

## Reading Tracks

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### TRACK ONE

Follow along with basics of the story in a short selection of readings this week..

Monday: Mark 3:1-6

Tuesday: Luke 15:1-2

Wednesday: Mark 14:53-59

Thursday: Mark 14:60-65

Friday: Matthew 5:11-12

Saturday: 2 Timothy 1:15-18

### TRACK TWO

Get a little bigger perspective by reading assigned sections from *The Story* © 2011 by Zondervan.

Read pages 355-358, 361 this week.

### TRACK THREE

Get the whole story by reading through most of the Bible in longer sections.

In your Bible, read Luke 4-13 this week.

## This Week's Scripture Memory Verse

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"Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus." Mark 3:6 (NIV)

## Next Week in Worship

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**Next Weeks' Message:** *Where Prayer Begins*

**Next Week's Readings:** Colossians 1:9-14, Matthew 6:9-13

Jesus encountered opposition of all kinds, and many of his disciples have continued to face opposition and persecution themselves. When *The Big God Story* continues next week we will learn to pray from the one who taught us to love our enemies and to pray even for those who would persecute us.



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# Group Discussion

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## Connect

Think of a person or a group of people you know that is *against* something. What do you think motivates them? How do they act?

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## Learn

In this week's message we learned about some of the groups that opposed Jesus and why they were against him. One of these groups was the Pharisees. **Read Luke 15:1-2.**

- What was it about Jesus that bothered the Pharisees in this example?
- What's so threatening about Jesus' action here? Try to put yourself in the Pharisees' place to understand their concern.
- What do you think is the difference between calling people back to the law (as the Pharisees would have wished) and Jesus calling people to himself?

Another group that opposed Jesus was the Sadducees. Many Sadducees were priests in the Jerusalem Temple, the center of Jewish national identity, and they occupied positions of greater official influence and power than most Pharisees, both religiously and politically. **Read Mark 14:53-65.** This account of Jesus' trial reveals the kinds of things Jesus said and did that finally got him killed.

1. What are the main accusations against Jesus in this scene?
2. Why do you think Jesus' claim to be the Messiah (God's coming King) and his threat against the temple were particularly troublesome to those with greater power? Try to think of a variety of reasons.

In the Bible both Jesus and his disciples experience a variety of reactions, both positive and negative. **Read 2 Timothy 1:15** for one example of the apostle Paul experiencing high challenge in faith and ministry.

- Sometimes we think of growth and popularity as signs of "success" in God's church. What do examples like this one (or the examples from Jesus' own life) tell you about experiencing opposition or challenge?
- Have you ever been opposed or persecuted because of your discipleship to Jesus? How might these examples encourage, strengthen, or comfort you in such times?

Jesus certainly had opponents 2,000 years ago. Can you think of things about Jesus (or following him) that would be unpopular or would create opposition today?

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## Apply

1. Do you have anything in common with the Pharisees or Sadducees we learned about this week? Are there attitudes or actions that these Bible passage invite you to change?
2. When you think of people who are opponents of Jesus today, do you think they oppose him for the right reasons? Do they know what Jesus is really about? How might the church represent Jesus better so that people could choose to embrace or oppose who Jesus really is?

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## Pray

Think of people you know who have decided that Jesus is not for them. Pray for God to reach them and pray for discernment whether God might want to use you somehow in their lives.