

# TWO MOLDS TO MAKE YOUR LIFE

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*By the Book*™ A Chapter by  
Chapter Bible Study Series  
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## Let's Begin

Chapter 13 begins a new section in John's gospel. It extends through chapter 17, being called the "Holy of Holies" of John's gospel. It is the most sacred section of John, containing not only the private teachings of Jesus while alone with His disciples, but also the intimate language Jesus uses in prayer to the Father. Indicative of this section are the twin concerns Jesus displayed: His devotion on the one hand and His departure on the other.

On another level, chapter 13 is highly practical and easily unfolds into either of two directions each person follows in life. The Bible often makes this division plain through bright contrasts that cannot be mistaken: serpent vs. Adam; Cain vs. Abel; Jacob vs. Esau; chosen nation vs. cast away nation; light vs. darkness; saved vs. lost; eternal life vs. eternal death. These are but a sampling.

In chapter 13, the contrast is no less vivid. On the one hand is Jesus; on the other is Judas. We find Jesus teaching but Judas tempted. While Jesus surrenders to the Father's desires, Judas succumbs to Satan's deception. Jesus' motive was love. Judas' was lust.

Jesus has a bowl of water to wash men's feet; Judas receives a sop of bread then wastes his soul. Humble service characterizes Jesus but a horrifying scheme defines Judas for eternity.

*Jesus surrenders, seeking the good of others; Judas sins, seeking his own good. With Jesus, Heaven was revealing our redemption but with Judas Hell was receiving the reprobate. These contrasts could not be clearer.*

*To easily guide our way, we will follow the simple outline below:*

- I. **Jesus' Sign of Surrender: Washing the Disciples' Feet (vv. 1-17)**
- II. **Judas' Badge of Betrayal: Taking the Sop of Bread (vv. 18-38)**

## I. Jesus' Sign of Surrender: Washing the Disciples Feet (vv. 1-17)

Here we capture some of Jesus' final spoken words. Soon the small band of disciples would be crushed by His arrest. Jesus is fully aware the disciples are not ready for what lies imminently before them.

John sets the scene up: "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (v. 1). This verse reveals the Jesus' heart like no other. If a person is not a follower of Christ, here is a good opportunity to meet the real Jesus. No one loved liked Jesus loved! When one really discovers the love of Jesus, it is powerfully magnetic, strongly drawing toward this God-Man from Heaven.

On the other hand, if you are a Christian, John's words stir you no less. They root themselves deep within your heart assuring you that no matter what horrible event lies in wait, ready to spring upon you as a cat in hunt, Jesus never walks away from you. If there is any walking, it will be by you, not Him—"he loved them unto the end."

Now we are ready to look at this solemn sign that Jesus gives

### Reflection Connection

*Recall the time when you first came to Christ. What did you feel? Did you sense a tugging in your soul? Share with the groups your experience and allow time for other to do the same.*



to signal His surrender to not only all the Father wanted, but also to all the disciples needed. Three lessons summarize Jesus' washing the disciples' feet.

**First, there is a lesson on humility** (vv. 4-5). John records what Jesus quietly does: *"And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him...He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet..."* (vv. 2, 4-5).

In Jesus' example, we visibly absorb the oriental custom of washing feet which unfailingly served the needs of the invited guest. To not do so would be viewed inconsiderate and a serious breach of standard social etiquette. Perhaps a similar breach we would have would be to invite people over for a barbeque but serve them bologna and crackers, or receiving guests overnight but expecting them to sleep in their car!

Know, however, that even though washing feet was a norm, it was the *norm for slaves* to perform. The fact that Jesus got up from the table, changed into the clothes of a slave, and began to serve as a slave must have so shocked the disciples that their eyes popped out of their sockets. The act Jesus did was so humbling, it is difficult to capture.

However, this beautiful act of humility was nothing less than a dramatic snapshot of His entire life (cp. Luke 12:37; Matthew 11:29). This stood as a signpost, pointing to what the Apostle would later reveal: *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich"* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Jesus' example provoked a universal blush, causing a blanket of embarrassment to fall on the disciples. Why? John does not tell us. But he did not have to; Luke fully explained the circumstances (Luke 22:24-27). The disciples were in a heated exchange over who would be accounted as *"greatest of all."* Imagine it: in the closing moments before His hour came, Jesus instituted the New Covenant symbol of His death, burial, resurrection, and the coming Kingdom by instituting the Lord's Supper. But, rather than soaking in this sacred occasion, the disciples shift into their discussion over who would be greatest.

Though neither John nor Luke say it just this way, consider, if you can, the heart of Jesus as He sits with them. His eyes turn upon one disciple and then another. It is not difficult to imagine, as He sits there watching and listening, fighting back the tears over His soon scattered flock.

Then, as they are at the height of their exchange, jockeying for position at the top of the food chain, Jesus rises, lays aside His outer garment, and takes the role of the slave. The hush quickly calms the room but their blush is so thick, their eyes could look nowhere but down. Jesus begins to wash their feet. The Prince takes the role of a peasant.

The picture before us is Christianity perfected. Jesus calls His followers to display the life of a humble servant without reservation. If washing feet is the example of the King, washing feet should be the example of the subjects of the Kingdom: *"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet"* (vv. 13-14).

### Reflection Connection

*Name some things that would be considered a breach of social acceptance.*

### Reflection Connection

*Have you ever had to sacrifice something very, very precious to you for a cause others may have thought was not worth the sacrifice? Be ready to share your thoughts about it and allow time for others to share as well.*

### Reflection Connection

*Is there an overly competitive spirit in the church today? Why or why not? Explain some ways to deal with "haggling over who's at the top."*



Thus, Jesus' example becomes His exhortation, calling all Christians to follow Him. Often we are tempted to think of our dignity, our prestige, our rights, our honor, our comfort while failing in our Lord's call to embrace His humility. Coming to Jesus means serving, not sitting; following, not leading.

While humility is the more observable lesson we glean from our Lord's washing feet, still we must note two more lessons. Therefore, let us note *the lesson of holiness* (vv. 6-11).

The conversation Jesus and Peter had centers on the term "wash." Jesus comes to Peter to "wash" his feet (v. 6). Peter refused. He missed the lesson of humility Jesus was teaching. Even more, Peter did not see the vivid picture it contained of Jesus' entire life.

Nonetheless, Jesus gently urges Peter to trust Him and later he will understand perfectly what Jesus' example meant (v. 7). Once again, Peter refused to listen to Jesus. On display was a rugged fisherman's fleshly, willful pride rather than a trustful surrender. Our Lord gave Peter his only option: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (v. 8b).

"Washing" is a beautifully biblical word and carries with it the idea of holiness or "setting apart." When a sinner comes to Christ, he is completely and finally "washed" or "cleansed" (cp.

Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:11). When one is saved, one is washed "all over," to use Peter's words (v. 9; cp. Revelation 1:5; 1 John 1:7).

*When a sinner comes to Christ, he is completely and finally "washed" or "cleansed."*

### Reflection Connection

*What acts of humility could be substituted today that would be similar to washing someone's feet? Discuss each one.*

Additionally, we learn from Jesus' example—an example that stands as a mold to make your life—the *lesson of helpfulness* (vv. 12-17). One thing we should make clear from this passage: *washing feet does not seem a perpetual ordinance to be kept*. There are fine Christian believers who embrace such a view and, while I offer no criticism toward them, I do offer a brief word why I believe washing feet is not a perpetual ordinance to observe "till he come" as is the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:26). By far, the major reason is the *essence* of the Lord's Supper compared to the *essence* of foot-washing.

As for the Supper, its roots originate in the Passover in the Old Testament (Exodus 12:1-28). There God delivered His people from Egyptian bondage. They were instructed to keep the Passover "throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever" (v. 14). Clearly, Jesus is instituting a New Covenant Passover for the church when He takes bread saying, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Afterward, He took the cup and said, "This cup is the new testament [covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20).

So, the Lord's Supper is rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures and instituted by Jesus in a way that accounts for His blood being shed to deliver God's people, the church. Furthermore, like the Passover instituted to Israel as an "ordinance forever," so the church observes her "Passover" until Jesus comes for the church (cp. 1 Corinthians 11:26).



Such is not the case with washing feet. As we learned earlier, foot-washing had no roots in Old Testament faith as did the Passover. Instead, foot-washing was a cultural custom which was not even unique to Israel.

Thus, Jesus was using this widely accepted practice performed by a common slave as an “example” of *humility, holiness, and, as we now see, helpfulness*. For that reason the example of foot-washing transcends all cultures through the ages and can be adapted to similar acts of humility and service unique to each community or society. Indeed, in our day, foot-washing is unlikely to be considered hospitable and could be considered highly offensive.

### Reflection Connection

*Does following Christ mean one has to give up everything? How do we explain the fact that no one of us literally “gives up everything”?*

Therefore, the example Jesus gives for us is striking. He serves others, offering assistance where they cannot help themselves. His ultimate service was His death, saving others who could not save themselves. Our service is not to save people from their sin, but it is nevertheless just as radical. The great pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was imprisoned under Hitler’s Third Reich, wrote: “When Christ calls a man, He bids him ‘come and die.’” That is precisely the mold Jesus offers us to make our life.

## II. Judas’ Badge of Betrayal: Taking the Sop of Bread (vv. 18-38)

This section stands as one of the most gruesome in all of God’s Word. The betrayal of Jesus is the darkest deed in human history. Many have betrayed others. Perhaps you’ve been betrayed by a friend. Such betrayal is very painful. But none was ever more tragic than Judas’ treachery. He is forever recorded by divine history’s estimate as Judas Iscariot, “the traitor” (Luke 6:16). Biblical descriptions of Judas have kissed the threshold of branding Judas as the embodiment of Satan himself (cp. John 6:70; 17:12; Acts 1:25).

Yet Judas was just a man, albeit a man of whom Jesus said it would be better for him not to have been born (Matthew 26:24). This in itself should make us shudder. Judas remains a warning to every person that a life molded in rejection of Jesus as Lord and Savior is a real possibility, if we turn our backs to the Gospel offered freely to us.

With this background in mind, let us observe, *first of all, the prediction of betrayal*: Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me” (v. 21). The prediction came from Jesus Himself. Our Lord never experienced ignorance about Judas—even when calling him to be a part of the disciple group—is clear from John’s testimony (6:64). Such testimony from John should cause us to pause: *we can never fool the Lord Jesus by pretending to be His followers when we are not*. As with Judas, Jesus will see through such a thin disguise.

Nor could we believe Jesus rejoices over the knowledge that Judas would betray Him. It must have broken His heart to speak such words (cp. 2 Kings 8:11-12). But the Lord never recoiled from speaking the truth even when it became uncomfortable. As Christians, we are called to speak the truth seasoned with salt on the one hand (Colossians 4:6) and love on the other (Ephesians 4:15). Jesus never failed in either and neither should we.

In addition, when Jesus predicted Judas’ betrayal, He was only following what the Old Testament itself revealed. For example, the Psalmist recorded that

### Reflection Connection

*Can you think of a time that you were betrayed? How did you feel? Did you continue to have fellowship with the person? Why do you suppose Jesus continued to fellowship with Judas even though He knew him to be a traitor?*



### Reflection Connection

*Do you think some people are prone to betrayal? Why or why not? Was it necessary that Judas betrayed Jesus? Was he free not to betray Him? Explain.*

Messiah's own "familiar friend" would lift up his "heel" against him (41:9). This phrase in Hebrew describes the most brutal violence possible (cp. also Psalm 55:12-14; Zechariah 13:6; Psalm 109:8). Thus, when Jesus predicted Judas' tragic unbelief, He was only applying the prophetic word.

Next, we observe the personality of betrayal (vv. 21-26). A dark shadow falls upon Jesus now. He becomes increasingly "troubled in spirit" (cp. 11:33; 12:27). Pain and sorrow drench His soul. Here is the heartbreak of wounded love. Nothing hurts more than sincere love extended, only to be rejected.

When He said one of them would betray Him, the disciples were stunned once again. One after another, each began to search his heart to query if he were the one: "He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?" (v. 25; cp. Matthew 26:20-22). This introspection reveals the possibility that any of them could have betrayed Jesus. We must never presume on our relationship with God. Our deepest thoughts and inner motives must remain open to the all-seeing eye of the Holy Spirit. The one filled with pride will be brought low but the humble will be exalted in due time.

While the possibility existed that any of the disciples could have been the traitor—though Jesus knew absolutely that it was Judas—the propensity to betray Jesus was in only one of them: Judas. His heart had already succumbed to such a state (13:2). A question all of us must ponder is this: *would I sell my Lord out? Would I betray my commitment to be a disciple for a bag of gold?* Tragically many people have done just that. The mold they followed in life was not Jesus; it was Judas.

In addition, we must consider that Judas' betrayal came after Jesus had washed his feet! Think of it: the very one who was about to sell Him out, Jesus sacrificially served as would a slave by washing His betrayer's feet. Truly the saying is great: No one loved like this Man loved.

Jesus dipped the bread and handed Judas the sop. This image becomes the badge of betrayal we forever remember: Judas took the sop and went out to betray Jesus.

### Golden Greek Nugget

The term John uses of Judas translated "betray" literally means "to hand over" or "to give or deliver over." It is translated various ways throughout the New Testament including "taken into custody" (Matthew 4:12), "handed over" (Matthew 11:27), and "delivered" (Matthew 20:18) among others. The idea is to commit someone to the custody of another. In this case, Judas "committed" Jesus to the custody of the religious leaders who sought to take His life, clearly a tragic unjust betrayal of the innocent Son of God.

### Wrap Up

Two molds by which one may make his life appear in Chapter 13 and never could two be more different. Jesus' act of foot-washing sealed the way of the believer: disciples love sacrificially. And Judas' sop of bread captures the way of the unbeliever: unbelievers are marked by rebellion and betrayal. The question for us is which mold will make our lives?

