

Small Group Guide

John 6:60-71 | Hard Teachings and How We Respond

In this passage, many of Jesus' disciples respond to a hard teaching by grumbling and ultimately walking away. Jesus does not soften the message. He asks the twelve if they want to leave as well. Peter's response stands as one of the most honest and grounded confessions in the Gospels: there is simply nowhere else to go.

Key Takeaways

- 1. There is a difference between bad teaching and hard teaching.** Jesus was not a poor communicator. His teachings were challenging because they required something of his listeners. When we encounter a hard passage or a difficult command, the first question should not be whether Jesus got it wrong, but whether we are willing to accept that he is right.
 - 2. There are two fundamental responses to hard teaching.** The first begins with the conviction that Jesus is right and works backward from there, asking how we need to change to align with what he says. The second begins with the conviction that we are right and filters everything through that assumption. Proverbs 14:12 speaks directly to the danger of the second path, warning that a way that seems right to a person can lead to destruction.
 - 3. Hard experiences test what we are truly clinging to.** Jesus does not only challenge his disciples with hard teaching. He also points ahead to hard experiences, including his ascension and, by implication, his death. When life delivers painful circumstances that are not our fault, the temptation is to conclude that God must be wrong. That moment is a test of whether our faith is rooted in Christ himself or only in the comfort and blessing we hope he provides.
 - 4. God enables us to respond.** In verse 65, Jesus says no one can come to him unless the Father enables them. In the hardest moments, we are not left to generate faith on our own. God has already provided what we need to press through.
 - 5. Peter's answer is a model for honest, humble confidence.** When Jesus asks the twelve if they want to leave, Peter simply says there is nowhere else to go. He has come to believe and to know that Jesus is the Holy One of God. That combination of belief and knowledge, held together with honesty about uncertainty, is a picture of mature faith.
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Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Read John 6:60-71 together. What stands out to you most in this passage? What questions does it raise?

Diving into the Text

2. The discussion in this session describes two responses to **hard teaching**: one that starts with "Jesus is right" and works backward, and one that starts with "I am right" and filters everything through that. Which response comes more naturally to you, and why?
3. Jesus points ahead to his ascension and asks how his disciples will respond when they see that. How did the disciples respond? What **hard experiences** have tested your faith in ways that felt similar?
4. Proverbs 14:12 warns that a way that seems right can lead to death. Can you think of a time when something seemed clearly right to you, but you later realized you were wrong? What did that teach you?
5. Jesus says in verse 65 that no one can come to him unless the Father enables them. How does it change your perspective on difficult seasons of faith to know that God is the one who provides the ability to press through?
6. Read John 6:68-69 again. Peter's response to Jesus is honest about uncertainty yet confident about direction. How can someone come to learn that life without faith will be incomplete? What does Jesus add to life that nothing or no one else can add?

Personal Application:

7. Is there a teaching from Scripture you have avoided or explained away because it feels too hard? What would it look like to approach it with the assumption that Jesus is right?
8. Think of someone who may be drifting away from faith. What do they want from the people around them? What do they actually need? How can you pray for them this week?

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying for three things: that each person in the group would develop a default posture of trusting Christ when his teachings are hard, that God would provide strength in whatever difficult experiences group members are currently facing, and that anyone you know who is drifting away from faith would be drawn back to Christ.