

## **The Bread of Life Discourse—Declaring Commitment to Jesus (John 6:60-71)**

Jesus is the Bread of Life, the sole provider and sustainer of eternal life. He challenged an increasingly skeptical audience to trust Him completely. After all, Jesus came from heaven, sent by God the Father. Jesus rightly expects us to put our faith in Him, faith that comes to recognize Him as the only deserving object of our devotion. Jesus described this kind of faith as an all consuming relationship, akin to eating His flesh and drinking His blood—receiving His sacrificial death as the source of endless life. This call to commitment unsettled many who had been following Jesus out of curiosity or convenience. The Bread of Life Discourse concludes with a note of departure on the part of a number of disciples, but there were some who became even more resolved in their hearts to follow Jesus. Jesus deserves our unwavering commitment because He is the Bread of Life. In this way we prove to be His disciples.

### **Being a disciple of Jesus Christ demands spiritual discernment (6:60-63).**

Everyone must make a decision about Jesus Christ. Either Jesus is who He claimed to be, God in the flesh, worthy of our committed faith—or Jesus is something less, an object of curiosity rather than an object of faith. We must discern the truth about Jesus if we're to follow Him.

*Many of Jesus' broader disciples determined that Jesus was making difficult demands (6:60).*

Jesus had a broad following throughout much of His earthly ministry. At that stage, anyone who followed Jesus was considered a “disciple,” or learner to some degree. However, because Jesus emphasized their need for commitment to Him, to His teaching, and to His exclusive claims many of these disciples admitted that His words were hard to accept. Jesus had presented some difficult demands for His followers. Even today, those who are truly Christians will need to make sacrifices for their faith in Jesus.

*Jesus challenged these disciples to recognize His divine nature (6:61-62).*

Jesus knew that His broader circle of disciples was murmuring about His teachings. He addressed the situation head on, saying, “Does this offend you?” He then posed the problem of His future return to the Father in heaven. Referring to Himself as the messianic “Son of Man,” Jesus asked how these wavering disciples would react to seeing Him ascend to His first home, to heaven. If these disciples found it difficult to follow Jesus based on His verbal claim, would they find it any easier to follow Him when they would witness His ascension? These people still

demanded empirical proof, and were unwilling to receive Jesus by faith. Therefore, even in the face of empirical proof they would not believe. Faith is, after all, a supernatural encounter with God.

***Jesus reminded these disciples that His words are life (6:63).***

Jesus pointed out that the Holy Spirit gives life. Eternal life rests on the work of Jesus Christ (John 6:57), but the Holy Spirit regenerates the human heart. By contrast, the human flesh offers no hope for eternal life. Human effort counts for nothing. Jesus claimed that His words were “Spirit” (probably referring here to the Holy Spirit as the object of His teaching) and “life” (eternal life that is available only by belief in Jesus and His message). In other words, these wavering disciples needed to discern between human attitudes and divinely revealed truth. To reject Jesus is to reject life. To receive Jesus is to receive life.

**Being a disciple of Jesus Christ  
demands supernatural enablement (6:64-66).**

It’s no small matter to become a follower of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus taught that such a decision requires a receptive response to the work of God in our hearts.

***Jesus acknowledged that there were unbelievers among His disciples (6:64).***

“There are some of you who do not believe,” Jesus declared. Those who had listened to His Bread of Life Discourse had, by their very questions, revealed a lack of faith. In addition, Jesus knows human hearts. In fact, Jesus knew from the beginning, the first moment people began following Him, who truly believed in Him and who didn’t. In addition, Jesus knew that one of His twelve closest disciples would betray Him. He knew about Judas all along. The fact that John raises this point in this context highlights the deceptive nature of those who pretend to be Christians but have no true faith in Him. Some deceive others, and some even deceive themselves. But Jesus knows those who truly believe in Him.

***Jesus reinforced His teaching that the Father must enable people to follow Him (6:65).***

Jesus reminded His listeners that only those whom God the Father gave to Him could truly come to Him. In other words, the Father must initiate in some way the path of faith (compare John 6:37, 39). Yet Jesus also consistently places responsibility for faith on His hearers (John 6:40, 47). He also stated that we must “listen” to the Father and “learn” from Him (John 6:45). So we must respond to the Father’s revelation and invitation. We must trust His

Son, Jesus, in order to receive eternal life. Discipleship is a supernatural relationship, prompted by God the Father and welcomed by those who would follow Jesus.

***Many of Jesus' disciples turned away from following Him at this point in His ministry (6:66).***

“From this” (either at this time or at Jesus’ words) “many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.” Those who had been disciples in the broad sense of the term discontinued their relationship with Jesus. They turned back to their old life. They stopped walking with Jesus—they stopped following Him around the countryside and they stopped following His teachings. This day marked a tragic change in the minds and hearts of many who had been blessed by Jesus’ miracles and teachings. Jesus placed appropriate demands on their lives and they all too quickly abandoned Him. Too many Christians walk away from Jesus when He doesn’t measure up to their shallow expectations. Rather than listening to God, they listen to themselves. To follow Jesus demands a supernatural work of God in the human heart, a life changing and life giving faith.

**Being a disciple of Jesus Christ  
demands personal commitment (6:67-71).**

In addition to His twelve closest disciples, Jesus had many followers during His earthly ministry. But when Jesus pushed the issue of commitment, many in the broader ring of disciples pulled back. To be a true disciple of Jesus, however, demands personal commitment to Him.

***Jesus asked the twelve disciples whether or not they would continue to follow Him (6:67).***

Watching a vast number of His followers walk away, Jesus turned to His closest twelve disciples and asked if they wanted to leave as well. The way Jesus asked this question implied a negative response—“You don’t want to leave too, do you?” He knew their hearts. He knew they were more committed than the rest. He expected them to remain faithful.

***Peter affirmed faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the One who has the words of eternal life (6:68-69).***

As he often did, Simon Peter spoke up for the rest of the twelve disciples. Addressing Jesus as his Lord, he asked where they should go if they were to leave Jesus. Peter then affirmed his faith in Jesus: “You have the words of eternal life.” Peter believed Jesus’ claims. He assured Jesus that he and the others “had believed” and “had known” (verbs that imply a past decision with continuing results) that Jesus was the Messiah. Peter referred to Jesus as “the Holy One of God,” clearly a messianic description (compare Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27; 3:14). In fact, many

ancient manuscripts instead record Peter as describing Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus is God’s Messiah. He has the words of eternal life. He is worthy of our deepest and unrelenting commitment.

***Jesus revealed that even among the twelve disciples there was a traitor (6:70-71).***

Jesus likely anticipated a response like Peter’s. He knew that His twelve disciples had already made significant sacrifices to follow Him. He had chosen them to be with Him in a special, close relationship. However, Jesus also warned the Twelve that one of them was a “devil,” an adversary. Within that band of twelve disciples hid one who was not committed to Jesus, one who would eventually betray the Lord. John later learned that Jesus was talking about Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Even among the committed are some who are uncommitted to Jesus. Discipleship, however, demands personal commitment. When we begin our walk with Jesus, receiving Him by faith, we enter into a relationship of growing commitment, growing sacrifice, and growing blessing. Jesus deserves our unwavering commitment because He is the Bread of Life.