

# COMPELLED BY THE CROSS

## STUDY ONE

### Jesus' Magnificent Obsession

*Matthew 16:21–26*

*Jesus understood His mission. It was His magnificent obsession—to die for people like you and me.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**T**HE Son of God took on human flesh “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

This mission was the focal point of Jesus’ life. It was the resolve that guided every step of His earthly journey. Not once did He veer from His intended course. But He kept His eyes fixed on the cross, where He would pour out His blood as the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins (Matthew 26:28).

Jesus was compelled by the cross.

This *Searching the Scriptures* series joins Jesus at key places on His journey. *Caesarea Philippi*, where He told His disciples that He would die. *Bethany*, where a woman anointed Him with expensive perfume. *Jericho*, where He healed a blind man before His triumphal entry. In the *upper room*, where He made a final appeal to His betrayer and washed the disciples’ feet as a demonstration of His love.

Across every scene stretched the shadow of the cross, beckoning our Savior. When the day of His crucifixion finally came, Jesus died *not* in defeat but in victory. On the cross, He paid the ransom price for our sin and broke the ancient curse. Then, on the third day, He conquered death by rising from the grave!

Let’s follow Jesus to these significant places on His way to the cross and listen to His heart as He shares His magnificent obsession to save the world.



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## Jesus' Magnificent Obsession

Matthew 16:21–26



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

What kept Jesus going on His road to the cross was His love for us. Welcome His love as you open this study. Affirm your desire to follow Him wherever He may lead.

*Father, the love of Jesus that compelled Him to the cross compels me to follow Him. My heart breaks at the thought of His suffering. Yet without His sacrifice, I would be lost. So I humbly receive His love and devote myself to Him as I listen to His words of life. In His name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The setting where Jesus first told His disciples that He would die and rise again was *Caesarea Philippi*, an ancient site of paganism where people had worshiped false gods for centuries. At this epicenter of idolatry and demonic darkness, Jesus revealed His magnificent obsession.

Simon Peter had just confessed Jesus' true identity: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Note his emphasis on *living*. Perched in niches and housed in temples, dozens of lifeless idols surrounded the disciples, and right in their midst stood the one, true God embodied in human flesh.

So rock-solid was Simon Peter's confession that Jesus consecrated the moment by affirming his name as Peter, the "rock." However, it didn't take long for this rock to show signs of cracking.



### Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

Pastor Chuck Swindoll's approach to studying the Bible in his book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, follows four steps: observation, interpretation, correlation, and application. For helpful instruction from Pastor Chuck, consult our online instructional web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



## Jesus' Magnificent Obsession

Matthew 16:21–26



### Observation: Revelation, Reprimand, Rebuke, Requirement

God had directly revealed Jesus' true identity to Peter (Matthew 16:17)—but not Jesus' *true mission*. Peter and the others thought the messiah would throw off Roman rule and rain down blessings on the Jewish nation. Jesus, however, came to redeem the world, not to conquer it. To overthrow death, not Rome. To liberate captives from bondage to sin, not Caesar. To swing open the gates of God's blessing to all people, not just the Jews.

Use your skills of observation as you answer the questions below and write down what the passages say. Read the verses carefully, noticing the strong verbs, figures of speech, key words, and logical flow. Take your time in the observation phase, which lays a solid foundation for interpretation.

### Jesus' Revelation—Matthew 16:21

What does “From then on” in [Matthew 16:21](#) indicate? How does the word *plainly* contrast with Jesus' previous teaching when He hinted at His destiny by referencing Jonah (see [12:40](#))?

Specifically, what did Jesus reveal? Watch for those verbs. Who would be His chief antagonists?

*When Jesus said, “They will kill Me,” the disciples stopped there. If you’ve ever heard shocking information, you know how it blocks out everything afterward. I don’t believe they heard what He said about rising again. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## Jesus' Magnificent Obsession

*Matthew 16:21–26*

### Peter's Reprimand—Matthew 16:22

What did Peter do and say in response to Jesus' revelation, according to [Matthew 16:22](#)?

What contrasts do you see between Peter's bold confession in [16:16](#) and his brazen reprimand? What did Peter not understand about Jesus? What do you think may have caused Peter to crack?

*While Peter was thinking, Jesus cannot die, Jesus was answering, "I must die."  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Jesus' Rebuke—Matthew 16:23

Peter's reprimand eerily echoes Satan's temptation in [Matthew 4:1–11](#), especially when the devil offered to Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" (Matthew 4:8). Like Satan, Peter told Jesus, in so many words, to grab the glory now and avoid the cross. Just as He resisted the devil's temptation, Jesus resisted Peter's.



## Jesus' Magnificent Obsession

*Matthew 16:21–26*

What rebuke did Jesus give Peter in *Matthew 16:23*?

What was the “dangerous trap”? What primary flaw in Peter did Jesus point out?

*Jesus is the master; we are the servants. He is the potter; we are the clay. He is the leader; we are the followers. He is God, and we are not. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Jesus' Requirement—Matthew 16:24–26

In a short span, the disciples must learn to follow a *suffering* Messiah. *But how?* Jesus gave the answer in *Matthew 16:24–26*. What did Jesus tell them they must be willing to do?



## Jesus' Magnificent Obsession

*Matthew 16:21–26*

What contrasts stand out in these verses?

By taking the disciples to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus had led them to a crossroad. Would they follow their master now that they knew what came next? Would they “give up” their lives to save them . . . or “hang on” and lose everything? What did Jesus mean by “take up your cross”? Let’s take a deeper look.



### Interpretation: Deny, Take Up, and Follow

Feel free to use Bible study tools when seeking the meaning of a passage—commentaries and Bible dictionaries. Keep in mind that the most reliable resource is the Bible itself, for it is consistent in its meaning and will never contradict itself.

### Deny Yourself

In the New American Standard Bible, Jesus said first, “If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself” (Matthew 16:24 NASB). How do other *Bible versions* translate “deny himself”? What meaning do you draw from these translations?



## Jesus' Magnificent Obsession

*Matthew 16:21–26*

### Take Up Your Cross

The Romans often forced condemned criminals to carry to the crucifixion site the horizontal beam upon which they would be hung. If Jesus must walk the way of humiliation and death, His disciples must be willing to take up their own crosses too.

What does it mean to “take up your cross” (Matthew 16:24)? Look for possible answers in your Bible study tools. For an online resource, consult *Constable's Notes* at [netbible.org](http://netbible.org).

### Follow Me

What does it mean to “follow me” (Matthew 16:24)? The Greek verb is a present imperative, which describes a command to an ongoing action. This verb contrasts “give up” and “take up.” The emphasis is complete action. What must Jesus-followers do continually?

That day, Peter and the other disciples learned a vital lesson about following Jesus. The way of Christ includes setting aside our self-interests, accepting the rejection of the world, and being willing to suffer for His sake—even to die.



## Jesus' Magnificent Obsession

*Matthew 16:21–26*

What did Jesus promise in exchange for losing our lives, according to [Matthew 16:25–26](#)?



### Correlation: Those Who Followed Jesus

Peter took Jesus' words to heart and later passed them on to other believers. How do Peter's instructions in [1 Peter 4:1–2, 12–14](#) reflect Jesus' requirements of denying self, taking up one's cross, and following Jesus?

How did Paul also reflect these requirements in [Galatians 6:14](#)?

*Understand that our times are in God's hands. Our God and our God alone is the One who determines when we are born and when we die. He is in charge. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*





## Jesus' Magnificent Obsession

*Matthew 16:21–26*



### Application: Three Principles to Apply

Three principles emerge from our passage. First, Jesus' unexpected revelation about His suffering and death teaches: *We must never think that just because a death is shockingly unexpected that it is unacceptable.*

Does Jesus' talk of death cause you to ponder your own death or the death of those you love? What comfort does He give you that can replace your fear with peace?

Second, Peter's reprimand of Jesus illustrates: *We must stop thinking that the Lord should alter His plan to fit our preferences.*

Have you ever tried to tell God what He can or cannot do? What preferences may Christ be asking you to set aside to follow Him?



## Jesus' Magnificent Obsession

*Matthew 16:21–26*

Third, Jesus' requirements for discipleship reveal: *It's impossible to be a close follower of Jesus without consistent and sacrificial self-denial.*

Are you willing to give up your agenda, take up your cross, and follow Jesus? What specific step can you take to embrace His way today?

At Caesarea Philippi, the disciples had come to a decision point. Would they turn their backs on the world to follow their King to the cross? The same question applies to us all today. Jesus' magnificent obsession beckons us as well.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I confess that I wish Your plans would fit my preferences. I long for my path to be easy, but Christ's road was anything but smooth. Help me, Lord, to stop clinging to what I want, to accept whatever You may have for me, and to follow Jesus wherever He may lead. In His name, amen.*



# COMPELLED BY THE CROSS

## STUDY TWO

### Extravagant Love on Everlasting Display

*Mark 14:1–9*

*The woman broke open the jar and poured the perfume over Jesus' head. What a beautiful expression of her adoration for Jesus.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**I**N Caesarea Philippi, Jesus warned of the coming storm:

*Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, leading priests, and the teachers of the religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.*  
(Matthew 16:21)

The dark clouds that seemed so distant from Caesarea Philippi now hung on the horizon. Jesus and His disciples had come to Jerusalem for Passover and were staying in nearby Bethany. This Passover would be like none other, for it would fulfill all the Passovers that had come before. Those were mere foreshadowing of the ultimate Passover when Jesus would lay down His life as the paschal lamb slain for the sins of the world.

The setting was a friend's home where Jesus and His disciples had been invited for dinner. In this warm and welcoming place, the disciples relaxed around the table enjoying their meal. Only Jesus felt the chill of the approaching storm. One woman, however, sensed Jesus' burden, and she ministered to Him with an unforgettable expression of extravagant love.



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### Extravagant Love on Everlasting Display

Mark 14:1–9



#### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Imagine yourself among Jesus' disciples, and express in prayer your desire to draw close to Him.

*Father, how I long to have been present in the room with Jesus to hear His voice and to see His face. May Jesus receive my heart as He received Mary's offering, for if I had been there, I, too, would have been at Jesus' feet. In His name, amen.*



#### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

According to John, "Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem" (John 11:18) and was the hometown of Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary. In his account of the event, John mentioned that Lazarus, whom Jesus had earlier raised from the dead, was also at the table (12:2). John also added, "Martha served" (12:2).

Turn to Mark's account in [Mark 14:1–9](#), where he paints the background and takes us into the scene.



#### Observation: The Setting, an Extravagant Act, and the Responses

Observing a passage of Scripture shouldn't be done in a hurry. Take time to notice how Mark selected each word and constructed each sentence. Enter the scene as if you could see the lamps flickering on the table, smell the spices in the food, and feel the thick air in the crowded room.

#### Setting the Scene—Mark 14:1–2

How does Mark describe the setting in [Mark 14:1a](#)? What would the religious and political atmosphere have been like with tens of thousands of pilgrims streaming into Jerusalem?



## Extravagant Love on Everlasting Display

*Mark 14:1–9*

What sinister undercurrent did Mark include in *Mark 14:1b–2*?

At this hinge point in Mark's gospel, Mark ushers his readers into the main section of his book—the final week of Jesus' earthly life (Mark 14–16). Mark purposefully leaves us hanging with the religious leaders wringing their hands over how and when to kill Jesus. Judas will solve their dilemma by offering to betray Jesus (*14:10–11*)—but not before one woman's act of love toward Jesus.

### An Extravagant Act of Love—Mark 14:3

Write down your observations of *Mark 14:3*, noting Mark's details about the perfume used to anoint Jesus. Consult the footnotes in the *NET Bible* for more information about the jar and its precious contents. Had you been present, what sensations would you have experienced? What thoughts and feelings would you have had?

*John 12:2–3* tells us the woman is Mary. What additional details did John include?



## Extravagant Love on Everlasting Display

Mark 14:1–9

*Mary said nothing but did something extremely extravagant. She broke open the jar of perfume. The scent filled the room instantly, and she poured it on Jesus' head. This was her sacrificial act of worship. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### The Responses—Mark 14:4–9

Mary's perfume may have been a family heirloom given to her to enjoy throughout her life. It was her most prized possession. As the bottle gave up its exquisite contents, the oil infused Jesus' skin with a sublime scent usually known only to nobles, kings, and queens. Instead of savoring the aroma and delighting in the gesture, however, some disciples were calculating the cost per drop spilled. Jesus saw pure devotion. Others saw price tags.

What shortsighted, even sinful, perspectives may have prompted these men's reaction, according to [Mark 14:4–5](#)? Whom did John point out as the primary antagonist, according to [John 12:4–6](#)? What was this man's true motive?

How did Jesus respond to their criticism of Mary, according to [14:6–8](#)? How did He interpret her actions?



## Extravagant Love on Everlasting Display

Mark 14:1–9

Judas would go down in history as a sell-out, a contemptible man who betrayed his master for cash. How did Jesus say Mary would be remembered in [Mark 14:9](#)?

*Judas saw no value in what Mary did; Mary saw only the value of Jesus. The perfume was the most priceless possession she owned. Therefore, only the perfume was good enough for her Savior. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: Examining the Action of Mary

If Mary's action could speak, what *message* do you think Mary was communicating to Jesus by anointing Him with perfume? For insight, read about the uses of [perfume](#) in the online *Encyclopedia of the Bible*.

Jesus interpreted Mary's actions as anointing His "body for burial ahead of time" (Mark 14:8). Whether or not Mary understood the full meaning of her actions, she gave herself in total devotion to her Lord with a gift worthy of Him.



## Extravagant Love on Everlasting Display

*Mark 14:1–9*

What principles about worship and devotion do Mary's actions model?



### Correlation: The Heart of Mary

What does Mary's previous encounter with Jesus in her home tell you about her heart, according to [Luke 10:38–42](#)?

What further insight into her character can you gather from her encounter with Jesus when He arrived in Bethany after Lazarus died, according to [John 11:31–44](#)? What do you think her tears communicated to Jesus? How did Jesus' actions strengthen her faith in Him?





## Extravagant Love on Everlasting Display

Mark 14:1–9

Mary anointing Jesus with costly perfume was the third time she appeared in Scripture. All three times, we find Mary at the feet of Jesus. What does Mary's example teach about the heart of a true disciple?

*The wonderful part of Mary's gift to Jesus was her silence. Not once did she defend her act. Not once did she explain her motive. Jesus read everything. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Application: Thoughts to Ponder

Mary's extravagant act of anointing Jesus is an everlasting display of love. Among the many lessons Mary models, here are two thoughts to ponder.

First, *there's a great difference between the price of something and the value of it.* Judas fixated on the price of the perfume because money was his treasure. Mary focused on the value of worship because Jesus was her treasure.

Do you sometimes confuse price and value? What or who holds the most value for you? Where does your treasure lie?



## Extravagant Love on Everlasting Display

*Mark 14:1–9*

Second, *every once in a while*, we should be like Mary and break open a jar. Sometimes an extravagant gesture is the only way to truly express great love.

How does Mary's extravagance inspire you?

The scent of Mary's perfume must have clung to Jesus for many days. Perhaps the lingering fragrance comforted His heart during the humiliation of His arrest and trials and the pain of His beatings and crucifixion.

Jesus gave Himself on the cross as the most extravagant gesture of love the world has ever seen. He broke the alabaster jar of His own body and spilled His priceless blood for us. What can we give in return but our lives and our eternal worship?



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, how can I demonstrate the extent of my devotion to Jesus? Help me pour out the perfume of my life for Him every day and may the fragrance of my love for Him be pleasing to You. May I be extravagant in my worship as I demonstrate to the world how much I value my Savior and Lord. In His name, amen.*



# COMPELLED BY THE CROSS

## STUDY THREE

### On the Trail of a Traitor

*Luke 22:1–6*

*Few experiences are harder to endure than being betrayed, especially when the betrayal has been going on for a long time under a cloak of secrecy.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE name, *Judas*, is synonymous with *betrayal*. When someone says, “There is a Judas among us,” a shiver goes up our spine. *A trusted individual is secretly plotting against us.* The name infers treachery, treason, disloyalty, duplicity, deceit, trickery, and guile. If a close friend, family member, or even a spouse has betrayed you, the pain most likely still sears your soul.

None of the disciples suspected Judas would betray Jesus. Why should they have? Jesus had personally called Judas to be one of the original twelve. Along with the others, Judas had a front-row seat for Jesus’ miracles and basked in Jesus’ words of life. He traveled with Jesus, ate meals with Him, and observed Him in His most unguarded moments. Judas could find no sin or hypocrisy in Jesus to criticize. Jesus was blameless in every way.

So why did Judas turn against his master?

Bible scholars speculate that greed may have driven Judas. He managed the disciples’ money, and, according to John, “he often stole some for himself” (John 12:6). Maybe jealousy spurred Judas, or ambition. Perhaps he hoped Jesus would liberate Israel from Rome and was disillusioned when Jesus refused to set up a political kingdom. Whatever the motive for his betrayal, in some dark moment, Judas welcomed evil into his heart, and Satan walked through the open door.



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## On the Trail of a Traitor

*Luke 22:1–6*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

The account of Judas reminds us that our struggle is not against “flesh-and-blood enemies” but “against mighty powers in this dark world” (Ephesians 6:12), and we rely on “God’s armor” to protect us (Ephesians 6:11). Invite the Lord in prayer to arm you with His truth and to strengthen you with His righteousness, peace, and faith.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The gospel writers don’t say how long the seeds of betrayal germinated in Judas before he acted. Matthew and Mark place Judas’ clandestine meeting with the religious leaders after Mary anointed Jesus with her expensive perfume (Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–6). Could that incident somehow have pushed Judas over evil’s edge? We don’t know for certain. The definite cause of Judas’ betrayal is found in Luke 22:1–6, which is our first passage to study.



## On the Trail of a Traitor

*Luke 22:1–6*



### Observation: Judas' Sin and Jesus' Compassion

In the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, observation is the initial step toward unlocking the meaning of a text and applying its principles. Read [Luke 22:1–6](#) and write down what you see. Try outlining the passage to clarify the sequence of events.

Specifically, what was the source of Judas' treachery?

What did Judas offer the religious leaders that they lacked? Why were they “delighted” (Luke 22:5)? For insight into their frustrated hostility toward Jesus, read [19:45–48](#) and [20:9–19](#).



## On the Trail of a Traitor

Luke 22:1–6

*Every time Jesus spoke, the crowds were large, and the religious leaders couldn't arrest Jesus or there would be a riot. Afterward, Jesus always slipped away to an undisclosed location. They needed inside help, and Judas was their man. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Judas' dark thoughts and actions were not hidden from Jesus, who, as the Son of God, knew Judas' secret dealings. Even so, Jesus kept loving His turncoat disciple. In the upper room, Jesus washed the disciples' feet, including the feet of Judas ([John 13:1–17](#)). And then, Jesus seemed to turn directly to His enemy and, according to John 13:18, quoted Psalm 41:9, which states:

*Even my best friend, the one I trusted completely,  
the one who shared my food, has turned against me.*

Imagine Judas hearing those words and realizing Jesus knew everything. What was Jesus' not-so-subtle message to Judas in [John 13:18–20](#)?

Again and again, Jesus threw out a lifeline to rescue Judas from his own choices. Even the seating arrangement for the Last Supper communicated Jesus' grace to Judas and desire to trust in Judas. The disciples and Jesus ate the Passover meal at a low, U-shaped table with pillows for reclining instead of chairs for sitting. The men leaned on their left elbows and ate with their right hands.

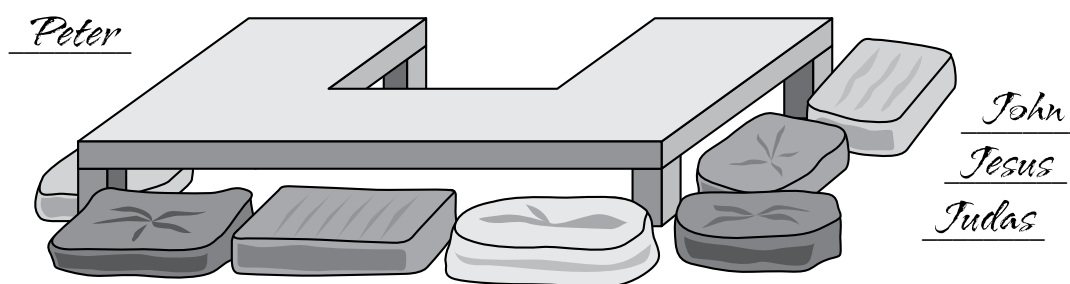


On the Trail of a Traitor

Luke 22:1–6

Read [John 13:21–26](#) and fill in the blanks below, noting the possible seating positions of Jesus, John, Peter, and Judas from the following diagram.

Diagram of the Lord's Table in the Upper Room  
(John 13)



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Jesus' emotional statement (John 13:21): \_\_\_\_\_

The disciples' reaction (13:22): \_\_\_\_\_

The location of John, "the disciple Jesus loved" (13:23): \_\_\_\_\_

Peter's question to John from across the table (13:24): \_\_\_\_\_

John's question as he leaned over to Jesus (13:25): \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus' response (13:26): \_\_\_\_\_



### On the Trail of a Traitor

*Luke 22:1–6*

Just as John leaned over to Jesus on his left to ask a private question, Jesus would have leaned back toward Judas on His left. Commentator William Barclay explains the significance of this seating:

*The revealing thing is that the place on the left of the host was the place of highest honour, kept for the most intimate friend. When that meal began, Jesus must have said to Judas: “Judas, come and sit beside me tonight; I want specially to talk to you.” The very inviting of Judas to that seat was an appeal.<sup>1</sup>*

Jesus wrapped His love in the bread He gave to Judas as one final appeal to His betrayer. Tragically, Judas ate the bread but refused the grace. What happened next, according to [John 13:27–29](#)?

*Only Jesus knew exactly what Judas was doing. Giving Judas the morsel was the last act of grace that would come his way. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



#### Interpretation: Satan’s Scheme through Judas

Satan knew Christ’s purpose for coming. “The Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil,” according to John (1 John 3:8). Even the demons understood Jesus’ power and quaked before Him, asking, “Have you come to destroy us?” (Luke 4:34).

When, at the outset of Jesus’ ministry, Jesus resisted Satan’s temptations, Satan left Jesus “until the next opportunity came” (4:13). That opportunity came through Judas.





## On the Trail of a Traitor

*Luke 22:1–6*

What was Satan intending to do by entering Judas?

Despite Satan's sinister efforts, what did Christ accomplish at the cross, according to *Hebrews 2:14–15*? What will be Satan's ultimate end, according to *Revelation 20:10*?

Judas may have been a pawn in Satan's hand, but Satan was a pawn in God's hand! God sovereignly turned Satan's treachery against him in order to bring salvation to the world.



### Correlation: Loving Our Enemies

At any moment, Jesus could have exposed Judas, and yet, the Master kept appealing to him to repent. How do Jesus' actions toward Judas illustrate His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, specifically *Matthew 5:43–44*?



## On the Trail of a Traitor

Luke 22:1–6

What insight does [1 Peter 2:23](#) give into Jesus' ability to bear Judas' treachery?

*With satanic or demonic possession comes the inability to visualize the consequences of one's actions. Judas never tracked his actions all the way to the end. If Judas had thought about the consequences, he would have realized that he was the one who lost in the deal.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Application: Lessons from Judas' Tragic Account

Judas' tragic account sounds an alarm that rings to this day: *too much time spent with evil invites closer ties with the enemy of our soul*. Judas took his first dip into the murky waters of deceit when he stole from the money bag. One betrayal of trust led to another until, finally, Judas drowned in his own sin. The warning is this: *steer clear of wicked plans and people*.

Think about how you may be secretly betraying someone's trust, even in small ways. How can you steer clear of this sin and put an end to it before it leads to even greater sins?

Along with the warning comes a reminder: *God continues to express His love and extend His grace*. Sometimes we think that someone we love has trailed too far into sin for God to redeem him or her. If Jesus kept reaching out to Judas, then He won't give up on your loved one, or on you. The encouragement is this: *refuse to write off any person*.



## On the Trail of a Traitor

Luke 22:1–6

Have you feared that someone you love is too far gone into sin and beyond God's love? Express your trust in Christ to keep offering morsels of grace to your loved ones.

What other warnings or encouragements do you glean from Judas' account and Jesus' example of love for His betrayer?

Close this *Searching the Scriptures* study by thanking the Lord for His unyielding love for even the worst of sinners and for His relentless resolve to destroy evil for all time. Our Savior is truly the hope of the world.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, just as Your Son appealed to Judas up to the final moment of betrayal, may He keep reaching out to my loved one who has wandered into sin. May my loved one hear His words of love and repent today. Yes, even now as I pray. Thank You for loving Your enemies enough to die for them, including me. I give You my heart in gratitude and faithful service, hoping for the day when Satan will finally be destroyed and this evil world restored. In Jesus' name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, rev. ed., vol. 2, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 145–46.



# COMPELLED BY THE CROSS

## STUDY FOUR

### Christlikeness in One Word

*John 13:3–15*

*Many expected the Messiah to arrive on a white horse, flashing a sword. Jesus, however, demonstrated authentic humility right up to the end.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WITH the clarity of cathedral bells, Jesus' "I am" statements in John's gospel ring out Jesus' identity. He declared, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35); "I am the light of the world" (8:12); "I am the gate" (10:9); "I am the good shepherd" (10:11); "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25); "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6); and "I am the true grapevine" (15:1).

But these weren't the only "I am" statements Jesus made. In a rare moment of self-disclosure, Jesus gave us an inside look into His personality with this "I am" statement in Matthew's gospel:

*"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28–29)*

"I am humble," Jesus said. This beautiful quality characterizes our Savior, the true Servant. In Jesus' final hours, it should not surprise us that His humility took center stage as He served His disciples by washing their feet.



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## Christlikeness in One Word

*John 13:3–15*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Join the disciples as they entered the upper room for their final meal with Jesus before He went to the cross. Pause to ask the Lord to reveal to you His truth found only in the Scriptures. Write down a prayer for open eyes, a receptive mind, and a responsive heart.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The occasion was Passover. To fill in some details about the meal, read [Luke 22:1–14](#), and write down how the disciples secured the room to celebrate Passover. Particularly, note the diabolical forces at work behind the scenes.



### Christlikeness in One Word

*John 13:3–15*

In addition, note the undercurrent of conflict that churned in the group. What were the disciples discussing, according to [Luke 22:24–27](#)? The Greek word for *argue* in verse 24 means “a verbal fight.”

The hour for Jesus “to leave this world and return to his Father” was fast approaching (John 13:1). In the closing darkness, the religious leaders conspired, the Devil schemed, and the disciples bickered. And yet, shining through in bright contrast was the humility of Jesus as displayed in an unforgettable act of service.



#### Observation: The Context, the Act, the Lesson

The first crucial step in studying Scripture is observing the text through the magnifying glass of questions. Read the passage carefully and ask, “What is the setting?” “Who is present?” “What did the characters do?”

#### The Context for Humility—John 13:1–3

John set the context for the scene with a glimpse into the mind of Jesus. According to [John 13:1–3](#), what did John say Jesus *already* knew and intended to do?



### Christlikeness in One Word

*John 13:3–15*

While Jesus entered the upper room with His heart full of selfless love, the disciples clomped into the room with soiled feet and self-serving attitudes. Customarily, the first guests to arrive washed the others' feet if no servant was present. Each man, however, considered himself too important for this lowly task.

#### An Unforgettable Act of Humility—John 13:4–10

Jesus observed the disciples' big heads and dirty feet. What did Jesus do in response, according to [John 13:4–5](#)? Why do you think John recorded each move Jesus made? What would have been the atmosphere in the room as it dawned on the disciples what Jesus was doing?

*Jesus said not a word. He simply slipped away from the table and began to wash the disciples' feet. To display humility, no words are needed. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

What happened when Jesus came to Peter in [13:6–10](#)? Observe each phase of the back-and-forth dialogue. What emotions do you think Peter was awkwardly trying to communicate?

*It was hard for Peter to let Jesus wash his feet. You see, it takes humility to receive.  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## Christlikeness in One Word

*John 13:3–15*

### The Lesson about Humility—John 13:11–15

Summarize the point Jesus made in *John 13:11–15* by washing the disciples' feet.

*Humble people offer what they have without calling attention to themselves. They want to serve because of love. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: The Principles We Glean

From your observations, you can glean key principles—truths about God and humanity that transcend culture and time. For example, Jesus' quiet service teaches the principle that *true humility is unannounced*. It's the same principle that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: “When you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Matthew 6:3). Why is unannounced serving an essential characteristic of humility?

Now you try. Read again Peter's responses to Jesus in John 13:6–9:

“Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

“No . . . you will never ever wash my feet!”

“Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!”





## Christlikeness in One Word

*John 13:3–15*

What principle do you glean from Peter's show of false humility? Finish the statement: *True humility . . .*

In the first century, foot washing was a demeaning task. Powerful leaders never stooped to wash a person's filthy feet. And yet, the Son of God stooped to wash the feet of the disciples to show them what leadership looks like in the kingdom of God. What principle do you glean? *True humility . . .*

Finally, Jesus knew Judas would betray Him; even so, He washed Judas' feet along with the others. What principle was Jesus teaching about dealing with enemies? *True humility . . .*



## Christlikeness in One Word

*John 13:3–15*



### Correlation: Humility and Servant Leadership

On a previous occasion, James and John tried to elbow past the other disciples by having their mother ask Jesus for places of honor for them (Matthew 20:20–23). Their brazenness angered the other disciples, prompting Jesus to teach a lesson about humility that was similar to His foot-washing lesson.

What point did Jesus make about humble leaders in [Matthew 20:24–28](#)?

What similarities from this teaching of Jesus do you see with Jesus' lesson of the foot-washing in [John 13:11–15](#)?

*Jesus came to give and to serve. You can say to anyone you meet, “Christ died for you. He can be your Savior because, in absolute humility, He served you by dying in your place.”*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Application: Putting on the Towel

The disciples had a lot to learn about humility. They were more interested in sitting on seats of honor than kneeling to serve others. They were ready to fight for a throne but not for a towel. How do we shake off a self-serving attitude like they had and replace it with a Christlike mindset?



## Christlikeness in One Word

*John 13:3–15*

Pastor Chuck Swindoll gleaned the following principles from our passage:

1. *True humility is unannounced.* You don't need to talk about what you're doing. Just do it.
2. *True humility is willing to receive—without embarrassment.* Humble people are vulnerable. They admit their need and gratefully slip their dirty feet in the bowl.
3. *True humility is not a sign of weakness.* Be confident in your abilities. Know your strengths and share with others what God has given you.
4. *True humility does not play favorites.* You're most Christlike when you wash others' feet—especially the feet of a "Judas" in your life.

Which of these principles hits closest to home for you? Which do you most struggle with implementing?

The blessing of serving won't be yours until you put on the towel, kneel with a bowl of water, and start washing. What can you do to serve with humility this week? Whom will you serve?

The Master became the Servant not merely to clean dirty feet but to purify sinful hearts and to send us into a sinful world with basins in hand, ready to serve in His name. *Humility*. It's Christlikeness in one word. Put on Christ's towel and follow in His humble footsteps today.



## Christlikeness in One Word

*John 13:3–15*



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, You sent Your Son, Jesus, as my Master but also my Servant. Thank You for His ultimate act of love when He died on the cross to cleanse me. Just as He washed the soles of the disciples' feet, He purged my soul from the filth of my sin. Help me receive His love, give His love, and even be humble enough to accept love from others. Amen.*



# COMPELLED BY THE CROSS

## STUDY FIVE

### Why Is Jesus So Fascinating?

*Mark 10:46–11:10*

*Jesus does the unpredictable that He might accomplish the incredible.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

JESUS wasn't like the other rabbis. He shocked people by blessing outcasts, touching untouchables, and keeping company with sinners. His words were refreshingly relevant and authoritative. Other leaders with large followings rode their popularity to fame and power, but Jesus shunned the spotlight, often slipping away to be alone and urging those He healed to tell no one.

Jesus did what no one else could do in ways that shook the religious establishment to the core . . . and people loved Him for it! His mission was to launch the kingdom of God—which could no more fit into conventional religious structures than new wine could be contained in old wineskins. Jesus purposefully split the seams of the status quo to show sinners what *real life* looks like—life with God, under His rule, and in His care.

Jesus is still as fascinating and engaging today as He was during His life on earth. Why? Because of who He is and the kingdom He offers—which is everything our hearts truly desire. Jesus is and has always been irresistibly appealing to anyone who has been disillusioned by this world and is thirsting for more.



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S05  
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## Why Is Jesus So Fascinating?

Mark 10:46–11:10



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Has worldly fare left you empty? Do your religious routines seem dry and lifeless? Are you searching for more? Come to Jesus in prayer.

*Father, lead me to Your Son, the King of Your kingdom, who rules a realm I long to live in. A kingdom of peace and security, love and grace, trust and hope. As I study Your Word, fill me with the satisfying bread of life in Christ. In His name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus' final steps to Jerusalem and the cross took Him through Jericho, an oasis with an ancient history. Joshua led the Israelites into the promised land through Jericho. The city was considered unconquerable until, with the blast of trumpets and shouts of God's people, God caused the thick walls to crumble (Joshua 6:1–27).

Jesus, whose name is the Greek form of *Joshua*, means “the Lord saves.” Like Joshua led the twelve tribes of Israel, Jesus led His twelve disciples as God's new people into the promised land of His kingdom. Few realized the significance of Jesus' march through Jericho to Jerusalem. In the spiritual realm, the walls of Satan's kingdom were collapsing like Jericho's ancient walls. Only those with eyes of faith could see Jesus as the savior—only those like the blind man, Bartimaeus.



### Observation: Jesus' Journey through Jericho into Jerusalem

This *Searching the Scriptures* study examines two closely linked passages—Jesus healing the blind man in [Mark 10:46–52](#) and Jesus entering Jerusalem in [11:1–10](#). Jesus healing the blind man in Jericho concludes His ministry phase. Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem begins His last week on earth prior to His crucifixion.



## Why Is Jesus So Fascinating?

*Mark 10:46–11:10*

### The Faith of Bartimaeus—Mark 10:46–52

What details did Mark relate in [Mark 10:46–47](#)?

Bartimaeus heard the name, “Jesus of Nazareth,” from people in the crowd, but he called Jesus, “Son of David” (Mark 10:47). Only Bartimaeus could see Jesus for who He truly was. What do you observe in [10:48–50](#) regarding the actions of the crowd, Bartimaeus, and Jesus? What contrasts do you see?

What was remarkable about Jesus’ response to Bartimaeus in [10:51–52](#)? In what ways did Bartimaeus demonstrate exceptional faith in Jesus and devotion to Him?

*Soon, Jesus would be betrayed, arrested, put on trial, tortured, and crucified. We wouldn’t think He would have time for some beggar. But Jesus did the unpredictable. He stopped and asked Bartimaeus, “What do you want me to do for you?” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## Why Is Jesus So Fascinating?

*Mark 10:46–11:10*

### The Triumphal Entry of Jesus—Mark 11:1–11

With Bartimaeus crying out, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:48), Jesus exited Jericho. Let’s observe Mark’s account of how Jesus entered Jerusalem.

What details did Mark record about how the two disciples secured the young donkey in [Mark 11:1–7](#)? What attribute of Jesus’ divinity did this event demonstrate?

What do you observe about Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem in [11:8–11](#)? What common threads do you see between Bartimaeus’ plea and the people’s praise in [11:9–10](#)?

*Roman victors entered on their warhorses. Jesus rode in on the back of a donkey colt. What an unpredictable way for Jesus to enter the city, but it was exactly as prophesied.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll





## Why Is Jesus So Fascinating?

*Mark 10:46–11:10*



### Interpretation: The Messianic Title of Jesus

Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied that the messiah would come from David's line. What do the following passages say the long-awaited descendent of David would do?

*Jeremiah 23:5–6*

*Ezekiel 34:23–24*

Jeremiah prophesied, “In that day Judah will be saved” (Jeremiah 23:6). Interestingly, the Greek word for “healed” in Mark 10:52 means, “saved.” In healing Bartimaeus, Jesus did what the Son of David was prophesied to do.

How were the messianic prophecies from Jeremiah and Ezekiel echoed in the people's praise as they announced Jesus at His entrance into Jerusalem in [Mark 11:9–10](#)? (Note: *Hosanna* means “save now.”)



## Why Is Jesus So Fascinating?

*Mark 10:46–11:10*

Finally, reflect on [Zechariah 9:9–10](#). What was Jesus announcing to the nation by entering Jerusalem on a young donkey?



### Correlation: The Way to Peace

Correlate Mark's account of the triumphal entry with Luke's. What added details do you find in [Luke 19:35–40](#)?

When Jesus saw Jerusalem, Luke recorded, Jesus wept, “How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace” (Luke 19:42). How tragic that the people of *Jerusalem*, which means, “city of peace,” refused the Prince of Peace and the kingdom of peace He came to offer.



## Why Is Jesus So Fascinating?

*Mark 10:46–11:10*



### Application: Opening Spiritually Blind Eyes

Those in the crowd tried to quiet Bartimaeus, telling him that he wasn't worth Jesus' time. Bartimaeus, however, ignored their critical words and cried out even louder. He believed in Jesus as his Savior and followed Him as his Lord. If only the whole nation had responded to Jesus with the bold faith of Bartimaeus!

Those who rejected Jesus lacked faith because of their spiritual blindness. What qualities did Bartimaeus have that helped him see Jesus truly? What attitudes blinded the others, including the religious leaders who eventually sent Jesus to His death?

Bartimaeus wasn't too proud to tell Jesus his need. How hard it is to ask for help! What might keep you from crying out to the Lord?



## Why Is Jesus So Fascinating?

*Mark 10:46–11:10*

You can trust Jesus to do the unpredictable in your life. What mercy can you ask from the Son of David?

Jesus entered Jerusalem as the Davidic king to bring God's kingdom of peace on earth. We await Christ to come again, not "humble, riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9) but riding "a white horse" and leading "the armies of heaven" to victory over evil (Revelation 19:11, 14). Until then, experience the *shalom* of His kingdom today as you live under His rule and in His care.



### A FINAL PRAYER

Join the Palm Sunday parade of Jesus' disciples who threw their coats before Him and laid branches in His path. What praise do you offer God the Father for sending His Son, the King of Kings? Write your prayer in the space below.

*Father,*



## COMPELLED BY THE CROSS

### STUDY SIX

## The Day Hope Eclipsed Death

*1 Corinthians 15:12–26*

*Christ was raised, and then comes the harvest of those who believed in Him. Everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. That's a promise you can rely on.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem set in motion the final days of Jesus' earthly life known as Holy Week. His ministry had been building up to this week when He would die "for our sins, just as the Scriptures said" (1 Corinthians 15:3). The gospel writers meticulously recorded every key moment of Jesus' heart-wrenching passion: His agony in Gethsemane, the treacherous betrayal, His trials and beatings, and His crucifixion.

On the day Christ died, "darkness fell" and covered the landscape like sackcloth (Matthew 27:45). It was as if creation were mourning the death of its Maker. The light of the sky dimmed as the Light of the world was snuffed out.

From the disciples' perspective, all seemed lost. Jesus' heart stopped pumping, a final breath passed His lips, and His body slumped. Jesus died . . . and along with Him died the hope of the world.

Imagine if the gospel account ended with Christ's death. No rolled-away stone. No empty tomb. No stunned soldiers. No surprised disciples. *No resurrection.* A shroud of hopelessness would still blanket the earth.



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S06  
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## The Day Hope Eclipsed Death

1 Corinthians 15:12–26

What might have been the consequences if Jesus didn't rise from the dead? This *Searching the Scriptures* study explores this question, and our guide through this bleak subject is the apostle Paul, who also considered the hopelessness of the world if "there is no resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:13).



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

The purpose of this grave journey is to highlight the hope essential to our faith—that our Savior *lives*. Light pierced the horizon creating morning's brightest dawn after history's darkest night. Pray now that God the Father might spark in you a brighter ray of hope through this study.

*Father, I admit that the hubbub of Easter can overshadow the true meaning of Christ's resurrection. Ignite in me the same excitement the disciples felt when they saw Jesus alive. Strengthen my faith with deeper convictions and lift me to a higher plane of hope as I look forward to resurrected life with my risen Savior. In His name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Mere decades after Jesus' ministry, some of *His own followers* in Corinth started to question whether He really came back to life and indeed whether anyone could experience resurrection at all.

The apostle Paul knew the danger of rejecting this core claim of Christianity. He reminded them of the essential elements of the gospel:

*Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.* (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)

And then, Paul showed his fellow believers the serious consequences of knocking out one of the legs of the gospel by denying the resurrection.



## The Day Hope Eclipsed Death

1 Corinthians 15:12–26



### Observation: What If There Is No Resurrection?

Observation is the first step in *Searching the Scriptures* because it lays a solid foundation for interpretation and application. Observe Paul's rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 15:12: "Since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection?" What implication was Paul making about these skeptics?

In 15:13–19, Paul argued against these naysayers by taking their premise to its logical disastrous ends. Complete each statement below using the following phrase: *If there is no resurrection, then . . .*

15:13, 16: \_\_\_\_\_

15:14a: \_\_\_\_\_

15:14b: \_\_\_\_\_

15:15: \_\_\_\_\_

15:17: \_\_\_\_\_

15:18: \_\_\_\_\_

15:19: \_\_\_\_\_



## The Day Hope Eclipsed Death

1 Corinthians 15:12–26

Note below anything Paul repeated in those verses. Remember, repetition functions like a blaring siren, alerting the readers to a passage's most important details.

The master logician turned a sharp corner with the phrase, “But in fact” (1 Corinthians 15:20), to lead his readers from darkness to light. What truth did Paul unequivocally proclaim in [15:20](#)? What bright hope follows?

*The evidence proves it. The witness declares it. Changed lives verify it, including our changed lives. “Christ has been raised from the dead.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

According to [15:21–22](#). What caused the night of sin's curse to fall upon humanity? What caused hope to dawn?

Curse: \_\_\_\_\_

Hope: \_\_\_\_\_





## The Day Hope Eclipsed Death

*1 Corinthians 15:12–26*

What order of events did Paul describe in *1 Corinthians 15:23–26*? Summarize what will happen after death for believers?

*I assure you there is reason for joy at the memorial service for a believer. There is a reunion coming. We're all going home, and that truth brings hope to every memorial service, regardless of the kind of death that was endured. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: What Does Our Resurrection Hope Mean?

The interpretation phase explores what the biblical author intended his readers to know, believe, feel, and do. This passage is brimming with significance about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Why did Paul say that Christians would be “more to be pitied than anyone in the world” if Jesus was not raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:19)? What did Paul mean?



## The Day Hope Eclipsed Death

*1 Corinthians 15:12–26*

After following the line of thinking of the skeptical resurrection-deniers, Paul reminded the Corinthians that “Christ *has* been raised from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20, emphasis added). The resurrection was not a hoax, as many even today contend. How does the fact that the resurrection is true provide Christ’s followers with hope? See [15:17](#), [22](#), [26](#) for some particularly hopeful words.

Based on your interpretation of this passage, write one or two timeless theological truths about the importance of resurrection. Finish this statement, “Because Jesus rose from the dead . . .”

*When a believer dies, the soul, the invisible part of the person, immediately goes to be with the Lord. When the Lord returns, He will resurrect the bodies and join them to the souls. A cemetery is not death ground; it’s resurrection ground. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## The Day Hope Eclipsed Death

*1 Corinthians 15:12–26*



### Correlation: Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection

According to *1 Corinthians 15:2–4*, what is the gospel? In your own words, summarize the “most important” components of the message Paul passed on to the Corinthians.

In *1 Corinthians 15:5–8*, Paul mentioned Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. List below those to whom Jesus appeared.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

Did you notice how Paul mentioned that most of witnesses of the resurrection were still alive? It's as if Paul was saying, “Do you need proof for the resurrection? You know the people who actually witnessed it. Go and ask them yourself!”

While followers of Jesus today do not have physical access to the witnesses of the resurrection, Scripture has preserved their testimonies for centuries, and the truths behind these words prove to be powerful and relevant.



## The Day Hope Eclipsed Death

1 Corinthians 15:12–26



### Application: Not a Hoax . . . but Hope

Since that first Easter morning, Christ's resurrection has filled His followers with hope—not just hope for future resurrection but hope available *right now*.

What fears burden you today? Fear of loss or abandonment? Fear of pain or death? How does the hope made available through Jesus' resurrection lift the weight of these fears off your heart?

Do you know someone who needs hope, perhaps a family member or friend? What do you think Jesus would tell them? What can you say to encourage them using Jesus' words?

The cross was not the end for Jesus . . . nor is death the end for us. Jesus defeated death when He rose from the tomb and will one day put death itself in a grave, never to hold power over anyone again. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26).



## The Day Hope Eclipsed Death

*1 Corinthians 15:12–26*

Close your study by reading aloud Paul's words of triumph and hold this declaration of victory in your heart today as your truest hope.

*Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:*

*"Death is swallowed up in victory.*

*O death, where is your victory?*

*O death, where is your sting?"*

*For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:54–57)*



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for the cross of Christ and His death for my sins. Thank You, also, that His death was not the end of His life but only a necessary precursor to His resurrection. I cling to the cross for my salvation, but I sing at the empty tomb for Jesus is my hope! "Hallelujah, He is risen. He is risen, indeed!" In His name, amen.*

