

**Morning Star Church**  
**Devotional Guide**  
**ONE, Week 4, One Truth [Pontius Pilate and Herod]**  
**March 20-25**

**Message synopsis:** Pastor Mike continued our series, *ONE*, this week by giving us a glimpse at the trial of Jesus before two civil rulers, Pilate and Herod. While Pilate's encounter with Jesus was brief, it created confusion for Pilate. He came face to face with Truth and he did not have the courage to embrace it.

*Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" John 18:38, ESV*

*Jesus answered, "I AM the Way and the Truth and the Life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6, NIV*

**Day 1: The Manipulation of the Religious Leaders**

1. Read Matthew 27:1-2. As we saw in last week's study, the Jewish religious leaders were seeking every opportunity to put Jesus away, so they brought Him before Pilate and invented a charge of leading an insurrection against Rome (see Luke 23:1). Based on what Jesus said in Matthew 22:15-22 to these same religious leaders, why would they "drum up" these charges?
2. Read Mark 15:12. Pilate read the situation with amazing clarity. He recognized that the religious leaders had incited a lynch-mob mentality here and that the motivation of their heart was "envy." The Greek word is *phthonos* and it means jealousy or envy at the sight of excellence or happiness. What kind of motive would cause these leaders to want Jesus put to death?

**Day 2: Pilate's Baggage**  
Luke 23:1-7

1. Historians tell us that Pilate was a consummate unprincipled politician. He had become hardened over years of growing through the ranks as a Roman soldier. He learned how to be a leader over soldiers, a disciplined administrator, and a man of decision. Pilate even married purposefully to advance in his career; his wife was granddaughter of the Roman Emperor Augustus. He was cruel to the Jewish people as governor of Judea. There were several skirmishes with these same Jewish leaders; he was an anti-Semitic Gentile—Roman to the core—so he made no attempt to please the Jews. As a result he was "on report" from the Roman emperor to keep the peace in Jerusalem at all costs. So as you see, the stage is set for a showdown.
2. Have you ever known someone like Pilate, who measured every decision carefully for his advantage? Are there any traits like this in your life? What would you cooperate with God in changing?

**Day 3: Two Questions of Pilate**  
Read John 18:28-38

1. As we read the interrogation account in John's Gospel, we are reminded once again of the uniqueness of Jesus being Jesus. The Bible said, "*He knew the heart of men*" (Luke 5:22). Jesus easily turned the tables on Pilate; Jesus was after Pilate's heart! Pilate's first question was, "**Are you The King of the Jews?**" Jesus was standing before him with no regal robe, His hands in chains, beaten and bloody. Look at Jesus' answer (John 18:34). In other words,

“*What about you? Who are you to question who I am?*” Would that question put you back as a proud, hardened leader?

2. Pilate responded with contempt (John 18:35). Pilate’s second question again is sarcastic: **“*What could you have possibly done to your people that they want to kill you?*”** Jesus did not return jabs with him; He went directly for Pilate’s heart (John 18:36). Jesus did proclaim Himself to be a *spiritual king*. If Jesus had answered that He was an earthly King, Pilate could easily kill Him because only Caesar was king. But Jesus challenged Pilate to think deeper (look at John 18:37-38). Jesus essentially tells Pilate, “*I came to this earth to establish a new kingdom, and anyone who really wants to know TRUTH will understand my message.*” Have you ever had a conversation with someone that left you wanting to know more?

#### **Day 4:** Herod’s Circus

Read Luke 23:8-12

1. Pilate thought that by sending Jesus to Herod—since He was born in Galilee—would get him off the hook. (Look at Luke 23:5-7.) This was the cruel leader who mocked and killed John the Baptist (Matthew 14:6-7).
2. In this kangaroo court in front of Herod, Jesus gave no answer . . . not one word! (See Isaiah 53:7.) All Herod was concerned about was the party, the show, a next thrill, a chance to make someone the spite of his sarcasm. Jesus knew this basic truth: Words are wasted on people who have no desire for the truth. Do you know people who think the truth of Jesus Christ is for freaks and fanatics . . . that life should be lived in party mode . . . that it’s all a big joke?

#### **Day 5:** Pilate’s Most Important Question

Read John 18:38; Matthew 27:19, 20-26

1. As Jesus dealt with Pilate’s heart, it became clear that Pilate was struggling and searching. Pilate asked his third question without really wanting to hear an answer, **“*What is truth?*”** The paradox of that question is that He was looking into the eyes of ETERNAL TRUTH as he asked it. Do you know people like Pilate who recognize the Truth about Jesus Christ, but refuse to yield to it because it threatens to disrupt the plans they have for their own lives?
2. God even warned Pilate through the dream of his wife, but still—because of his need to attain position and power—he could not turn his decision over to God and release Jesus. How difficult is it for you to sometimes fear the *rejection of people* so much that you make costly decisions?

**Morning Star Church**  
**Small Group Discussion Guide**  
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**Group Icebreaker**

Have each person make three statements about themselves: two true statements and one lie. For example, *"I've never broken a bone. I have five sisters. I was born in Canada."* Then have the group try to guess which statement is the lie.

1. Pastor Mike said in our world today, *"Truth is a like a target in a shooting gallery. It seems like it is always on the move."* Discuss in your group your thoughts about why our culture struggles with identifying truth. In your opinion, how much has the Church of Jesus Christ "dropped the ball" on its responsibility of communicating Truth?
2. The *sticky statement* in this week's message was this: **The One Truth is Jesus Christ, a Person, the Word of God made flesh.** (Look at John 1:14, 17; John 14:6.) How has Jesus impacted your life with Truth?
3. Pastor Mike pointed out in his message that all of those present at the trials of Jesus struggled with their understanding of truth—all but Jesus Himself.
  - "Pilate's truth" was, *"Only the strongest survive."* He was blinded to Truth by his own *desire for power*. Be open to the Holy Spirit's direction in our lives (John 16:13)
  - The Sanhedrin's (Jewish religious leaders) truth was, *"The Messiah could only be a warrior who led a rebellion to ensure Israel's freedom."* They were blinded by *religious pride*.
  - To the crowds who gathered and demanded Jesus' crucifixion, truth was *mob mentality and majority consensus*. They were blinded by *popular opinion*.

Discuss in your group how easily those three *blindness* keep people from seeing the Truth.

4. Share with your group your thoughts about the three ways Mike suggested we can know the truth:
  - Study in God's Word (John 17:17)
  - Be open to the Holy Spirit's direction in our lives (John 16:13)
  - Ensure our lives are pointing to the One who is Truth (John 17:14-18)

**Prayer requests**