus dead, and they would not take no for an answer. Finally, Pilate gave in and gave the people what they wanted. Jesus was taken to the cross where He was hung to die alongside two criminals.

**Pilate’s Decision Led to Jesus’ Death**

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

The choices we make in life don’t impact our life alone. Pilate caved in to the pressure of the crowd around him. His orders were followed, and Jesus died as a result. Many times, our lack of commitment to Jesus affects the lives of others, too. But by standing firm, we can be an example to others.

Let’s consider how Pilate and others may have felt about their decision after Jesus died. We read that a crowd went away in sorrow after Jesus’ death. They knew what happened there was wrong. Also, imagine the guilt Pilate may have had for sending a Man he knew was innocent to be executed. The lesson we need to learn is that we must be careful of the crowds we listen to or join. They may not have our best interests in mind.

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| **QUESTION**How can we stay committed to Jesus, even when we face pressure from others? |

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| **QUESTION**Can you think of someone who has been an example of strong commitment to God even when they faced pressure from others? Who is it, and what did they do? |

**Reflect**

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

Pilate folded under the pressure of the crowd while Jesus maintained obedience to God the Father no matter how difficult circumstances became. What a contrast between these two men! It appears Pilate was unwilling to remain committed to what he believed was right. As Christians, it’s important that we stay committed to God, even when the crowd tries to tempt us.

As the voices got louder and louder, Pilate tried everything to avoid making the difficult decision, even though he knew what was right. He tried to pass off the responsibility to someone else, and then he tried to compromise. The same voices were ringing in Jesus’ ears too, but He never wavered.

Sometimes, following Jesus will lead us to make difficult decisions that others don’t agree with. If we are trying to please the crowd, we’ll fold under pressure. We must choose to please God alone, no matter what, when we are in situations like Pilate and Jesus were.

**Listen to God**

Let’s take time to consider how our life demonstrates a real trust in the Bible. These questions are meant to serve as a conversation between you and God. Sharing your responses with the group is completely voluntary.

• *Pause for a few moments of silent reflection after reading the questions. Then ask students if they want to share. Sharing your personal response may also be helpful to the students.*

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| **QUESTION**Do examples like this challenge you to stay committed to God? How? |

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| **QUESTION**Is there a situation in your own life where you’ve tried to please the crowd more than you’ve tried to please God? What can you apply to your situation from this Bible story? |

**Activate**

Ultimately, making the right decision is easier when we are surrounded by the right crowd. Let’s commit to be the kind of friends who encourage and challenge each other to be all that God has called us to be. This week, share with a friend one thing you learned from this discussion. Be willing to stand with them when they face the temptation to please others instead of God.

**Conclusion**

The big question today is this: Are you living to please the crowd, or are you living to please God? Pilate was concerned with appeasing the crowd, and his decision had consequences. Jesus, on the other hand, showed us how to obey God, even when life is hard, and the crowd is loudly against us. Despite Pilate’s decision, this story is a great example of how God can work our mistakes out for good. Because of Jesus’ death on a cross, you and I can be forgiven and have access to Him in our difficult moments.

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| **Salvation Opportunity***Include this if you think there may be some in the group who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.*Pilate may have made the final decision to send Jesus to death, but it was ultimately God’s love for humanity that kept Jesus there. With His death on the Cross, Jesus paid for the sins of each one of us. And three days later, He defeated death when He rose from the grave. That gives us access to God, and we can always trust Him.**Is anyone here that we can pray for who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus or wants to renew their relationship with Him?***Take a moment to acknowledge those who respond, and thank them for their desire to make things right between themselves and God. Pray with them as you close in prayer or after the group time is over. Following group time, talk more about where they are in their walk with God and how you might be able to help.* |

**Prayer**

Dear God, thank You for being the kind of Father we can trust, even when it gets difficult. Help us all to value Your voice more than we value the world’s. When we’re faced with tough decisions, give us the courage to stand firm. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

**Dismissal**

Don’t forget to open the Bible Engagement Project app this week to find the personal devotions. These allow you to spend time in God’s Word on your own and put into practice the things we’ve been learning. I look forward to seeing each of you next time as we continue our journey in God’s Word.