

Hanging Out with Jesus

Stories about Jesus from the Gospel

How Men Deny Jesus and What We Can Do About it

Unedited Transcript

Matthew 26:69-75, Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:55-65, John 18:25-27

Good morning, men! It is a joy to be with you today. It's always a pleasure when I get a chance to come and to speak. It's a highlight for me, certainly of any week to get a chance to be here, and also a chance to open the Word of God together. If you do want to turn to Matthew, Chapter 26, and we'll be looking at verses 69 through 75 as we continue the series, Hanging Out with Jesus. Today we are going to look at the denial, where Peter denies Jesus. We're going to talk about this idea of how do men deny Jesus and what can we do about it.

On the one hand we think about Peter's denial, and we think about the extreme circumstances that we're in, and it may not seem like it relates to us all that well. I hope that by the time we get to the end of this we'll see some great lessons that will make a difference in our lives. Let's look at Matthew, Chapter 26, Verses 69 through 75.

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean. But he denied before them all saying, "I don't know what you mean." When he went out to the entrance another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." Again, he denied it, this time with an oath, "I don't know the man." After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them for your accent betrays you."

Then he began to invoke a curse on himself, and to swear, "I do not know the man," and immediately the rooster crowed. Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows you will deny me three times, and he went out and wept bitterly." May God add understanding to the reading of his Holy Word.

When you look at this passage, and you guys have been walking through this scripture, this time of the passion of Christ, the trial of Jesus, his last night with his disciples, all of those things. One of the things that you realize is that Peter had a really, really bad day. This is like one of the worst 24 hours on record. Here you are with the Messiah of the world, and if you go back a little bit earlier in the passage, Jesus says, "I'm going to have to go, and I'm going to have to die." Peter says, "Uh, uh." "You're all going to forsake me." "No, I'm never going to forsake you." He makes this promise that he can't keep, he's contradicting Jesus. There's a little problem there. When we start contradicting Jesus that should be a red flag.

He makes a promise that he can't keep. Then Jesus says, "Hey, I need to pray, and I need you guys to pray with me. Would you stay awake and pray for me?" Of course, what happens? They fall asleep. He comes, and it says Jesus actually talks to Peter, "Can't you stay awake with me?" Jesus goes back to pray, and they fall asleep again. Then they come to arrest Jesus, and Peter in his zeal, the book of John tells us he's the one who grabs a sword and hacks the ear off, of course, not of a soldier, of a servant. Jesus has to heal this servant.

Then like all the disciples he runs away when Jesus is being arrested, and he flees into the night, but somehow he gets enough courage to sheepishly follow at a distance. Here's the guy, "I'll never forsake you." Then he gets to this courtyard, and it's in this complex here that looks like this. This is what they think it probably looked like from archaeological evidence, something like this. It's a pretty confusing night, there's different venues, probably both Annas and Caiaphas lived within this complex. John mentions Jesus being before both of them. You can see the multiple courtyards, and all the places where people would be kneeling about, and the soldiers, and the guards, and people coming in and out of the gate there.

In the midst of all this confusion, three times people ask Peter if he knows Jesus, if he's with Jesus. He denies Jesus three times. It even escalates to where the second time that he denies him, and he seals it with an oath, or a curse. Peter had a really, really bad day. He was incredibly tired, he was emotionally and spiritually exhausted. All of this pressure is going on, and the reality is men under pressure make mistakes. That's what happened to Peter.

Before we point the finger at him too much, I think we ought to think about the fact that if Peter could deny Jesus, anybody can. You may be here today, and you may have had a rough week. You may have had a rough 24 hours. Things might be going on in your marriage, things might be going on with your kids, or finances, or work pressures. You may be trying to figure out how can I not deny Jesus. You may be here and you may realize that you've been making some bad decisions. I hope that this message is going to be an encouragement to you. I believe that what we see in this passage, and the passages that surround it, help us understand what's going on in our hearts, and how we can stay in that place where we can maintain that active faith with Jesus Christ.

Before we start, we're going to have a little friendly competition. We're going to spice things up a little bit today. If you have an English Standard Version, it might be a little bit of an advantage in this game, not much, but a little bit, of that passage, because what I need to do is make sure everybody has one of these sheets of paper face down. If you were supposed to hand those out at your table, and if you're watching by video you could have printed these out, they're attached to your question sheets that you get. Pass these out to everybody at your table. Does everybody have one, or do any tables need extra sheets of paper? Everybody have one of these sheets of paper, 'cause we're about to have a contest. We're about to throw it down in here.

Here's what's going to happen. On the other side of this paper are words that have been scrambled up. Don't look at them yet, turn them over. Words that have been scrambled up, and I'm going to give you two minutes as a table. Two minutes as a table, you need a scribe, you need somebody that's going to write it down. In those two minutes I want you to unscramble as many words as you can. You probably don't want to yell out the words that you've unscrambled, because there's tables right around you. You might want to lean in a little bit here. You need a scribe, write down as many of these words as you can in two minutes.

You ready, get set, go. All right, a minute and 15, you can work together now. Remember, tell somebody who's scribing it at your table, a minute and 15. One minute, 30 seconds, 15, 10, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, pencils down. Remember that, remember that from third grade, pencils down. No cheating now, no cheating. Whatever you've got written right now that's it. Somebody, whoever's the scribe for your table count up how many of them you got right. Count of how many of them you got right, and by the way there's the list on the screen in case you were missing any of them, but count up how many you got right.

How many tables got five or more? Keep your hands up if your table got five or more. You're at least awake, that's good. You're alive and awake, so that's great. How about ten or more? Wow, look at that, ten or more. How about twelve or more? Whoa, we have a winning group over here. How many did you get? 12? 12 exactly. Nobody else can beat 12? I had a prize for you, but it's sitting on my kitchen table. Next time I come remind me, and I'll give you your prize. I don't know, it's probably going to be two or three months, they might be a little stale, but anyway you can have them then. Let's give these guys a hand.

The Most Important Question

In this passage then, I want us to look at three aspects of this, in terms of what it is like for men to deny Jesus. The first thing I want us to see is Peter is asked the most important question. Peter is asked the most important question. Essentially, what these people are asking Peter is, "Do you know Jesus. Are you a follower of Jesus?" In our lives, we probably aren't going to be in a situation where the authorities are asking us if we know Jesus, and based on our answer we're going to get arrested, or tortured, or killed, or whatever. In reality it's a question that we're asked all the time. It's a question we're asked all the time. Not by other people necessarily, but by the situations in our lives. Do I know Jesus?

What do I mean by that? Whenever we make a choice, we show how much we value the various options that we're choosing between. If you have a choice between two restaurants which one do you go to? The one you want to go to more. You don't say, "I think this food's terrible, and I hate the service, and it's always cold, let's go there." No, you go to the restaurant you think is going to be better. It shows the one that you value the most. The same thing is true in all the other choices that we make in our lives.

Let me show you what I'm talking about. Imagine you live in an area where there's no running water. You're in this little village, and outside the village is a clear, beautiful spring. But, a little bit further away is a marshy area, and it is a disgusting, polluted mess. Imagine every day when you went to get water that you went to this disgusting, polluted, marshy place to get the water to drink. Are you thirsty? You're okay, you don't want any. No? Imagine that you did that, and you passed this clear spring every day when you get this water. What would somebody say to you? They would think you're crazy, right? Don't you see that spring right there? You could say, "Oh yeah, I know the spring's there," and just keeping walking over to the muddy marsh to get your water." What this shows is that you don't really understand the value of that spring. Because if you went to the spring you could get pure, perfectly clear, tasty water, healthy water. Instead you keep walking over to the marsh to get water like this. What it shows is that you don't really know the value of what's in the spring.

The reality is that when we are tempted by pornography, when we're tempted to be selfish in our marriage relationship, when we're tempted to use people as tools in our workplace, whatever it is, the reason we're tempted to do those things is that we are valuing something more than we're valuing Jesus. We're being asked, "Do you really know Jesus?" When we choose to use our resources in a certain way, when we choose to give our time to certain things, when we choose to watch certain

things, there's a question underneath that. Do you really know how valuable Jesus is? If you do it's going to change the choices that you make.

Peter denied Jesus in this situation, because he made a wrong evaluation of the consequences. What did Peter think were the consequences at stake, do you think? Going to jail, being arrested? Possibly being killed. You say well it sounds like that's a pretty accurate evaluation of the consequences to me. How did he make a wrong evaluation of the consequences? He made a wrong evaluation of the consequences, because he believed that those were the worst things that could happen to him. He didn't understand that denying Jesus, and losing that connection to Christ, was actually much worse than anything that the authorities could have done.

The same thing is true for us. When we lose that connection to Christ, and when we choose our own desires, when we choose our own agenda, when we try to control other people, manipulate them, get our own way, whatever it is. We're doing that because we made a wrong evaluation of the consequences. We get angry with our kids to try to make them behave in a certain way, because we think the consequences of being late to church, or making a scene in public, or whatever. We're so scared about that, and we just made a wrong evaluation.

In reality, the effect that we're having on our children is way, way worse, than whatever was going to happen because of their misbehavior. We're trying to control it, we're trying to get our own way, because we think we've understood what's going on. In reality, we've lost that connection to Jesus Christ.

What causes men to value things incorrectly? We already talked about one thing, pressure. When you're under pressure you've got to make snap decisions, it feels like you don't have all the information. There's lots of people saying different things to you. So guys end up making bad decisions when they're under pressure. If you're under pressure you need to be really careful about the choices that you make.

We also value things incorrectly because of long term exposure to bad influences. This is huge because of the culture we live in today. What happens when you put something really smelly in the refrigerator? Everything starts to smell like that, right? Or, have you ever picked up a jacket, or maybe a sweatshirt or something, from when you were at a campfire a couple nights before, or something like that. You pick up the sweatshirt, you pick up the jacket, what happens? It smells like the campfire? Why? Because it has picked up the odors of what it was around. The same thing is true for us as men. Over time, what we immerse ourselves in is going to affect the way that we view the world. The people we hang out with, the things we watch, the voices that we listen to. We're going to end up saying the things that they say. We're going to end up believing the things that they believe. So, we need to be careful that we don't allow them to influence us so that we no longer see the world for the way that it really is.

There's a young guy that has been involved in my life for along time, I've mentioned him here before. He started hanging out with our family when he was probably 11 or 12 years old. He's 27 now, and he was over at our house, and we were talking about his career, and perhaps trying to get some more education. It was so interesting, because here's a guy who has basically no positive influences in his life besides the few minutes he spends at our house, and talking to my wife and myself.

Here he is, and he says, "Well I can't take class, because if I show up for this welding class, or become a mechanic, or whatever. I don't know anything about that, I'm going to look like an idiot. The people, they're going to think I'm stupid. Then he proceeds to tell us a story about how he's in a parking lot, and

he's parked a certain way, and somebody pulls in, and they tell him he needs to move his car. He pretends like he can't hear them, and the person starts cussing at him. He's so proud of this way that he was able to make this other person get all angry in this situation. I'm sitting there thinking seriously? You're scared of what somebody's going to think when you actually try to better yourself, and do something that's going to help you, and yet you're proud of yourself for picking a fight with somebody in a parking lot.

What's going on? It's a person who doesn't have anybody influencing them about what it means to make right decisions. Then I compare that to some other young guys that are about the same age that are in a group that Brett Clemmer and I are doing for young business leaders. Meets at our house once a month. Here's guys that come together, and they are asking great questions. They are pursuing Godliness in their lives. They want to know what it looks like to be a Christian man. They want to know what it looks like to be a business leader in the community. The contrast between this is so amazing, because here's one guy that's out on his own, nobody influencing him in the right direction, and here's another group of guys that are really trying to sharpen one another to become everything that God wants them to be.

That's what we need to do if we want to maintain that connection to Christ. You see, the big idea for today is that **men deny Jesus when they value something else more than they value knowing Him.** That's what happened to Peter, he valued his safety, he valued his reputation, more than he valued knowing Jesus. When we look at the actions of our lives we need to ask ourselves do they represent somebody who really places the proper value on knowing Jesus, or have I let other things step into a place that they shouldn't be.

What do we learn from Jesus about handling mistreatment?

The second point about this is that denying Jesus always escalates. Men tend to deny Jesus in two situations. One is when everything is going really well, and we see that in the scriptures with various guys like David, and other guys. The second time they deny Jesus is when everything is going really poorly. Of course, that's what we see here with Peter. Those two are very dangerous situations for men. When things are going really well, and when things are going really bad, those are dangerous, dangerous situations. What happens is guys take some little step of compromise, some little step of distraction, and frankly the consequences are not all that great. It's not that big a deal.

If you don't go to worship on one Sunday, because it's a beautiful day and you want to go surfing. Is the world going to come to an end? Are you going to become an atheist tomorrow, and be in the newspaper, and start ranting and raving about God is dead, and Christians are stupid, and whatever, probably not. It doesn't seem like that big deal. Or, a little conversation with a woman in a workplace, or on a trip. There's just little extra friendliness, it's like oh, she's a pretty encouraging person, she's cute, she's got a good sense of humor, that's all. That's all it was. You take these little tiny steps that don't feel like much, the problem is it always escalates.

We see that here with Peter. Peter three times, the second time he even swears an oath, and we know how serious it is in the Bible. Jesus himself told them not to swear oaths, we don't think anything about today really, but Jesus had told them not to swear an oath. Matthew 5:33 says, "Again, you have that it was said to those of old. You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn. But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, where there is the throne of God, or by the earth for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Do not take an oath by

your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply yes or no, anything more than this comes from evil."

Jesus has expressly said don't take an oath, and what does Peter do when he denies Jesus? Not only spitting, he also takes an oath and does something that Jesus says not to do. Not only does it happen in more than one time, but it happens in more than one way. Some of you in this room, or some of you watching this on video, are probably in a situation where you've started down a path of denying Jesus. You may not even realize it yet. You may be so early in the process that it doesn't even feel like a big deal yet. Where is it going to end up in six months, or where is it going to end up in six years.

If the decisions you've been making over the last few weeks, or the last few months, aren't going to get you in a place in six months, or six years, that you want to be, then it's time to stop and ask the question, what am I really valuing in my life? Maybe you have a pattern of ignoring your wife in your marriage. It's gotten easy to do this right here, and do this. It's so easy for me. I love the news, and to check and find out what's going on, all the different discoveries in health things and robots, all that stuff. I love all that stuff. You can do that all day long, ignoring your wife.

Maybe you're working too much. Maybe you're not investing in your kids. Maybe you're putting too much of the burden for family life onto your wife. Maybe you've looked at pornography, but it's only once every few months, it's not that big of a deal. Maybe you've started that kind of relationship with a woman where it's just a friendship, we just have a good time talking together. Here's the thing, it almost never stops there. Maybe it's hobbies, I'm going to step on some toes. Maybe it's hobbies, maybe it's the first day of hunting season. I can tell you there's a lot of men in America that the first day of hunting season is sacred. If their mother died they'd have to have the funeral on another day, because they're going hunting.

You may not be at that place yet, but have you started down? College sports, I love college sports! Think about how men have elevated that to a place of worship. The amount of money and time, and effort, that goes into all the stuff we do around college sports. Reading all the message boards, and who recruited who, and all this stuff. It's so irrational, because half the people never make it, and half of them never play, and all that stuff. Yet we're so into it. These things become dominant.

I'll never forget the guy in my neighborhood a few years ago, about 11 o'clock at night he was knocking on my door. That doesn't happen very often, obviously. I go to the door, and I hear this noise outside. I'm like what in the world. I open the door up, and there's Monty, and he's completely broken down, tears streaming down his face. He comes in, I'm wondering if somebody has died, is somebody hurt, what happened? He comes in and all he can say is they're gone, they're gone, they're gone. I'm like what, who's gone? Through his tears he explained that every weekend his wife would say, "Hey go do something with your buddies. Go do something fun." Pretty much every weekend he went and did something with buddies.

Now, three, four, five, six years later, he found a note, "I just don't love you anymore," and she and the kids were gone, and the house was empty. He's looking at it thinking what do I do now? Humanly speaking it was simply too late. Denying Jesus always escalates. You may have experienced this in your past, or you might be there right now. You may be a long way down this track. You may be hiding something today that you think would shock everybody if they found out about it. The reality is, of course, it wouldn't, and secondly wouldn't shock Jesus. You may be thinking that this could never be

forgiven. What I've done is so awful that God could never love me, God could never forgive me. Guess what?

How should we handle it when we're mistreated?

The third thing we see in this passage is that Jesus is already ready, he's already prepared to restore. In Matthew 26, the passage I alluded to earlier, Verse 30, a little bit earlier here in this chapter, Jesus predicts the betrayal. He says in Verse 31, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." That, of course, is what Peter reacts to and says, "Uh, uh, not me. I'm not going to be one of those guys."

Notice what Jesus says in Matthew 26:32, even before Peter makes his promise. Before Peter makes the commitment that he's not going to fall away, before Peter falls asleep, before all those things, before any of that. Before he denies Jesus three times, before he swears an oath when Jesus told him not to, before any of that happens Jesus says, Verse 32, "But after I am raised up I will go before you to Galilee. Jesus knew what was going to happen. Jesus knew what Peter was going to do. He says you're going to deny me, you're going to fall away, but I am going to go before you to Galilee. I am going to restore you.

No matter where you are this morning, Jesus is already prepared to restore you. He's done enough. He's done everything that has to happen. What does that restoration look like? Does it look like pulling yourself up by your boot straps? Does it look like trying to do a good job, and be a better man? I'm going to talk to my wife tonight, or I'm going to spend time with my kids, or I'm going to leave work at 5 o'clock? Is that what it looks like? No. Willpower never gets up there. Truly being restored looks like learning to love Jesus more than anything else, because men deny Jesus when they value something else more than they value knowing Him.

Let me give you an example. Many of you guys try to watch what you eat. So do I. I'm at that point in my life where I've got to be careful about my weight, and trying to stay fit. I have some heart issues and things like that that make it even more of a priority for me. I can tell you there's days when I'm like I've had too much sugar recently, I had that dessert today, 100% discipline. Just water, no sweets, no nothing, and I'm laying in bed, I'm getting up ready for a shower, good, we got that settled.

Then what happens? It's the meeting at work with the ice cream sandwiches, or oh I'm feeling so down, I've got this big thing coming up, I need a pick me up, I need a Coke, I need some caffeine, or something. Or we go to somebody's house at night and they break out the warm chocolate chip cookies with the little dab of vanilla ice cream. I'm just going to have a little bit of it, just a little bit. That's what ends up happening with the two hour willpower. We make these kind of decisions and commitments, and literally within 12 hours we're doing something different than what we said we were going to do. It happens in every area of our life.

Willpower alone is not enough for me. I have to value something else more than I value whatever this distraction, or temptation is. That's the only thing that's going to make a difference. I have to value something else more, and that's what restoration is all about. It's about coming to value Jesus more than those things that are tempting us to pull away from Him. When we get to this passage of Peter's restoration in the Book of John, we're going to see that he comes face to face with Jesus, and Jesus allows him to confess his love, and his allegiance three times. Just like he denies three times, he confesses his love three time. Jesus helped Peter come to that place of valuing him more than anything else.

We know from church history what happened, Peter went on to be this courageous preacher. We see that in the Book of Acts. Then we see him, even in the face of the authorities and being arrested, I have to obey God, I can't obey men. This is the same guy who told a servant girl he didn't know Jesus, and look what happens. Ultimately, church tradition tells us that he was crucified, but asked to be crucified upside down, because he wasn't even worthy to die in the same way as his Savior. He came to value Jesus more than he valued anything else.

If men deny Jesus when they value something else more than they value knowing Him, then we show our allegiance to Jesus, and we show obedience to Jesus when we value Him more than anything else. It really changes everything. If we value Jesus in our marriage, then we're going to realize that laying down our lives for our wife is the path to true joy. If we value Jesus in relationships, then we're going to be willing to consider others better than ourselves, even when it's tough. Somebody getting more credit for the project at work than they deserve, somebody getting a bigger bonus than we got. Now you're talking about money out of the pocket. Are we really willing to lay down our lives, do we really value Jesus.

Being willing to share the Gospel with others, so many of us are cautious about doing that. Why? Because we value something more than we value knowing Jesus. We value the reputation with that person, or we value how it makes us feel to feel awkward, or embarrassed, or like we don't know what to say, or whatever. Let's be honest, the reason we don't do it is because we don't really value Jesus that way we should. Listen, if you lived in that village, and had the choice to tell everybody they don't have to drink this, they can drink this, you would do it. If you saw people getting sick, and having dysentery, and dying, and everything else because they were drinking this, and they could be drinking this, you would tell them. You would tell them right away.

It's no different, if we really value Jesus. Sacrificially giving our time and money, making a real commitment to the church. Not just attending, and well I didn't really like the music, or the message didn't really speak to me, I think we should find a different church. No, a real commitment, a real priority, to be engaged in what God's doing through the life of his church. A real commitment to other men as friends. It's so easy, and I'm guilty of this. Man with five kids, I have three kids, I have three kids, they're out of the house now, but you get so busy, you've got so much stuff going on, it's hard to maintain friendships with other men.

You have this glancing conversation with a couple of the dads at the little league games, and maybe you see a couple guys at church. Maybe there's a couple of guys in a small group you talk to, but you don't really have a friend. If you're in that situation you are at risk. The scriptures talk about how we need to have brothers, we need to have real friendships. If we value Christ correctly we're going to make a commitment to that. We can't say that we really value Jesus, and then live our lives in ways that show everything else that we really love. It just doesn't make any sense.

We need to put ourselves in the way of rightfully valuing Jesus. Peter had that chance to reaffirm his love for Christ. We need to get out of the way of all the influences that are causing us to overvalue everything else. So we need to be involved in things like worship, small groups, personal Bible Study, real friendships with men that are spurring us on, that are challenging us. If you're not doing those things you're like a toddler that's out playing in the street. What do you tell a toddler that's playing in the street? Get out of the street, you're going to get run over.

If all you're doing is living your life in the world, surrounded by guys at work, listening to stuff on the internet, watching TV shows, glancing at a few things you shouldn't, pursuing your hobbies, doing whatever you want all the time, you're like a toddler playing in the street. You should not be surprised if eventually you get run over, because that's what happens to toddlers that play in the street. We need to get out of the street, and we need to put ourselves in a way of falling in love with Jesus Christ. Don't keep drinking the gross, muddy water that the world is offering you. Come back to Jesus, and find the pure living water that helps us become the men that God's called us to really be.

Let us pray.

Closing Prayer

Father we thank you so much for your word today, and Lord I thank you how it encourages me as a man as I think about the ways that I have denied you, and all the little ways that I have allowed my heart to become distracted with other things that I think are going to satisfy. Here in this passage as we sympathize with Peter, who'd gone through this unbelievable trial, this night that seemed like it would never end. One bad thing happening after another, and all the pressure of that, Lord we realize that our own hearts are the same way. That we could do exactly the same thing, and we do do exactly the same thing.

Lord, I pray that you would restore us. Lord Jesus that you would show us how great, and mighty, and powerful you are, and that you have done everything that needs to be done for us to love you, and to be the kind of men that you've called us to be. Would you work in our hearts today? Would you not in our own self effort, but would you cause us to see you for who you really are, so that we value you, and love you more than anything else. For your glory we pray in Jesus name, Amen.