

# TALK IT OVER

CROSS TO CROWN

PART 1 | 23 MARCH 2025

## NOTES TO LEADERS

The key objectives this week are to:

1. Encourage open and honest discussion.
2. If someone shares a struggle with guilt or shame, remind them of God's grace and forgiveness.

## SCRIPTURES

### MATTHEW 27:1-8

*Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed.*

*2 So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.*

*3 When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. 4 'I have sinned,' he said, 'for I have betrayed innocent blood.' 'What is that to us?' they replied. 'That's your responsibility.'*

*5 So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.*

*6 The chief priests picked up the coins and said, 'It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.' 7 So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. 8 That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day.*

### ROMANS 8:28

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

## START TALKING

1. What stood out to you from Sunday's message? What challenged you or encouraged you?
2. What has God been doing in your world - what can we celebrate?

## START THINKING

1. In the Lord's prayer, we are taught to ask for our heavenly Father's help in resisting temptation. If you were giving advice to a new believer on how to resist temptation, what learnings would you share from your own experience?
2. Judas kept his sins hidden rather than confessing them.
  - a. What are some warning signs that we might be ignoring sin in our own lives?
  - b. What steps can we take to bring hidden struggles into the light and experience God's healing?
  - c. How does accountability in Christian community help protect us from the dangers of secret sins?
3. Compare Peter's response to failure with Judas's. What can we learn from Peter's story?

## START SHARING

1. Romans 8:28 says God works all things for good. Can you think of a time when God used a failure or painful situation in your life for His purpose?
2. Have you ever felt like you've messed up too badly for God to forgive you? How does the story of Peter give hope?
3. Are there areas in your life where you need to bring hidden struggles into the light? What steps can you take?

## START PRAYING

1. Pray for God to reveal any hidden sins in our hearts and give us the courage to confess and turn from them.
2. Ask God for the strength to resist temptation and to flee from anything that leads us away from Him.
3. Pray that we would not just be near Jesus but truly transformed by Him in our daily lives.

## START DOING

1. Set aside some time this week to ask God to search your heart (Psalm 139:23-24). Write down anything He reveals - hidden sins, temptations, or areas where you need to grow.
2. Identify one specific temptation or small compromise you've been struggling with. Make a practical plan to remove or resist it (e.g., setting boundaries, seeking accountability, replacing it with a godly habit).

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### SUMMARY OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, Steve shared a challenging message titled "Life Lessons from Judas" in part 1 of our series Cross to Crown.

The story of Judas is tragic. He was personally chosen by Jesus, walked with Him for three years, witnessed incredible miracles, and yet ended his life in shame and remorse after betraying Christ.

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Matthew 27:1-8

#### a. He was hand-picked by Jesus

*Jesus called his twelve disciples to him ... first, **Simon (who is called Peter)** ... Andrew; James ... John ... and **Judas Iscariot**, who betrayed him.* Matthew 10:1-4

#### b. He was in the presence of Jesus for 3 years.

- He saw the miracles of blind eyes being opened, lame people walking, mute people speaking.
- He was there when the feeding of the 5000 happened.
- He was in the boat when Jesus walked on the water.
- He was there when Lazarus was raised from the dead.
- He heard all of the teachings of Jesus.

The story of Judas is tragic. He ended his life in shame and remorse after betraying Christ.

There are some lessons for us from Judas's story:

#### **Lesson #1: He had hidden sins that he was not dealing with**

*Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.*

*4 But one of his disciples, **Judas Iscariot** ... objected, 5 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' John 12:3-5*

*6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor **but because he was a thief**; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.* John 12:6

Judas pretended to care about the poor, but that was just a cover-up for greed and theft. Judas was greedy and money-hungry. He did whatever it took to get what he wanted, and he probably had a number of excuses. Like Judas, we can be around Jesus, hang out with His followers, and hear Christ's teachings from the Bible – and our hearts can remain unchanged. Like Judas, we may be able to quote Bible verses and sprout all kinds of platitudes, but beneath it all, our hearts can be full of greed, bitterness, prejudice, or any other kind of sin.

Question: If Jesus knew about Judas dipping his hand into the money, why didn't He do something earlier? Maybe the answer is this: that the money was less important to Jesus than Judas's heart. He was giving Judas ample opportunity to change. And yet he never did.

#### **Lesson #2: He did not flee from temptation**

*Then ... Judas Iscariot – went to the chief priests 15 and asked, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?' So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. 16 From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.* Matthew 26:14

We need to watch out for our own hearts. Sin is rarely a sudden event - it starts with small compromises, secret sins, and unchecked desires. Eventually, it leads to destruction.

Temptation is not in itself a sin. Jesus was tempted in every way yet was without sin. (Hebrews 4:15). But if we give into temptation and linger with those thoughts or act on them, then it becomes sin.

In the Lord's prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Another way of saying that is, "Lord help me to flee from temptation."

One of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves and those around us is to acknowledge that we are vulnerable to temptation. We are vulnerable to all kinds of sins. The fact that we have not given in to that temptation yet does not mean it will never happen.

In which of these areas are you vulnerable or experiencing temptation: Alcohol; Dishonesty in your words and dealings (maybe even in the handling of money); Cheating the Receiver of Revenue by not calculating our taxes & VAT properly; Lust, Pornography and other sexual sins; Pride; Anger; Critical Spirit; Gossip etc

The Holy Spirit's help and power is available to help us not give in to temptation.

#### **Lesson #3: He did not understand Christ's grace & forgiveness**

Judas's greatest tragedy was not his betrayal of Jesus but his failure to turn back to Christ for forgiveness.

Steve compared **Judas and Peter**: both belonged to Jesus' team of 12 disciples, and both sinned grievously. Both had strong emotions afterwards, but their responses were different:

|                                           |                                             |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Peter denied Jesus                        | Judas betrayed Jesus                        |
| Peter wept bitterly                       | Judas was filled with remorse               |
| Ran towards Christ & received forgiveness | Turned away from Christ & destroyed himself |
| Great impact in the Book of Acts          | Was replaced in the Book of Acts            |
| Wrote 2 books of the New Testament        | "Field of Blood" named after him            |

There is a great difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow.

In 2 Corinthians 7:9,10, Paul writes to believers in a church who had really messed up: ... *your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended ... 10 **Godly sorrow** brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but **worldly sorrow** brings death.*

Judas's sin did not get in the way of the incredible greatness of God's plans. He took the sin and mess of Judas' actions and amazingly used it to bring about His great Master Plan.

Whatever we face when it comes to feeling let down by people, it probably doesn't come anywhere close to what Judas did. If we keep our hearts pure, God can use it to fulfil His ultimate plans. *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* Romans 8:28.