

JUDAS AGREES TO BETRAY JESUS (LUKE 22:1-6)

A RESOURCE FOR SMALL GROUPS

The story of Judas Iscariot is a tragedy, at once unique – bound with the singular, unrepeatable story of the crucifixion of God the Son – and exemplary for us. For we are closer to Judas than we may realize.

To begin, read Luke 22:1-6.

1. What does it take for someone to get to the point where Satan may enter?

It can be tempting to think that Satan just “takes over” Judas, simply to advance the plot. But just as Scripture acknowledges that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh long ago (Exodus 10:1), yet equally that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15), we can be assured that Judas came under the influence of Satan through his own choices. Even when our sense of bondage or difficulty is acute, we always have choices, either to follow the way of the flesh – and so come under the influence of Satan – or to follow the lead of the Spirit, and so come under the influence and protection of Jesus.

For clues as to why Judas was moved to betray Jesus, we can look to his “surname”, *Iscariot*. There are many theories (listen to the podcast), but it’s probably best to think of him as a man (*ish*) of *Kerioth*, a village in the Roman province of Judea, situated some 45 kilometres south of Jerusalem. This made him an outsider among the largely Galilean followers of Jesus, and we can imagine him more politically motivated, and more acutely aware of Roman domination, than the other disciples. It’s likely that he became disillusioned with Jesus, whose conduct in Jerusalem was at odds with Judas’s hope of political reform and national liberation. Judas had an idea of Jesus, and expectations of his messiahship, that Jesus did not fulfil. He was a disappointed man. Disappointment with Jesus will harden our hearts, opening the door to evil influence, causing us to live as though God had no claim on our lives at all.

2. Be honest: how and when has Jesus failed your expectations?
3. How have you dealt with the disappointment that followed?
4. Can you see ways in which disappointment has distanced you from the Lord, or opened a path to poor choices?

Capitalizing on Judas’s disappointment, Satan leads him directly to the Jewish authorities, where he cements a deal. In this way Satan makes it far more difficult for Judas to “walk back” his plan. His intention to betray is now a matter of public record and formal transaction. (Listen to the podcast for a similar strategy in Satan’s “sifting” of Peter, later in the chapter.) This is Satan’s strategy with us, also. It’s illustrated every time a hidden sin is covered by an open lie when queried (as every teenager knows!).

5. Can you tell a story of how this has happened in your own past? How did the story end?

Even an open, public betrayal of Jesus can be redeemed. Judas could have walked his bargain back, but did not, and his fate is a warning. Yet though Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus restored him and renewed his leadership (John 21). There is always a way back with the Lord.

6. Where in your life are you in need of a “way back”? Confess your sins to one another and pray for God’s gracious help.
7. Alternatively, pray together for those in your life whose choices have brought them under the influence of God’s enemy.