



**Working Through Hard Truth
Following Jesus When It's Hard to Do
John 6:59-71**

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We have been with Jesus as He fed the 5000+ people who were following Him around. They were not necessarily believers, but they were interested in what He was doing and some of what He said.

They believed He was giving signals of what they thought they wanted in a Messiah and when he fed everyone, bingo. Many in the crowd wanted to make Him the King right then and there. But Jesus goes off by Himself to pray and leaves them there on the hill.

He obviously gave His disciples some instructions because they have also left the eastern shore of Galilee as well. In fact, the twelve and His disciples had Jesus catch up with them 3 miles in the middle of the lake heading towards Capernaum.

After spending time in prayer, Jesus walks out to them. Yes, He goes boardless and walks out 3 miles to the boat on the water.

The next morning, once everyone finally figured out where Jesus may have gone to, they make their way to Capernaum as well.

They locate Him and basically corner Him asking where He had been?



It is at this point that Jesus, realizing the majority of them still are not understanding what it is He is saying, lays truth down of the same character that He did for the woman at the well. She got it, most of these folks though, do not.

When you and I talk with folks, we tend to use figures of speech frequently to get our point across. For example:

I worked out in the yard yesterday afternoon and got a bit carried away with it working my fingers to the bone. Today I'm tired as a dog.

I spent a lot of time wracking my brain for examples to use on this topic, but I had to stop since I had a ton of work to do.

Jesus did the same. In fact, figures of speech occur all throughout the Bible. Jesus spoke about living water (the Holy Spirit) to the woman at the well and she finally made the leap that He is Messiah which He confirmed (John 4:25-26).

Here in John 6, Jesus talked with the hangers on about Him being the bread of life.

John 6:35

"Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; the one who comes to Me will not be hungry, and the one who believes in Me will never be thirsty." (NASB 2020)

He clearly states, twice, that He is the bread of life. The problem though, they didn't seem to make the leap at all.

They remained blinded to the reality of what He was saying and continued to be focused on the physical rather than moving to the spiritual.

They would miss what He was saying.

When you add in the Jewish leadership, who had multiple hidden agendas going on, they really had difficulties connecting what it was Jesus was saying with the figures of speech He was using. They concluded that He was advocating cannibalism or including blood when eating. He wasn't.

In other words, Jesus provided Biblical truth, truth that on its own is difficult to deal with as it involves leaning entirely on Him and faith in Him alone for salvation. But He did so in a manner that almost appears to challenge the status quo of the culture. They fixated on Him being the bread of life. "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"

Jesus though began mixing elements from the wilderness wanderings, Passover, and to really get them going, very clear assertions that He is God. This was hard to hear for most because they were not spiritually discerning at all. They were of the world thinking living and breathing per the dictates of the culture and wanting Him to conform to them.

Jesus has been and always will be unsafe to the culture. The culture always will try and force Jesus, and us, to conform to them and their ideas of who Jesus is.

They like to keep Him as a baby and in the manger.

For those of us who become followers of Jesus Christ, and then commit ourselves to become more like Him by conforming our minds to His, in other words develop a Biblical worldview, we will come across things that will challenge us. Some of these may downright anger us as we learn just how different living for Jesus is when compared to the world's ideas.



Spoilers, they are diametrically opposed to each other.

As we grow in Christ, we make decisions everyday how to live. The Holy Spirit though has a plan operating. What preconceived notion will He deal with in my life today?

We find ourselves, from time to time, walking through some hard to stomach truth. It is hard to stomach because we grew up in this world system and we did not grow up having a Biblical worldview. The Lord has to cut off our ties to and understandings of the world to order conform us to His view of the world.

Some of us may have grown up in church believing we have it wired.

We believe we have a Biblical worldview, just like many of those hanging around Jesus thought they did, but most have a mish mash worldview which now shows up in research being done in the Cultural Research Center of Arizona Christian University.

We need to understand the task ahead of us as followers of Jesus Christ. Our minds, for the most part, are being shaped by the world. Our daily choices of what we feed our heads in terms of consumption of the things of the world, impacts us.

Jesus was also dealing with this, then.

We are in John 6. Today we will wrap up the chapter as we talk about dealing with hard truth.

John 6:59–65

“These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. So then many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This statement is very unpleasant; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, aware that His disciples were complaining about this, said to them, “Is this offensive to you? What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh provides no benefit; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit, and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray Him. And He was saying, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”” (NASB 2020)

This discussion is taking place there in Capernaum in the synagogue. We understand the reaction of the crowd upon learning that Jesus is the bread of life. But now the discussion is with His disciples. This is a larger group than just the twelve. These are those who have stated they believe and are following Him to become like Him. You would think that everyone in this group listening would be spiritually discerning.

We think the same in church too. We think that if someone says they are a believer, then they would understand spiritual things. We are going to discover though that that is not always the case. The world has a strong hold on some and they struggle to get free. By the way, Jesus set us free, but there is a faith issue going on. There is also the issue of the spiritual Christian versus the carnal Christian.

Let's determine who is a disciple. D.A. Carson defines that for us in his commentary on John.

At the most elementary level, a disciple is someone who is at that point following Jesus, either literally by joining the group that pursued him from place to place, or metaphorically in regarding him as the authoritative teacher. Such a 'disciple' is not necessarily a 'Christian', someone who has savingly trusted Jesus and sworn allegiance to him, given by the Father to the Son, drawn by the Father and born again by the Spirit. Jesus will make it clear in due course that only those who continue in his word are truly his 'disciples' (8:31). (Carson 1991, 300)

Jesus has just explained that He is the source of eternal life. He is the one who has come down from heaven offering eternal life to all who eat of what He offers. But some of those who are His disciples are not on board with this statement. They have grown up in the Jewish system of animal sacrifice and



obedience to Torah, and now they hear simply believe and internalize what you are being taught, by Jesus.

Some of them followed because:

- Food that He supplied.
- Politics and looking for a political Messiah to free them from Rome.
- Miracles.

Jesus, by using the analogy with bread and saying we must have it to live, is saying to the disciples and to us that He wants to be the priority of life. Being in Christ means abiding in Him.

We are to be daily giving up our sovereignty in favor of His and then rely wholly and completely on Him for everything. We are to be Spirit led as we abide, or rather rely in Him.

Romans 8:14

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (NKJV)

Jesus will later give an agricultural example of this principle.

John 15:5

“I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” (NASB 2020)

The concept is the same, abiding reliance on Jesus as the source of eternal life. Remaining in Him.

The Greek here in John 6:60 gives us a hint. “This statement is very unpleasant” is how we read it in the NASB. But my translation of it from the Greek reads “this one, the Logos (teaching), is demanding.” Yes, there are layers of meaning to what is being said.

The bottom line for us, many of those who allege to be disciples of Jesus have just been confronted with the level of commitment expected. They have responded with “the Word and His teaching is demanding who can obey this?”

John 6:60

“When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?”” (NRSVue)

Let me ask you a question, is there anything that you find offensive, demanding, or difficult today in the Bible? Fortunately for us, Jesus was asked this question. His answer.

Matthew 22:37–39

“And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (ESV)

Most of us get the love the Lord, but then we begin to play with the definitions covering “all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Why do we do that? Because it is “difficult,” and we are fallen. This is something simply not possible to do apart from the enablement provided by the Holy Spirit. He is teaching us how to do this every day.

By the way, Jesus never asks us to do something without supplying the resources for us to do the job. In this case, the Holy Spirit is absolutely vital for us to be able to be obedient. Without the help of the Spirit, all we have is the flesh and that is the problem.



Jeremiah 17:9

“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?” (NKJV)

That right there is why we want to word smith the definitions a bit.

Then there is the love your neighbor part. We wind up being just like the Pharisees and ask, “Who is my neighbor?”

Even though we are believers and followers of Jesus Christ, when we stop and really think about it, His teachings can be difficult and downright demanding.

His teachings can also be controversial and highly inflammatory in our current culture. As the culture becomes more and more debauched, remaining Holy in Christ becomes more and more a problem for the culture dealing with us.

Proverbs 3:5–6

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the LORD in everything you do, and he will show you the right way.” (GNB)

Are you kidding me? Trust God, I don't have the answer and can never even come up with it so stop bothering to try, just make the Lord the center of everything and He shows us the right way, the right thing to do. So much for being the captain of my ship.

Am I the only one who, upon a first glance, rebels at this? It's hard not to rely on your own understanding. Try using that as an answer in a business meeting.

We have all spent a lifetime being trained to use our minds and intellect. Whenever confronted with a problem at work, do we just step in and work through it, or do we pray first, and then engage.

I spent some time as an insurance adjuster. Every case is unique and different. I was trained to read the policy information, examine the situations of the claim and gather facts; then determine what is and is not covered under the policy. Right. I was completely lost from day one, loved the job, but lost just the same.

Then I discovered a little thing to do, try praying about it before you start doing it. Rely on the Lord Ken, not your intellect.

I still was lost, but the Lord showed up over and over again. He would point me to policy provisions or facts that needed to be considered resulting in totally different outcomes.

That then led to pride issues which is a story for another day.

Jesus has been saying He is superior to Moses. Ok, let's consider Moses.

My paraphrase of God to Moses in Exodus 14:13 – 18, “stop talking, trust me, wave your walking staff over the Red Sea, divide it and walk on across, okay?”

Easy to do? Hardly. “Never rely on what you think you know.”

We all start off being fallen worldly people. Things we used to do, now appall us as we become more like Jesus. But just like wanting to play with definitions on clearly stated stuff, what do we do when confronted with what our culture supports. Things like educating our kids appropriately, abortion on demand, gay marriage, and on and on.



Having a truly Biblical understanding of these things can lead some to the same conclusion as some of the disciples, this level of commitment to Jesus is hard. Especially when the culture is busy gas lighting those who do not fall into line with their narrative making you and me into the bad guys.

Jesus talks right to His wavering disciples, and to us. “Is this offensive to you? What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?” (John 6:61b–62, NASB 2020)

Let me put this into terms we might understand. “Is what I am asking of you to do too scandalous (σκανδαλίζει) or shocking to consider? What if you see Me ascend to the Father right in front of you? How scandalous will it be if I come back for my church, and you wind up being left here?”

Jesus says, “Come and see.” But now He has added in the obedience part. This is hard.

John 6:63

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh provides no benefit; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit, and are life.” (NASB 2020)

When we come to Christ, He gives each of us the Holy Spirit, just as He promised to do in John 14:16. These hard statements are impossible to do in our flesh, but with the Holy Spirit, we can get there.

Jesus tells us it is the Spirit who gives life. The Holy Spirit is the one that provides us the ability to follow and do all the hard things Jesus asks of us. He is the one who helps us.

John 14:16–17

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may be with you forever; the Helper is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him; but you know Him because He remains with you and will be in you.” (NASB 2020)

When Jesus says helper here, He is using the word paraclete. This is “the Holy Spirit in a special role, namely, as the personal presence of Jesus in the Christian while Jesus is with the Father.” (Brown 2008, 1139)

Jesus, in the person of the Holy Spirit, helps us to deal with the hard things.

In his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul covered some of the hard things he had to experience as he went about serving the Lord. He also tells us how to be able to do those things.

Philippians 4:12–13

“I have experienced times of need and times of abundance. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I go satisfied or hungry, have plenty or nothing. I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me.” (NET 2nd ed.)

He covers this provision not only of physical capability, but spiritual as well just a few verses later.

Philippians 4:19

“And my God will supply your every need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” (NET 2nd ed.)

He has been and continues to be the God of more than enough. Just as demonstrated the day before when He fed 5000+ people. Now the very next day, after demonstrating that, the level of commitment He is asking for, is hard and demanding.

Jesus knows that there are some who are in the group of disciples with Him who do not believe in Him. As a result, that level of commitment, well it is indeed hard.



Jesus has presented evidence that He is Messiah, He is God. He has also stated this. Those He is talking to have heard this.

Now, He has also referenced that at a point in the future, a little more than a year from this point, He will ascend to the Father, and this will be after the resurrection from the dead. Some of them, even at that point will not believe.

What happens when those who say they are believers, but are so in word only, are confronted with truth that they find offensive today? In our culture, they find another church which teaches more in line with what they believe, or they cease going to church. They fall away from the faith. The word for that is apostasy.

But heresy a thing too, and in our culture today it is a deep concern because thanks to the culture, it is hard to hear solid doctrine from the Bible anymore. George Barna relates that “one hallmark of contemporary Christianity is heresy, for that is essentially what the prevailing worldview in America-Syncretism-represents. The blending of elements from numerous, unbiblical worldviews along with a few biblical views is now embraced as the popular, accepted expression of Christian faith.” (Barna 2023, 27)

This isn't new, Jesus was dealing with the same problem with those who were standing right in front of Him. They had traveled with Him, heard Him speak and were eyewitnesses to a miracle or two.

John 6:64–65

““But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray Him. And He was saying, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”” (NASB 2020)

If you have friends or family who are struggling with Jesus and what He says, the first place we need to go is prayer. It is okay to ask questions. Jesus is asking His disciples to think more than the physical. “He is urging his hearers, as he has been doing all along, to go beyond a one-dimensional understanding of what he is doing and saying (for instance, a desire to follow him to get more free bread) and to break through to listen to the Word within the flesh. For this, they will need the spirit to help them. Without that, they will remain in unbelief.” (Wright 2014, 91)

The bottom line, when left to themselves, those who are not saved, and that is a tough thing to say as well, because they may have looked and smelled like believers for a short period, go back to what they could not give up, their sin. The disciples who walked away didn't expect this level of commitment. They wanted fire insurance but didn't want to pay this much for it.

Peter, who will answer a question Jesus proposes here in this chapter, later would write about this moment in his conversation about apostasy in the last days. He saw this happen to some firsthand who walked away and was able to write about it later.

2 Peter 2:20–22

“And when people escape from the wickedness of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up and enslaved by sin again, they are worse off than before. **It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life. They prove the truth of this proverb: “A dog returns to its vomit.” And another says, “A washed pig returns to the mud.”**” (NLT)

John 6:66–71

“As a result of this many of His disciples left, and would no longer walk with Him. So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to leave also, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have already believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.” Jesus answered them, “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is



a devil." Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot; for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him." (NASB 2020)

Jesus experienced the same thing we see take place today in churches all over the world. There are always those who hear and want to know more, but they never quite get to the place of being believers. They go to church, in some cases very regularly, even becoming members, but the necessary connection with Jesus and believing faith in what He accomplished on the cross never takes place.

Some of those who had identified as disciples, simply turned away and stopped following Jesus. That does not mean all of those who did not believe left, just some. Jesus had discussed this earlier in His ministry on another hill near Galilee.

Matthew 7:21–23

““Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.” (NLT)

A sizable number, we do not know how many, made the decision that today’s meeting at the synagogue with Jesus would be the last for a while. Some may have returned, but others, not.

The crowd has left, they left earlier in the conversation. Now many of those who had traveled with Him awhile, also walked away. The sign of a successful rabbi was having lots of disciples. But Jesus had another motive as well. “It is indeed said, that Jesus wished to sift his disciples, to remove from his society the superficial believers, the earthly-minded, whom he could not trust...” (Strauss 1902, 374-375)

Since so many left, Jesus asks the twelve about their commitment as well.

John 6:67–69

““So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to leave also, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have already believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”” (NASB 2020)

This is the first time in John that the twelve are pulled out like this. This is the core group; this is not all who are left. There are other disciples who are there as well. This is not an anxious question but is in a grammatical form where “No” is the anticipated answer.

Jesus’ “question,” therefore, is not asked anxiously; one can even hear confidence in Jesus’ present remark. But that Jesus asks (what is at least at first) a question at all adds poignancy to Jesus’ words. Jesus wants his people. And he wants their answer. (Bruner 2012, 457)

As we do life, have you ever noticed that it seems that there are those times when something takes place in our life and we can almost hear Jesus saying to us, “do you trust me?” He knows our answer, but we need to say it and hear us say it. “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17, NASB 2020)

This is one of those moments for the twelve. It is not surprising that Peter is the spokesman for the group. He takes the opposite view that those disciples who have left took. Those disciples said, “this is hard, why should we stay?”

Peter instead says where else could we go? “Peter starts with the assumption of their belief in Jesus. They follow only him and cannot conceive of turning aside. The other religious options simply fell into nothingness in comparison with Jesus.” (Osborne 2018, 179)



What would we say if Jesus asked us that question? “You do not want to leave also, do you?”
Where is it that we came from before coming to Jesus? What was our life like before?

Personally, I am not interested in turning back the clock and going back to trying and be the best pagan I could possibly be. Where does that lead to?

What is in my life today that is there because of Jesus?

Let’s see, my wife, my family, my kids, my grandkids, my friends and fellow servants. This ministry, nope, not going back.

I agree with Peter, there is nowhere else to go where I can hear the words of eternal life. There is nowhere else to go where I can be satisfied. There is nowhere else to go where I know that My savior and Lord loves me and has my future for all eternity as His primary interest. God wants us to be with Him for all eternity. He has been busy preparing a place for us for over 2000 years. I am all in.

Peter gets it, he addresses Jesus as Lord and goes from there.

Peter doesn’t stop there. Jesus has the words of eternal life. Peter gets the entire bread of life conversation and he and the twelve have made their decision.

The verbs “believe and know” are both in the perfect tense, and this should be given its full force: “We have come to a place of faith and continue there. We have entered into knowledge and retain it.” “You” is also emphatic; Peter stresses Christ’s place and person. (Morris 1995, 345)

Peter is confident that the rest of the twelve are with him on this statement, but Jesus lets them know that one of them is a devil. One of them will actively oppose what it is Jesus stands for, just like Satan.

John then adds to the comment from Jesus letting us know He meant Judas Iscariot. The one who would betray Him. By doing so, the point is also being made that yes, people can hide out in the church and still be posers.

How about you? Are you ready to deal with hard truth? Jesus tells us all we have to do is confess our sin, our disagreement with His word, and come back into fellowship.

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (ESV)

If you find that you are one of those who are still looking for answers and checking Jesus out, the answer is simple.

John 14:6

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (ESV)

Why not commit to Him right now?

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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