

FAITH MOVES FORWARD 03: LESSONS FROM JUDAS STUDY GUIDE

Judas was one of Jesus' friends, he was on staff with him, he loved him, he served him, but he ended up betraying him. There are mountains for us to move with faith, and journeys for all of us to take, and my heart and passion is that every single one of us moves forward. Now, we all know there twelve apostles and we also know 11 of them moved forward in faith – they planted churches, raised the dead, healed the sick, they preached to thousands, travelled the world, and stood strong in tough times and change the world. But one apostle moved backwards – he got out of faith and moved backwards. So, what we are looking at today is very important when it comes to the faith life!

I am going to show you this morning how satan got into the heart of one of Jesus' best friends. I am going to expose satan's plans to get into your heart to betray people close to you and let your friends down and then they get bitter, you get bitter and nothing works and no one moves forward in faith.

Judas Iscariot walked with Jesus for three and a half years. He was the treasurer for the ministry, one of the 12 associates. If you are doing the finances for a large ministry, you are going to be talking to the CEO a lot – discussing the income, the expenditure, how to save, where to give, what other ministries to give into. Jesus must have trusted Judas, knew him well, and he was a vital part of the ministry. So, we must think – how on earth could satan have got into Judas' heart? Knowing this process will help any Christian.

I don't know if anyone has ever thought about this – have you ever wondered how someone could be that close to someone as glorious as Jesus and then end up betraying him? How did satan get into Judas's mind in the middle of revival and convince him to sell out the son of God for 30 pieces of silver. How mental would you have to be to think that is a good deal? Now, we have established that satan hates friends – he hates friendships – and he is looking for a way to destroy every fruitful functioning kingdom friendship. The friendships satan hates the most are ones that move you forward – what I call your forward friends.

Read John 12:1-3. Jesus and His disciples were having dinner in the house with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Three siblings. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, and so the family really loved Jesus and they were having dinner. They were blessing Jesus by making food for him – that's a real cultural thing there – and Mary brought a very expensive gift for Jesus.

Mary brought Jesus ointment of spikenard. A pound of spikenard. Now, just to get into context, that's the most expensive perfume of the day. Spikenard was rare. It was made from a grass, that only grows in India. You got all the juice from the grass and dry it out – it becomes a sort of hard substances, like butter. Turning that "Butter" into perfume was not easy, it took a long time and cost a lot of money. Then of course it had to be imported from India, so it was very expensive. Very few people would ever have any, it was only available to the richest of the rich. There were several cheap knock offs available, but Mary brought the real thing.

This was the gift you give to a king, and Mary gave it to Jesus. The Greek word for very costly is *polutimos*, and it means great cost, but also it means great honour. This is the kind of gift where the amount is so great, to give it to someone you are honouring them. This is top of the line giving. I never know what amazes me about this the most – that

Mary had a pound of this lying around, or that she gave it to Jesus. A pound of this perfume is about a pint of it.

Can you imagine everyone's faces – the disciples, the family, as Mary gets the perfume bottle, takes the lid off and tips it and pours it on the feet of Jesus.

Even kings didn't use this perfume on their feet! That would have offended some people – I know a lot of people who their first point of offense is when something happens that is lavish, expensive. I know people upset I have flown first class a couple of times. I know people upset at a lot less than a pint of royal perfume. And no one ever used this on their feet, but Mary loved Jesus' feet. I wonder if Mary was thinking of Isaiah 52.7, about the beauty of feet that bring good news. No one brought better news than Jesus – her brother was dead and now is alive! Now what Mary did was a revelation of what was in her heart – for three and a half years, Jesus taught "where your treasure is, there your heart will be" – Mary took her treasure and poured it on Jesus, because that is where her heart was. It was an act of worship, it was something so powerful.

She then wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. In those days a woman's hair was her glory, Paul said that in I Cor II. For Mary to uncover her head and use her hair was an act of remarkable humility – it was a sign of how much she loved and valued Jesus. The whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment!

Now here is the truth you have to understand: radical obedience and authentic worship is often an opportunity to get offended.

Now, satan is so skilful – this is something we must realize. He can take an act of humility, of worship, of zeal – and play with your mind and make you offended at something so godly. We are going to see some great worship, some generous giving, some lavish, extravagant events happen in the Tree of Life this year, and satan would love nothing more than to use one of those to get you offended and bitter and filled with resentment.

Read John 12.4–5. This spikenard could have been sold for three hundred pence, or three hundred denarii. A denarius was a day's salary, so this perfume was worth 300 days salary. That's a lot of money! Judas objected!

Read John 12.6–7. Jesus explained that he was being anointed for his burial and to leave Mary alone. Now I love this about Jesus: Jesus was not afraid to sound offensive. I mean look at his words here:

The poor you always have, but you will not always have me.

Stop reading the Bible through the lens of everything is sweet and everyone lives six inches above ground floating around in Bible days.

When Jesus said some things people were tempted to take it the wrong way, people were tempted to get upset, people were tempted to be offended. People walked out of his meetings, people tried to throw him off a cliff! Look at what he said: "Let's stop talking about the poor for a minute, there are always poor people – but I am only here for a while, today is about me" Can you imagine a church meeting – where we are discussing what to do with money, and I said "forget about the poor, there are so many of them, how can we use that money to help me, to bless me" – I am sure some people would have a temptation to get bitter and resentful.

We know Jesus loved the poor. But he would have sounded offensive – he would have sounded arrogant, insensitive, unloving. And satan loves moments like that – he can get inside your mind, take one sentence out of context, out the context of a life of serving and loving and helping people – and use that to offend you and destroy a friendship, pick apart a church, and rip apart a ministry, and tear apart a family, a marriage. I know people who hate me based on one sentence on social media that they have taken out of context, added non-verbal communication that was not there, judged my heart and got offended. It happened then and it happens now!

There was a moment here – a moment where you decide: is what Mary did superfluous waste and excess, was it a waste of money, or was a powerful and beautiful act of worship.

Judas' mind was going “you could help so many poor people with this money, they are more important than you doing this Mary, Jesus you are receiving this because you have an ego, you want the adulation, you don't care about the poor.”

Read John 13.2. It tells us by the end of the supper, satan had put it in the heart of Judas to betray him. So, this supper is where it all happened and changed. One event can change anything and turn your mind into satan's playground. We must study this supper and discover satan's plan.

John 13.2 says that the devil “put into” Judas. Now we know that the word devil is diabolos, and the word “put into” is also diabolos. The devil devilled into Judas' mind! The word means to thrust inside, to throw at with force, to cast into. It is the word for an injection, or the word to stab with a knife. It is used in the Bible to put money in the bank, to put wine into new wineskins. Jesus put his fingers into the ear of a deaf man, the same word – Jesus didn't slowly put his fingers into the deaf man's ears, he hurled them in there, he wanted that man healed quickly! Jesus told Thomas to do the same and put his fingers into the nail prints. So, it is a word that means fast and forceful action, the devil was quick, over one meal he got Judas to the point where he was imagining betraying Jesus!

There was a small moment of opportunity as Judas saw the generosity and humility of Mary, the worship, the praise, all of it – there was a small window in Judas' mind about Christ's integrity. Always have the poor, I am going – he doesn't even care for the poor – this is what I gave up my job for – this is where I am – I could run this ministry so much better, I am so unappreciated – and as that window opened, quickly the devil threw his thought in there – betray him! There was an entry point and satan took it – he got in.

Judas was then satan's instrument because he let satan drive bitterness in his heart about Jesus. Judas let that issue be a big deal in his mind, and blew it out of so much proportion it became a reason he could actually stab Jesus in the back. He let the devil use his mind as a playground, swing on the swings and slide down the slide. It forever changed his view of Jesus and it ruined their friendship and it stopped Judas moving forward.

God has given all of us forward friends – friends that bring us forward. Satan hates that, and the biggest forward friend is Jesus! Your second is the church that God assigned you to. Satan wants you offended at Jesus, failing that – at church. Now think about that in your life:

- Ever had a moment where one sentence has caused you to think badly of someone?

- Are you aware you are the elder of your heart – you can choose! You can choose to let that sentence offend you or let the offense get deep inside your heart
- Are you aware that satan is trying to drive into your mind and get you offended?
- Are you now thinking “I made the wrong choice about that person”, “I let my mind get seized by thoughts that are bitter and resentful”

I have been there. I can tell you. I shared a testimony on Sunday about how satan tried his hardest to get into my mind and break up a close relationship with a forward friend. I am as human as any of us, and we all need to make sure that satan does not get involved in our relationships.

The problem with deception caused by offense is that you are often really blind to it. I believed I was doing the right thing, I believed I was acting in the best interest of the church, of my family, of my ministry, of me, I was offended and annoyed and it nearly cost me a good friendship.

I was about to do something blatantly wrong. And as I finally saw what I was about to do and what it really was, I was totally set free. I saw how spiteful and petty it was, I saw how destructive it would have been to me and to the church. I saw satan’s hand in it all. But the day before – I would have sworn on a stack of Bibles that I was in the right. And right to do it. And thankfully I didn’t end that relationship, and that relationship has opened preaching doors for me all over the world and helped our TV ministry and so much more!

When something becomes a big deal in a relationship – always press pause and just look again at what it is. Often that person is someone who loves you, you love and someone you need in your life to move forward. Satan loves destroying those relationships.

John Dowie was a Pentecostal preacher with a remarkable healing ministry. He died claiming he was Elijah. Mariah Woodworth-Etta was going to speak to him, but he was offended at people falling off chairs in her meeting and turned away from her. He missed the person who could have took him forward through offense, and he went back. The history of the church is full of stories like this, do not be one of them.

Read Php. 1.24. Demas is a fellow worker with Paul, presumably an apostle. Imagine getting your ministerial training one on one with Paul, that would have been a glorious opportunity. Paul would have been a forward friend! Now read 2 Tim. 4.10. Demas deserted Paul! Church history suggests that Demas got offended at Paul’s commitment to grace and wanted to teach food laws and circumcision and the like, and that must have really taken his ministry backwards, but Paul could have helped him move forward in faith. There are people who will take you forward, do not let satan get in the way of these relationships.

SERIOUS QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Do I really want satan to build a wall between me and this person over something that will not matter a year from now?
- Do I really think that person tried to hurt me deliberately?
- Relationships are hard work, I have spent and invested a lot to get this relationship to where it is, do I really want to abandon it on something like this?
- Is what happened actually serious, or only a big deal in my imagination?
- Have I ever done something similar to someone else?

I have found out that satan is always looking for moments to drive a wedge between people. A small comment, an act of extravagant worship, a real offence, an imaginary offense – and satan knows when to spring his attack, to get in the satanmobile and drive straight at your mind and play a mind game.

Here is an idea that I believe will make our churches heaven on earth:

If all of us stopped trying to work on everyone else's hearts and stopped thinking about and working out what other people are doing and thinking and feeling, and we all work on our own hearts, and dealt with our own hearts – that would make our church heaven on earth.

The condition of our heart is serious. Read Hebrews 12.15. Remember we are the elders, the overseers, the bishops of our own hearts – we have to make sure bitterness does not come in, resentment is not in there, that our heart is sweet, that we are thinking the best, dreaming big, walking with the Lord. Let us not be Judas!

Think carefully – the betrayal from Judas – a good friend – was satanically designed to strip the confidence from Jesus, to disrupt his life, to make him hate people, to make him bitter too, to make Peter give up, to make John angry, to disappoint James. Zechariah prophesied that Jesus would be wounded in the house of his friends, but he didn't let it distract him. Some of you have been betrayed, don't let that destroy you – some of you have been let down by a friend, some of you have had this happen. But do not let it become your focus.

I believe the reason God led me to teach on this is because some of you do need to forgive people. You need to spend some time with the Lord and deal with some wrong heart attitudes. You need to stop being disappointed and start being hopeful about the future. You may even need to stop blaming God for what happened!

Some betrayers have been launched into your life to blow it up and stop you moving forward. It works both ways – whether you betray or are betrayed satan doesn't care as long as you stop advancing.

I also believe I am talking to a Judas or two this morning – I love you, but you have by your actions treated a friend like an enemy. You have caused someone to stumble, and made them bitter. You say "well they need to sort themselves out" – true, but you are committed to looking at your heart not theirs. You can do something today. You can hunt down peace with all men. You can change your ways and rebuild a broken relationship. You can repent for what you have done.

You are the bishop of your own heart, you are not the elder of my heart or your spouse's heart – you are responsible for your heart. You are going to be the best elder your heart has ever had. You are going to take the axe to the root, and you are going to remove that bitterness right now – you are going to change today. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you – help you and encourage you.

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- I. How close were Jesus and Judas before Judas betrayed him?
2. How would you describe what Ben calls a “forward friend”?
3. How expensive was the spikenard and why was it so expensive?
4. What about the supper gave satan a window into Judas’ mind?
5. Have you ever judged someone on one event or even one sentence rather than their whole character and actions over time?
6. Has there ever been a time satan has injected some evil thoughts in your mind to separate you from a forward friend?
7. These are the questions Ben asked in the sermon. How would you answer them?
 - Ever had a moment where one sentence has caused you to think badly of someone?
 - Are you aware you are the elder of your heart – you can choose! You can choose to let that sentence offend you or let the offense get deep inside your heart
 - Are you aware that satan is trying to drive into your mind and get you offended?
 - Are you now thinking “I made the wrong choice about that person”, “I let my mind get seized by thoughts that are bitter and resentful”
8. Ben was about to end a friendship thinking he was doing the right thing. Have you ever been in that situation and what saved or helped you?
9. These are the questions Ben says to ask yourself when you
 - Do I really want satan to build a wall between me and this person over something that will not matter a year from now?
 - Do I really think that person tried to hurt me deliberately?
 - Relationships are hard work, I have spent and invested a lot to get this relationship to where it is, do I really want to abandon it on something like this?
 - Is what happened actually serious, or only a big deal in my imagination?
 - Have I ever done something similar to someone else?

How can asking yourself these questions help you when satan is injecting ideas into your head?

10. What should we do if we are being betrayed?
- II. What about this sermon inspired, challenged or encouraged you the most?