



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The account of Judas and the Last Supper reveals something magnificent about our Savior. Because of His great compassion, Jesus was able to accept Judas despite Judas' sin. In this study, we'll take a closer look at Jesus' ability to accept others and use His example to measure our A.Q. —our "acceptance quotient."

Chuck Swindoll defines "acceptance quotient" as our ability to receive another person *without restrictions of prejudice or requirements of performance*. Just as an I.Q. test measures our minds, an A.Q. test measures our attitude and openness toward others.

Acceptance doesn't nullify discernment; we need to see people for who they really are. And it doesn't deny depravity; we all have a sin nature. But it *does* allow for maximum freedom and individuality. With a high A.Q., we can accept people as they are, and, at the same time, speak the truth to them—just as Jesus accepted Judas and spoke the truth to him.

Accepting a person like Judas, who was caught up in the most heinous forms of greed and guile, would go against our most basic impulses to fight back or run from people who threaten us. Relating to a Judas would put our acceptance ability to its greatest test. Can we truly love our enemies? Thankfully, there's no better person to help raise our A.Q. than Jesus, who, with a heart of pure acceptance, loved His disciple-turned-betrayer to the end.

Quotable

Acceptance is the ability to receive another person without restrictions of prejudice or requirements of performance.

— Charles R. Swindoll





YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

If you've ever endured the heartache of betrayal, you understand Jesus' anguish over Judas. If a friend, family member, or even a spouse stabbed you in the back, the pain most likely still sears your soul. We can't launch a study on accepting a betrayer without allowing a moment for honest expression. Lean on the soft shoulder of our Lord, and pray the psalm of David:

*Feel my pain and see my trouble.
Forgive all my sins.
See how many enemies I have
and how viciously they hate me!
Protect me! Rescue my life from them!
Do not let me be disgraced, for in you I take refuge.
May integrity and honesty protect me,
for I put my hope in you. (Psalm 25:18–21)*

Write a prayer of hope in the Lord, and ask Him for the strength to respond to your betrayer(s) as Jesus responded to His.



Observation: An Illustration of Acceptance

In the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, observation is the first step toward unlocking the meaning of a text and applying its principles. Read John 13:18–30, and as you read, look for four main sections: truth about the traitor (John 13:18–20), treatment of the traitor (13:21–26), change in the traitor (13:27–29), and reaction of the traitor (13:30). Read slowly, looking for clues about the setting, contrasts, emphasized phrases, or connected ideas.



The Truth about the Traitor—John 13:18–20

In the Upper Room, Jesus and His disciples reclined on pillows to observe the Passover. Tradition dictated the meal to be a joyful celebration of the memory of freedom from Egypt and the hope of future liberation. This night's festivities, however, were shrouded in two dark realities.

Look closely at John 13:18 for the first reality, and connect what you see in verses 2 and 11. Based on Jesus' quote of Psalm 41:9, what did Jesus know Judas would do?

The first reality was that Judas had already committed to his plan. The second reality was that he had skillfully concealed his intentions. This wolf in sheep's clothing acted the part of a loyal friend with such cunning that he fooled everyone except Jesus. His charade was treachery at its worst. What about Jesus' identity enabled Him to see through Judas' disguise (John 13:19–20)?

Later, the disciples would recall Jesus' prediction and know He was the true Messiah. Never taken by surprise, Jesus was always in control of His destiny and always extending grace. At any moment Jesus could have exposed Judas, yet the Master remained in the traitor's crosshairs so that He could take every opportunity to appeal to him to repent.

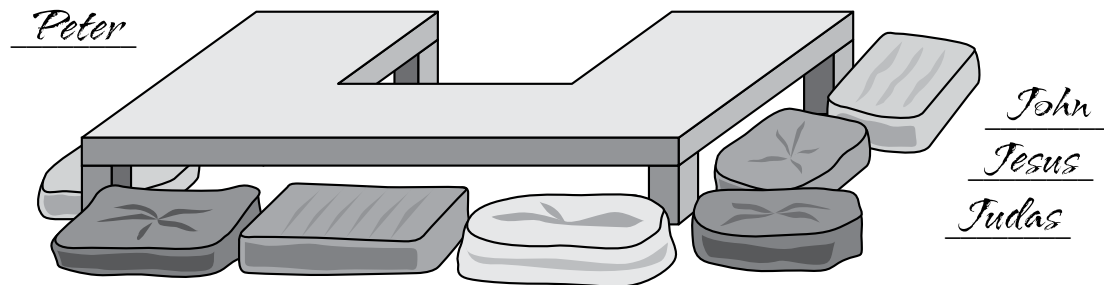
The Treatment of the Traitor—John 13:21–26

Again and again, Jesus threw Judas a lifeline to rescue him from his own choices. Even the seating arrangement for the Last Supper communicated acceptance. The disciples and Jesus likely ate the Passover meal at a low, U-shaped, Middle-Eastern style table with pillows for reclining instead of chairs for sitting. The men leaned on their left elbows, leaving their right hands free to eat with.



Read John 13:21–26, noting the possible seating positions of Jesus, John, Peter, and Judas from the diagram below, and then fill in the following points.

**Diagram of the Lord’s Table in the Upper Room
(John 13)**



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Jesus’ emotional statement (John 13:21): _____

The disciples’ reaction (13:22): _____

The location of John, “the disciple Jesus loved” (13:23): _____

Peter’s question to John (13:24): _____

John’s question as he leaned toward Jesus (13:25): _____

Jesus’ response (13:26): _____

Apparently, the others didn’t notice Jesus’ interaction with Judas. So it’s likely that Judas was on His left as they lay on their sides. Just as John leaned back toward Jesus to ask a private question, Jesus would have leaned back toward Judas. Commentator William Barclay explains the significance of this seating:



The revealing thing is that *the place on the left of the host was the place of highest honour, kept for the most intimate friend*. When that meal began, Jesus must have said to Judas: “Judas, come and sit beside me tonight; I want specially to talk to you.” The very inviting of Judas to that seat was an appeal.¹

The Change in the Traitor—John 13:27–29

The drama climaxed when Judas ate the morsel from Jesus’ own hand (John 13:26). As you observe John 13:27–29, what clues reveal that this poignant moment between the Son of God and the “son of perdition” (17:12 NASB) was the turning point in the scene?

Giving the morsel to Judas was Jesus’ ultimate gesture of acceptance . . . and Jesus’ final appeal. What statement from Jesus indicated the end of His acceptance (13:27)? What signaled to Jesus that Judas had crossed the line and He should release Judas?

The Reaction of the Traitor—John 13:30

What did Judas do next, and why do you think John specifically added the detail, “going out into the night” (John 13:30)? Hint: recall Jesus’ words in John 3:18–20 and 12:35–36.





Interpretation: Principles of Acceptance

What does Jesus' acceptance of Judas mean to us? As we raise our A.Q. to Jesus' level, we can expect the following characteristics of our acceptance of others.

Willingness to Accept People without Partiality

As we noted in the beginning of the study, acceptance means we receive others *without restrictions of prejudice*. How did James explain this principle in James 2:1–4, 9 with regard to preferring some people over others?

Willingness to Accept Another Style without Jealousy or Criticism

Acceptance also means that we receive others *without requirements of performance*. In other words, we don't expect everyone to act just like us before we accept them. How did the disciples learn this lesson when they met others intruding on their ministry (Mark 9:38–40)?

Paul experienced something similar when he encountered others who “do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ” (Philippians 1:17). He refused to be jealous or critical. Instead, he tolerated them as long as the message about Christ was being preached (1:18).



Willingness to Accept Offenses without Holding a Grudge

On this point, the A.Q. test gets exceedingly difficult. Could we wash the feet of our Judas or extend to him or her a gesture of love like when Jesus touched the lips of Judas with a morsel—the same lips that would betray Jesus with a kiss? What principles do you see in Romans 12:14–21 to help you pass this part of the test?

The fragrance of Jesus' acceptance of Judas filled the Upper Room with a sweet sacrificial aroma to God. And when we apply these principles, we fill our world with a kind of love that is not of this world.



Correlation: The Limits of Acceptance

Remember, acceptance *doesn't* turn a blind eye on discernment and depravity. There are times when we refuse to tolerate the actions of certain people. After many attempts to restore, as Jesus attempted with Judas, discipline is sometimes necessary. What guidelines do these verses offer?

Galatians 6:1; James 5:19–20

Matthew 18:15–17

Like Jesus, we must hold out our hand of fellowship as long as possible, until people take that final rebellious step. Then we must release them into the night.





Application of A.Q.

This lesson on acceptance must find its way off the page and into the fiber of our character. Review the principles below, consider the following questions, and write down ways you can accept others just as Jesus accepted Judas.

- *Be willing to accept others without partiality.* How do I treat people from a different social class, culture, or ethnicity than mine? How do I relate to people with disabilities? Do I show favor to some people more than other people?
- *Be willing to accept other people's styles without being jealous or critical.* Are my words judgmental toward others who don't fit my style of worship? Am I jealous of other ministries God is blessing? Do I criticize others who don't fit the mold I expect them to fit?
- *Be willing to accept offenses without holding a grudge.* Do I think about getting even with others who have hurt me? Have I let go of hurts from the past? Am I ready to release the poison of bitterness?

In the beginning, you wrote a prayer to express your heart to the Lord. Now pray again, asking for His Spirit of acceptance to fill your heart with divine grace.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I ask You to turn up the heat in my heart to boil off all my bitterness, hurt, and anger. Let any grudges I hold toward others dissipate as steam from a pot. Purge me of prejudice and condemnation. Reduce me to pure love. Sweeten me with the Spirit of Christ, who is my Savior. May words of acceptance pour from my heart as I reach out to others with the compassion of Jesus. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, rev. ed., vol. 2, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 145–46.



FOLLOWING CHRIST . . . THE MAN OF GOD

How High Is Your A.Q.?

John 13:18–30

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



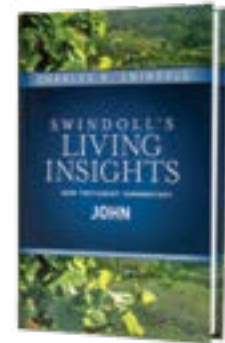
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2018 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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