

# Life Group Discussion Guide

No Greater Love: In the Upper Room with Jesus  
Week 2: Love Betrayed • John 13:18–30

One of the most perplexing realities of the Christian life is how Christians can be so vicious toward other Christians.

Yes, we know people can be vicious, but within the Christian community it's especially hurtful because of its stark contrast to the Christ we profess. And yet, we saw last week that Jesus said, "No servant is greater than his master." As we'll see today, this maxim applies not only to foot washing, but to betrayal: betrayal of friendship, of deep love, and of light.

## 1. The Betrayal of Friendship

Picking up where we left off last week, we find ourselves around the Passover table with Jesus and His 12 closest followers. He's just finished washing their feet, a gesture meant to help them understand the cleansing power of His coming death. He says to them, "You are clean, *though not every one of you,*" a statement that must have startled and confused them. In verse 18, He continues:

"I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: 'He who shared my bread has turned against me.'" John 13:18

Here, Jesus quotes from Psalm 41, a lament that describes a person in great weakness whose enemies gloat over him. But, it's not just his enemies; it's also his friends. The psalmist mourns, "Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me" (41:9).

*"The person in Psalm 41, most likely David, sees himself as someone in extreme weakness. And that's where the Lord borrows from to express what He's facing. We tend to think of Jesus as having so much strength. And He did. He does. But not in that hour. It was in this hour of His greatest weakness that His friend, whom He trusted, turned against Him."*

- Why do you think Jesus chose Judas to be part of His inner circle?
- Take time now to reflect on the reality of Jesus' suffering (psychological, emotional, relational, physical, etc.) leading up to and during His betrayal, arrest, false trial, and torturous death. What do you think He felt?
- Why does it matter? What does it mean to you?

Jesus continues, "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am" (13:19). Jesus understands that Judas' betrayal will not affect only Him, but all of them. It will shake them. Knowing this, He assures them of one unchanging reality in the midst of all the chaos and confusion to come: Who He is.

*“When Jesus says, ‘I am who I am,’ He is referring to the name of God. The name by which He revealed Himself to Moses. The Great I AM. What He’s saying to them is this: ‘Even as things look bleak, my authority remains.’”*

- Has “the unexpected” ever shaken your trust in Jesus’ authority? Caused you to question who He is? Talk about it.
- How does Jesus’ assurance, *“Even as things look bleak, my authority remains,”* encourage you today?

## **2. The Betrayal of Deep Love**

*“After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, ‘Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.’ His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.”*  
John 13:21-22

Perhaps the most incredible part of Jesus’ statement, *“One of you is going to betray me,”* is the disciples’ response. They’re *“at a loss.”* They have *no idea* who He’s talking about, which tells us two things.

First, Judas was really good at hiding his true heart (which can also happen among us). But even more astonishing, Jesus did not love Judas any less. In all the interactions Jesus had with Judas (and He had many), Jesus gave no hint that something was up. None of the disciples had a clue.

*“Doesn’t the depth of His love expose the shallowness of ours? It’s easy for people to tell when we don’t like someone. We show it and often are happy to show it. But that’s not even what we’re talking about—annoyance or vexation. We’re talking about love. As profound as the betrayal was to be, Jesus treated Judas the same way He treated the ones who were loyal. This is a deep love. May our ability to love like the Savior grow.”*

- How does Jesus’ love toward Judas challenge the way you treat those who’ve annoyed, offended, or wronged you?
- If needed, take time now to repent of demonstrating a shallow, conditional love toward others. Pray for the heart-level transformation you need to love as Jesus calls us to.
- What is a practical step you can take to love like Jesus loves?
- Note: If you are in an unhealthy/abusive relationship, please seek help from a mature trusted friend or see a professional counselor. There are other important dynamics at play in these relationships.

## **3. The Betrayal of Light**

*“Leaning back against Jesus, [the disciple whom Jesus loved] asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’ Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas*

took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, 'What you are about to do, do quickly.' But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night." John 13:25–30

There's much to unpack in this passage, but we're going to focus in on just four words: "And it was night." Earlier, Jesus had said, "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (9:4–5). For Judas, time was up. He was betraying the light of the world and giving himself over to the darkness.

Elsewhere in Scripture, we see the warning signs the disciples couldn't, like when John tells us Judas is a thief, and that the devil had prompted him to betray Jesus.

*"Scriptures like these help us understand what's going on with Judas. Judas never belonged to the light. He never belonged to Jesus. He was not cleansed by Jesus' word because he never received that word. He was around Jesus but never **with** him. The whole time, he was hardening his heart to Jesus, to God. His character and morality were never transformed. He was a thief and stayed a thief. He belonged to the darkness. He belonged to the devil. So the devil used him for his purposes."*

Reflecting on this, Pastor Jon left us with three final thoughts:

**a. Take heed that you're not a Judas.**

What was going on in Judas' heart is the same thing that can go on in ours:

*"I get concerned for those of you who get a sense of comfort because you're around Jesus, but you're not **with** Jesus. His word has not cleansed you. Your character and morality have not changed. The danger for you is that being around Jesus without being cleansed by Jesus means you're hardening your heart—because you cannot be exposed to him and to his word and remain the same. So, I implore you. Come to Jesus. Stop merely hanging around him. Come to him. Confess your sins. Turn from them. Beg God to give you a hatred for your sin. It's not too late. But God will not be mocked."*

- If this resonates with you, take time now to pray together as Pastor Jon instructed. Receive a new heart—one humbled before your Savior and King.

**b. Loyalty to Jesus opens you to betrayal.**

Many of us have known the betrayal of a friend. Someone close to you. Someone you trusted. And Jesus knows what it feels like.

*“Jesus knows betrayal. He knows how to comfort the betrayed, the abandoned. Let Him comfort you. Don’t give more power to your betrayer by remaining in anger, bitterness, and hatred, or by staying away from the only One who can heal your deep wound.”*

- If this resonates with you, take time now to bring your pain to Jesus and receive the healing He has for you.

**c. Long for a deeper love for the Savior.**

*“I have felt a lot preparing this message, taking in the scriptures. Allowing myself to feel the darkness surrounding the Savior, the deep agony in His soul. Did His hand tremble as He dipped the bread for Judas? Did His lip quiver as He said, ‘One of you is going to betray me?’ I want Jesus to become more human to me, so that I may marvel even more that He is the divine Word become flesh. And in all of this, I want to long for a deeper love for my Savior, so that sin will grow faint and distant and distasteful, and my God will grow in presence and stature and worth. I pray the Lord will do the same for you.”*

- Pray together that you might have this kind of love for the Savior—a rich, intimate, all-consuming love