SO CLOSE, YET SO FAR
Matthew 26

Judas Iscariot is one of the most paradoxical and mysterious characters in the entire Bible. Was Judas actually a really good guy who just made a few bad decisions? Was he someone who was actually trying to help out Jesus? Just a pawn? Was Judas an unsung hero or a pathetic zero?

**PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES**

1. Just because good came despite Judas’ betrayal, that does not justify it. Judas was clearly complicit and responsible for the decisions that he made.

2. It’s not the bait that constitutes temptation. It’s the bite. Like the rest of us, Judas had opportunity to resist temptation, but instead he took the bait and ran with it, betraying Jesus out of greed.

3. Jesus regarded Judas as a friend all the way to the end. He gave Judas every opportunity to repent and treated him with the same love He always did. Jesus truly loved Judas, and Judas’ betrayal broke His heart.

4. Judas had no excuse. He was a hand-picked disciple of Jesus and spent over three years walking and talking with Christ. He saw miracle after miracle and heard teaching after teaching, but these only hardened his heart instead of softening it. Judas betrayed Jesus deliberately, of his own volition.

5. Remorse is not the same as repentance. Just because you are sorry does not mean that you are repentant. Most of the time remorse stems from getting caught in the consequences of your sin.

**RELEVANT REMINDERS**

- God the Father and Satan were moving toward the same objective in Christ’s death, but for different reasons. The devil wanted Jesus silenced once and for all. But God wanted Christ to atone for our sins.
- Never be afraid to place an uncertain future in the hands of a certain God.
- Sin makes people act crazy. Rational people, under the power of sin, do the most irrational things imaginable.

**APPLICABLE ACTIONS**

The last thing God wants is for anyone to go to hell. That is why Jesus spoke of it in detail. That is why Jesus warned us about it. And that is why Jesus did everything He could do for us so we would not have to be separated from Him for all eternity. Jesus Christ experienced hell on earth so we don’t have to experience it for eternity. Isn’t that a message worth sharing with others today?