

Bad Boys of Easter, Part 2

“When Following Becomes Bargaining”

Scripture Focus: John 13:21–30; Matthew 27:3–5

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin your group time by asking God to search your heart—not just your actions—and to reveal any area where you have been following Jesus on your own terms rather than surrendering to His. Ask Him to give you the courage to release what you’ve been holding back.

Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Question: Have you ever made a deal with God? What were you hoping He’d do? How did that situation turn out?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

- Proximity to Jesus does not automatically produce devotion — Judas walked with Jesus for three and a half years and still betrayed Him.
 - We treat Jesus as a means to an end when we follow Him conditionally — “Jesus, I’ll follow you if...”
 - Unmet expectations can turn into betrayal — Judas wanted a political king; Jesus offered a servant Savior.
 - Bargaining is the opposite of surrender — We try to force God’s hand rather than trust His will.
 - God won’t override your free will — but the consequences of choosing your own way are your responsibility.
 - The safest, most fulfilling place in the universe is the center of God’s will — surrender leads to life; self-direction leads to loss.
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Discussion Questions (30–40 minutes)

Understanding the Scripture

1. **1. Read John 13:21–30 together.** What stands out to you about how Jesus handled knowing Judas would betray Him? What does it tell you about Jesus’s character that He said, “What you are about to do, do quickly”?
2. **2.** The sermon described how Judas checked nearly every box for the expected Messiah—except the ones about servanthood and sacrifice. Why do you think those specific qualities were so hard for Judas to accept? How do we sometimes resist those same qualities in Jesus today?

Personal Reflection

3. **3.** The sermon asked: “Are you following Jesus for who He is, or for what you expect Him to do for you?” How would you honestly answer that question right now?
4. **4.** Have you ever bargained with God? (“God, if you do this, I will...”) What were you hoping He would give you? Looking back, what does that reveal about where you were placing your trust?
5. **5.** The sermon said, “God won’t get in the way of you having your way.” Does that feel like freedom or a warning to you? Why?

Applying the Truth

6. **6.** Judas lost everything by refusing to surrender and trying to force Jesus’ hand. Is there something in your life right now that you are holding onto—refusing to surrender—because you want God to do things on your terms? What would surrender look like practically?
7. **7.** The sermon contrasted bargaining with surrendering, and said: “When we surrender and say ‘not my will, but Your will be done,’ the outcome is up to God.” What area of your life is hardest to pray that prayer over? Why?
8. **8.** Peter asked, “We have left everything to follow you—what then will there be for us?” How do you think Jesus would answer that question for your life today? What has following Jesus actually cost you, and what has it given you?

Practical Applications (15 minutes)

Individual Commitments

9. **1. Surrender Prayer (Daily this week)**

Each morning this week, begin your day with a simple surrender prayer:

“God, today—not my will, but Yours. May I see people through Your eyes, and may my choices align with Your will.”

Write it on a sticky note, set a phone reminder, or put it somewhere you’ll see it every morning.

10. 2. Bargaining Inventory

Reflect on this question this week: “Is there any area of my life where I am following Jesus conditionally?”

Journal your answer. Identify one thing you need to release to God and one practical step you can take toward surrender this week.

11. 3. Gratitude Reframe

Each day, write down one way you can see God working in your life right now—not something you’re waiting on Him to do, but something He is already doing.

Group Accountability

- Share one specific thing you want to surrender to God this week.
- Exchange contact information and check in mid-week to encourage one another.

Closing Exercise (10 minutes)

Read Matthew 26:39 together:

“Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’”

Go around the circle and have each person complete this statement:

“One thing I am choosing to surrender to God this week is...”

This shifts the focus from what we are trying to control to what we are trusting God with.

Prayer Time (10 minutes)

Break into groups of 2–3 and pray for each other:

- Pray for freedom from conditional faith and bargaining with God.
 - Pray for the courage to surrender specific areas that are hard to release.
 - Pray for trust in God’s goodness—that His will truly is the safest place to be.
 - Pray for those who may be walking close to Jesus outwardly but holding back inwardly.
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Challenge for the Week

The Daily Surrender Challenge: Pray the surrender prayer every morning this week (7 days). Come prepared to share one moment where you felt the difference between bargaining and trusting God.

Additional Resources

Scripture for Further Study

- Matthew 26:36–46 (Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane)
- Luke 9:23–25 (Deny yourself, take up your cross)
- Proverbs 3:5–6 (Trust in the Lord with all your heart)
- Romans 12:1–2 (Offer your body as a living sacrifice)
- John 12:1–8 (Mary’s extravagant devotion vs. Judas’s calculating response)

Recommended Reading

- “Not a Fan” by Kyle Idleman
 - “Surrender All” by Jay Strack
 - “The Pursuit of God” by A.W. Tozer
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Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to those in your group who may be in a painful season where surrender feels costly or scary—job loss, health struggles, broken relationships. Meet them with grace.
- Avoid turning the Judas discussion into a debate about whether Judas could have been saved. Keep the focus on the personal application: conditional faith vs. surrendered faith.

- Create space for honest answers—some people may never have asked themselves if they're following Jesus conditionally. Give the group permission to be real.
- Emphasize that surrender is not passive resignation—it is active, daily trust. It's the hardest and most courageous thing a person can do.
- Be prepared to extend grace without judgment, especially for those who recognize they've been bargaining with God for a long time.