

## **Libanus Daily Devotions**

### *The Twelve Disciples*

1. Matthew
2. Andrew
3. Thomas
4. Peter
5. Bartholomew/ Nathaniel
6. Jude
7. John
8. James
9. Philip
10. James the Younger
11. Simon the Zealot
12. Judas

## Day 1 Matthew

**Reading:** After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" (Luke 5:27-30)

**Message:** Matthew or Levi was the son of Alpheus he lived in Capernaum and worked as a tax collector; he is most well-known for writing the gospel of Matthew we know that he later died a martyr for his faith.

The call of Matthew Which means 'a gift of God' is one of the most staggering where we learn of the heart of Jesus. My assumption is that none of us like paying taxes, but can you imagine paying money to a government that has invaded your country. Money that you have worked hard to earn is now being used to keep your nation enslaved. The Jewish people would have hated tax collectors as they have abandoned Israel, abandoned their own people to earn money profiting off Israel working in service of the Roman occupiers.

In the minds of the Jewish people the tax collectors were criminals, both for their immoral conduct and service towards the invaders. Tax collectors were well known to abuse their positions and extort people of more money than they should have. Despite all the baggage and personal dislike of Matthew and his profession he was remarkably one of the twelve people chosen by Jesus himself. Jesus did not choose his disciples from a list of the great and the good he selected someone from a profession in which everyone hated.

In many ways it took an encounter in Jesus to see the potential of that small tax collector from Capernaum. Matthew not being a fisherman but someone with the relevant writing skills who would later use this human ability inspired by God to write a gospel. People saw Matthew as someone to be ignored and cast off but called and transformed by Jesus he became a writer of a portion of scripture and eventually sacrificed his own life for the gospel.

How often do we disregard people? The calling of Matthew shows us that anyone Jesus calls can be used powerfully for himself. Nobody would have expected that a tax collector could be used by God. We are ordinary people, there might be nothing special about who we are in ourselves people might not think much about us. But God has power to transform us, God can use whoever he chooses in a powerful way for his glory.

**Prayer:** We thank you that you do not condemn us as this world might, but we thank you that you saw us where we were in our state of sin and depravity and yet you still loved us. We thank you that no matter who we are if we follow Jesus there is salvation available. We ask that we might all be used by God to bring glory to his name, in his power and not in ours. Amen.

## 2. Andrew

**Reading:** The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So, they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. (John 1:35-40)

**Message:** Andrew was the brother of Peter and was a son of Jonas, from what we know he lived in Bethsaida and Capernaum. Before Jesus called him to his greater calling, he like many of the disciples worked as a fisherman. Andrew was a follower of the teachings of John the Baptist who spoke of Jesus who was the one who was coming who was greater than him. While arguably coming under the category of one of the less well-known disciples Andrew is the Patron Saint of Russia, Scotland and Greece.

In many ways Andrew is one of the most relatable disciples to us in that before he was called by Jesus directly, he first believed the message from someone else. When we became Christians, we would have heard the message from a preacher, Bible study leader or an author and the good news of the promised Messiah who has come is a message we all needed to hear. But what we really needed in our lives was that personal and real connection with the risen Jesus Christ.

Let Andrew be a reminder for us that we are not saved because of the words or teachings of any man, no matter how much we admire and are built up and encouraged by other brothers and sisters in the faith. What really matters is our personal relationship with the God of the universe who in such love sent his only son to be our redemption. Today think about that personal relationship you can have directly with God, not dependant on any man, spiritual teacher or holy object. This very day you through Jesus you can have direct access to God for yourself.

**Prayer:** Father we thank you that you have an interest in our lives, that while we were still sinners you reached down to meet us where we were offering us forgiveness. We are thankful and we do praise you for the encouragement of fellow Christians in pointing us towards you but how undeserving we are to have an intimacy with the risen conquering Son.

### 3. Thomas

**Reading:** Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:24-29)

**Message:** Thomas Didymus lived in and around Galilee. Tradition says he laboured in Parthia, Persia, and India, until he was eventually martyred near Madras in India. Thomas was his Hebrew name and Didymus was his Greek name. Thomas is often the disciple (other than Judas) who receives the harshest criticism but in many ways the disciple to whom we can most aptly relate.

In this passage we see the backstory behind the phrase and nickname 'doubting Thomas' where Thomas declares that he needs proof or evidence that Jesus has risen from the grave. This is very relatable to many of us who found it very hard to accept or grasp the reality of God, there are many things that distract us or hinder us from the reality of God. How many times have we wished that we could see, or handle more evidence or proof, by nature we are weak and doubting?

Here, we see Thomas making the greatest confession of faith, and arguable the thing we should remember him for more than his doubting Thomas declares "My Lord and my God." In many ways It does not matter what our view was before our encounter with Jesus what matters is the change afterwards. When you have been presented with the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection and victory over sin it does not matter who you once were, but who you are now.

Thomas' doubts were transformed into faith. By this very fact Thomas' faith became great, intense and impassioned. Thomas was later martyred, after meeting with Jesus he was transformed and received great courage and strength. Thomas is the relatable disciple someone who struggled with the reality of God but yet someone who was still used powerfully by God. What matters most is not our views at the start of our lives but at the end.

**Prayer:** We thank you that you did not leave Thomas in a position where he was without you, but we thank you for the graciousness of Jesus in meeting us and dealing with us where we once were. We thank you that in you we can have a complete transformation where we are no longer the same person because of the blood of Jesus. Amen.

#### 4. Peter

**Reading:** When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” (John 20:15-19)

**Message:** Simon Peter was a fisherman and very well-known and was part of Jesus’ closer circle of followers. He wrote two New Testament epistles which bear his name, the tradition records he was crucified, head downward, in Rome. By trade, Peter was a fisherman and his home was Capernaum. One of the most famous accounts of Peter is his denial of Jesus three times once even before a girl, however today I don’t want us to focus on the denial of Jesus but rather the reinstatement of Peter.

Jesus ends his reinstatement with the phrase ‘follow me’ as we continue through this series, we will see how so often this is the exact phrase Jesus used to call his disciples. After Peter has failed, completely messed up, bringing shame on himself and his ministry Jesus uses the phrase in which he recruited disciples.

In our lives we should be striving continually for a deeper relationship with God living in a way which is pleasing to Him, but when we make mistakes when we fail miserably, we have such a powerful reminder that Jesus is the forgiveness we need.

If you have made mistakes, if you have let God down there is still forgiveness available in fulness for those who are in Christ Jesus. How grateful we should be as Christians that despite our continued shortcomings we can be forgiven and used by God. Peter continued to serve and benefit the early church in such a powerful way. Be encouraged that God can use us even though we have daily shortcomings, Jesus demonstrates such care and forgiveness for this people.

Peter was then inspired and filled with God to not only refuse to deny God in front of a little girl but he was so empowered by the gospel that he was crucified and martyred for his faith. God is transformative and empowering in our lives.

By reinstating Peter Jesus did not devalue the sin that Peter fell into, instead it highlights the value of Jesus himself.

**Prayer:** We thank you that you do not cast us away for our failings, despite our ongoing struggles with sin we thank you that the forgiveness won through the cross is sufficient for all of God's people. We pray that you might fill us with your Spirit and help us in whatever small way to serve you and model your great forgiveness. Amen.

## 5. Nathanael/Bartholomew

**Reading:** Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (John 1 45-51)

**Message:** There is not much said with regards to Nathanael specifically in the bible, but what we do know is that his name appears every time the disciples’ names were listed, and how he came to know Jesus and, as does the whole bible, this story can help us to draw closer to our Lord and saviour.

In the verses above we see how he started off being quite skeptical when Phillip was telling him about Jesus, and he had to be convinced to go and meet him. This was probably the case for some of us when we first came to know Jesus, or we know someone who is this skeptical when we try to share the good news with them. However, we can see that even though he was hesitant he followed Philip and went to meet Jesus, not knowing that this would be his most life changing experience ever.

When he was approaching Jesus, it was made very clear to Nathanael that he was already known by this man, which was very surprising to him. At this point he did something that is very natural for humans to do, he questioned how this could be possible. There are a lot of things in life that we may not understand but the only way we will usually gain understanding is by researching, asking questions and just generally looking for an answer. This attitude that Nathanael had to question Jesus did him the world of good as he then came to know and love him as his saviour.

I will be the first to admit that I do not understand large portions of the bible, but this does not stop me from reading it each day, praying for wisdom from God by his Spirit to help me, revealing great truths from it. God loves us so much that it will bring him joy to know that we are making every effort to know him more and grow in understanding of who he is. This

should also be remembered when we are witnessing to those who don't know him. It might just be a lack of understanding that is keeping them from him, but if we are there to answer their questions (as best as we can with the help from God) this may help them to open their hearts to him too.

One final thought drawn out of this story is that should always amaze us even though there is little written about Nathanael we can still learn so much from him. God really does spoil us in the depth in which can be found in his word.

**Prayer:** Lord thank you for your word and how much we can learn from it for our lives. We thank you for giving us examples of people to follow and for the best example we can have in Christ. Lord help me to turn to you when I feel confused or just don't understand your word, as I know you will answer my questions and guide me to you. Amen



## 6. Jude

**Reading:** Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you.

**Message:** Yesterday I mentioned that there was not much said about the disciple Nathanael, well there is even less said about today's disciple Jude. He does have his own book in the bible, but that is not a story of his life. Other than this book his name is mentioned a handful of times where they simply state who he is related to and to show that he was an apostle. In the eyes of the world this may make him an unimportant character in a book, but we know with God this is not the case.

If we feel that we are unimportant or that our actions don't matter, then this can affect how we live out every aspect of our lives. If we believe our actions have no effect, then this can lead to us doing whatever we want whenever we want which is never a good idea. This can also go the opposite way in that we never need to do anything, never read our bibles, never go to church or spend time with any other Christians because in the grand scheme of things it makes no difference.

But as I mentioned above this is just in the view of the world, in the eyes of God all of our actions or inactions will have consequences and they do matter. It is made clear throughout the bible that God hates all sin and therefore the punishment of sin is death, and to be far away from God. What is also different in the eyes of God that makes this a less terrifying thought, is that he loves us so much and we are so important to him that he sent his son to die to make sure that we will spend eternity with God.

There are going to be times where we feel unimportant or even just irrelevant, but this is when we need to remember how much God loves us and how much we mean to him. Just because Jude was not mentioned as much as the other disciples does not mean that he was any less important in God's eyes.

**Prayer:** Lord I thank you for your love, I thank you that it does not matter if I am in a position of power or seen as the lowest of the low, you love me regardless. I pray you will help me to remember this and to remember the sacrifice you gave as a result of this love which has saved me and given me a life with you. I pray you will also help me to remember what the consequences of my sin should be, as when I think about the death I deserve, your love seems even more amazing.

## 7. John

**Reading:** While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was.

Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. <sup>4</sup>And he strictly charged them that no one should know this and told them to give her something to eat. (Mark 5:35-43)

**Message:** John is one of the more recognisable disciples and was often known as the Beloved disciple. He worked as a fisherman and lived in Bethsaida, Capernaum and Jerusalem. He is most likely the author of several biblical books including the Gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Revelation.

In this passage we read that Jesus only allowed three disciples to witness these events, even amongst those twelve whom Jesus called he had an inner group of people. There was also the account when the same three were taken to a mountaintop and witnessed the glorious event of the transfiguration. More than just this one of the most intimate events as Jesus taking these three with him into Gethsemane where he would wrestle with God in prayer before submitting himself to the cross.

These people must have been the best of the best that the disciples had to offer. Their character surely was higher than any of the disciples. John must have been the type of Christian that everyone wants to emulate and strive to be. Here we see 'the disciple who Jesus

loved' and the closeness and involvement with Jesus himself, what a strong and courageous follower of Jesus John must have been.

However, something else we know about John was he had a fierce temper, this can be clearly seen when John says "Lord, do you want fire to come down from heaven to consume them?" (Luke 9:54). Whenever we examine the characters of the disciples, we must always view them through the lens that they are like all humans, they all have their various faults and struggles. The disciples are special men not because they are spectacular but because of how special their saviour was.

So often we can be impressed and taken by the fact that John was the disciple whom Jesus loved, in reality we should be amazed that Jesus would love any of us. Yet that is the message of the Gospel despite all John's human faults Christ loved him. Today I urge you to stop and think, reflect on the love that Jesus has for his people. Not because we are deserving but because he is loving.

**Prayer:** Father help us to understand in a greater way the supreme love that you have for us, we thank you that although we were far from perfect in you, we could be washed clean. We praise you that despite all our faults there is such love freely made available to us.

## 8. James

**Reading:** About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. (Acts 12:1-5)

**Message:** James the elder was the son of Zebedee and the brother of John the Apostle, similarly he worked as a fisherman and lived in Bethsaida, Capernaum and Jerusalem. James often preached in Jerusalem and Judea and was eventually martyred for his faith being beheaded by Herod.

James was one of the three disciples who were closest with Jesus however what is most interesting about James is that he is often never mentioned except for when John is mentioned. These brothers had a very strong borderline inseparable bond with each other very rarely being recorded as being apart.

In many ways you might assume that James would have been tagging along constantly living in the shadows of his brother. When I was younger, I would often be invited places or parties because my older brother's friends invited me along. In many ways I did not know the people that well, but because respect or fondness of my brother the invite was often extended to me also.

What joy and confidence we can have that Jesus does not take this view of us; we are told that he loves us as individuals. More than just that there is an essential need for us to know Jesus in this personal way. Because Jesus does not love us based on who our siblings or relatives are, we need to ensure that we know the risen Jesus for ourselves. Having Christian relatives and family is not enough, the question is not is someone close to you a follower of Jesus, the eternal question is are you a follower of this Jesus?

James was the first of the twelve disciples to be martyred for his faith, despite the fame and well-known nature of his brother James did not rest on it or rely on it but he knew that he needed to know Jesus for himself. It was for this personal relationship with Jesus he was prepared to give up everything, including his own life.

**Prayer:** We thank you that your love is for individual sinful people, we thank you that we are not just included because you see something in our relatives or loved ones but you love us for who we are, despite everything we have done wrong. We also pray that more people will come to know their need for a personal relationship with Jesus. Amen.

## 10. James the Younger

**Reading:** Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:2-6)

**Message:** James the Younger sometimes known as James the lesser does not have a very detailed account of him or his character which is becoming a theme throughout this series. It is widely believed that this is the James who wrote the epistle and book of the Bible by the same name.

Throughout this series I hope it has become obvious that though the twelve disciples were important in their support and assistance during the ministry of Jesus. But in so many ways the whole purpose of the disciples was to stress the need, importance and reliance people should have on Jesus. The gospel is not the message of how the disciples can help people but how Christ alone is the solution. If our hope or trust was in men, then there would be a limitation of the sincerity or truth.

Have you ever made a promise that at the time you were sure you would be able to keep but then because of a change of circumstance or human error you became unable to keep the promise you had made? As people we can be depended on to some extents but ultimately, we are all open to human error, the disciples were no different. But with God he is faithful in all things, all his ways are straight, and he is truth.

The beginning of the book of James explores the necessity and need of knowing God, if you are lacking wisdom you are not to find it in the disciples teachings, or from within yourself but you are to go to God directly and ask for it. The role of the disciples is not to take the spotlight but to amplify and promote Christ more.

In our daily lives as Christians we must not seek to hog the spotlight or promote ourselves but constantly be trying to share and speak of Jesus the one who is so far beyond and above ourselves.

**Prayer:** We thank you that we are not called to follow any individuals or men, but we have complete confidence and assurance as we put our trust in Christ. We thank you for the faithfulness that we can have in you as our Lord. We ask that you might help us to be people who publicise Jesus, more of Christ and less of self.

## 9. Philip

**Reading:** The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?"

Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:43-51)

**Message:** Philip came from Bethsaida, the town from which Peter and Andrew. The likelihood is that he, too, was a fisherman the gospel of John focuses more on the person and character of Philip than the other gospels. There is some debate over whether the Philip mentioned in Acts 6:5 and Acts 8:26 are the same person as the disciple.

However, for this daily devotion I want to largely concentrate on the calling of Philip and his initial response. Philip appears to be one of the first people that Jesus calls, but the reaction and response of Philip is what we should all be striving towards. It would appear that as soon as Philip hears the calling of Jesus, he rushes to find Nathanael and share the news of Jesus with him. There does not appear to be any sense of hesitation or fear for the persons response, just a commitment and necessity that people need Jesus for himself.

If we have met with Jesus, if we have been called to follow him how reluctant are, we often to hesitation or fear that he might be ridiculed for trying to bring Nathanael to Jesus. Philip urges Nathaniel to come and see Jesus for himself, Philip does not try to reason or argue or make logical well-constructed arguments. For Philip his priority is not for people to follow his own teaching but for them to go directly to Jesus where they will find the answer to all their problems.

**Prayer:** Father we thank you that we do not have to approach you through someone but can come to you directly. We praise you for such a great message of hope that we can have all our sins forgiven through the work you have done on the cross. We pray that you would further kindle within our hearts a desire for mission, for sharing the message of hope for all who need it.

## 11. Simon the Zealot

**Reading:** Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. (Acts 1: 12-14)

**Message:** Simon, the Zealot, one of the little-known followers called the Canaanite who lived in Galilee. Tradition says he was crucified. The New Testament gives us practically nothing on him personally except that it says he was a Zealot. The Zealots were often fanatical Jewish Nationalists who had a heroic disregard for the suffering of the Jewish people. They would seek to oppose those involved in assisting with the Roman occupation.

In many ways the Zealots fiercely despised their Roman occupiers despite this political view Simon sacrificed everything to follow his saviour. After Jesus' death when the disciples gathered in the upper room in Acts what were they to do? Simon could have been arguing for a mass overthrow of the Roman occupation who played a role in Jesus' death. Instead of taking this response, how does he respond? Verse fourteen says they were all of one accord and they were not just praying, instead they were devoting themselves to prayer.

I wonder if prayer would have been Simon's natural response. So often when problems arise, we can have a deep desire to act humanly and not take the time to reflect and seek God. Whatever our beliefs and positions does our view of Jesus change every aspect of our lives? We must seek in all things that the reality of the person of Jesus transform who we are in every aspect, element and trait in our lives.

**Prayer:** We praise you for the reality that you transform broken lives, and we ask that you fill us making us more like you. Please be with us as we seek to put on the new self, striving to be more like our saviour.



## 12. Judas

**Reading:** 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. (Mark 14:10-11)

**Message:** Judas Iscariot, often referred to as the traitor, was the son of Simon who lived in Judah. He betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and afterwards hanged himself probably out of guilt or remorse for what he had done.

We all know what Judas did, but as we come to the end of this devotional series and we look at the disciple who followed Jesus (for whatever motivation) through hard and difficult times and then rejected Jesus this should be a stark reminder for us to make sure that we are not holding onto religion, tradition, friendships, church but Jesus himself.

For us it very easy to see Judas for who he is as we know the end of the story but imagine how it would have felt for the disciples. Judas was someone who had been with them for the beginning, throughout Jesus' ministry he would have seen the miracles, seen the lives touched and changed by Jesus. More importantly he would have heard the message for three years Judas would have Jesus speaking; he would have seen not just the words of Christ but witnessed that the life of Jesus was consistent in his living with his message.

Despite all of these things Judas witnessed he rejected Jesus, because he valued the money of this world more than Christ. In our Christian walk we need to be sure that we are valuing Jesus more than anything else. As we begin to value things more than Jesus there is a huge damaging impact on our Christian walk. Just because you are doing the things that every other Christian is doing does not mean anything, Judas physically blended in very well with the disciples.

The real problem was lying deep within his heart, and that eventually and eventually what was hidden could not be hidden for long. Just because we are in church, perhaps active in church it is still possible if we are not actively ensuring our attention is on Christ and not anything superficial.

**Prayer:** Help us to really and truly know you, we pray that we would not be distracted by anything, we pray that church, people would push us closer to Christ and not distract us from you. We also pray that those around us would truly know and understand the importance of Jesus and what he did on the cross in their lives. Amen

