



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

## Judas: The Ultimate Bad Guy

FOLLOW ME:

## THE STORY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Various Scriptures

Tim Badal | June 18, 2023

What is it about villains—bad guys—that we find ourselves attracted to, especially on the silver screen? Our movies are filled with people who are dark and mean, hungry for power and world domination. What is it about these people we find ourselves morbidly curious about? You know who I'm talking about. Figures and characters like Darth Vader from Star Wars with that deep voice and dark armor. It brought fear and caused me to shiver when I first met him as a young boy in a movie theater.

How about some of the others we know, going back even further. Bad guys have been around for a long time. Norman Bates from "Psycho"—Alfred Hitchcock's thriller—drawing that very difficult line between sanity and madness. For those who go back a whole bunch of generations, remember the Joker—the Bat Man's arch nemesis? He's taken on very different looks through the years, like clownlike features and his diabolical pursuit. What is it about characters like this that we find ourselves wanting to know more about?

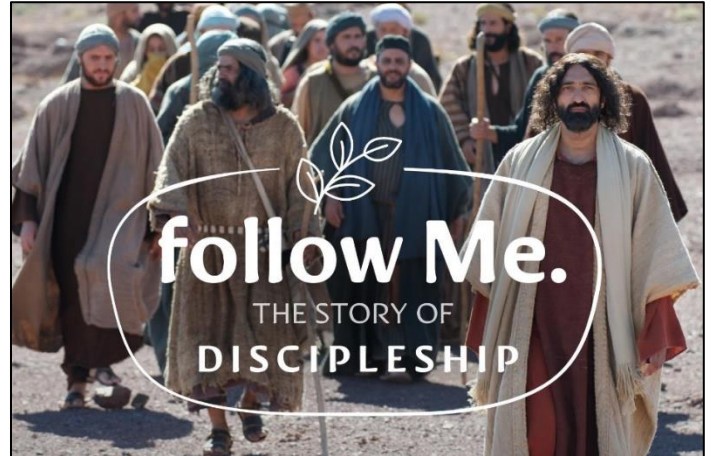
How about Thanos—the super villain of the Marvel series—bringing violence to the universe through his ruthless pursuit of the Infinity Stones? Some of you have no earthly idea what I'm talking about. No clue, someone says. So I'll give you the Wicked Witch of the West that caused young children for a generation to be fearful. The pointy hat, the menacing look, the green features, the flying monkeys—all trying to strike fear into the travelers to the world of Oz. Finally, how about Sauron from the literature of Tolkien with that all-seeing eye and a desire for dominion over the Middle Earth?

What is it about these bad guys, these villains? What causes us to be attracted to their stories? Why are we captivated by them? Is it because it gives us a glimpse into the darker aspects of human nature? Could it be that they reflect some of our own inner struggles we find ourselves facing? Is it the battle between good and evil?

With most of these, the bad guy loses, then goodness, holiness and rightness triumph. Could it be that some of our infatuation with these characters is because we ask, "Could I go there? Could I do such things? What would it take for me to be a Darth Vader, to be a Joker, to be a Norman Bates? What would have to happen? What type of experiences would I have to face? What potential do I have for greed, envy and betrayal? What lusts are lying within me that, under different circumstances, might sway me to do these things?

We started a series a couple weeks ago focusing on the lives of the disciples titled "Follow Me." Our goal is to understand what real discipleship looks like by examining the lives of these individuals who were so closely associated with Jesus during His ministry here on earth. Today—Father's Day, of all days—we come to the bad guy of the group: Judas Iscariot. He was the man who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. That betrayal led to Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion. What do we need to know about this villain? One writer says he's the ultimate villain, the ultimate bad guy, putting it this way:

Judas is the most colossal failure, the most wicked monster in human history. He committed the most horrible act ever, betraying the perfect, sinless, holy Son of God for some money. His dark story is the most poignant example of what the human heart is capable of doing.



Judas spent three years with Jesus Christ, yet his heart was growing harder and more hateful all the time. So what are we to do with this figure?

I understand that today is a glorious day, a day to celebrate dads. But my message will have no jokes, no funny Father's Day videos. I believe what we'll see today is incredibly beneficial. Yes, we'll get to celebrating our dads later, but before we do that, let's do some examining. Remember, the goal of this series is to examine the disciples' lives in order to find things we can emulate. But as we look at the life of Judas, there's honestly nothing to emulate. There's nothing that makes us say, "You know, it seems we could take what Judas does home with us." In fact, I would say it's the exact opposite. Most of Judas' life is something we should examine so we don't do it at all. We'll see a whole bunch of things in his life that should cause us to examine our own lives to see if we're following the way of Judas. So let's see if we can understand him a little better this morning.

## We are reminded that we are given a great opportunity.

Here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, if we put ourselves in Judas' shoes, we'll see that we have been given a great opportunity. That's probably the most true thing we can say about Judas: he was given a great opportunity. Before we actually go to the Scriptures, let me give you a list of passages to write down. In Matthew 10, Mark 3, and Luke 6, all these Gospel writers declare that Judas was one of the 12 disciples. Jesus chose him. Jesus called him and Judas followed Jesus. At the minimum, we can say Judas did that right; he followed the calling of Jesus. We don't know what he saw in Jesus, although we might discern some of it as the story continues. But he did decide to follow Jesus. He was there for the totality of Jesus' earthly ministry, so about three and a half years. We're going to learn that during this time he was part of everything Jesus did with the other disciples. He specifically served as the group's treasurer of their money.

We also know that while he had all these great opportunities, he made a decision to betray Jesus with a kiss, soon after the Lord's Supper, in exchange for 30 pieces of silver. During the time Jesus was going through His trial, Judas decided he didn't like the decision to do what he did. In his remorse, he took the money he had received back to the chief priests, but they wouldn't accept it. He was so filled with shame and sorrow that he committed suicide by hanging himself.

So what in the world can we garner from his example? There's actually quite a lot, but first we need to understand who Judas was. His name was derived from the Hebrew name Judah, which literally means "praised." Now, there are two different understandings of this according to the commentaries.

First, they start with Judas' mom and dad. They say when Judas was born, the parents looked at the gift God had given them and praised Him for it. Judas was therefore a constant reminder to praise God for this gift, which could have been the case. But the word "praise" in the Hebrew implies that you see something, then exclaim, "Wow!" You might look at something like the Grand Canyon and your first response is, "Wow! This is amazing." That's why some commentators have speculated that Judas might have been such a beautiful child that the parents looked at him and exclaimed, "Wow. Praise!" That's what my parents did when they saw me, right?

Seriously, some think it's a reflection of the parents' love for God, or it might have been their response to the appearance of their child. That's something that Moses' parents said about him, as we're told in Hebrews 11:23. We don't know if that's true about the name Judas, but we do know that his second name, Iscariot, tells us where he was from. It's derived from the Hebrew word *ish-Kerioth*, which literally means "man of Kerioth." Kerioth was in southern Israel, in the land of Judah, which could also be why he was named Judas.

The geography of that area might tell us a little more about Judas. This is modern-day Israel. At the bottom of the map you have the starting point, which is Kerioth. If you go up the line to the destination, that's the town of Galilee, which is by the Sea of Galilee. At the north end of the sea is the town of Capernaum, which was the home of Peter, James, John and Andrew. Many believe Thomas was also from that area as well.



Most of the disciples were probably from northern Israel. In fact, just to the left of the top dot is the city of Nazareth, which was Jesus' hometown.

It's about 140 miles from Kerioth to Galilee, which by car isn't that big of a deal; it's like driving to central Illinois for us. But that's a long way when you're walking across that terrain. One commentator said the distance Judah had from the other disciples geographically reflects the distance he had from them relationally as well. Let's be honest. It could be that he wasn't a part of the good-ol'-boy club; he wasn't part of the hometown group. He was different. He was probably farther away than any other disciple from a geographical standpoint.

Here's where the great opportunity exists. Jesus had called Judas along with the others. Judas was given the opportunity to walk with Jesus, to talk with Jesus, to learn directly from Jesus, to witness all His miracles and hear all His teachings. He had access both to the public view and the private view of Jesus. He experienced Jesus' love and grace first hand. He was chosen by Jesus Himself to be in an intimate and vibrant relationship with Him. What an opportunity!

The story of Judas is therefore a story of opportunity squandered. Here we are, self-described followers of Jesus as well. So let me ask: are we, like Judas, squandering the opportunity of a lifetime to get close and personal with Jesus? Judas had things that were more important to him. Judas had things that in his mind deserved his time, attention and energy. Are we not also tempted in these ways? Do we sometimes push away the greatest opportunity we have—to live in deep relationship with Jesus—because we're too busy doing a great many other things? Judas had the opportunity to get close to Jesus and we do as well. So will we be like Judas or will we follow the words of Jesus when He said, "Abide in Me. Get close to Me. Stay connected with Me"? We have been given great opportunity, but will we squander it like Judas did?

## **We must always be evaluating our spiritual reality.**

Judas never did this. There was never a point when Judas stopped, took stock of his life and examined it. Now, Jesus gave him great moments of opportunity to do this, but he never did.

It's easy for us to make a monster out of Judas, to demonize him. We do this so often with people who sin publicly and grievously. Phrases like this come out of our mouths: "How could they? Why would they?" But it's just us getting on our high horses and casting judgment on someone else. The truth is, if it wasn't for the grace of God, we would be there too.

I want you to see how Judas is a cautionary tale, showing us what a life looks like that is wasted on sin instead of invested in a Savior. This begs the question is that true of your life? Of my life? In order to do what Judas didn't do, let's examine some things. I pray that these things will serve as ways to examine our own hearts; it's been that for me this week.

### **We cannot equate doing with being.**

The first thing we need to examine is the truth that we cannot equate doing with being. That's what Judas did. He was thinking, "If I am doing stuff for God, that means I'm in relationship with God. If I'm doing stuff for Jesus, then I'm in a relationship with Jesus."

Understand this: Judas did lots of ministry. In the three and a half years he was with Jesus, he engaged in lots of spiritual activities. Judas sat under the best teaching. He experienced the best fellowship. He saw the greatest signs and wonders. He had the opportunity to experience greater spiritual highs than any camp or retreat could ever give us. He was a part of all of that, but he never made it his own. He never internalized it. He never took what he saw being done and put it into the fabric of who he was.

So let's stop and ask ourselves: am I doing the same thing? Am I doing a lot of religious things, church things, then saying, "I'm in a relationship with Jesus?" Am I equating doing religious things with being the same as following Christ? With being a Christian? Am I subscribing to a religious program or am I involved in a personal relationship? How do you know which of these things you're doing?

Do this test. Take away all your doing—all the stuff you do because you're part of this church—then ask, "Once I strip all that away, what's left? If I'm not asked to study my Bible for small group, am I studying my Bible? If I'm not asked to serve in the church, am I serving without being asked? If Pastor Tim doesn't tell me to open my Bible, am I opening my Bible? If Pastor Josh doesn't tell me to stand and sing, am I singing to the Lord?"

What I mean by all this is, do you need others to set up the program and that is then the totality of your relationship with Jesus Christ? Or do you find yourself, just because you love Jesus, opening His Word, praying to Him or singing to Him? Just because you love Jesus, are you living like Him and serving others as He did? Or have you bought into a program, as Judas did, thinking, "I'm busy at church so I must be a Christian"? It didn't work for Judas and it will not work for us.

Now, does that mean all Judas did was bad? No. This is where the prophet Isaiah says, "Even our righteous deeds are but filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6), unless we're engaged in a personal and intimate relationship with the Savior Who saves us. Don't equate doing with being

### **What stuff will cause me to sell Jesus out?**

The second thing is a question we need to ask. What stuff in this world will cause me to sell Jesus out? Turn to John 12. We aren't told a lot about Judas in the Gospels, but here he comes on stage. I think this will help us answer the question of what stuff caused Judas to sell Jesus out. I'm not sure many of us have made this connection. In my Bible, the heading at the beginning of this chapter says, "Mary Anoints Jesus at Bethany." It goes like this:

<sup>1</sup> Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. <sup>3</sup> Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"

This is one of the first times we hear Judas speak. We're thinking, "That's not a bad question." When we really think about what Mary did, it appears that there was some waste. John says she anointed Jesus' feet. Matthew however says she anointed His whole body' either way, the whole bottle, as a result, was wasted on Jesus. Let's be honest. Even if we love Jesus, we could say that was a waste.

Why do I say that? Jesus' feet are going to get dirty and smelly soon. Let's think about the best use of money. It might be that in a couple days the perfume smell would be gone. Like Judas, we might think, "Let's give the money to the poor, because that could change lives." We might think John was telling us that Judas was concerned about ministry. But John tells us more. *"He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it."*

The reason Judas objected was that he knew selling the perfume could benefit the poor—but first the money would go through his hands. He was the one who was in charge of the benevolence account. But without that bottle, Judas wasn't going to be able to get his hands on the money. John explicitly says Judas would help himself from the moneybag for his own selfish purposes. Jesus then rebuked Judas, saying, *"Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."*

Turn now to Matthew 26, because Matthew makes a connection that I think is really important for us to understand. The heading in my Bible, beginning in verse six, says, "Jesus Anointed at Bethany." This is the same episode John just gave us and Matthew's version is very similar. In Matthew's case, he doesn't name Judas. Jesus' response is the same, that the poor would always be with them and that the ointment was for His body. But there is more. Notice that in verse 14, Matthew starts with the word "Then..."

<sup>14</sup> Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup> and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup> And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

What's the correlation here? Matthew gives us the insight that Jesus and the other disciples were in the way of Judas' real agenda. Judas loved money. He couldn't get enough of it. He saw 300 denarii go right through his fingers; he's thinking, "Jesus is screwing this up for me. He has put a damper on what I really want." So instead of giving that up, seeking forgiveness and mercy, Judas decides to get rid of Jesus. He decides to sell Jesus out.

Notice what Judas asks: "What will you give me to betray him?" What is being revealed in Judas is our earthly sinful nature. Do you realize that every day, you too are asking yourself this question? "What would it take for me to betray Jesus? What would it take for me to give up my faith? What would it mean to walk away from my testimony? What would I have to be given to cause me to humiliate my Savior or other Christians?"

For Judas, it was a sum of money. For some of you, it's sex. For some of you, it's power. For some of us, it's prestige, popularity or security. The devil is constantly tempting us with this question: what will it take? Brothers and sisters, if we don't grab hold of this, there will be a day when someone will offer us what we're looking for and we'll betray Jesus. We'll give up Jesus, because our "lord" is really that thing we desire. The chief priests told Judas, "We'll pay the price." Some of us have done great damage to our faith and our relationship with Jesus Christ because we had more stuff that would cause us to sell out Jesus. The devil knows this and is tempting us with those things over and over again.

There's an old story that was told years ago about a young man who gave up his soul for the love of a woman. That story was portrayed in two movies, both called "Bedazzled" —one in the late '60s and one more recently. The story line goes like this: A young man was willing to sell his soul to the devil for the love of a woman. The problem was that in selling his soul, the man never got what he was seeking. Had he stayed with God, he would have gotten everything he desired and so much more. Once he sold his soul, there was an odyssey of events that proved he would never get what he sought. Why? Because the devil is a liar.

Some of you are willing to sell Jesus out for a lie. You think you're getting something, but in the end you get nothing you're seeking. What is it that would cause you to sell out Jesus?

### **Don't mistake God's longsuffering for license.**

All along, Judas was doing his thing. He was living a lie. Jesus was preaching to him and Judas was nodding in tacit approval, but nothing was really changing him. None of the disciples knew who Judas really was. At no point did Jesus call Judas out, saying, "Listen, Judas, you're on the wrong path. What you're doing is wrong. You're heading down the road to betrayal. You'd better cease and desist, or something terrible is going to happen to you." Jesus never did that.

Some people think this means if God doesn't speak directly to our situation, then He must not care, or He must not be too offended. But I'm here to tell you that Jesus said a great many things to Judas and the other disciples that should have stopped Judas in his tracks. Let me give you two of these that come right up to the porch and front door of Judas' betrayal. At this point, there were three sermons Jesus gave the disciples. The first one was the parable of the fig tree. He cursed the fig tree because it did not bear fruit. Then in the upper room, where He talked about the vine and the branches. He said, "If you're not abiding in Me and I in you, I will cut you off and throw you away." Both of these pictures say, "If you're not bearing fruit for Jesus, if you're not abiding in Jesus, you will be cut down and thrown out." In fact, Jesus adds, "You'll be thrown into the fire." But Judas never heard these sermons in order to appropriate them to himself.

Right now I'm speaking to a group of people who are hearing a general sermon about the warnings to not turn away from the God Whom we are called to love, but some of you may not be appropriating this to yourself. This does not give you an excuse to keep doing what you're doing. Our job as disciples is to take what we hear, then ask, "Is that me?"

Jesus said to the disciples at the last supper in the upper room, "One of you is about to betray Me." Notice that 11 of them asked, "Is it me? Could it be me?" I'm wondering if they're thinking, "Could it be me? Oh, my goodness. I don't want to betray Jesus. I know I've failed Him, but I don't want to do that."

What is Judas doing? He's getting close to Jesus, yet Jesus says, "Go do what you're going to do quickly." If we are not examining our lives, God in His longsuffering and patience is giving us an opportunity to repent. Are you taking that opportunity?

### **Regret and repentance are very different things.**

We've seen here that Judas betrayed Jesus, then in Matthew 27:3-5, we learn that he regretted his decision. Most scholars and commentaries believe he had seen some aspect of Jesus' trial and flogging, maybe even His crucifixion. Maybe by Friday night, a day of thinking about what he had done had brought him to his senses. So he took the 30 pieces of silver back to the chief priests, but they told him they didn't want it. In shame, sorrow and regret, Judas went out by himself, then hung himself. You're thinking, "Well, at least he understood what he had done, so he must have repented." I would say, "No, there's really no evidence of repentance. There's regret and remorse, but Judas did not repent."

Here's the difference between the two:

- Regret leads you to isolation. Repentance leads you to Jesus.
- Regret leads you to sorrow and shame. Repentance leads you to the Savior.
- Regret and remorse lead you to destruction. Repentance leads you to deliverance.

Judas was regretful and remorseful, but he never repented

Maybe today you find yourself sinning as Judas did. You may be thinking, "My sin is so bad. What I've done is so heinous."

This morning we sang, "Our sins, they are many..." But we didn't stop there; we continued, "...but His mercy is more." I like how one individual put it:

What a mistake those who do not hope make. Judas made a colossal blunder the day he sold Christ for 30 pieces of denarii. But he made an even bigger mistake when he thought his sin was too great to be forgiven. No sin is too big. Any wretchedness, however great, can always be enclosed in infinite mercy.

I want you to know that as terrible as betraying Jesus was, Jesus would have received Judas with open arms. Judas would have received what you and I receive—grace and forgiveness. *"If we confess our sins, [Jesus] is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). But Judas didn't. Some of us are living in regret and remorse, but it's not leading us to repentance. It's not leading us to Jesus. **Pursuing sin instead of the Savior has disastrous results.**

Right away you're probably thinking, "Well, Judas hung himself." But that wasn't the disastrous result. That's ugly and heinous. But look at Matthew 26:24. Here Jesus made what is probably the most damning statement he ever made about anyone. Maybe it's even the most damaging statement in all of Scripture about any human being. Jesus said this about Judas: *"It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."*

When you hear this and maybe you're thinking, "Wow, Judas was truly a terrible individual." But I think this is true of anybody who dies apart from Jesus. You get 50, 60, 70 years, maybe 100 if you're lucky, and you live life for yourself. You experience the good, the bad and the ugly that life gives, to believers and nonbelievers alike. Then you die. You're appointed to die once, then you approach judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Then you stand before the true and living God. In that moment, you know you lived for yourself instead of for the Savior Who came to die for you and give you eternal life. You will then be consigned to a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. You know you're there because you made a decision to follow yourself instead of the Savior. I do wonder if every soul in torment in hell today is saying, "It would have been better if I had never been born at all." Following and pursuing sin instead of your Savior leads to disastrous results.

I'd like to close this point, but I can't because I know there are some of you saying, "Wait a minute." There are some theological geeks out there who are thinking, "Hey, Badal. You're leaving something on the table." So let me give you one final point to help them and to help others.

### **While we make choices, God is always in control.**

Some of you are thinking, "To talk about Judas and not address this would be criminal, Tim." The Old Testament Scriptures are full of prophecies that one of Jesus' closest disciples would betray Him. It even includes the detail that he would betray Him with a kiss. So if it was written in the Old Testament scriptures, if God had His plan in place that one of the disciples was going to do it, then Judas can't be put on trial for it—God made him do it. Judas was only a robot, a pawn. He was just an actor in God's meta-narrative of redemption. We needed a foil and God produced it in Judas.

Here's the thing. That's absolutely biblical. God did purpose Judas. God did plan Judas to do that. God chose Judas for that and we can't take that away. That's a biblical truth, but to stop there is unbiblical. To say that Judas did it because God made him isn't the right answer. That may be part of the biblical answer. That's the sovereignty of God answer. But then we have to ask did Judas have a part in this? And the answer is yes.

Let's look at Mark 14:10-11 quickly: *"Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him."*

Look at the action steps Judas took. He went to the chief priests; he wasn't forced to do that. He made a decision, a decision to betray Jesus. He looked for an opportunity. That word "sought" includes a continual searching after. It wasn't a one-time crime. He was premeditating in his heart, "I'm going to find a time and a place that's perfect to betray Jesus." So he sought an opportunity to betray Him.

Brothers and sisters, our actions can never thwart the purposes and plans of God, but never think that you are just a pawn. Your decisions and my decisions have real consequences. They are our decisions. We are free to make those decisions and we will

experience their consequences. We are without excuse. Judas was without an excuse, yet his evil, diabolical plan was a part of the purpose and plan of God from the beginning of the age.

You're probably thinking, "What in the world? How do I make sense of that?" You can't, this side of heaven. God is sovereign and we are responsible. So hold these two things in utter tension.

So what do we do with all this? Let's close with this.

## **We must follow Jesus with total authenticity.**

Judas' original sin was not the betrayal. His original sin wasn't the love of money. His original sin was hypocrisy. He did not let the world around him know the real him. Judas was part of a small group. There were 12 others in his group, including Jesus. They had the best small group leader. They had the best times of discussion and prayers. Judas sat there, yet never allowed the real him to come out.

That sin of Judas is alive and well in some of our lives today? Because of insecurity, pride or private sin, we will never allow the real us to come out for the people around us to see. The disciples never thought Judas would be the one to betray Jesus. Even when Judas headed out from the upper room, they still gave him the benefit of the doubt. They thought they knew him.

How many of those closest to us have no earthly idea who the real us is, the private battles we're facing, the private feelings we're dealing with, the idiosyncrasies and struggles we deal with on a daily basis? Even though these people are closest to us, we will not let them in and they have no idea who we really are. This is sin, a sin that leads to a great many other sins. Judas' hypocrisy and privatization of his life—this double life he lived—gave the devil a foothold. This will be the same in your life. So how do we eradicate this? Two very quick points.

### **We have to live in true community.**

We have to be honest and open enough to let people see who we really are—our thoughts, feelings, fears, sins and temptations. There are things we think we shouldn't tell people, but we should be telling them. Here's why. I would rather have people judge me for the real me now than be judged one day and sent to hell because I faked everybody out.

### **We have to be involved in confession.**

At no point in Judas' life do we ever see a word of confession. Confession is what saves us from the life of Judas. We need to ask, "Could this be me? Is there an offensive thing in me? Jesus, am I believing, doing, thinking and acting in a way that is ungodly? I ask for Your forgiveness. I confess this to You and will confess this to others." The Bible says that if we do this, God is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9).

Judas didn't experience forgiveness, not because Jesus was not faithful, but because Judas was unwilling to ask for it. How many sins, faults and issues are we holding on to, living in despair, because we won't confess them to the One Whose mercy is more?

So give your sins, struggles and battles to the Lord. Ask for others to help hold you accountable and encourage you in that journey, so that in this decision you've made to follow Jesus, you won't turn back from Him.