

Mark 6:14-29 – The Death Of John The Baptist

Leader's Guide

March 31, 2019

- 1. Read Mark 6:14-29 to familiarize yourself with the passage. What can you learn about sin and its consequences from Herod and Herodias? What can you learn about discipleship from John the Baptist?**

The Death of John the Baptist

¹⁴ King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." ¹⁵ But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶ But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." ¹⁷ For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

²¹ But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²² For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." ²³ And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." ²⁴ And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." ²⁵ And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶ And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. ²⁷ And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison ²⁸ and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

2. Herod and Herodias had a problem with sexual sin, like many people today. Proverbs 5:1-23; 6:20-35 are words of wisdom from a father to a son about avoiding a trap of a seductive woman. What can we learn from these verses about the consequences of sexual sin and how to avoid sexual sin?

My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it. And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation." Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray. Proverbs 5:1-23 (ESV)

- The words and appearance of a forbidden relationship always look good but over time you will be filled with suffering and regret if you pursue it. You may even suffer death.
- Do not go near an opportunity to meet this kind of person. A practical example of this is avoiding the Internet if you struggle with pornography. Avoiding friends if they keep introducing you to the wrong people. Don't spend time with someone like this that can lead you astray.
- If you give in to this kind of relationship, it will result in poverty and a waste of your life.
- Keep your sexuality for the wife of your youth. Pour your sexual energies into your spouse. Don't dissipate them on another woman.

- God is watching our life and we will answer to him for the sexual sin we think nobody knows about but us.

My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life. Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished. People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry, but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house. He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away. For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge. He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts. Proverbs 6:20-35 (ESV)

- Be correctable when it comes to your relationships. Listen to the advice of your parents when it comes to dating someone.
- Do not allow yourself to think about a forbidden woman (or man). What you role-play in your mind will become what you later real-play in your life.
- Sexual sin, especially with someone outside of marriage, will always result in painful consequences.
- Sexual sin, adultery in particular, is stupidity and it will destroy your life.

3. What can we learn about the dangers of sexual immorality and how to avoid it from these verses written by Paul? 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:3

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 (ESV)

- Some in Corinth were teaching that a sexual appetite is no different than the appetite of your stomach, and both should be satisfied. Paul completely disagreed. Our bodies are not meant for sexual immorality but for God.
- Sex with someone unites them together. That is why sex should be saved for marriage.
- Run from sexual sin. Never hang around and negotiate. Run as fast as you can to get away from the tempting situation.
- Focus not on using your body to satisfy your sexual desires but use your body to please Christ.

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 2 Timothy 2:22 (ESV)

- When facing sexual temptation, don't negotiate with the situation but run from the situation.
- Pursue things that build you up, not sexual temptations that tear you down.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (ESV)

- It is God's will that we abstain from any kind of sexual sin, not just adultery and fornication.

4. Herod was plagued with guilt for the murder of John the Baptist. What do these verses teach us about what God does with the guilt of our sin when we trust in Jesus? Psalm 103:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Psalm 32:5; Acts 2:38

...as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:12 (ESV)

- When we confess our sin to God and call out to Jesus, he takes our sin away from us so we are no longer defined by what we did in the past but by whose we are in the present. We now belong to Jesus.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

- When we come to Christ, Jesus makes us into completely new creations. The identity of our former sin is gone. We are not defined by it. We are free from it.

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah Psalm 32:5 (ESV)

- When we don't cover our guilt but call out to God and confess our guilt, God forgives us of our sin through Jesus.

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 (ESV)

- This verse reminds us that when we confess our sin, repent of our sin and call out to God for forgiveness, that forgiveness is found in Jesus.

5. John the Baptist was the greatest prophet, but he paid the ultimate price for speaking the truth. Jesus was even greater, and they killed him. How does knowing what John and Jesus experienced because they were faithful to God prepare us for what we will face when we live faithful to God today? See also (2 Timothy 3:12; Acts 14:22; John 12:25)

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

- The world will persecute us for living godly lives, just like they did John the Baptist and Jesus. We should expect it, not be surprised by it.

strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22 (ESV)

- Paul reminds us that trials are part of the way we enter God's kingdom. Those trials may come by direct persecution for doing and saying the right thing in a crooked world.

Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. John 12:25 (ESV)

- Jesus reminds us that we have to love him even more than life itself. We may need to lose our life to be faithful to our savior, just like John the Baptist.