



LESSON 68

1st and 2nd Grade

Principle: Giving into peer pressure can be sin.

Bible Character(s): Jesus and Pilate

Scripture Reference: Matthew 27:15-26



PERSONAL PREPARATION: Before this weekend, read through Matthew 27:15-26.

Jesus was sent to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, for trial. Pilate was allowed to release to the crowd one prisoner of their choice. Even though Jesus was innocent, the crowd asked for the murderer Barabbas to be released, and Pilate complied. He also gave Jesus to the crowd so they could crucify Him, as they wanted.

Was Pilate more interested in justice or pleasing the people? When we follow the advice and example of our peers rather than God's Word, are we acting like Pilate? Do we look to God for direction and wisdom, or depend too much on others around us? Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, but he gave Jesus over to be crucified because he wanted to please the crowd. He cared more about pleasing the people than doing what was right. When we allow people around us to cause us to make decisions and live in a way that disobeys God, that is sin. God wants us to follow Him and obey His commands, even if it means sacrifice and suffering. Jesus experienced suffering so we could have eternal life; we have the privilege of sharing in that suffering to share the Gospel and glorify His name. Spend some time thinking about how you have given into peer pressure and cared more about what others thought than obeying God. Think about how you can embrace the life God wants you to live so that you glorify Him in all you do, even if it means suffering for His sake. Be prepared to share some examples with your campers.

PLUG IN TIME - 5-10 minutes as the kids begin to arrive

Arrive early to check the supplies in the bin and review the lesson. Write today's principle on the whiteboard. Remember to greet all campers upon arrival; meet their parents; welcome and introduce all visitors. Create a welcoming cabin for all campers!

We Are Influenced By...

Have the campers come up with things in their life that influence the way they think and act.

Examples: friends, family, sports, teacher, TV, radio, books, movies, etc. Write down their ideas on the whiteboard.

Follow the Leader

Play the game, "Follow the Leader." Campers must copy whatever the leader does.



BIG GROUP TIME - 35-40 minutes

As you line up, remind campers we are going to have fun as an entire Camp Grace group! We are going to live out GRACE by **Glorifying God** through worship, **Respecting All leaders**, and **Accepting Responsibility** to listen with attentive ears, minds, and hearts - fully **Celebrating Christ** with passion! We should **Encourage Others** to do the same, by not distracting them from their worship of God.

The Bridge to Small Group

Today we will look at Pilate's response to the peer pressure of people. We will see that we also make decisions based on our fears of what others will think rather than looking to God for direction and wisdom.

Small Group Time - 25-30 minutes

Getting Started

If your cabin did well in Big Group, acknowledge it. If not, take a couple of minutes to talk about how they can do better next time.

What did you learn in Big Group? What did Surfer Dude teach you? (We should care more about what God thinks than what others think; we should obey what God wants for us instead of giving into peer pressure that can cause us to sin.)

What is peer pressure? (Allow responses.) We are going to talk about that today. Peers are your friends and the people around you who are your age. Peer pressure is the tension that we feel when our friends tell us one thing, and we know something else is right and good. We are going to see how a man named Pilate let peer pressure influence him about Jesus, but first let's review what we learned last week.

What did we see Jesus do last week? (We saw Him choose to submit and obey God's will for His life.) **What happened to Jesus?** (He was in the garden praying before being arrested.) **How did He feel?** (He knew exactly what kind of suffering He was going to experience in order for God's plan to prevail.) **How did Jesus choose to submit and obey God's will?** (He could have defeated the soldiers who came to arrest Him, but He chose to follow God's will and allow them to arrest Him. He submitted to what God wanted because He knew God's plan would bring much more blessing than disobeying God.)

Today we are going to continue in the book of Matthew to see what happens when Jesus is in prison. The Israelites were still celebrating Passover at this time.

Let's begin reading the Bible in Matthew 27 [NLT].

Matthew 27:15-18

¹⁵ Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner to the crowd—anyone they wanted. ¹⁶ This year there was a notorious prisoner, a man named Barabbas. ¹⁷ As the crowds gathered before Pilate's house that morning, he asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" ¹⁸ (He knew very well that the religious leaders had arrested Jesus out of envy.)

Barrabas was guilty. He deserved to be in prison. Jesus was not guilty; He never sinned. Pilate was the Roman governor over the Jews who determined if someone received the punishment of death. He decided which prisoner would be released. He knew that the Jewish leaders did not like Jesus, and He knew that Jesus was innocent.

Let's read the Bible to see what happens next.

Matthew 27:19-21a

¹⁹ Just then, as Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him this message: "Leave that innocent man alone. I suffered through a terrible nightmare about him last night."

²⁰ Meanwhile, the leading priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be put to death. ²¹ So the governor asked again, "Which of these two do you want me to release to you?"

Pilate knew Jesus was innocent. He knew Jesus did not deserve to die. His own wife told him Jesus was not guilty. Why do you think Pilate would consider killing Jesus if he knew Jesus was not guilty? (Allow responses.) Pilate could release Jesus. He could choose to lead well and make a decision to do what was right, or he could choose to do what the people around him wanted him to do, even though it was wrong.

Lead or Follow?



The purpose of this activity is to show that Pilate had a choice to lead or follow. We also have this choice.

Supplies:

Blocks (20 per bin)

Pull out one camper to be on a team alone. Everyone else will be on the opposite team. All the blocks will be piled on the floor on one side of the room. The "teams" will start on the opposite side of the room. On "go" each team will try to be the first to stack up ten blocks. Each team member can only pick up one block at a time. The team of one person has to keep returning to the stack, running back and forth, to get another block. The team with everyone else can get blocks at the same time.

Tie It Together



Was this game difficult? Was it harder for the team with one person, or the team with everyone else? (Allow responses.) It was hard for the person who was all alone. He or she did not get to be a part of the winning team, and had to do all of the work for the game alone. Sometimes we will have to choose to make the right decision and be alone, or go along with others' bad decisions and stay with the group. If we disagree with the people around us, that can be difficult. Pilate had to make this choice. He could either choose to lead and release the innocent man, or he could follow the crowd and release Barabbas. Barabbas was a well-known criminal who was guilty of murder. He deserved punishment for his crimes, but Jesus did not.

Let's continue reading the Bible to see what happens. Remember, Pilate just asked the crowd which of the two prisoners they wanted to be released.

Matthew 27:21b-23

The crowd shouted back, "Barabbas!"

²² Pilate responded, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

They shouted back, "Crucify him!"

²³ "Why?" Pilate demanded. "What crime has he committed?"

But the mob roared even louder, "Crucify him!"

The people listened to the chief priests and the elders, and then pressured Pilate to crucify Jesus. Do you think Pilate would give them what they wanted? (Allow responses.) Pilate was worried that the people would not like him if he released Jesus.

The Bible tells us that Pilate gave in to the pressure of the people. He tried to say that he was not responsible, that the people had chosen; but Pilate gave in to their pressure. He could have released Jesus. He was sinning by giving into their pressure.

How should Pilate have made his decision? How should we make a decision when we are faced with peer pressure? (Pilate should have done what was right; we should do what is right, and that is to honor God.)

Who is Your Yelling Crowd?



The purpose of this activity is to explore what the sources of peer pressure are for the campers.

Supplies:

Whiteboard

Ask the campers the following questions and discuss how easy it is to place more value on a friend's opinion rather than on obeying God and following Him. You can use the whiteboard to write down the questions and/or answers to help the visual learners.

- Who do you listen to?
- Who are some people in your life that have influenced decisions you have made?
- Do these people encourage you to do good things or bad things?

Tie It Together



It is difficult to stand up to peer pressure. We might get called names, or a person might not like us anymore if we do not listen to them. However, we know that God's way is the best way to live. When we choose to listen to others and disobey God, we are missing out on the blessings God has for us. It is tough to go against the crowd, but it is much harder to live outside of God's plan.

Different From the World



The purpose of this activity is to see how we are to be different and set apart from the world rather than giving in to the peer pressure to sin.

Supplies:

Clear disposable food storage container with oil (1 per session)
Jug of water (1 per bin)
Stirrer/spoon (1 per bin)
Bottle of food coloring (1 per bin)
Teacher's Guide (1 per bin)
Paper towels
Jar to mix water and oil

Lead your campers through the following illustration and help them see that God desires us to be different and set apart from the world rather than giving in to peer pressure to sin. See the Teacher Guide for a visual reference.

1. Show campers the container with oil. **The oil represents Christ followers – those who have believed and trusted in Jesus as their Savior.**
2. Pour water into the jar (equal parts water and oil; being careful not to overflow). **The water represents the world (or things that are not of the Lord).**
3. Watch the liquids separate.
4. Add a few drops of food coloring. **The food coloring represents sin.**
5. Make sure the lid is secure and shake the container. Watch as the oil (Christ followers) repels the food coloring but the water “accepts” it.

God's word tells us in Romans 12:2 “Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.” We are to be separate from the world – different – not copying the sins of the world (giving in to peer pressure), but rather allowing God to transform and change us.

6. Use the stirrer/spoon to stir the liquids.

Sometimes we mess up and give in to the peer pressure to sin. When we do, we need to repent, to turn away from sin and ask Jesus to change our hearts. God's word tells us in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."

7. Watch as everything starts to separate again!

** At the end of this activity, please place your lid tightly on the jar and dispose of according to instructions given by your coach or GCK staff member.

Tie It Together



In this activity, we see a great illustration of how God desires us to live for Him rather than giving in to the peer pressure to sin. Our God is powerful, glorious, and forgiving. He is worthy of our worship! Because of this we should desire to be different from the world and please God by doing what is right. This means we will need to focus on pleasing God and not giving in to peer pressure to sin. God promises us in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure."

Optional Additional Activity: Act It Out



The purpose is for the campers to have a better understanding of how peer pressure can lead to sin.

Supplies:

Matthew 27:20-26 passage (below)

Characters: Priests, Elders, Pilate (Governor), Barabbas, Jesus, the crowd.

Ask for volunteers to act out the passage (below).

Matthew 27:20-26

²⁰ *But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.*

²¹ *"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered.*

²² *"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!"*

²³ *"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"*

²⁴ *When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"*

²⁵ All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!"²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Tie It Together



The people listened to the chief priests and the elders, and then pressured Pilate to crucify Jesus. Pilate was worried that the people would not like him if he released Jesus. What did Pilate do? (Allow responses.) Pilate gave in to the pressure of the people. He claimed that he was not responsible and the people had chosen. The Bible shows us that Pilate was responsible. He could have released Jesus and done what was right, but He sinned by listening to the people. Pilate gave into peer pressure instead of doing what was right, and this decision caused him to sin.

How should Pilate have made his decision? How should we make a decision when we are faced with peer pressure? (Pilate should have done what was right; we should do what is right, and that is to honor God.)

Optional Additional Activity: When Wisdom Governs



The purpose of this activity is to explore what scripture says about fear of the Lord versus the fear of man.

Supplies:

Worksheet (1 per camper)

Give each camper a worksheet. Explain that as a class, you'll read through each verse on the worksheet. As you do, campers should draw a line to match the passage with the verse reference.

Tie It Together



Pilate was afraid of the people. When he made his decision, he made it based on fear of man instead of fear of the Lord. Pilate did not lead; he became a follower as he allowed the crowd to make the decision. He cared more about having the people's approval than making the right decision. Do you ever fear that people won't like you because of a choice you make? (Allow responses.) These verses show us that we should not fear other people, but we should trust in the Lord. Sometimes we are tempted to do things because we are afraid others will not like us. We need to value what God thinks about our actions rather than what others think.

Prayer Time

Spend a few minutes in prayer to close small group time. Thank God for loving us enough that Jesus died on the cross for our sin. Ask God to help us live with courage and bravery to obey God, rather than giving in to the peer pressure to sin.



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