

COMPELLED BY THE CROSS

STUDY THREE

On the Trail of a Traitor

Luke 22:1–6

Few experiences are harder to endure than being betrayed, especially when the betrayal has been going on for a long time under a cloak of secrecy.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE name, *Judas*, is synonymous with *betrayed*. When someone says, “There is a Judas among us,” a shiver goes up our spine. *A trusted individual is secretly plotting against us.* The name infers treachery, treason, disloyalty, duplicity, deceit, trickery, and guile. If a close friend, family member, or even a spouse has betrayed you, the pain most likely still sears your soul.

None of the disciples suspected Judas would betray Jesus. Why should they have? Jesus had personally called Judas to be one of the original twelve. Along with the others, Judas had a front-row seat for Jesus’ miracles and basked in Jesus’ words of life. He traveled with Jesus, ate meals with Him, and observed Him in His most unguarded moments. Judas could find no sin or hypocrisy in Jesus to criticize. Jesus was blameless in every way.

So why did Judas turn against his master?

Bible scholars speculate that greed may have driven Judas. He managed the disciples’ money, and, according to John, “he often stole some for himself” (John 12:6). Maybe jealousy spurred Judas, or ambition. Perhaps he hoped Jesus would liberate Israel from Rome and was disillusioned when Jesus refused to set up a political kingdom. Whatever the motive for his betrayal, in some dark moment, Judas welcomed evil into his heart, and Satan walked through the open door.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

The account of Judas reminds us that our struggle is not against “flesh-and-blood enemies” but “against mighty powers in this dark world” (Ephesians 6:12), and we rely on “God’s armor” to protect us (Ephesians 6:11). Invite the Lord in prayer to arm you with His truth and to strengthen you with His righteousness, peace, and faith.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The gospel writers don’t say how long the seeds of betrayal germinated in Judas before he acted. Matthew and Mark place Judas’ clandestine meeting with the religious leaders after Mary anointed Jesus with her expensive perfume (Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–6). Could that incident somehow have pushed Judas over evil’s edge? We don’t know for certain. The definite cause of Judas’ betrayal is found in Luke 22:1–6, which is our first passage to study.



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Observation: Judas' Sin and Jesus' Compassion

In the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, observation is the initial step toward unlocking the meaning of a text and applying its principles. Read [Luke 22:1–6](#) and write down what you see. Try outlining the passage to clarify the sequence of events.

Specifically, what was the source of Judas' treachery?

What did Judas offer the religious leaders that they lacked? Why were they “delighted” (Luke 22:5)? For insight into their frustrated hostility toward Jesus, read [19:45–48](#) and [20:9–19](#).



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Every time Jesus spoke, the crowds were large, and the religious leaders couldn't arrest Jesus or there would be a riot. Afterward, Jesus always slipped away to an undisclosed location. They needed inside help, and Judas was their man. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Judas' dark thoughts and actions were not hidden from Jesus, who, as the Son of God, knew Judas' secret dealings. Even so, Jesus kept loving His turncoat disciple. In the upper room, Jesus washed the disciples' feet, including the feet of Judas ([John 13:1–17](#)). And then, Jesus seemed to turn directly to His enemy and, according to John 13:18, quoted Psalm 41:9, which states:

*Even my best friend, the one I trusted completely,
the one who shared my food, has turned against me.*

Imagine Judas hearing those words and realizing Jesus knew everything. What was Jesus' not-so-subtle message to Judas in [John 13:18–20](#)?

Again and again, Jesus threw out a lifeline to rescue Judas from his own choices. Even the seating arrangement for the Last Supper communicated Jesus' grace to Judas and desire to trust in Judas. The disciples and Jesus ate the Passover meal at a low, U-shaped table with pillows for reclining instead of chairs for sitting. The men leaned on their left elbows and ate with their right hands.

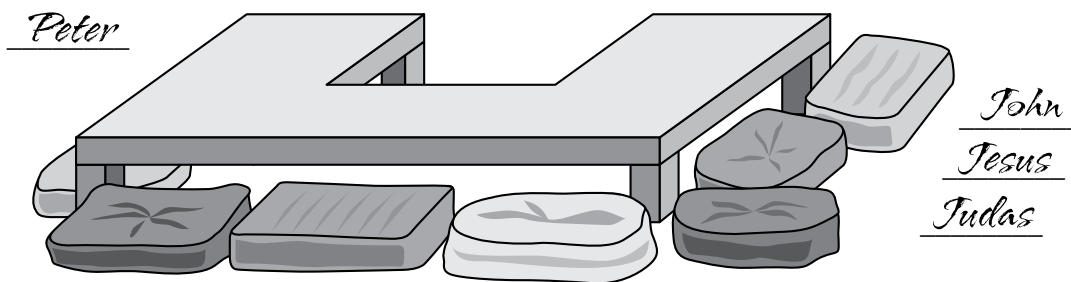


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Read *John 13:21–26* and fill in the blanks below, noting the possible seating positions of Jesus, John, Peter, and Judas from the following diagram.

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 from across the table (13:24): _____

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

Jesus’ response (13:26): _____



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Just as John leaned over to Jesus on his left to ask a private question, Jesus would have leaned back toward Judas on His left. 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

Jesus wrapped His love in the bread He gave to Judas as one final appeal to His betrayer. Tragically, Judas ate the bread but refused the grace. What happened next, according to [John 13:27–29](#)?

Only Jesus knew exactly what Judas was doing. Giving Judas the morsel was the last act of grace that would come his way. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Satan’s Scheme through Judas

Satan knew Christ’s purpose for coming. “The Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil,” according to John (1 John 3:8). Even the demons understood Jesus’ power and quaked before Him, asking, “Have you come to destroy us?” (Luke 4:34).

When, at the outset of Jesus’ ministry, Jesus resisted Satan’s temptations, Satan left Jesus “until the next opportunity came” (4:13). That opportunity came through Judas.



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What was Satan intending to do by entering Judas?

Despite Satan's sinister efforts, what did Christ accomplish at the cross, according to *Hebrews 2:14–15*? What will be Satan's ultimate end, according to *Revelation 20:10*?

Judas may have been a pawn in Satan's hand, but Satan was a pawn in God's hand! God sovereignly turned Satan's treachery against him in order to bring salvation to the world.



Correlation: Loving Our Enemies

At any moment, Jesus could have exposed Judas, and yet, the Master kept appealing to him to repent. How do Jesus' actions toward Judas illustrate His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, specifically *Matthew 5:43–44*?



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What insight does *1 Peter 2:23* give into Jesus' ability to bear Judas' treachery?

With satanic or demonic possession comes the inability to visualize the consequences of one's actions. Judas never tracked his actions all the way to the end. If Judas had thought about the consequences, he would have realized that he was the one who lost in the deal.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Lessons from Judas' Tragic Account

Judas' tragic account sounds an alarm that rings to this day: *too much time spent with evil invites closer ties with the enemy of our soul.* Judas took his first dip into the murky waters of deceit when he stole from the money bag. One betrayal of trust led to another until, finally, Judas drowned in his own sin. The warning is this: *steer clear of wicked plans and people.*

Think about how you may be secretly betraying someone's trust, even in small ways. How can you steer clear of this sin and put an end to it before it leads to even greater sins?

Along with the warning comes a reminder: *God continues to express His love and extend His grace.* Sometimes we think that someone we love has trailed too far into sin for God to redeem him or her. If Jesus kept reaching out to Judas, then He won't give up on your loved one, or on you. The encouragement is this: *refuse to write off any person.*



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Have you feared that someone you love is too far gone into sin and beyond God's love? Express your trust in Christ to keep offering morsels of grace to your loved ones.

What other warnings or encouragements do you glean from Judas' account and Jesus' example of love for His betrayer?

Close this *Searching the Scriptures* study by thanking the Lord for His unyielding love for even the worst of sinners and for His relentless resolve to destroy evil for all time. Our Savior is truly the hope of the world.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, just as Your Son appealed to Judas up to the final moment of betrayal, may He keep reaching out to my loved one who has wandered into sin. May my loved one hear His words of love and repent today. Yes, even now as I pray. Thank You for loving Your enemies enough to die for them, including me. I give You my heart in gratitude and faithful service, hoping for the day when Satan will finally be destroyed and this evil world restored. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

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



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

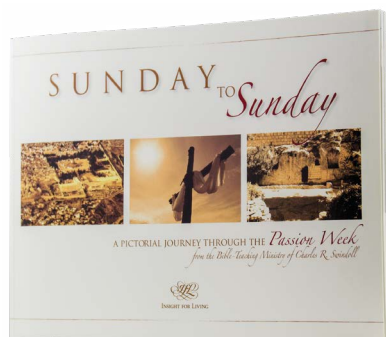
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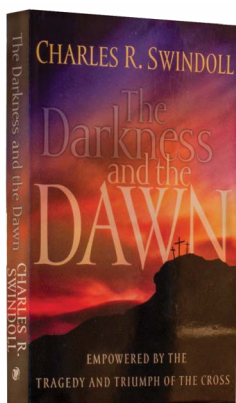
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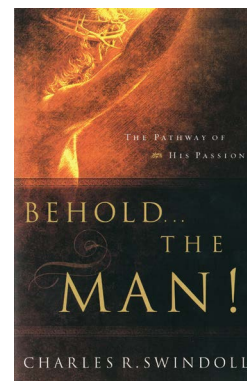
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For the 2023 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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