

## AIM

- To explain that ignoring Jesus' call to repent and believe will eventually earn us the rejection of Jesus.
- To show from Herod's example that "we are a result of the choices we have made."
- To challenge group members not to put off the choice to follow Jesus.

## EXPLORE

- None

## LISTEN (DVD)

- Mark 6:26 – "The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her."
  - Ignoring our conscience can be a terrible thing. Sometimes, ignoring our conscience—our God-given sense of right or wrong—will affect far more than our bodies; it will affect the ultimate destiny of our soul...because, "we are the choices we have made."
  - Mark 6:17-28 provides us with a historical account of King Herod. Herod had been married for over twenty years, but then gave his heart and marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife (v. 17). John the Baptist, who was respected by Herod as a "righteous and holy man" (v. 20), rebuked Herod, but Herod ignored him. Herod liked to listen to John (v. 20), but he still put him in prison, apparently both to placate Herodias who hated John and wanted him killed and to protect John from Herodias (vv. 17-20). So, Herod liked John, appreciated listening to him, and respected him; but he would not stop his adultery—he would not repent.
  - Then, "the opportune time came" (Mark 6:21)—an "opportune time" both for Herod and for Herodias...but only one seized it, while the other missed it. Having been sensually pleased by Herodias' daughter's dance, Herod offered to give her whatever she wanted (vv. 21-23). When she inquired of her mother what to ask for, her mother immediately sent her back to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter (vv. 24-25).
  - Now, Herod must make a choice, and he will be a product of this choice. At this point, under pressure from friends, family, and work colleagues, Herod stops listening to his conscience, and he allows the head that warned him and the tongue that told him to repent and be rescued to literally be cut off (vv. 26-28). He feared men more than God.
  - Many people will, at the crucial moment, deny what they know to be right, because they know it will mean changing much loved habits and will garner undesired criticism from others. There is a cost of listening to your conscience, but Jesus and His family supports that choice (Mark 3:21, 32-35) and Jesus will reward that choice (Mark 10:29-30).

- Are you noticing the parallels that Mark wants us to see between John the Baptist and Jesus? Both John and Jesus preached the same message—that we need to turn from our rebellion against God and accept the rescue He has lovingly provided. Both were protected by powerful men, Herod and Pilate, both of whom tried to remain neutral, but could not. And both John and Jesus suffered violent deaths as a result. In both cases, when they found themselves under pressure from those around them, neither Herod nor Pilate would listen to their conscience. And they both reaped the consequences of that choice.
- For Herod, he reaped the consequences of his choice to ignore his conscience, when he met Jesus a little bit later (cf. Luke 23:8-9, 12). From that passage we learn that there does come a time after repeatedly refusing to repent when sadly there is no longer an opportunity to do so. So, we discover that there is also a cost when we refuse to listen to our conscience. When Herod silenced his own conscience, he lost something that was more precious even than life itself—the opportunity to turn away from his wrong doing and turn back to God...the opportunity to repent. Ignoring Jesus’ call to repent and believe may earn us the approval of other people and win us friends, but it will eventually earn us the rejection of Jesus.

## DISCUSS

- *Was there something in particular that stood out or stuck you from the DVD?*
- *How do you think Herod felt about killing John the Baptist (see Mark 6:20, 26; 6:16)?*
  - Mark 6:20 – Herod knew that John was “righteous and holy” and did not deserve the treatment he received, so he may have felt guilty. He liked to listen to John, so he may have been sorry to lose that opportunity.
  - Mark 6:26 – Herod was distressed by the demand for John’s head, but didn’t want to refuse in front of his dinner guests. He didn’t want to have John killed, but was caught in a trap of his own making. He may have felt he didn’t have a choice—but that’s not true! He could (and should) have refused the girl’s request.
  - Mark 6:16 – This verse suggests that Herod was still thinking about John. Herod may have felt guilty for what he’d done, and perhaps worried that he was going to have to meet the man he had killed.
- *Mark tells us that “the opportune time came” (Mark 6:21). What opportunity did Herodias take (see Mark 6:19, 24)?* Herodias had wanted to kill John the Baptist for some time (Mark 6:19), but couldn’t because Herod was protecting him. Herod’s foolish oath to her daughter gave Herodias the opportunity to have John “immediately” killed (Mark 6:27).
- *What opportunity did Herod miss, and why?* Herod missed the opportunity to repent: that is, to turn from what he knew was wrong and turn back to God. He liked to listen to John, whom he knew to be “a righteous and holy man” (Mark 6:20). He had heard John’s clear message that his marriage to his brother’s wife, Herodias, was wrong (Mark 6:18)—but had refused to repent. At the banquet Herod had the opportunity to save John’s life and repent of his foolish oath to the daughter of Herodias. But he wasn’t willing to do this in front of His dinner guests, so he gave the order for John’s execution.
- *What kind of soil is Herod (see Mark 4:15-20)?* Herod is the soil filled with thorns (Mark 4:18-19). He heard the Word of God, taught clearly by John the Baptist, but other things choked it and made it unfruitful.
- *An old saying says, “We are the choices we have made.” How was that true for Herod?* Herod had chosen to take his brother’s wife and marry her. He refused to repent when John told him he was wrong. His wrong relationship with Herodias, and her hatred of John, led to Herod agreeing to John’s execution. He had the opportunity to listen to God’s Word as spoken by John, but didn’t take it. Later on, when Herod met Jesus, the opportunity had gone and Jesus didn’t answer any of Herod’s questions (Luke 23:9).

- *What choices will you make about the things you have heard during Christianity Explored?*
- *Mark tells us that, “When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to Him” (Mark 6:20). Having heard the good news about Jesus during Christianity Explored, did you enjoy listening and discussing? Are you puzzled by anything?*

**FOLLOW-UP**

None