

# Small Group Guide: "The Protector"

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Series: Bad Boys of Easter

Week 1: Caiaphas

Scripture Focus: John 11:45–53

## Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin your time together by thanking God for the opportunity to gather and grow together. Ask Him to help each person be honest about the areas of life where it may be difficult to trust Him. Pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal anything we may be holding onto that is preventing us from following Jesus more closely.

## Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Question: Have you ever watched someone make a decision that seemed obviously wrong from the outside?

What made it so clear to you—and why do you think it was harder for them to see?

(Optional follow-up: Have you ever had a moment in your own life where you later thought, 'I knew better'?)

## Key Takeaways from the Sermon

- Resistance isn't always disbelief – Sometimes people know what the right thing is but still resist it.
- The temple was more than a religious building – It was the economic, political, and cultural center of Israel.
- Jesus threatened Caiaphas' system – His influence, authority, and criticism of religious leaders made Caiaphas fear losing control.
- Protecting something important can lead us to resist God – The more we feel we have to lose, the easier it becomes to justify resisting Jesus.
- The greatest obstacle to following Jesus may be the life we've built without Him.
- Leaning closer to Jesus leads to freedom – When we stop resisting and begin trusting, we discover the life Jesus invites us into.

## Discussion Questions (30–40 minutes)

### Understanding the Scripture

1. Read John 11:47–53 together. What reasons did the religious leaders give for wanting to stop Jesus? What were they afraid might happen?
2. Caiaphas says it is better for one man to die than for the nation to perish. What does this reveal about his priorities and what he valued most?

### Personal Reflection

3. The sermon pointed out that resistance to God often comes from protecting something important. What are some things people commonly protect that might make it difficult to follow Jesus fully?
4. Caiaphas feared losing his influence, stability, and reputation. Which of those do you think people struggle most to surrender today? Why?
5. The message suggested that 'sometimes the greatest obstacle to following Jesus is the life we've built without Him.' What do you think that statement means?

### Applying the Truth

6. Have you ever experienced a time when following Jesus felt costly—socially, emotionally, or practically? What made it difficult?
7. The sermon used the illustration of a Chinese finger trap. How might leaning closer to Jesus instead of pulling away change a situation in your life?
8. The message ended with the question: 'What are you protecting that makes following Jesus difficult?' Without sharing anything too personal, what are some areas of life where people might struggle to trust God?

## Practical Applications (15 minutes)

### Individual Commitments

Identify One Area of Trust – Ask yourself this week: Where might I be resisting Jesus right now? Write down one area where you feel God inviting you to trust Him more.

Prayer and Conversation – Pray about that area during the week and share it with a trusted friend or someone in your group and ask them to pray with you.

Lean Closer to Jesus – Choose one practical way to lean closer to Jesus this week: spend intentional time in prayer, read Scripture daily, take a step of obedience you've been avoiding, or have a conversation you've been putting off.

## Group Accountability

Before leaving, invite each person (if comfortable) to share one area where they want to trust God more this week. Encourage group members to check in with one another during the week for encouragement and prayer.

## Closing Exercise (10 minutes)

Read Matthew 16:24–25 together: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'

Go around the group and complete this statement:  
'One way I want to lean closer to Jesus this week is...'

## Prayer Time (10 minutes)

Break into groups of 2–3 and pray for one another. Pray for courage to trust Jesus fully, wisdom in difficult decisions, freedom from fear of losing control, and greater faith to follow Jesus even when it's costly.

## Challenge for the Week

The 'Lean In' Challenge: Each day this week, ask, 'Jesus, where are you inviting me to trust you more today?' Write down anything that stands out and be ready to share what you noticed next week.

## Scripture for Further Study

- John 11:45–53 – The decision to kill Jesus
- Matthew 16:24–25 – The cost of following Jesus
- Proverbs 3:5–6 – Trusting God rather than leaning on our own understanding
- Luke 9:23 – Taking up our cross daily
- John 10:10 – Life to the full

## Leader Notes

- Create a safe and non-judgmental environment where people feel comfortable sharing.
- Keep the focus on reflection and growth rather than guilt.
- If discussion drifts toward debates or side topics, gently steer it back to the central question: What might we be holding onto that makes trusting Jesus difficult?