

I Am Not

JOHN 18:15-27 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

While Jesus stands true under blows, his friend says, 'I am not.'

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 23): John 17:1-26, The Prayer. Its big idea: The Son who shared God's glory prayed for you before the cross.
- After this passage (day 25): John 18:28-40, What Is Truth. Its big idea: Jesus, the true King, asks whether your answer about him is your own.

Open

Ask: Have you ever been asked a small, casual question where the honest answer would have cost you something? What did you say? Recall last time (John 17): Jesus prayed for his disciples on the night before he died. Recall 'Before the Rooster': Jesus told Peter he would deny him three times before the rooster crowed. Read John 18:17. Big idea: While Jesus stands true under blows, his friend says, 'I am not.' Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. At the Door and the Fire (John 18:15-18, about 12 min)

The one thing: Peter's first denial comes fast, over a small question, at a door.

Ask: Why do you think such a small question from such an ordinary person was enough to make Peter lie?

2. Jesus Before the High Priest (John 18:19-24, about 14 min)

The one thing: Inside, the bound prisoner is the one who stays true.

Ask: Jesus is bound and struck, and he still doesn't back down. What does that tell you about him?

3. The Rooster (John 18:25-27, about 12 min)

The one thing: Peter fails completely, just as Jesus said he would, and John lets it stand.

Ask: John stops right at the rooster's crow and doesn't tell us what Peter felt. Why might he leave it there?

Close (never cut it)

Don't rescue Peter. Let the rooster crow, and give the room a moment of quiet. Then point to Jesus: the bound, struck man inside never once said 'I am not.' He stayed true on the very night his closest friend didn't, and he had seen it coming and went on anyway.

PROTECT THE ENDING

If section 3 starts late, drop its discussion question, read verses 25-27 aloud, and go straight to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 4, 2, 1, 5, 3 (top to bottom) · Feelings: Peter worried, Jesus sad, The high priest worried, Servants warming at the fire happy · Code: I HAVE SPOKEN OPENLY

Act it out: Choose a Peter, a servant girl, and a rooster. The girl asks, 'Are you one of his friends?' Peter says, 'I am not.' Repeat three times, then the rooster crows. Ask the class how Peter felt.

1. At the Door and the Fire

JOHN 18:15-18 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Peter follows Jesus farther than most: right into the high priest's courtyard.
- The question comes from a servant girl at a door, not a soldier.
- Peter ends up warming himself beside the men who arrested Jesus.

'Aren't you also one of this man's DISCIPLES?'

Peter was also standing with them, WARMING HIMSELF.

Discuss: Why do you think such a small question from such an ordinary person was enough to make Peter lie?

Peter's first denial comes fast, over a small question, at a door.

MUST COVER

- v15-16: Peter did follow. He was brave enough to come in but not brave enough to own Jesus.
- v17-18: 'I am not.' Then he stands at the officers' fire and blends in.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Hours earlier in the garden, Peter swung a sword during the arrest (18:10). Now one question stops him.
- Jesus had already told Peter this would happen before the rooster crowed (John 13:38).

Illustration idea: A new coworker at the coffee machine asks, half joking, 'You're not one of those church people, are you?' It is easier to smile and shrug than to say yes.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: He was scared he'd be arrested too.
- Listen for: It caught him off guard, so he had no time to think.

If it drifts: If talk turns to whether we'd have done better, bring it back to v17: what exactly did Peter say, and to whom?

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

One servant girl, one small question, and Jesus' friend says, 'I am not.'

Short on time? Drop both optional points. Keep the blanks and the question.

Bridge → While Peter warms himself outside, John takes us inside to see how Jesus answers his questioners.

2. Jesus Before the High Priest

JOHN 18:19-24 · ABOUT 14 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The high priest questions Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.
- Jesus has nothing to hide. He taught in public, where anyone could hear.
- When he is struck in the face, Jesus still speaks the truth and asks a question.

'I said nothing in SECRET.'

'But if I spoke correctly, why did you STRIKE Me?'

Discuss: Jesus is bound and struck, and he still doesn't back down. What does that tell you about him?

Inside, the bound prisoner is the one who stays true.

MUST COVER

- v19-21: When asked about his disciples, Jesus points to what he taught openly. Meanwhile, one of those disciples is disowning him outside.
- v22-23: After the slap, Jesus answers with a question: name what was wrong, or explain the blow.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Annas was a former high priest and still the power behind the office. Caiaphas (v24) held the title that year.
- John sets this scene between Peter's denials on purpose. Two people are being questioned at the same moment.

Illustration idea: Think of a witness who tells the same plain story no matter who is pushing, next to one whose story shifts depending on who is in the room.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: He was brave and not afraid of them.
- Listen for: He knew he was telling the truth, so he had nothing to cover.

If it drifts: If it turns into a debate about whether the trial was legal, go back to v23 and ask what Jesus' question shows about him.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Inside, Jesus stands true under blows. Outside, his friend is saying, 'I am not.'

Short on time? Skip the Annas and Caiaphas background.

Bridge → Now John steps back outside, where Peter is still standing at that fire.

3. The Rooster

JOHN 18:25-27 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Peter is still at the fire when the question comes again.
- Someone saw him in the garden, so the lie is running out of room.
- He denies Jesus a third time, and immediately a rooster crows.

He denied it and said, 'I AM NOT.'

Immediately a ROOSTER crowed.

Discuss: John stops right at the rooster's crow and doesn't tell us what Peter felt. Why might he leave it there?

Peter fails completely, just as Jesus said he would, and John lets it stand.

MUST COVER

- v25-26: The last questioner is a relative of the man whose ear Peter cut off in the garden, and he says he saw Peter with Jesus.
- v27: 'Immediately a rooster crowed.' Jesus' words came true to the moment (John 13:38).

IF THERE'S TIME

- Luke's Gospel, another account of Jesus' life, adds that Peter 'went out and wept bitterly' (Luke 22:62).

Illustration idea: You hit send on a message you regret, and the screen says 'delivered.' There is no taking it back.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: So we feel the full weight of it.
- Listen for: Because the story isn't finished yet.

If it drifts: If people jump ahead to Peter being forgiven, gently hold them here: 'We'll get there in a few days. For now, stay with v27.'

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Jesus kept his word. Peter couldn't keep his. And the rooster crowed.

Short on time? Drop the Luke reference and go straight to the question.

Bridge → Leave the crow ringing in the room and move straight to the close.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

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

1. Start with fitting in. Ask whether they've ever gone along with something just to fit in and regretted it later. Share one of your own.
2. Read it together. Read John 18:15-27 aloud. Point out that John keeps cutting between two scenes: Peter at the fire and Jesus before the high priest.
3. Compare the two answers. Jesus says, 'I said nothing in secret.' Peter says, 'I am not.' Ask which one surprised them more, and why.
4. Face the hard part honestly. Admit it: the leader of the first disciples is shown failing badly. Ask why they think John kept this in rather than hiding it.
5. Leave the courtyard's question. The question put to Peter hangs in the air: 'Aren't you also one of His disciples?' Leave it with them as it stands. They don't need to answer it to you.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

"If Peter lived with him and saw everything and still wouldn't admit he was his disciple, why should I trust him when I've seen nothing?"

That's fair. But notice the story never asks you to trust Peter. It sets him beside Jesus, and Jesus is the one who holds firm. It also counts for something that his own followers told this story about their own leader.

"Why would the Bible include something so embarrassing?"

People who make up a flattering story leave this out. John tells it plainly, down to the rooster, and that honesty is part of why the account is worth reading.

"Is Peter finished after this?"

This passage doesn't say. It stops at the rooster. John's Gospel keeps going, though, and Peter isn't dropped from the story.

"Why didn't Jesus defend himself more?"

He didn't need to invent anything. He pointed to what he had taught in public and asked his accusers to name what was wrong.

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

John ends on a rooster crowing, not on a rescue.

If you're new: Finish section 3 at verse 27. Save any talk of forgiveness for the day it comes.

If you've taught for years: Resist the reflex to jump to John 21. Trust the plan's order and let the failure carry its weight.

2. Let silence do its work

The crow is meant to hang in the air.

If you're new: After reading verse 27, count to ten silently before you speak.

If you've taught for years: Use the silence to watch faces, and notice who looks like they've heard their own rooster.

3. Plan for the skeptic and the grieving

Drifters may see themselves in Peter, and seekers may doubt because of him.

If you're new: Have the coffee objection and its answer ready. Expect someone to go quiet.

If you've taught for years: Plan who you'll check in with afterward. Don't call anyone out in the room.

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: Have you ever been asked a casual question where the honest answer would cost you something?
- use an object: Hold up a lump of charcoal. 'Tonight a disciple warms his hands at a fire like this, standing with the wrong crowd.'
- start in the text: Read Peter's two words from verse 17, 'I am not,' and ask what they hide.

CLOSINGS

- allow quiet reflection: Read verse 27 slowly, then let the room sit in silence for thirty seconds.
- restate the big idea: While Jesus stands true under blows, his friend says, 'I am not.' Let the two voices sit side by side.
- call back to the opening: Return to the small question from the start. Peter's was that small too, and Jesus stayed true while Peter failed.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone who has walked away from faith hears their own story in Peter and goes quiet, or says, 'That's me.': Don't hurry to fix it or quote John 21. Say that John tells this honestly and doesn't end Peter's story here. Then find them afterward.
- Someone raises Matthew 10:33, where Jesus says he will deny whoever denies him, and asks if Peter is lost.: Admit it is a hard word. Say this passage stops at the rooster without a verdict, and that the plan returns to Peter soon. Leave the question open rather than forcing an answer.
- 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

- John 13:36-38
- Luke 22:31-34, 54-62
- Mark 14:66-72

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/18-15-27/lesson

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JOHN 18:15-27 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: "Peter denied it once more, and immediately a rooster crowed." John 18:27

THE BIG IDEA

While Jesus stands true under blows, his friend says, 'I am not.'

1. AT THE DOOR AND THE FIRE · JOHN 18:15-18

- Peter follows Jesus farther than most: right into the high priest's courtyard.
- The question comes from a servant girl at a door, not a soldier.
- Peter ends up warming himself beside the men who arrested Jesus.

'Aren't you also one of this man's _____?'

Peter was also standing with them, _____.

Discuss: Why do you think such a small question from such an ordinary person was enough to make Peter lie?

2. JESUS BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST · JOHN 18:19-24

- The high priest questions Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.
- Jesus has nothing to hide. He taught in public, where anyone could hear.
- When he is struck in the face, Jesus still speaks the truth and asks a question.

'I said nothing in _____.'

'But if I spoke correctly, why did you _____ Me?'

Discuss: Jesus is bound and struck, and he still doesn't back down. What does that tell you about him?

3. THE ROOSTER · JOHN 18:25-27

- Peter is still at the fire when the question comes again.
- Someone saw him in the garden, so the lie is running out of room.
- He denies Jesus a third time, and immediately a rooster crows.

He denied it and said, '_____.'

Immediately a _____ crowed.

Discuss: John stops right at the rooster's crow and doesn't tell us what Peter felt. Why might he leave it there?

Read this week: John 13:36-38 · Luke 22:31-34, 54-62 · Mark 14:66-72

For Kids: I Am Not

JOHN 18:15-27 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus told the truth even when Peter was scared.

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

- ☐ Jesus answers the high priest truthfully.
- ☐ A girl asks Peter about Jesus.
- ☐ Peter follows Jesus into a courtyard.
- ☐ Peter denies again; a rooster crows.
- ☐ Peter says, 'I am not.'

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

Peter: happy · sad · worried

Jesus: happy · sad · worried

The high priest: happy · sad · worried

Servants warming at the fire: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

C P K H D H N V R
O K G A R D E N O
U F D Y D R U V O
R S E R V A N T S
T B P E T E R J T
Y K V G P S B E E
A U C F P O F S R
R F I R E F G U V
D D O O R N C S U

PETER · JESUS · ROOSTER · FIRE · COURTYARD · SERVANT · DOOR · GARDEN

4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=E 3=H 4=I 5=K 6=L 7=N 8=O 9=P 10=S 11=V 12=Y

4 3 1 11 2 10 9 8 5 2 7 8 9 2 7 6 12

5. DRAW IT!

Draw Peter standing by a charcoal fire at night, with a rooster nearby.

6. MEMORY VERSE

"I have spoken openly to the world, Jesus answered." John 18:20 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

Jesus told the truth even when _____. _____