AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP
MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY

Topic: Gethsemane, Arrest, and Peter's Denial: Voluntary surrender of Jesus; human weakness

Wednesday, Sept. 02, 2026

Text: John 18:1-27 **Facilitator: Tayo Ayodeji**

Introduction

The scene transitions from Jesus' prayer in chapter 17 to His voluntary surrender. The story unfolds at night in the garden of Gethsemane, a familiar place where Jesus often met with His disciples to pray *(Mark 14:32; John 18:2)*. What follows is not a story of helplessness, but of divine purpose: Jesus willingly steps forward to fulfill the mission given to Him. The events in this passage took place the night before His crucifixion. Each of the four Gospel writers describes the events of Jesus' betrayal and arrest with slight variations, hence reading all four accounts will give a more accurate picture of this night in its entirety ***(Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-50; Luke 22:47-53****)*.

Key observations from the passage:

- **Jesus' composure versus human fear:** Jesus remains steady and poised, even as others around Him responded with anxiety, fear, confusion and violence.
- **Judas' betrayal versus Jesus' voluntary surrender:** Judas arrives with an armed detachment to arrest Jesus, yet Jesus does not resist or hide; He yields freely in obedience to the Father's will.
- **Jesus' faithfulness versus Peter's weakness:** While Jesus stood firm during the interrogation before the religious authorities, Peter gives in to pressure in the courtyard and denies his Master three times, just as Jesus had predicted *(Matt. 26:34; Mark 14:30; Luke 22:34; John 13:38)*.

1. **The retreat in the garden at Gethsemane (John 18:1-2)**

- The garden contrasts the first Adam who fell in the garden of Eden to sin and Jesus, the Last Adam, who surrenders to God's will in the garden at Gethsemane.
- Gethsemane sits across the Kidron Valley, this is the same valley that King David crossed while fleeing from his son Absalom who betrayed him by waging a rebellion against King David **(2 Samuel 15).** In John 18, we see the King of kings crossing the Kidron valley heading towards betrayal rather than running away from it.
- Gethsemane was a special place, it's where Jesus regularly met with His disciples to pray.
- After celebrating **Passover**, Jesus took 3 of His disciples (Peter, James and John) separated from the rest to watch and pray with Him so they would not fall into temptation. **(Matt 26:36-41) NIV**

Question: Knowing what was about to happen, **w**hat stands out to you most about Jesus' attitude and actions in the garden?

2. **Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested – (Verses 3-11)**

Questions:

a. In verse 6, the soldiers drew back and fell to the ground when Jesus said, "I am He". What does this reveal about who was actually in charge of the arrest.
b. What did Jesus mean when He said in verse 11- "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"
c. How does Jesus' surrender challenge the way we usually think about strength and control?

3. **Compromise and Denial (Verses 15–18, 25–27)**
   Peter knew Jesus is the Son of God and believed all the truth about Jesus, yet he denied his association with Him. Peter's denial shows how fear, pressure, and the desire for acceptance can lead a person to compromise what they know is right. His experience is a reminder to us that our loyalty to Jesus Christ must remain steady even when circumstances become uncomfortable or risky.

   Key observations to consider:
   - **Compromise often begins quietly:** Peter followed Jesus from a distance. Compromise begins in the space we create between ourselves and Jesus.
   - **Pressure can expose divided loyalty:** When questioned, Peter chose self-protection over public association with Jesus.
   - **Faithfulness requires courage:** We can learn from Peter's failure and collapse by preparing our hearts to stand *firm* before moments of testing arrive.

Questions:

a. What does Peter's denial teach us about responding under pressure?
b. Why do you think Peter was quick to fight with a sword but later afraid to admit he knew Jesus?
c. Jesus predicted Peter's failure, but why didn't Jesus pray for Peter to not fail?

4. **Truth and Dignity in the face of injustice (Verses 12–14, 19–24)**

   Jesus knew the legal proceedings were illegal:
   - Capital trials and court proceedings were not to be held on the Sabbath or during major holy festivals.
   - Capital cases were strictly forbidden at night or during major festivals like Passover.
   - A judge, including the high priest, were not permitted to question a defendant directly in order to force a confession.
   - Capital cases depended on credible witnesses. Jesus called for witnesses to testify, yet none were produced to support the charges against Him.

   Key lesson: Even when Jesus was treated unjustly, He responded with truth, restraint, and dignity. His example teaches us to remain composed and trust God when facing unfair treatment.

Questions:

a. When the officer struck Jesus in the face, He did not retaliate; He remained calm. How can we show the same moral composure and dignity when we are treated disrespectfully or moments that feel threatening?
b. What comfort can we draw from the fact that Jesus remains faithful even when His followers are weak?

Conclusion: John 18:1-27, presents two powerful realities: the majesty of Christ's obedience and the frailty of human courage. Jesus is not portrayed as a helpless victim, but as the willing Savior who steps forward in full awareness of suffering that lies ahead. Even in the moment of arrest, He remained composed, fully in control, and fully submitted to the Father's will.