

CHURCH.

LESSON 40

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray and commit your group and this course on building Christ's Church to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] 2 PETER 1 - 3 and JUDE 1
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Take turns and *share* (or *read* from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (2 Peter 1 to 3 and Jude).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [CHRISTIAN PARENTS] (4) EPHESIANS 6:4
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Review two by two.

(4) Bring up in the Lord. Ephesians 6:4. Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) [THE GOSPEL OF JOHN] JOHN 18:1-40
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Introduce. John 18 deals with the suffering of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Luke shows that Jesus was tried three times by the Jews, denied three times by Peter and tried three times by the non-Jews. John chapter 18 relates a part of these trials. First, Jesus is arrested, tried before Annas and denied once by Peter. Then he is tried before Caiaphas and denied twice more by Peter. Finally he is tried before Pilate, Herod and again Pilate before he is crucified.

STEP 1. READ.	GOD'S WORD
<i>Read.</i> LET US READ John 18 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

STEP 2. DISCOVER.	OBSERVATIONS
<i>Consider.</i> WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? <i>Record.</i> Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. <i>Share.</i> (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)	

18:4

Discovery 1. When Jesus was arrested and tried, he was all the time fully in control of his situation.

Verse 4 says, "Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, 'Who is it you want?'" Several things point to the fact that Jesus was fully in control of the situation:

(1) Jesus knew beforehand what was going to happen.

While people never know what is going to happen in the future, Jesus Christ knew exactly what was going to happen to him.

(2) Jesus deliberately came out to his enemies.

Jesus did not flee away from the danger. He also did not hide until they found him. Instead, he took the initiative and came out to them! He came out of the darkness of the trees in the Garden of Gethsemane to face his enemies. When he stood there right in front of them, Judas embraced Jesus and kissed him, saying "Hail, Rabbi!" (Matthew 26:49) This was the pre-arranged sign for the soldiers, temple-police and Sanhedrin officials to arrest Jesus. This was a very mean act, because Judas chose the most sacred night (the Passover), the most sacred place (the place where Jesus prayed) and the most sacred symbol (a kiss) to betray his own Master! This was even a ridiculous act, because Jesus took the initiative to come out to his enemies and hand himself over to them!

(3) Jesus' would-be captors had no power against him!

His would-be captors had gone out to arrest Jesus with force: soldiers, police, a small crowd of people and weapons. But when Jesus voluntarily identified himself to them and said, "I am Jesus, the man from Nazareth", they lost their footing and fell backwards to the ground! They had not expected that Jesus would take matters into his own hands and come up to them! His authority as the King of kings that radiated from the look in his eyes and the tone in his voice made them weak in the knees!

(4) Jesus did not allow one of his own disciples to be captured with him.

When his would-be captors said that they had come to arrest Jesus, Jesus said, "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." Even in his greatest hour of suffering, Jesus was still "the Good Shepherd", who cared for his own sheep. He did not want his disciples to be captured and tortured at this time, because this might have been too severe a test for their faith. By doing this, Jesus fulfilled another prophecy he had made several times before, "He had not lost one of those God the Father gave to him" (John 6:39; 10:28; 17:12)

(5) Jesus was completely determined to lay down his life for his sheep.

Peter, who was one of the disciples of Jesus, was always impulsive, drew his sword, struck a servant of the high priest, called Malchus, and cut off his right ear. Jesus immediately stopped Peter and ordered him to put away his sword. He said, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" "Drinking the cup" was an expression for undergoing the most bitter suffering of dying on the cross. Jesus was determined to drink the cup of suffering and death on the cross. Jesus was determined to lay down his life voluntarily for his sheep. Peter's defence with a sword was at variance with his determination!

Later Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is of another place." (John 18:36) Jesus made it very clear to the governments of this world that his kingship does not come through political intrigue or military power. Jesus said, that if he wanted to, he could mobilise twelve legions (a legion is 6000) of angels to defend him (Matthew 26:53). And he warns all people who revert to violence, "All who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52).

Jesus Christ was not merely the victim of evil people. He was the King in complete control of whatever happened on earth. He was not merely murdered. He deliberately and voluntarily gave his life as a ransom for many people (cf. John 10:17-18)! I am deeply touched that Jesus Christ gave himself voluntarily to die for my sins. And I am impressed that he is in complete control of whatever happens to me in my life.

18:27

Discovery 2. Peter's denial.

Peter did not really know himself. The day before Jesus was crucified, he made a big statement. He said to Jesus, "I am ready to go with you to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33) and "I will lay down my life for you" (John 13:37). But that same night, when Jesus was arrested, Peter deserted Jesus and fled together with the other disciples (Mark 14:50)!

As the mob took Jesus to be tried by the Sanhedrin and the high priest, Peter followed at a distance and entered the courtyard of the high priest. Three times people recognised him as one of the disciples of Jesus. And three times Peter denied that he knew Jesus! After the last denial, the rooster crowed for the second time and Jesus turned around and looked straight at Peter. Peter went outside and wept bitterly (Luke 22:61-62).

Peter did not want to deny Jesus, but Peter did not realise that he too had feelings of fear. He did not realise that in his own power he could not keep any promise. Only the realisation of his own weakness and emptiness prepared him to later receive the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

I also thought about myself. Which promises have I made to the Lord? Which aspirations have I had with regard to God's kingdom? Do I really know myself? Do I realise just how weak I am? Am I willing to tell this to Jesus? I know that I can also deny Jesus. So I prayed for his grace and the power of his Holy Spirit, that I would never deny him, but instead confess him at all times and under all conditions (cf. Matthew 10:32-33).

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 18:1-40 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

18:12-24

Question 1. Which Jewish authorities tried Jesus?

Notes. Remember, that the four accounts of the four Gospels are the accounts of eye-witnesses. By comparing the accounts in the four Gospels, we get a clear picture of the events during his trial, death and resurrection.

After his arrest by the soldiers, temple-police and Sanhedrin officials, Jesus was bound like a criminal. The One, who came into the world to bring freedom, was bound, so that everyone who believes in him may be loosed from the bonds of their sin!

Three Jewish authorities tried Jesus and three Roman authorities tried Jesus. His three trials before the Jewish authorities were before Annas, before Caiaphas and before the Sanhedrin.

(1) The preliminary hearing before Annas (John 18:12-14,19-24).

This trial took place while Peter was in the court of the high priest denying his Master (John 18:15-18). Annas is called “the high priest” (John 18:19) even though his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was the real high priest (John 18:13,24). Annas and Caiaphas probably lived in two different flanks of the same large house of the high priest, which consisted of a building with many rooms surrounding a courtyard in the middle.

This Annas was a very influential man. He himself had been the high priest from 6-15 A.D. Although he was deposed, he remained the dominant member of the Sanhedrin, which controlled all Jewish affairs. He managed to get his son-in-law, Caiaphas, as well as five of his own sons and a grandson to be appointed high priest! Although he was not officially the high priest himself, everybody still called him a “high priest” (Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6). Though he might not preside over the Sanhedrin, he was surely the man to consult! He was the man largely responsible for the actions of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Other historical sources describe him as a proud, exceedingly ambitious and very wealthy man. His family was notorious for its greed. The main source of his wealth came from receiving a good share of the profits made by selling sacrificial animals in the temple court. He was responsible for turning God’s house of prayer into a den of robbers (John 2:14). He might have been the instigator behind the plot to kill Jesus. Anyway, his son-in-law, Caiaphas propagated that it would be good for Israel if Jesus was killed (John 11:49-53).

Annas questioned Jesus first about his disciples (followers) and then about his teaching. He was more interested in the success of Jesus than in the truth. Jesus declined to be a witness against himself and demanded that Annas produce honest witnesses as the Old Testament law required. Jesus said that he had always spoken openly and everybody had been welcome to hear his teachings. This stood in stark contrast to the secret plotting by the Sanhedrin! When Jesus was struck, he demanded that they testify as to what he had done wrong (John 18:22-23). They couldn’t.

The Jews could not produce any incriminating evidence at this preliminary hearing. Jesus was completely innocent! Nevertheless, Annas sent Jesus across the courtyard to Caiaphas.

(2) The trial before Caiaphas and all the chief priests, elders and scribes.

This trial is described in Matthew 26:57-68 and Mark 14:53-65 and also took place in the high priest’s house (Luke 22:54). All the religious leaders of the Jews were looking for false evidence against Jesus, so that they could put him to death. No one dared to be different! Jesus remained silent against all false accusations.

However, he did not deny that he was the expected Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus said that at his second coming to this world, people would see him sitting at the right hand of the Almighty God (Matthew 26:63-64). Then Jesus Christ would be the Judge of all people that have ever lived in history!

The high priest, Caiaphas, and all the chief priests, elders and scribes could also not find any incriminating evidence against Jesus. Jesus Christ was completely innocent! Nevertheless, they accused him of blasphemy, spat in his face and struck him with their fists! This trial must have ended about 3 a.m. in the morning, because roosters start to crow at that hour. Jesus was kept imprisoned in the high priest’s house until early morning. Meanwhile, the soldiers, who guarded Jesus, mocked and insulted him and beat him (Luke 22:63-65).

(3) The trial before the official Sanhedrin with the high priest presiding.

This trial is described in Luke 22:66-71, Matthew 27:1 and Mark 15:1 and took place just after day-break (Luke 22:66). The Sanhedrin was the highest Jewish government and court. The Sanhedrin council convened a hurried meeting to ratify their official decision that Jesus was guilty of the death sentence. They wanted everything to be over before the multitudes in Jerusalem would become aware of what was happening and before the Sabbath started that evening. They wanted to give a semblance of legality to the corrupt proceedings that had marked the night-session.

Again Jesus admitted that he was the expected Messiah, that he would soon be seated at the right hand of the Almighty God and that he was the Son of God. “Son of God” means that God took on the human nature in Jesus Christ and came to live among people on earth (John 1:1,14). If God could manifest himself in a burning bush (Exodus 3:2-4), then he is certainly able to manifest himself in a righteous Man! The name “Son of God” means that Jesus Christ is “the visible image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), “the visible radiance of God’s invisible but glorious attributes” and “the exact visible representation of God’s invisible being” (Hebrews 1:3).

But also the official Sanhedrin council of the Jews could not find any incriminating evidence against Jesus. Jesus was completely innocent! Although the Sanhedrin had the right to pronounce the death penalty, they had no right to execute the death penalty. Therefore they took Jesus to the Roman governor, Pilate.

18:12-24

Question 2. Why were the trials before the Jewish religious authorities unfair?

Notes. These trials before the Jewish religious authorities were unfair. John 11:49-50 says that the Jews had long before decided that Jesus had to be put to death. The Jewish religious leaders were envious of the fact that they were losing their hold upon the Jewish nation. They were angry that Jesus had exposed them and denounced them publicly. Therefore, the trials before the Jewish religious leaders were not real trials, but mock trials. *They* devised the plot against Jesus and they saw to it that it was carried out. *They* sent their officials to arrest Jesus. *They* brought the witnesses, who were all false witnesses. *They* condemned Jesus, while he was completely innocent. *They* delivered him over to the Roman governor. *They* stirred up the whole crowd to choose Barabbas and have Jesus crucified. *They* mocked him. *They* spread lies about his resurrection. And according to the book of Acts *they* continued to persecute Christians.

This envy and anger of the Jewish religious authorities at the time of Jesus does not make Jewish people in general worse sinners than anybody else! Remember, the non-Jewish Romans tried him equally unfair and crucified him. And today other nations also reject Jesus and persecute Christians. That is why the Bible says, “All have sinned”. Both Jews and non-Jews need a Saviour for their sins!

18:28-40

Question 3. Which trials did Jesus have before the Roman authorities?

Notes. After Jesus had faced three trials by the Jewish authorities, he faced three more trials by the Roman authorities. His three trials before the Roman authorities were the first trial before Pilate, the trial before Herod and the second trial before Pilate.

(1) The first trial before Pilate.

The Roman Empire ruled over Palestine and Pilate was the Roman governor in Judea. He was a proud man (John 19:10), cruel (Luke 13:1), superstitious (John 19:8), and a self-seeker, who was afraid to lose his good standing with the Roman emperor. He was very afraid that the Jews would use their influence to remove him from office. During the trial, everything points in the direction that he wanted to get rid of this case.

When Pilate asked what the charges were, the Jewish leaders said that the only reason they brought Jesus before Pilate, was because Jesus was *a criminal* (John 18:30). This was *a veiled threat* to Pilate not to come to another conclusion!

When Pilate said that the Jews were allowed to judge Jesus according to their own law, the Jewish leaders showed that they were determined to kill Jesus (John 18:31). From Luke 23:2 it appears that when Pilate refused to sentence Jesus without due process of law, the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of three things:

- he had perverted (subverted) the Jewish nation
- he had forbidden the Jews to pay taxes (tribute) to the Roman government
- he claimed to be a king.

Thus they charged Jesus with being *a dangerous political opponent!*

When Pilate privately examined Jesus, Jesus explained to him that he was indeed a king, but not like the kings in the world. He came from heaven, not to fight against nations for political and military power. He came to testify for the truth and to destroy the realm of lies. Jesus even gently invited the governor, Pilate, to come to the side of truth. He said, “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37).

When Pilate came out to where the people were standing, he pronounced that Jesus was completely innocent. He said, “I find no basis for a charge against him” (John 18:38)! If Pilate had been an honest judge, he would have released Jesus at this point.

But the Jewish leaders immediately accused Jesus of continuously stirring people up in Galilee and all over Judea (Luke 23:5). Although Pilate had full jurisdiction over Judea, he sent Jesus to king Herod, because he would rather let another condemn Jesus. Jesus originally came from Galilee (Nazareth) and Herod had jurisdiction over Galilee.

(2) The trial before king Herod.

This trial is only recorded in Luke 23:6-12. Although king Herod asked Jesus many questions and the Jewish religious leaders vehemently accused Jesus, Jesus did not give one answer.

Even Herod could not find any cause of indictment. Nevertheless, he mocked Jesus and then returned him to Pilate.

(3) The second trial before Pilate.

According to Luke 23:13-25, Pilate called together the Jewish leaders and said to them that he had examined Jesus in their presence, but neither he nor king Herod had found any basis for their charges against Jesus. On the one hand, Pilate was afraid of the Jewish followers of Jesus if he would hand Jesus over for crucifixion. On the other hand he was afraid of the Jewish religious leaders that they might stir up the Jewish nation to rise up against the Roman authorities.

According to Matthew 27:15-26, the crowd demanded that Pilate showed his usual favour during the Passover by releasing a prisoner. Pilate let them choose between Jesus, the king of the Jews, and Barabbas, a notorious rebel and murderer (even for the Jews). He expected the crowd to choose Jesus. At that critical moment, a messenger arrived to inform Pilate about a dream which had caused intense suffering to his wife. It was then that the Jewish leaders stirred up the whole crowd to demand the release of Barabbas and to have Jesus crucified.

Pilate still maintained that Jesus was completely innocent. Nevertheless, because he feared that he might lose his position as governor, he had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from John 18.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from John 18:1-40.

- 18:1. Like Jesus, you could also choose a quiet place to pray.
- 18:5. Jesus never lied. He never denied his real identity.
- 18:8-9. Jesus never lost one of the people that God the Father had entrusted to him.
- 18:10. Christians should never resort to the use of weapons, terrorism or holy wars.
- 18:11. Christians should rather accept the suffering that God permits to happen.
- 18:12. Christians should not resist arrest, because they have to witness to high officials (Matthew 10:17-20).
- 18:20. Jesus always spoke openly to the world and said nothing in secret. He taught people even at the religious places where they usually met.
- 18:21. Jesus challenged his accusers to ask the people that had heard him speak, because they knew what he had said.
- 18:23. Jesus challenged those that struck him without reason to testify as to what is wrong. He confronted them with unjustly beating him when he spoke the truth.
- 18:34. Jesus challenged the governor to say what he himself believed about Jesus and not simply to say what other people said.
- 18:36. Jesus openly said that because his kingdom was not of this world, he would not fight to defend himself.
- 18:37. Jesus openly said that he was the king of this kingdom and that his kingdom was spread by proclaiming the truth.
- 18:38. Christians should be prepared that they also may be tried and condemned to death, even though no basis for a charge may be found against them.
- 18:39-40. Christians must be prepared that many people in the world would rather choose Christians to be killed and let criminals continue to live.

2. Examples of personal applications from John 18:1-40.

I thought about myself and asked myself the questions, "Like Peter, which promises have I made to the Lord?" "Which aspirations have I had with regard to God's kingdom?" "Do I really know myself?" "Or do I risk denying Jesus?" I want to ask God for grace to be humble and think of myself as God wants me to think of myself.

Jesus Christ was not merely murdered. He deliberately and voluntarily gave his life as a ransom for many people. He is the King. He is always in complete control of whatever happens on earth. Do I really believe that? I want to exercise my awareness that my life is ruled and my destiny is determined, not by a blind fate or irrational circumstances, but by no one less than the living Lord Jesus Christ!

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in John 18.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[INTERCESSION]</i> PRAY FOR OTHERS
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Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the Bible study of John 18 together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of **1 John 1-3** each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method or question method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (5) Love through discipline. **Proverbs 13:24.**
Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. Update your notebook on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.