

March 29/30, 2025
"The Two Trials"
Pastor Jeff Manion



SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2025 Focus: 50 Key Truths

Each Friday, explore a key truth about our Christian faith and how we can live in light of this truth.

Day 1 [Mark 14:53-72](#) | The Two Trials

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Mark 14:55

Mark wrote his gospel during a time when Christians faced growing persecution under Roman rule. As the political climate became increasingly hostile toward followers of Jesus, believers confronted a crucial question: What would they do when hauled before courts and authorities? In this pivotal passage, Mark presents two contrasting examples. Jesus stands before the Sanhedrin with unwavering courage and truthfulness, even when it costs him everything. Meanwhile, Peter follows "at a distance" and crumbles under questioning, denying his relationship with Jesus three times. These parallel trials reveal the challenge of discipleship when facing opposition.

We might not be dragged before a court, but we face similar choices daily. Will we follow Jesus closely or keep a safe distance? Our world remains skeptical, sometimes even hostile, toward Jesus followers. Each day presents opportunities to prioritize comfort and self-preservation or to embrace the demanding path of Jesus. Following Jesus means more than casual association—it requires the courage to deny ourselves, take up our crosses and follow him even when it's difficult. The way of Jesus involves service, sacrifice and sometimes suffering, but it also leads to the truly abundant life he promised.

TODAY: Begin this week with a prayer of honesty: "Lord, too often I follow you from a distance when the path becomes demanding. As I reflect on these trials, help me see how I've chosen comfort over courage. Give me the strength to follow you more closely, not just when it's convenient but especially when it's costly. Prepare my heart to learn from both Jesus's faithfulness and Peter's failure. Amen."

Day 2 [Mark 8:27-38](#) | The Backstory

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Mark 8:34

Peter's journey with Jesus began with a simple invitation by the Sea of Galilee. Leaving his fishing nets behind, Peter becomes one of Jesus's closest followers. The disciples' original call was twofold—to "be with" Jesus and to be "sent out" by him. They walked together for hundreds of miles and shared countless meals. For years, they witnessed miracles firsthand—seeing Jesus heal, calm storms, feed thousands and walk on water. Then, Peter boldly confesses Jesus is "the Messiah." Yet when Jesus explains that being Messiah meant suffering and death, Peter rebukes him. Jesus responds by clarifying the true nature of discipleship: deny oneself, take up a cross and follow him.

We face the same challenge Peter did—understanding what it truly means to follow Jesus. It's much easier to be a Christian in name while keeping Jesus at a comfortable distance than to embrace his call of self-denial and sacrifice. We can attend church, participate in events and even serve, yet still keep parts of our lives separate from Jesus's influence. Jesus challenges us to change our minds about what following means. Discipleship isn't about convenience or comfort but about closing the gap between where we are and where Jesus leads. To follow Jesus means to be with him, not following at a distance.

TODAY: Take a step toward closing your discipleship gap by [signing up for Ada Bible Academy](#). Two classes on parenting and spiritual practices start on April 17. These classes will help you follow Jesus more closely by deepening your understanding and equipping you to live out your faith. Learn more and register at adabible.org/ada-bible-academy.

Day 3 [Mark 14:55-65](#) | Jesus's Trial

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Mark 14:61-62

False testimonies crumble as Jesus stands before the religious council. When he is finally questioned directly about his identity, Jesus responds with clarity: "I am." By adding that they would see the Son of Man at God's right hand, Jesus seals his future. The leaders condemn him for blasphemy, then unleash their rage by spitting on, beating and mocking him. Jesus willingly embraces this suffering, fulfilling what he told his disciples—that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many" ([Mark 10:45](#)). Through his humiliation, Jesus reverses the curse of sin by being cursed. He brings healing by being wounded and welcomes outsiders by being cast out.

As we approach Good Friday and Easter, it's easy to view the cross merely as a religious symbol. Yet for Jesus, the cross represented the most shameful, painful form of public execution reserved for the worst criminals. Jesus willingly embraced this torture for us. His courage and self-sacrifice in the face of his accusers reveal the true measure of his love. He was mocked, beaten and ultimately killed so we could experience forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

TODAY: Take time to express gratitude for what Jesus endured on your behalf. Join Ada Bible Worship in singing "[The Love of God](#)" as a response to Jesus's sacrifice for you. If you've never accepted Jesus's gift of salvation, you can acknowledge your need for him and receive his forgiveness today. Reach out to us at btw@adabible.org if you have questions about accepting Jesus.

Day 4 [Mark 14:66-72](#) | Peter's Trial

But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. Mark 14:68

While Jesus faces his accusers, Peter faces his own trial out in the courtyard. A servant girl recognizes him as one who has been with Jesus, but Peter denies it. Moving farther away, he's confronted again and denies Jesus more forcefully. When his accent gives him away a third time, Peter swears he doesn't know Jesus. Then, the rooster crows, fulfilling Jesus's prediction, and Peter breaks down in bitter tears. His failure is a stark contrast to Jesus's faithful testimony. Yet Peter's story doesn't end with this devastating failure. Later, Jesus specifically mentions Peter when telling the disciples where to meet him after the resurrection. Peter is fully restored and goes on to lead the early church boldly as seen throughout the book of [Acts](#).

We should see ourselves in Peter's story. Too often, we also choose self-preservation over faithful witness. We follow Jesus but don't want to follow him *here* when it involves service, sacrifice or suffering. We may regret times we've denied Jesus through our words or actions. We may have remorse for seasons when we followed him in name only or didn't think of him at all. The good news is that, like Peter, our failures aren't final. Jesus specializes in restoration and invites us to follow him closely. The way forward begins now—by serving others as Jesus did.

TODAY: Pick one relationship you can begin serving in today. It might mean serving your spouse, aging parents, a challenging supervisor or teammate, or at church. Choose one specific act of service that follows Jesus's example and puts their needs ahead of your comfort.



Day 5 [Genesis 1](#) | Question 13: How God Created

Question: How did God create the world?

Answer: God created all things by his powerful Word, and all of creation was very good.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Genesis 1:31

[Genesis 1:31](#) marks the culmination of God's creative work. After bringing forth galaxies, oceans, mountains, plants, animals and finally humans, God steps back and evaluates all he has made. Unlike in previous days, when God called individual elements "good," here he declares the entirety of creation "very good" —emphasizing the perfection and harmony of his completed work. The repeated pattern of "evening and morning" throughout the creation account shows God's methodical, purposeful design. Nothing exists by accident. God, through the power of his spoken Word alone, brought order from chaos, light from darkness and life from emptiness. This declaration of creation's goodness directly contradicts any notion that the physical world is somehow inherently flawed or evil.

Understanding God as the Creator transforms how we view everything around us. The natural world isn't merely the product of random forces but the intentional handiwork of a loving Creator. This means every mountain, river, plant and creature reveals something of God's character and wisdom. As image-bearers placed within this creation, humans were given the command to "rule over" it ([Genesis 1:28](#))—not to exploit, but to care for it as faithful stewards. Creation's original goodness reminds us that despite the effects of sin, the world remains God's masterpiece, designed with purpose and filled with his glory. Even in a fallen world, we can appreciate the wonder of creation as a testimony to God's power, wisdom and creativity.

TODAY: Take time to notice the intricacy and beauty in God's creation around you. Whether observing a sunset, listening to birds sing or simply breathing fresh air, pause to thank God for his creative handiwork.