THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 6.60-71



T. M. Moore A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 6.60-71 Copyright 2017 T. M. and Susie Moore Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing The Fellowship of Ailbe www.ailbe.org

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Introduction to John 6.60-71

Jesus insists that those who follow Him trust Him explicitly. They must not be looking out for their own interests, and they must not try to make Him palatable to reason at every point. They must believe and trust in Him, and follow where He leads.

The people in that Capernaum synagogue, thought they were called *disciples*, found the cost of following Jesus too much. So they turned back and walked with Him no more.

But what about the twelve? Would they continue? Peter has the answer we rejoice to hear.

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1 Too Much

Read and meditate on John 6.60.

Apparently, Jesus was only worth following either if He gave people what they wanted, or they could make sense of everything He said. These are not proper motives for following Jesus.

⁶⁰So then, when many of His followers heard Him say this, they said, "These words are hard; who can make sense of this? And who can understand it?"

- John 6.60

Reflect

1. John refers to these people as *disciples*. The word means *learners*, and John applies it to the many who had been following Him for some time. Is it wrong for disciples to puzzle about the Lord's hard sayings? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, there's plenty in Your Word that leaves me scratching my head, but...*

2. These *disciples* are hung up on Jesus' message about His flesh and blood. They can't *understand* it, and they don't seem to think anyone else can, either. What would you have said to these people, had you been in on their conversation? *Father, help me to remember that understanding comes only partially before believing. But believing leads to*...

3. Augustine once wrote that he did not have to understand the things of the Lord to believe in them; he believed in them, so that he might understand. How is understanding related to believing? Which comes first? Or are there levels of each? Should we expect to understand perfectly everything we believe? Explain. *I believe, Lord, help me...*

4. From verse 61, it's clear these *disciples* were becoming exasperated. Why? When we can't fully understand the Word of God, what should we do? *I want to believe You Lord, and I want to understand as much as I can. Show me how to...*

5. It was just too much for these *disciples*. Jesus knew these people would not understand what He was saying. He didn't expect them to, and He wasn't about to try to explain everything at this point. What He wanted was to discover who among these *disciples* would *believe* Him, simply because of what they'd seen Him do and heard Him teach. Is there a warning in the puzzling and questioning of these *disciples* for His *disciples* today? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"They thought he spoke above himself, and more highly than he had a right to do. And so they said, "Who can bear it?" Perhaps they were making excuses for themselves since they were about to leave him." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

John is working hard to help us understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Disciples don't follow Jesus for what they can get from Him. And they don't follow Him because everything He says or does makes sense to them. Why *do* disciples follow Jesus?

Closing Prayer Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Psalm 32.10, 11

Psalm 32.8-11 (*Hendon: Take My Life and Let It Be*) Teach me, Lord, how I should live; sound instruction ever give. Let me never stubborn be; let Your eye watch over me. Let Your eye watch over me.

Though the wicked wail and weep, they rejoice whose souls You keep. Trusting, we exult with praise, joyf'ly singing all our days, Joyf'ly singing all our days!

2 You Think *That's* Hard?

Read and meditate on John 6.61, 62. Jesus had no sympathy for those who would only believe what they could make sense of for themselves.

⁶¹Jesus, when He knew that they complained about this, said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶²What if, then, you should observe the Son of Man ascend again to where He'd come from?"

- John 6.61, 62

Reflect

1. Hard sayings? These people hadn't heard *anything* yet. What does the verb *complained* suggest about the heart attitude of these *disciples*? Complete this prayer: *Help me*, *Father*, *to keep watch over my own heart, so that my attitudes are always*...

2. Here again, as in John 2.24, John advises us that Jesus *knew* the hearts of these people. Does Jesus know *your* heart? Does it matter whether He does? *Lord, You know my heart. You know that..,*

3. We note that Jesus does not apologize, as if He were being merely obtuse. Nor does He back up and try to explain Himself, to assuage their complaining. Is it possible that some people simply *will* not believe unless they can figure it all out for themselves first? How would you be able to recognize someone like that? *Lord Jesus, I cannot make people believe in You. I can only...*

4. So instead of trying to bring these complaining *disciples* along, Jesus leaves them in the dust. He rebukes them for being *offended*. Why? Do you ever need to be rebuked by the Lord? *I welcome Your every rebuke, Lord, so that*...

5. And then, as if to push these complaining *disciples* further away, Jesus adds a "What if?" hypothetical. To what does He refer? Do you fully understand everything involved in that event? But do you *believe* it? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

"Therefore Christ is one, the Word, soul and flesh, one Christ; the Son of God and the Son of man, one Christ. The Son of God always, the Son of man in time, nevertheless, one Christ according to the unity of the person. He was in heaven when he was speaking on earth. So the Son of man was in heaven as the Son of God was on earth. The Son of God was on earth in the flesh he had taken, the Son of man was in heaven in the unity of person." *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

How can we know how far to go in trying to *understand* before we simply decide to *believe*? Should something in our *heart* cue us that it's time to stop questioning, and just accept the Word of God?

Closing Prayer The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me. *It is* better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man. *It is* better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in princes.

Psalm 118.6-9

Psalm 118.1-9 (*St. George's Windsor: Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*) Thank the Lord, His love endures! All to whom is love is sure, All who fear Him day by day, let them thanks and praise now say! Out of my distress I cry; He will hear me from on high. He will free me from all fear. What can man do to me here?

For the Lord stands next to me; He will give me victory! Over all who hate my life, I will triumph through the strife! In His grace I refuge find; in His steadfast love so kind. Trust not princes, trust not men – Christ shall be our haven then!

3 Life is from the Spirit...

Read and meditate on John 6.63, 64.

Life does not come either with a full belly or a satisfied mind. Life is the work of the Spirit, and the Spirit comes to those who *believe*.

⁶³Life comes from the Holy Spirit, for the flesh is of no profit. All the words I speak to you are life and spirit. ⁶⁴Some of you, I know, do not believe." For from the start, He knew those from among them who did not believe in Him; He also knew who would betray Him.

- John 6.63, 64

Reflect

1. These complaining *disciples* had been following Jesus because they thought He promised a better *life*. How were they understanding that idea? What was their view of the "good life"? Complete this prayer: *Lord, You came to give us life and give it abundantly! Thank You, Lord, for the life of...*

2. Jesus, however, is offering a different understanding of *life*, a different *kind* of life altogether. Since that life comes from the Spirit and Word of Jesus, what kind of *life* is it? What are its defining features, if not a full belly and a completely satisfied mind? *I want to know more of this life*, *Lord, especially*...

3. Jesus said that some of these *disciples* did not *believe* (v. 64). How could that be? Can a person be a *disciple*, or at least, consider himself a *disciple*, and yet not *believe* in Jesus? Explain. *Show me*, *Lord*, *when I am beginning to drift from faith into unbelief. Help me always to...*

4. Jesus knew who were the false disciples, and even who would betray Him. He knew this "from the beginning." How did He know this? What does Jesus know about you? You know my heart, Lord. Let my heart always be...

5. In this whole situation – John 6.22-71 – we can identify at least three responses to Jesus among those who heard Him. How would you describe these? Should we expect similar responses to the Gospel in our day? Explain. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

"If he says that 'the flesh profits nothing,' then the meaning must take direction from the context of that remark. For seeing that they regarded his speech as hard and unbearable, as though he had really prescribed his flesh for them to eat, since his purpose was to assign the establishment of salvation to the Spirit, he first said, 'It is the spirit that gives life,' and only then added, 'the flesh profits nothing'—toward the giving of life, of course. He also proceeds to state how he wishes 'the Spirit' to be understood. 'The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.' ... And so, when establishing his teaching as the Life-giver (because the Word is spirit and life), he also said that it is his flesh, because the Word also was made flesh. We ought therefore to desire him in order that we may have life. We ought to devour him with the ear, and to ruminate on him with the mind and to digest him by faith." *Tertullian (ca. 150-222 AD)*

Jesus' words are, indeed, hard for many people to accept. But His offer of life is clear, and life is what we must offer in His Name. How do we do that?

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together. I sought the LORD, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Psalm 34.1-8

Psalm 34.1-9, 3 (Alleluia [Lowe]: Mighty God, While Angels Bless You)
I will bless the Lord at all times; I shall praise Him evermore!
My soul makes its boast in Jesus – Him we gladly all adore!
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I sought the Lord, He answered, and from fear delivered me. Those who look to Him are radiant; shamed their face shall never be. Magnify the Name of Jesus! Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I cried to God, He heard me, and from trouble rescued me. 'Round their camp His angel lingers that they may delivered be. Magnify the Name of Jesus! Let us lift His Name in praise!

Taste and see how good is Jesus; blessed are all who in Him hide. None shall lack for any blessing who in Christ will e'er confide. Magnify the Name of Jesus! Let us lift His Name in praise!

4 ...and the Spirit is from the Father

Read and meditate on John 6.65. The Spirit and life which are to be found in Jesus are from the Father only. You'd better believe it.

⁶⁵And He said, "Therefore, I say to you, as I have said before, no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

- John 6.65

Reflect

1. Coming to Jesus is not something initiated by people. The flesh profits nothing. Explain. Complete this prayer: Why do I belong to You, Lord? Why do I know and love You? Why have I come to Jesus, if only because...

2. Jesus has explained that the life He offers is His flesh and blood, by His Word and Spirit, and whoever wants this life must feed on Him, which is what He means by *coming* to Him. But here Jesus says that no one can come to Him unless the Father grants it. How do you understand what He means here? How would you explain the relationship between our responsibility and God's work in our coming to Jesus? *It is hard to understand the workings of grace and faith, Lord, but...*

3. Nothing in our lives that pertains to coming to Jesus can be ours unless the Father grants it. What are the implications of this for your daily walk with and work for the Lord? *Apart from You, Lord, I...*

4. Like those Jews and those complaining disciples, we are all basically skeptical, self-centered, seeking only what's best for us, and expecting everyone to cater to our needs and whims. We are *all* like this. Why does this make the phrase "has been granted" so extremely important in understanding the life of faith? *Father, unless You grant me life with Jesus, today and every day...*

5. Meditate on Galatians 4.6. How is *anyone* able to cry out to God as *Father*? And, by the way, in the Greek, the words *crying out* in Galatians 4.6 are in a form indicating that it is *the Spirit* doing the crying. It's all of grace, friends. Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

"He teaches us that even the act of believing is by way of being a gift and not a matter of merit: 'As I told you,' he says, 'no one can come to me but whoever has been given it by my Father.' If we call to mind the earlier part of the Gospel, we shall discover where the Lord said this. We shall find that he said, 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me drags him.' He did not say 'leads' but 'drags.' This violence happens to the heart, not to the flesh. So why be surprised? Believe, and you come; love, and you are dragged. Do not regard this violence as harsh and irksome; on the contrary, it is sweet and pleasant. It is the very pleasantness of the thing that drags you to it. Isn't a sheep dragged, or drawn irresistibly, when it is hungry and grass is shown to it? And I presume it is not being moved by bodily force but pulled by desire." *Augustine (354.430 AD)*

Salvation is all of grace. Every day. Give thanks to God for the great gift that *has been granted* to you. Share that gift with someone today.

Closing Prayer

Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, For in You do I trust;

Cause me to know the way in which I should walk, For I lift up my soul to You. Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies; In You I take shelter. Teach me to do Your will, For You *are* my God; Your Spirit *is* good. Lead me in the land of uprightness. Revive me, O LORD, for Your name's sake! For Your righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

Psalm 143.8-11

Psalm 143.7-12 (Divinum Mysterium: Of the Father's Love Begotten)

Answer quickly, O my Lord! Do not hide from me Your face! For my spirit fails and I am like those who do not know Your grace. In the morning let me hear Your steadfast love; Lord, I trust You, show my way! I lift up my soul and pray!

Rescue me from all my enemies! Lord, I refuge seek in You. Let me know Your will, O Lord my God; make me know what I must do. Let Your Spirit lead me on to level ground; save my life! Preserve my soul! Rescue, Lord, and make me whole!

5 So Long

Read and meditate on John 6.66.

Many of those who had been following Jesus, and thought of themselves as disciples, now turned back. If He wasn't going to feed them, or explain to their satisfaction every hard saying, then so long.

66As

of that time, therefore, many who had been with Him turned back, and would not walk again with Him.

- John 6.66

Reflect

1. Why did these people turn from Jesus? How can you guard against this ever becoming true of you? Complete the following prayer: *Keep my heart loyal to You, O Lord! Do not let me...*

2. John uses the phrase "walked with Him no more" to describe those who *went back* from following Jesus. He'd been referring to these people as *disciples*. Were they really *disciples*? Why or why not? Is it possible today that some people who think of themselves as disciples aren't in fact walking with Jesus? Explain. *Father, keep me close to Jesus. Guard my heart against turning away from Him, even when...*

3. Why is "walk with Him" an apt way of describing what it means to be a disciple? How does this idea apply to your daily life in the Lord? *I want to walk with You, Lord, and today that will involve...*

4. To keep from turning back from Jesus when push comes to shove, what must we have as our focus in life? What understanding of *life* must be *our* understanding? How can believers encourage one another in this matter? *Today, Lord, let me encourage another believer to...*

5. How would you counsel a new believer against *turning back from Jesus* and *walking with Him no more*? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

"The medical men called surgeons pass for being cruel but really deserve pity. For is it not pitiful to cut away the dead flesh of another person with merciless knives without being moved by his pain? Is it not pitiful that the one who is curing the patient is callous to his sufferings and has to appear as his enemy? Yet this is the order of nature. While truth is always bitter, a pleasant disposition waits upon evildoing. Isaiah goes naked without blushing as a type of the captivity to come. Jeremiah is sent from Jerusalem to the Euphrates (a river in Mesopotamia) and leaves his girdle to be marred in the Chaldean camp among the Assyrians hostile to his people. Ezekiel is told to eat bread made of mingled seeds and sprinkled with the dung of people and cattle. He has to see his wife die without shedding a tear. Amos is driven from Samaria. Why is he driven from it? Surely in this case, as in the others, because he was a spiritual surgeon who cut away the parts diseased by sin and urged people to repentance. The apostle Paul says, 'Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?' The Savior himself found it no different. Many of the disciples left him because his sayings seemed hard." *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

Jesus is neither cold nor indifferent to the fact that people turned away from Him in large numbers. But He will not cater to their whims or demands. He has come with a message of grace and salvation, but that can only be received on God's terms, not man's. Meditate on John 20.21. What are the implications of this for you?

Closing Prayer You are my hope, O Lord GOD; You are my trust from my youth. By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You. I have become as a wonder to many, But You are my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with Your praise And with Your glory all the day.

Psalm 71.5-8

Psalm 71.4-8, 3 (Solid Rock: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less)From wicked hands redeem me, Lord, from all who wrest and break Your Word;My hope, my confidence from youth, my praise forever reaches You.A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue Me;My Rock and Fortress ever be!

While many see in me a sign, I shelter in Your strength will find. Lord, fill my mouth with endless praise and with Your glory all my days. A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue Me;

My Rock and Fortress ever be!

6 And You?

Read and meditate on John 6.67-71.

Jesus wants His twelve disciples to make sure they are following Him for the right reason. They are. Most of them.

⁶⁷Then to the twelve He said, "Do you want also to turn back?" ⁶⁸But Peter to Him answered, "Lord, to whom else shall we go? You have the words of life; ⁶⁹and this we know, and all believe: You are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁷⁰Then Jesus answered, "Every one of you, the twelve, I chose to follow Me. And one of you a devil is." ⁷¹Now He referred to Judas, son of Simon; he it was who would betray the Lord, though he was one of His disciples.

- John 6.67-71

Reflect

1. Apparently, the twelve either hesitated or did not immediately go with Jesus as He left the synagogue. Or could something else be happening here? What do you think? Complete the following brief prayer: *Lord, let me never hesitate to walk with You, even when...*

2. Look at Peter's response to Jesus. How would you describe his heart? What seems to have been motivating at least eleven of these *disciples*? Do you suppose these fishermen, tax collectors, and assorted everymen *fully understood* all this? Yet they *believed!* How does this counsel us? *Make me like those first disciples, Lord, so that I always...*

3. And yet, even in this august bunch, one was a devil! How could this be? He was still with Jesus, and hadn't turned back. He would continue to walk with Him, at least, up to that evening in the upper room. But he was a devil! There is counsel for us as *disciples* of the Lord here. How should we use this to encourage one another in our walk with and work for the Lord? *Help me to persevere every day, Lord, and never let me...*

4. How would you describe the *mood* of John's story at this point? Reflect on all we've read and observed in John 6. How does John want us to feel at this point in the story? What emotions is he trying to stir in us? Does it matter? How does what we *know* about Jesus relate to how we *feel* about Him, and about following Him? How do each of these – mind and heart – relate to *believing* in Jesus? *Being a disciple is a whole-person calling, Lord. I know this. It demands all my thoughts and all my affections, as well as...*

5. Who is a true disciple of Jesus? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

"For it is not the number of worshipers but rather those who excel in the right faith, though they are few, that are precious in the sight of God." *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444AD)*

What do we learn from Peter about what it means to "excel in the right faith"?

Closing Prayer Those who trust in the LORD Are like Mount Zion, Which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the LORD surrounds His people From this time forth and forever. For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest On the land allotted to the righteous, Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity. Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, And to those who are upright in their hearts.

Psalm 125.1-4

Psalm 125.1, 2 (St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers)
All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!
Like the hills surrounding safe Jerusalem,
Christ surrounds His Church and holds her in His mighty Hand!
All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

7 The Cost of Discipleship

Read and meditate on John 6.60-71.

Jesus made it plain from the beginning that following Him, no matter the cost, is what it means to be a true disciple. He has the words of life. He is our meat and drink. His words are true spiritual life. The Father is drawing (*dragging* – Augustine) people to Him. Following Jesus can cost you everything in your life, but it will bring you *true* life instead.

60 So then. when many of His followers heard Him say this, they said, "These words are hard; who can make sense of this? And who can understand it?" 61 Jesus, when He knew that they complained about this, said to them, 'Does this offend you? ⁶²What if, then, you should observe the Son of Man ascend again to where He'd come from? ⁶³Life comes from the Holy Spirit, for the flesh is of no profit. All the words I speak to you are life and spirit. 64 Some of you, I know, do not believe." For from the start, He knew those from among them who did not believe in Him; He also knew who would betray Him. 65 And He said, "Therefore, I say to you, as I have said before, no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." 66As of that time, therefore, many who had been with Him turned back, and would not walk again with Him. 67Then to the twelve He said, "Do you want also to turn back?" 68But Peter to Him answered, 'Lord, to whom else shall we go? You have the words of life; 69 and this we know, and all believe: You are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁷⁰Then Jesus answered, "Every one of you, the twelve, I chose to follow Me. And one of you a devil is." ⁷¹Now He referred to Judas, son of Simon; he it was who would betray the Lord, though he was one of His disciples.

- John 6.60-71

Reflect

1. Do *disciples* of Jesus sometimes get confused or become misguided in their motives for following Him? How? How does this happen? Complete this prayer: *Remind me every day, O Lord, of the grace You have shown me in salvation, so that I...*

2. There will always be people who turn away from Jesus for one reason or another. Should we give up on them? Explain. *Teach me to love the lost, O Lord, like You love me, and help me to...*

3. Jesus, Spirit, Word, Father, life: In one sentence, use those words to explain the mission of Jesus during

the time of His incarnation. I thank You, Lord, that ...

4. Hear, come, believe, understand, feed: In one sentence, use these words to explain what we must do to know the promise of life in Jesus. *Let it be true of me, O Lord, that I...*

5. The story of Jesus is a matter of life and death. In what way? How should believing this affect our daily lives? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"For we believed in order to know. Had we wanted first to know and then to believe, we could never have been able to believe. What have we believed and known? "That you are the Christ the Son of God," that is, that you are eternal life and that in your flesh and blood you give what you are yourself." *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Today, pay attention to all the ways Jesus unfolds His life within you. Give thanks as often as you become mindful of some blessing of life. Share your gratitude with others. Let the grace of Jesus well up and overflow from within you!

Closing Prayer

Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, *And* His praise in the assembly of saints. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise His name with the dance; Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp. For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand...

Psalm 149.1-6

Psalm 149 (*Toulon: I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*) Sing to the Lord a glorious song and new! Praise Him you people, to Whom praise is due! Let us rejoice, let us be glad in Him Who has created us and cleansed our sin.

Praise Him with dance, with tambourine and lyre! To be so praised is God's one great desire. Lord, beautify Your holy ones with grace; Show us the mercy of Your saving face.

Sing to the Lord, exult with great delight! Sing on your beds with joy to God by night! Sing praise and take His Word into your hand; Publish His grace and wrath in every land!

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why do people not believe in Jesus? What is our responsibility in helping them to believe?

2. Since no one can come to Jesus except the Father *drags* him, what does this suggest about how we ought to pray for the lost people in our Personal Mission Field?

3. People today have differing views of what constitutes the good life. What is the good life as Jesus offers it?

4. What can you do to help keep yourself and your Christian friends from *turning back* from Jesus and *walking with Him no more*?

5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 6.60-71? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

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