

EASTER

D E V O T I O N A L

J. D. GREEAR

DAY 1: BETRAYED BY ME

Watch Session 1: Betrayed by Me (14 Minutes)

REFLECT

Today, we took a deeper look at Jesus’s betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. **After watching the video, how would you characterize Judas?**

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Judas was a committed follower of Jesus who got frustrated and fed up with Jesus’s actions. J.D. said when Jesus failed to meet Judas’s expectations, Judas started to question whether it was worth following Jesus at all. **What, if anything, makes you frustrated with Jesus?**

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J.D. mentioned that, in essence, Judas made a deal with Jesus: if you get rid of the Romans, I will follow you. Many of us have similar deals with God: I’ll be a good Christian—go to church, pay my tithes, and read the Bible—as long as you give me what I expect. J.D. called this our “price.” **Do you, like Judas, have a price? Is there anything Jesus can do or take from you that would cause you to stop following him?**

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J.D. said, “Jesus’s value to you is shown by what you do when following him is not convenient. The value you place on something is shown by what you’ll give up for it.” **What would you do if Jesus asked you to give up “your price”? What would you do if he asked you to follow him where you do not want to go?**

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READ

Read John 21:1–22 and Matthew 27:3–10. Contrast the responses of Judas and Peter to Jesus after their betrayals. **In what ways can you follow Peter and avoid Judas’s example?**

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RESPOND

We have all sinned, betrayed, and turned away from Jesus to some degree. Despite our failings, Jesus has not turned away from us. Romans 5:8 says, “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Jesus knows the desires of your heart, your best-kept secrets, and darkest moments, and he still loves you.

We do not have to hold on to the shame of our failings and must let go of whatever price we put on our faithfulness. God is asking us to give up our price and trust him in every area of our lives. **What might you need to give up in order to follow Jesus more closely? What could make it difficult for you to give those things to Jesus?**

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Close your time by praying for the nearness of Jesus when you are disappointed where he leads you. Pray for his peace in difficult circumstances. Pray that he would be enough for you when the world tells you that you need more in order to be happy.

DAY 2: FORSAKEN BY ME

Watch Session 2: Forsaken for Me (12 Minutes)

REFLECT

Matthew 26:36–44 shows us a different and unsettling portrait of Jesus. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus was afraid, alone, and anxious. But, as J.D. taught us, he chose to be separated from God so that we would never have to be. As a result, we see Jesus experiencing what many of us go through when we endure difficult times. **When was a time you felt afraid, alone, and anxious?**

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There may be times in our lives when it feels like God is far away or not listening to our prayers. **Have there been times in your own life where you felt like God wasn't listening to you? If so, what made you think he was not listening to your prayers?**

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When you are nervous, anxious, or afraid, where do you turn for hope?

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In our moments of greatest need, Jesus does not abandon us, even when it feels like he is far away. A pastor once shared a quote about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, which J.D. quoted in the video: Jesus's darkest hour is our darkest hour. Jesus was abandoned so that we could be at peace with God. **In what ways would your life change if you knew God was with you, even in your darkest moments?**

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When we feel like God is not listening to us, we may feel tempted to give up on waiting for God's help. We may feel like Peter, who chose to draw his sword and fight when Jesus wouldn't. **When are you tempted to give up on God's timing? What would it look like for you to trust Jesus even when his timing doesn't line up with your own?**

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READ

Read Lamentations 3:18–24. **What does it look like to wait expectantly on the Lord?**

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RESPOND

If you know Jesus, if you have accepted him as your savior, you can rest in the assurance that no matter where you go, no matter what happens, no matter how dark life gets, God will never forsake you. Take a moment to think of the "new mercies" God has given to you this morning. Write down all of the ways he is taking care of you in your current circumstances. After you have exhausted that list, praise God for his consistent faithfulness.

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DAY 3: ACCUSED FOR ME

Watch Session 3: Accused for Me
(12 Minutes)

REFLECT

In the video, J.D. pointed out six ways Jesus’s trial in Matthew 27:11–31 was not only unjust but illegal. But Jesus, who knew the Law inside and out, never spoke out against the injustice being done to him.

What is your reaction when someone wrongly accuses you of doing something you did not do?

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To understand what Jesus is doing, we must accept that we are sinners. Generally speaking, there are three ways people react to being accused of sin. First, we may get defensive, trying to explain how we are good people with a resumé of good behavior. **What, if any, good behaviors or moral habits do you believe balance the scales or outweigh your sin?**

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The second reaction is indifference. Maybe you haven’t thought much about guilt, sin, Jesus, or religion much at all. We all prioritize our time and attention to what we believe matters most. If we aren’t thinking or focusing on Jesus, we are putting our energy into something else. **What do you spend most of your time thinking about? What do you think is most important in your life?**

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If you are focused on something temporary, beyond your control, or even circumstantial, you are like Pilate—too distracted to notice the one issue of eternal importance. **In what ways would your life have to change to prioritize Jesus? What worries you about making this change?**

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The final group is those who, like Barabbas, have been spared. Barabbas was a criminal who deserved the punishment Jesus received. In the same way, we are sinners, enemies of God, fully deserving of the guilt Jesus took for us. **What could it look like for you to confess and repent from your sin?**

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READ

Read Ephesians 2:1–10. Read it as many times as you need to internalize the truth of what Jesus has done for us.

RESPOND

In Jesus, there is no more guilt and shame for our sin. Instead of living with the burden of our past wrongs, Jesus offers us freedom, allowing us to live for him. What would it look like for you to walk in the freedom Jesus has given you? How might you leave the burden of your sins in the past and live in the joy Jesus has secured for you?

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DAY 4: PUNISHED FOR ME

Watch Session 4: Punished for Me (12 Minutes)

REFLECT

Instead of focusing on what Jesus endured during his crucifixion in Matthew 27:27–56, let’s take a deeper look at people who were around Jesus when he died. As J.D. taught, we should be able to see ourselves in their reactions.

The first reaction was anger—those who were upset at Jesus for not doing enough. When we go through difficulty, we want God to immediately rescue us. If he does not, we may become angry and doubt his goodness or ability to save us. **When you are in pain or difficulty, in what ways does your view of God change?**

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When have you felt like God was holding out on you?

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Jesus willingly endured the cross so that he might rescue us from the penalty of our sin. J.D. said, “If God saved me from my greatest condemnation, he won’t abandon me in my struggles.” **What could it look like for you to trust him in your pain?**

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The second reaction J.D. noted was misunderstanding. The religious leaders around Jesus didn’t understand his mission and mocked him. You may not mock Jesus or laugh at those who follow him, but if you think Jesus was just a good man, teacher, or spiritual guide and not the savior and Son of God, you have misunderstood him and his mission. **In what ways might you have misunderstood Jesus’s mission?**

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The last reaction, adoration, came from an unlikely group: the outsiders, like the Roman centurion. He saw that Jesus was not just a good person. Jesus was not just a spiritual leader with a few nice teachings. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God whose purpose was to accomplish the forgiveness of sins. **If you were to take Jesus at his word, recognizing him for who he truly is, how might your life change?**

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READ

Read Isaiah 53, a prophecy about the coming Messiah. **What does this passage teach you about the Messiah’s mission? What did Jesus, the Messiah, do for you?**

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RESPOND

Jesus, the Messiah, stepped into the middle of our mess, carried our sin on the cross, and was wounded so that we might be healed. This is good news! This Easter, make a point of celebrating Jesus’s work. **What could it look like for you to make Easter a big celebration for you and those around you?**

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DAY 5: ALIVE IN ME

Watch Session 5: Alive in Me (12 Minutes)

REFLECT

The resurrection that we read about in Matthew 28:1–15 is more than a simple happy ending; our entire faith rests on the fact that Jesus conquered death and rose from the grave. First Corinthians 15:17–19 says if the resurrection is not true, “[Christians] should be pitied more than anyone.” So, how can we know it happened? While J.D. offered us some compelling evidence of Jesus’s resurrection in the video, we may still have doubts about our faith. J.D. told us some of the doubts he wrestles with. **What questions or doubts do you have about Jesus’s resurrection?**

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Doubts are not a sign of a lack of faith. Even the disciples wrestled with doubt. You may even find that people within your community have wrestled with the same doubts and are willing to help you with your questions. **What could it look like to talk about and wrestle with your doubts alongside others?**

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Whom could you talk with about your questions?

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When Jesus was resurrected, the soldiers guarding his tomb became afraid, but the women were astonished and amazed. His resurrection proved that Jesus was who he had claimed to be: the Son of God, our savior. **After watching the video with J.D., what do you think it means for Jesus to be “alive” in you?**

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Matthew 28:18–20 is also known as the Great Commission. Every Christian is called to grow as a follower of Jesus and share the good news of what he has done for us with others. **What would it look like for you to take part in this calling?**

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Whom do you know that needs to know the good news of what Jesus has done for us?

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READ

Read Ephesians 3:14–21, Paul’s prayer for the church in Ephesus. **What does this prayer teach you about God’s work in you? In what ways does this prayer encourage you?**

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RESPOND

Jesus is alive in us and that changes everything. It changes the way we live, the way we view those around us, and it gives us a profound purpose each day. Write a personal mission statement that you can memorize or remind yourself of each morning. **What is God’s purpose for you today, tomorrow, and five years from now?**

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