AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP - BIBLE STUDY
Study Series: That You May Believe

Part 13: Real Devotion vs. Emotional Devotion **Wednesday, July 15th 2026**
Text: John 13:21-38 **Teacher: Pastor Paul Akoh**

This is a very significant moment in the passion of Christ narrative. Jesus is disturbed in view of Judas' impending unprecedented betrayal (Psalms 41:9). Jesus moves from His public ministry into the intimacy of the Upper Room with His disciples. His deep emotional distress here reveals the humanity of Christ (Heb 4:15). The bottom line for the Lord in His crucifixion and resurrection is His glorification - verse 21 (Heb. 12:2). Within this passage, we see three distinct forms of relationships the disciples have toward Jesus: total betrayal, a radical new standard of love, and a well-intentioned but fragile emotional devotion.

1. The Shock of Betrayal

> Verse 21: **"***After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."* NIV

Jesus' emotional distress here is very profound - He was deeply agitated. This highlights His true human nature—feeling the sharp sting of betrayal by a close companion (fulfilling the prophecy in Psalm 41:9). Jesus sharing His distress dismantles the idea that spiritual maturity equals stoicism. By openly expressing His heavy heart, Jesus models that true leadership and authentic relationship require vulnerability. It teaches us that feeling deep sorrow, betrayal, or agitation is not a sin or a lack of faith; rather, bringing those emotions into the light allows for genuine communion with others and God. Yet, in His sovereignty, Jesus hands Judas the dipped bread, an ancient gesture of hospitality and special honor. He extends grace to the very end.

Question: If it was prophesied that Jesus will be betrayed by a friend, was Judas wrong in fulfilling the prophecy?

Lessons from Judas Iscariot

- **The Mystery of Judas:** Judas represents one of the most sobering warnings in Scripture: **proximity to Jesus does not guarantee intimacy with Him.** A person can be surrounded by the miraculous, hear flawless biblical teaching, and participate in ministry, yet still have a heart that is completely hardened. It is a stark reminder that religious routine and outward association are no substitute for inner transformation and surrender. Numbers 14:20-23.
- **"And it was night":** While historically a statement of time, John uses it to signify a profound spiritual reality. Jesus is the "Light of the World" (John 8:12). When Judas turns his back on Christ to betray Him, he is literally walking away from the Light and stepping into ultimate spiritual darkness. It represents the extinguishing of grace in Judas' heart as he aligns himself with the kingdom of darkness.

Question: What lessons can believers learn from Judas who spent three years being discipled by

Jesus, watching miracles and hearing perfect truth, yet hardened his heart?

2. The True Mark of Discipleship

Verse 34-35: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* NIV

The New Standard

- The command to "love your neighbor" wasn't new (Leviticus 19:18). What made it **new** was the yardstick: *"As I have loved you."* This is a sacrificial, covenant-keeping, cruciform love (*agape*) that does not depend on feelings. Human affection is fickle—it fluctuates based on circumstances, physical exhaustion, and how others treat us. If love is just a feeling, it vanishes when the feeling fades. By anchoring love in Christ's actions (*"as I have loved you"*), love becomes a **covenantal commitment**. It shifts from *how I feel about you* to *how I will serve you*. This kind of love (Agape) washes the feet of betrayers and goes to the cross; it operates on sacrifice and obedience, even when the warm emotions are entirely absent.
- **The World's View of the Church's "Badge":** This is deeply convicting. If the secular world looks at the modern church, they often see a "badge" of political affiliation, judgment, eloquent preaching, or impressive programs. Jesus didn't say the world would know us by our theology or our worship services; He said the undeniable proof of our discipleship is our radical, sacrificial love for one another. When Christians attack, divide, and devour each other, that badge is tarnished. *How can we really love one another? Gal. 5:15-16 AMPC.*

Section 3: Peter's Warning

Verse 37-38, *"Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"* NIV

Peter's interaction with Jesus is a masterclass in understanding the difference between good intentions and spiritual reality.

- **Why Peter Failed:** Peter genuinely believed his own declaration: *"I will lay down my life for you."* He wasn't lying; he was just tragically self-deceived about the source of his strength. Ephesians 6:10 *"In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [be empowered through your union with Him]; draw your strength from Him [that strength which His boundless might provides]."* AMPC.

Peter's devotion was entirely **emotional and adrenaline-driven**. In the warmth of the Upper Room, surrounded by his brothers and the Lord, it was easy to feel so confident - until reality hit.

- **Why Jesus Warns Peter:** Jesus' warning (*"...before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"*) was not said to shame Peter, but to save him. Jesus knew that **self-reliance must be shattered before true reliance can be built.** Zech.4:6.

- **Zeal vs. Substance:** Emotional devotion operates on human willpower. When the environment turns hostile, human willpower inevitably breaks: John 18:25-27.
- **The Necessity of Brokenness:** Peter had to learn that he could not follow Jesus to the cross in his own strength. His subsequent failure broke his pride, paving the way for Pentecost, where he would finally be filled with the Holy Spirit - Acts 2:14.

The Takeaway: Peter's warning urges us to audit our own faith. Are we loudly promising God what we will do for Him, or are we quietly asking Him for the daily grace to remain faithful? The crucified life's devotion to God is not found in loud declarations, but in a quiet, desperate dependence on the Holy Spirit when the pressure is on. John 15:5; Mark 8:34-38.