

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME TWO

STUDY ONE

Murder at a Stag Party

Mark 6:14–29

If you're carrying out acts of deception, you need to know it's only a matter of time before innocent people around you will be heartbroken and bruised—impacted by your sinfulness.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THOUGH it gleams delicately in the sun's soft rays, a spider's web is a remarkably cunning death trap. It begins with a single silk filament and ends up as a sophisticated architecture made of sticky strands woven in a specialized design to ensnare insects upon contact. The web forms its own spider-ruled world where escape is nearly impossible.

Sin weaves a similar trap. One small deceitful act spins the first thread. Bitterness and a desire for revenge add more tiny cords, followed by greed, pride, and treachery. Thread after thread, the web of sin becomes a world of its own, entangling us and, tragically, ensnaring other innocent lives.

The passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study warns about the weblike nature of sin and its deadly consequences. Though some accounts in Scripture inspire us with heroism and faith, others, like this passage, shock us with a sleazy setting of pulsating music, bawdy jokes, sensual dancing, and the total absence of moral restraint. The main character in this decadent scene in Mark 6 is a man whose life paints a somber picture of the deceptive and destructive power of sin. His name is Herod Antipas, and we'll look closer at how his web of sin trapped him and cost the life of an innocent man.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin in prayer with a verse to guide you:

*Direct my footsteps according to your word;
let no sin rule over me. (Psalm 119:133 NIV)*

Ask for the Lord's wisdom to see and apply the truths revealed in His Word. Invite Him to break any hold sin has on you. Thank Him for His sure guidance and great power that will help you walk in freedom.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Meet the Herodian family. The patriarch was the insanely power-mad Herod the Great, who took control of Judea in 37 BC. During his thirty-three-year reign, he married ten women. Paranoid and ruthless, Herod executed *anyone* who opposed him—including one wife, one mother-in-law, two brothers-in-law, and three of his own sons.

He first appeared in Scripture in Jesus' birth story. Deeply disturbed by the news of the arrival of the rightful King of the Jews, he tried to stamp out the threat to his throne by ordering the slaughter of all the boys in Bethlehem who were two years old and under (Matthew 2:1–18).

After Herod's death in 4 BC, the kingdom was divided among four branches of the Herodian line—including Herod's son Herod Antipas, who ruled over Galilee and Perea. Antipas was less powerful than his father but equally debauched. He left his first wife to seduce and marry Herodias—the wife of his half brother Herod Philip. She was also his niece. Herodias' father was Antipas' half brother Aristobulus, who was one of the sons Herod had killed. What a twisted family tree!

When news of Jesus and His growing ministry in Galilee reached Antipas, it shook him to the core. Let's find out why.

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Observation: Herod Killed John the Baptizer

Take the first step of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method by using your skills of observation as you thoughtfully read [Mark 6:14–29](#) and answer the questions below.¹

Looking Around: Antipas' Dread—Mark 6:14–16

Jesus' "name had become well known" (Mark 6:14 NASB). "Everyone was talking about him" (6:14). What were some saying about Jesus' identity in Mark 6:14–15? What terror gripped Antipas in 6:16?

Looking Back: Antipas' Past Sin—Mark 6:17–28

To explain Antipas' reaction, Mark flashed back to a previous incident. Note the explanatory connective conjunction *for* at the beginning of Mark 6:17. According to 6:17–20, why did Antipas arrest and imprison John the Baptizer? Why did Herodias hold a grudge against John? What was Antipas' dilemma over John? Why do you think Antipas "liked to listen to him" (Mark 6:20)?

Conniving Herodias saw Antipas' raucous birthday party as the perfect opportunity to coerce her husband to execute John. Taking advantage of her husband's moral weakness, what web did she spin to trap him, according to 6:21–28? What role did Herodias' daughter play in her mother's treachery? Although not named in Scripture, history tells us Herodias' daughter was Salome, and she was from Herodias' marriage to Herod Philip. Why didn't Herod refuse her request even though he wanted to?

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What moral fault lines can you pinpoint in Antipas' character? Which of God's commands did he violate?

Behind the scenes is not only John wasting away in prison, in the dungeon, but Herodias is beginning to make her moves. Stag party—hmm. Plenty of drink—hmm. A lot of food—hmm. All these cronies—hmm. She began to plan in her mind a way to deal with what had been bugging her for the longest time.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Looking Down: Disciples' Lingering Grief—Mark 6:29

Picture the solemn scene in [Mark 6:29](#). See the tears of John's friends and feel their grief. What did John's disciples do? Why do you think this episode of John's martyrdom comes after Jesus' rejection in Nazareth and His sending out the disciples? What did John's death foreshadow?



Interpretation: Revenge, Rationalization, and Peer Pressure

Herodias' grudge against John the Baptizer grew into murder when she saw the opportunity to get even. Her sin corrupted her daughter Salome, and we can see its chilling results in Salome's coldhearted request. What principles can you learn from these verses about revenge and rationalization?

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Read [Mark 6:26–28](#) in the MSG and the AMP translations. What kept Herod Antipas from acknowledging his rash offer? What biblical principles can modern-day Christ-followers learn from this passage?

And suddenly, as time stands still, Herod is in the middle of the biggest dilemma of his life. Now he's got to put up or shut up. The crowd played a major role in Herodias' plan. They are the leverage that Herodias used to get her husband to say what she had been waiting to hear for a long time. How sorry was he? Not sorry enough to do what was right. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Sin Is a Deceitful and Destructive Snare

Sin began as a single filament in the garden of Eden and became a sticky, deadly world of its own. How has Adam's sinful web caught the entire human race, and how did Jesus set us free ([Genesis 2:16–17](#); [3:1–17](#); [Romans 5:12–21](#); [Ephesians 2:1–10](#))?

Though Christ has freed us from sin's power over our lives, what do passages such as [Romans 6:12–23](#) and [Galatians 5:16–25](#) explain about believers' responsibility to not let sin rule over their lives? Compare [Mark 6:14–29](#) to [Jeremiah 17:9](#); [Hebrews 3:12–13](#); and [James 1:15–16](#). What do these passages teach about sin's subtle and destructive nature and the necessity for us to look within?

The bad news is that there is not one of us who has not been deeply tainted and affected by sin. The good news is that Christ's death on the cross has paid the complete penalty for our sins. So, the secret, of course, is that you find yourself in Christ. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Look Within—Heeding the Warning

Through the step of application, let's invite the Holy Spirit to use His Word to expose the hidden corners of our hearts, the thoughts that do not align with His holy character, and the unspoken self-serving desires, so we can see our need for His enabling grace to walk in freedom. Pastor Chuck suggests four timeless lessons from this Bible passage.

First, *Herodias teaches us the danger of revenge*. What has the Holy Spirit impressed upon your heart about grudges and revenge?

If you're massaging a grudge, you are courting disaster. You don't think so, because you've not done anything yet. Yet is the formative word. You hold on to that revenge long enough, and it's like pus in a sore. It only intensifies.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Second, *Herod teaches us the power of peer pressure*. In what area of your life do you sense some peer pressure?

Third, *Salome teaches us the treachery of rationalization*. What biblical principles can you memorize that will help you use discernment when you're asked to follow orders? In what way would you influence your family, friends, and community if you chose to live by these principles?

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Fourth, *the account teaches us the extent of sin*. Have you experienced sin's deceptive and destructive snare? How did God use His Word, your prayers, and your community of faith to help you find freedom? What specific habits has the Holy Spirit led you to develop to ensure that you continue to walk in freedom?

Express your gratitude to God for His great power that can break you free from sin's deceptive and destructive snare.



A FINAL PRAYER

Help us, our Father, as we come to grips with what we have read and seen in the pages of this Book. Help us to see the reality of our own lives and go there first. Guide us with courage to make decisions that will change a life now lived in deception—one that masquerades as purity while hiding impurity and immorality. Guide us clearly into Your will and keep us pure as we continue to serve You in this decadent era. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page "*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*" at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org).

For the 2026–2027 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2010, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Insight for Living

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