

It's What's in the Heart That Matters!

In our study of “*It's What's in the Heart That Matters!*” from John 13:21–30, we learn that outward nearness to Jesus is not the same as inward surrender to Him. Three disciples illustrate three heart conditions: Judas, Peter, and John.

Judas was physically close to Christ but spiritually far—his heart hardened like the seed that fell on the path (Matt. 13:19). Though he heard the teachings and witnessed miracles, he never truly received the Word, allowing Satan to influence his actions (John 13:27).

Peter displayed bold declarations and zeal but lacked spiritual depth—like the seed on stony ground (Matt. 13:20–21). He could proclaim allegiance one moment and speak contrary to God's will the next (Matt. 16:22–23). His confidence rested in his own strength rather than in the Word of Christ, leaving him vulnerable to failure under pressure (John 13:37–38).

John, in contrast, models the “good soil” (Matt. 13:23). He leaned on Jesus' bosom (John 13:23), showing an intimate heart connection and deep trust. Though surrounded by “thorns”—Judas the betrayer, Thomas the doubter, Peter the denier, and others who fled—John persevered in love and faithfulness (Luke 8:15). This intimacy with Christ shaped his ministry and writings, as he later emphasized the love of God and His desire that none should perish (John 3:16; 1 John 4:7–8). The parable of the sower reveals that only the heart fully surrendered to Christ will bear lasting fruit, and John's life is an example of such fruitfulness.

This lesson challenges us to examine our own hearts: Are we like Judas, content with outward association but resisting inner change? Like Peter, quick to agree with Christ intellectually but shallow in obedience? Or like John, abiding in Christ's love and persevering through trials? True blessing and usefulness in God's kingdom come from the heart that hears the Word, understands it, and lives it out in faithful love toward God and others.

Text: John 13:21–30

Title: *It's What's in the Heart That Matters!*

I. Judas – The Surface Relationship (The Hard Path)

1. What actions of Judas show that he did not truly understand or follow Christ? (John 12:4–6; Matthew 26:14–16)
2. In John 13:27, what does it mean that “Satan entered him”?
3. How does Matthew 13:19 describe the “seed” that falls along the path?
4. How does Judas' example warn us about mere outward association with Christ?

II. Peter – The Mental Relationship (The Stony Ground)

5. Why didn't Peter understand the washing of his feet in John 13:6–9?
6. In Matthew 16:21–23, why did Jesus rebuke Peter?
7. How did Peter react on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17:4–5, and what was wrong with his response?
8. In Matthew 26:33–35, Peter promised never to deny Christ. How did this turn out?
9. How does Matthew 13:20–21 describe the seed on stony ground, and how does this fit Peter's situation?

III. John – The Heart Relationship (The Good Soil)

10. What does John 13:23 reveal about John's closeness to Jesus?
11. According to Luke 8:15, what does a "noble and good heart" do with God's Word?
12. How does 2 Peter 3:9 express the heart of God that John understood?
13. Which verses in John's writings show his deep understanding of God's love? (Hint: John 3:16–17; 1 John 4:7–8)
14. What was John's stated purpose for writing his gospel? (John 20:31)

IV. Personal Questions

15. Which of the three disciples do you relate to most right now—Judas, Peter, or John—and why?
16. What steps can you take to move toward a "good soil" heart?
17. How can you "lean on Christ's heart" in your daily walk this week?