

# Before the Rooster

JOHN 13:36-38 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

## THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

Jesus knows you better than your promises do.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 19): John 13:1-17, Love to the End. Its big idea: The Lord of all knelt to wash you before asking you to kneel.
- After this passage (day 21): John 14:1-14, The Way. Its big idea: Jesus doesn't hand us a map home; he is the way.

## Open

Recall last time: in John 13:1-17 Jesus washed his friends' feet and loved them 'to the end.' Ask: 'Have you ever made a promise you truly meant, then couldn't keep it?' Let two or three people answer. Just before today's verses, Jesus told his friends he was going where they could not come. Read John 13:36-38 aloud. Then say the big idea: Jesus knows you better than your promises do. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

## Run Sheet

### 1. Not Now, but Later (John 13:36, about 12 min)

The one thing: Jesus tells Peter the truth about now and gives him a promise about later.

Ask: Why might Jesus say 'not now' to someone who wants to come with him?

### 2. The Promise and the Question (John 13:37-38, about 18 min)

The one thing: Peter's love is real, but Jesus knows his strength better than Peter does.

Ask: Jesus asks, 'Will you lay down your life for Me?' Why answer a promise with a question?

## Close (never cut it)

This passage mostly shows who Jesus is. He hears our best promises, knows our worst night before it comes, and still speaks of 'later.' Don't tie up Peter's story, because the rooster hasn't crowed yet. Read Jesus' question aloud once more, 'Will you lay down your life for Me?', and let a moment of quiet sit.

## PROTECT THE ENDING

If section 2 starts late, skip its discussion question and optional points, but read v38 aloud and keep the close.

## KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 4, 1, 3, 5, 2 (top to bottom) · Feelings: Peter, asking where Jesus goes worried, Jesus sad, Jesus' friends at the table worried, Peter, hearing about the rooster sad · Code: YOU WILL FOLLOW LATER

Act it out: One child is Peter and makes a big brave promise with arms wide. The teacher, as Jesus, gently asks, 'Will you?' One child makes a rooster call three times while everyone freezes.

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# 1. Not Now, but Later

JOHN 13:36 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 2

## THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus has just said he is going where his friends cannot come.
- Peter wants to know where, and he wants to go too.
- Jesus says 'not now' and 'later' in the same breath.

Jesus said, "Where I am going, you cannot follow Me NOW."

But he promised, "you will follow LATER."

Discuss: Why might Jesus say 'not now' to someone who wants to come with him?

Jesus tells Peter the truth about now and gives him a promise about later.

## MUST COVER

- v36: 'Where I am going' points to his arrest and death. Only he can walk that road right now.
- v36: 'you will follow later' comes before Peter's vow and before his fall.

## IF THERE'S TIME

- Peter asks an honest question. Newcomers can ask Jesus theirs too.
- Jesus had said the same thing to the whole group a moment earlier (v33). Peter is the one who speaks up.

Illustration idea: A little kid at the door as an older sibling leaves for the first day of school: 'Not this year. Your turn is coming.'

## RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: He was protecting Peter.
- Listen for: Peter wasn't ready yet.

If it drifts: If talk turns to heaven or the end times, come back to v36: what exactly does Jesus say to Peter? 'Not now.' 'Later.'

## TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Jesus knew exactly where Peter stood, and he still gave him a 'later.'

Short on time? Cut both optional points. Keep the now/later contrast.

Bridge → Peter doesn't like 'later,' so he makes a promise.

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## 2. The Promise and the Question

JOHN 13:37-38 · ABOUT 18 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 2

### THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Peter makes a brave vow, and he means it.
- Jesus answers with a question, then a plain forecast.
- Jesus sees Peter more clearly than Peter sees himself.

Peter said, "I will lay down my LIFE for You."

Jesus said, "before the ROOSTER crows, you will deny Me three times."

Discuss: Jesus asks, 'Will you lay down your life for Me?' Why answer a promise with a question?

Peter's love is real, but Jesus knows his strength better than Peter does.

### MUST COVER

- v37: Peter isn't lying. His vow is sincere. His love is real; his strength is not yet.
- v38: 'before the rooster crows... three times' is exact. It happens that very night, at a sound Peter can't miss.

### IF THERE'S TIME

- Luke 22:31-32 (Luke is another Gospel writer): Jesus tells Peter, 'I have prayed for you.'
- Peter offers to die for Jesus. In the chapters ahead, Jesus is the one who lays down his life.

Illustration idea: A friend at the hospital bedside says, 'I'll be here every single day.' They mean it with all their heart. Do they know yet what week three will feel like?

### RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: To make Peter stop and think.
- Listen for: To show Peter he didn't really know himself.

If it drifts: If people start retelling the denial itself or arguing how Jesus could know the future, say: 'We'll stand in that courtyard in two days. Today we stay at the table, with Peter's promise and Jesus' question.'

### TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Peter's promise was big. Jesus' knowledge of Peter was bigger.

Short on time? Drop the optional cross-references. Keep the question in v38.

Bridge → So what does this little exchange show us about Jesus? Let's land there.

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## With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Set the scene. It's Jesus' last meal with his friends. He has just told them he's going where they can't come.
2. Read it together. Read John 13:36-38 aloud. It's three verses, so read it twice.
3. Notice Peter. Ask: 'Ever made a promise you fully meant and couldn't keep?' Share one of your own first.
4. Notice Jesus. He isn't fooled by Peter's vow, but he isn't finished with him either. He says 'later.'
5. Leave his question. Read Jesus' words: 'Will you lay down your life for Me?' Say it's his question to them, not yours. Leave it there.

### QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

“Wasn't this written after the fact, so of course Jesus 'predicts' it?”

It was written later, yes. But notice what it keeps: a church leader shown boasting and failing. That's an odd way to flatter your heroes. You can weigh that for yourself.

“Where was Jesus going?”

To his arrest and death that night, and beyond it. John tells that story in the chapters that follow.

“Did Peter actually deny him?”

Yes. John tells it a few chapters later, rooster and all.

“I've broken promises to God. Is this about me?”

Maybe. What it shows is that Jesus knew Peter's failure ahead of time and still spoke of 'later' to him.

# Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

## EVERY LESSON

### 1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).

If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.

If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

### 2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.

If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.

If you've taught for years: Don't lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

### 3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.

If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.

If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn't serve it, cut it.

### 4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).

If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?

If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

## FOR THIS LESSON

### 1. Let the passage land the way it lands

This is the start of Peter's story, not the end.

If you're new: Don't jump to Peter's restoration. End on Jesus' question.

If you've taught for years: Name the tension out loud and tell the class it will pay off later in the plan.

### 2. Ask good questions, then wait

Jesus himself answers a vow with a question.

If you're new: Ask the v38 question, then count to ten silently before speaking.

If you've taught for years: Let a follow-up question come from the group instead of from you.

### 3. Plan for the skeptic and the grieving

Newcomers doubt the prediction; people who have drifted carry broken vows.

If you're new: Have the 'written after' answer ready, and keep it short.

If you've taught for years: Watch for anyone who goes quiet at 'deny Me' and check in with them afterward.

## BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you'll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

## Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

## OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: What's a promise you meant with your whole heart but couldn't keep?

- tell a short story: Tell of a time you vowed 'never again' and broke it within days.
- start in the text: Read only Peter's line, 'I will lay down my life for You,' and ask whether he means it.

### **CLOSINGS**

- restate the big idea: Peter didn't know himself. Jesus did. He knows you better than your promises do.
- allow quiet reflection: Read 'Will you lay down your life for Me?' and hold thirty seconds of silence.
- call back to the opening: Return to the promises people shared: Jesus heard Peter's and still said 'later.'

### **WHEN CLASS GETS HARD**

- Someone who has drifted says, 'I'm Peter. I already failed him.': Don't argue. Point to v36: 'you will follow later' was spoken before Peter fell. Stay with that line.
- Someone wants to jump ahead to how it all turned out for Peter.: Thank them, and say the plan gets there (days 22 and 27). Ask them to sit with the unfinished story today.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: "Thanks. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can't answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: "Great question. Let's catch it after class so we can finish the passage."

### **READ THIS WEEK**

- Luke 22:31-34 (Luke's account: Jesus says he has prayed for Peter)
- 1 Corinthians 10:12 (Paul's warning to anyone sure they're standing)
- John 15:13 (Jesus on laying down one's life for friends)

Free at [digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/13-36-38/lesson](https://digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/13-36-38/lesson)

# Before the Rooster

JOHN 13:36-38 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: “Where I am going, you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow later.” John 13:36

## THE BIG IDEA

Jesus knows you better than your promises do.

### 1. NOT NOW, BUT LATER · JOHN 13:36

- Jesus has just said he is going where his friends cannot come.
- Peter wants to know where, and he wants to go too.
- Jesus says 'not now' and 'later' in the same breath.

Jesus said, "Where I am going, you cannot follow Me \_\_\_\_\_."

But he promised, "you will follow \_\_\_\_\_."

Discuss: Why might Jesus say 'not now' to someone who wants to come with him?

### 2. THE PROMISE AND THE QUESTION · JOHN 13:37-38

- Peter makes a brave vow, and he means it.
- Jesus answers with a question, then a plain forecast.
- Jesus sees Peter more clearly than Peter sees himself.

Peter said, "I will lay down my \_\_\_\_\_ for You."

Jesus said, "before the \_\_\_\_\_ crows, you will deny Me three times."

Discuss: Jesus asks, 'Will you lay down your life for Me?' Why answer a promise with a question?

Read this week: Luke 22:31-34 (Luke's account: Jesus says he has prayed for Peter) · 1 Corinthians 10:12 (Paul's warning to anyone sure they're standing) · John 15:13 (Jesus on laying down one's life for friends)

# For Kids: Before the Rooster

JOHN 13:36-38 · NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Big idea: Jesus knows me and loves me anyway.

## 1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

- ☐ Peter promises to give his life.
- ☐ Jesus says he is going away.
- ☐ Jesus says, "You will follow later."
- ☐ Jesus says the rooster will crow.
- ☐ Peter asks, "Where are You going?"

## 2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

Peter, asking where Jesus goes: happy · sad · worried

Jesus: happy · sad · worried

Jesus' friends at the table: happy · sad · worried

Peter, hearing about the rooster: happy · sad · worried

## 3. WORD SEARCH

U O P E T E R H H  
P R F O L L O W K  
K O Y D P F U Y K  
H O F L A T E R U  
G S C T H R E E O  
G T R H L Y N F D  
H E O D O G Y H E  
O R W S R B C U N  
U N S B D C S H Y

ROOSTER · PETER · FOLLOW · LATER · LORD · DENY · THREE · CROWS

## 4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=E 3=F 4=I 5=L 6=O 7=R 8=T 9=U 10=W 11=Y

11 6 9      10 4 5 5      3 6 5 5 6 10      5 1 8 2 7

## 5. DRAW IT!

Draw Jesus and Peter talking at the table, with a rooster waiting outside the window.

## 6. MEMORY VERSE

"You cannot follow Me now, but you will follow later." John 13:36 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

Jesus knows me, and he still \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_