



Shaped to Serve

Sunday, March 26, 2017

Judas Iscariot: The Disappointed Revolutionary

Some Background

With the exception of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, Judas is probably the most vilified character in the Bible. Judas was one of Jesus' chosen followers, one of his inner circle of confidants, one of the twelve. And yet, for a single sum of money, Judas betrayed Jesus, an act that led to Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

Most people think of Judas as a bad guy who betrayed Jesus and died at his own hands. In this session, students will explore Judas's possible motives as they think about who he really might have been. Was Judas a willing pawn of those who were threatened by Jesus' growing number of followers? Or did Judas grow frustrated when Jesus' peaceful message diverged from Judas's vision of a military-style, messianic revolution?

Throughout history, the betrayal of Jesus by Judas (whose name in Hebrew means "Jew") has been used to justify anti-Semitism, especially when combined with Pontius Pilate's words in Matthew 27:24. Be aware of any anti-Semitic language that arises during this session, and redirect the conversation, reminding students that it's unfair to condemn an entire group of people because of the actions of one man.

Exploring Judas as "the disappointed revolutionary" will help youth to begin to understand that just like them, Judas was a complex person with his own thoughts, motivations, and issues.

Ant-Semitism: Hostility toward or discrimination against Semitic peoples and Jews.

Teacher Homework: Read some key passages about Judas Iscariot as you prepare for this lesson or learn on your own: John 6:60-71, 12:1-6 / Matthew 26:36-56, 27:3-10.

Youth Mindset: Youth are becoming adept at complex thinking, tough decision making, and creative problem solving. Many ask difficult questions, and most will no longer accept simple answers. These skills enable students to see a character like Judas as a complex human being, as opposed to simply a bad guy. Betrayal is another theme of this story that will resonate with youth, as they all know what this feels like.

Watch the Video

Show the video: “Judas Iscariot: The Disappointed Revolutionary.”

- What are two words you would use to describe Judas?
- What surprises you about Judas after watching the video?
- When have you encountered an act of betrayal? What happened?

In the Bible

Divide the group up into smaller groups of three and have them read the account of Judas’s inconsolable remorse in Matthew 27:3-10. Ask groups to point out where in the passage Judas begins to feel in over his head. Have them share with their group about a time when they have felt overwhelmed.

- When did Judas reach the point of no return? How did he handle the remorse? Was this a healthy way of handling this remorse?
- How did the other disciples also betray Jesus? How did they handle their remorse?
- Imagine that Jesus and Judas met again after Jesus’ resurrection. What do you suppose would have been said? Would Jesus forgive Judas? Would Judas apologize?

Closing Ritual

Share in “highs and lows” in small groups. Write “The Disappointed Revolutionary” on the board and invite each group to list words that describe Judas. Pass out a penny to each student to hold as we pray. Have each think about one or two words that also describe them that they may share in common with Judas. Following prayer, invite the students to keep the penny and think about how their talents and abilities can be used to lift up or betray the people closest to them.

Take-Home Prayer Activity

Grab your penny from class or grab one from home. Hold it in your hand and pray, remembering that Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Ask God to make room in your heart to forgive yourself or others when you or they betray or break trust. Invite a parent or sibling to pray with you in this activity if you feel comfortable.