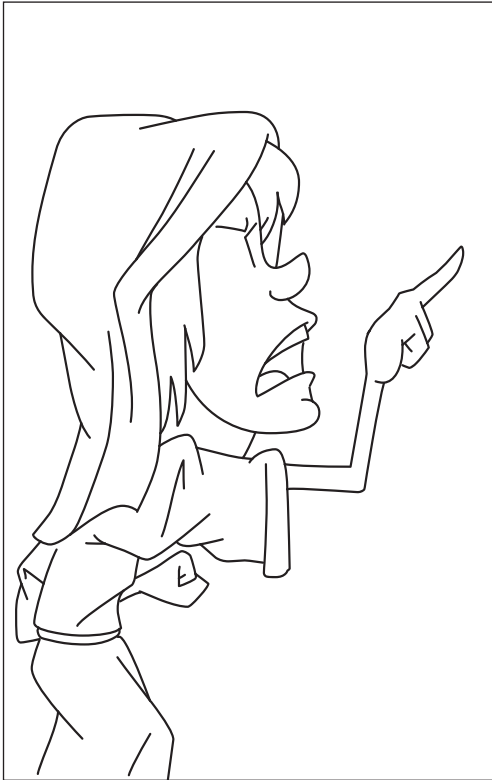


Peter denies Jesus



Colour me!



Matthew 26:57-58, 69-75

After the last supper, Jesus and his friends, called disciples, went to a garden to pray. The disciples, including Peter, fell asleep but Jesus was praying hard because he knew that he would soon be arrested. And that's what happened. Soldiers and a mob of people with clubs and swords grabbed Jesus and arrested him.

After Jesus had been arrested, he was led off to the house of Caiaphas the high priest. The nation's leaders and the teachers of the Law of Moses were meeting there. But Peter followed along at a distance and came to the courtyard of the high priest's palace. He went in and sat down with the guards to see what was going to happen.

While Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, a servant girl came up to him and said, "You were with Jesus from Galilee." But in front of everyone Peter said, "That isn't so! I don't know what you are talking about!" When Peter had gone out to the gate, another servant girl saw him and said to some people there, "This man was with Jesus from Nazareth."

Again Peter denied it, and this time he swore, "I don't even know that man!" A little while later some people standing there walked over to Peter and said, "We know that you are one of them. We can tell it because you talk like someone from Galilee." Peter began to curse and swear, "I don't know that man!"

Right then a rooster crowed, and Peter remembered that Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows, you will say three times that you don't know me." Then Peter went out and cried hard.

Commentary

Jesus had been arrested in the garden of Gethsemane and taken to the high priest's house for trial in the middle of the night. The religious leaders were anxious to get rid of him as soon as possible. The disciples had all run away when Jesus was captured, except for Peter, who followed the temple guards secretly and made his way to where Jesus was being held. Inside they were busy interrogating Jesus, accusing him of all sorts of things that he hadn't done. Jesus said very little, but just once he let them know that he was from God, and this caused uproar.

Peter was nearby in the courtyard and possibly heard the angry shouts, but was helpless to do anything. He must have been terrified and, as a result, he denied being one of Jesus' followers, even saying that he never knew him. Jesus had warned him that this would happen, but Peter hadn't believed it. No wonder he burst into tears and disappeared off into the darkness.

This is a remarkable piece of honest reporting. Peter went on to become a leader of the church, but he didn't mind people knowing how low he had once sunk. Perhaps he wanted them to understand how much Jesus loved him and, therefore, each one of us, that he could forgive even this betrayal.

Questions

- ▶ Was Peter brave or foolish to follow Jesus to the courtyard?
- ▶ Have you ever let someone down? How did you feel?
- ▶ Have you ever been let down by someone else? Were you able to forgive them?
- ▶ What was it that made Peter betray his best friend like this?



Visual aid

Find a picture of a rooster and have a go at adding your own sound effects to the story. This sound must have been a permanent reminder to Peter of what happened that night.



Activity idea

Peter was put under pressure to reply quickly to the people's questions. So much must have been going on in his head: should he say 'yes' to knowing Jesus or deny all knowledge of him? Between you, try to imagine the quarrel going on inside his own mind before he spoke. What arguments are there for saying one thing or the other? What were the risks involved? What was his head saying as opposed to his heart? Try to step into Peter's conscience and explore the story from this point of view.



Prayer idea

After a short time of quiet, ask God to forgive you for the ways you have let him down and then be honest with each other and forgive each other for the ways you have let each other down. Sometimes, tears are involved when we say 'sorry' properly like this.

Key verse

"Then Peter went out and cried hard." (Matthew 26:75)

New Testament story link

Psalm 51:1-19: This is David's prayer, saying 'sorry' after he had let God down very badly.



Colour me!

