

John (Part 12)

What We Believe Determines What We Do

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Turn back into John the sixth chapter. I think that is a good place to start. And, I think that the subject involved in what Jesus is saying there is very similar to where we began the last time that I had Bible study. I think it would be good to just go back to those two verses and kind of pick up on that context, because it fits right into what we were saying the last time, as well as what we are going to be saying tonight, pretty much.

John 6:27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him. Well then they said to Him, what shall we do, that we may work the works of God?

I think that Jesus' answer is kind of interesting, because He says, "this is the work of God, that you believe in Him, whom He has sent." We do not tend to think of believing in Christ, that is, having faith in Him, trusting Him, relying on Him, as being a work. We kind of separate faith from work, as though they were two different categories. Actually, I think that you believe this, that faith and work cannot really be separated. And that the faith that he is talking about is absolutely essential to producing the right work.

Here is why. I believe that perhaps we can make a general, overall statement, in that the chief end, or purpose of man, is to glorify God. There are other statements that I think that we could make that would be similar to that, just overall things, but if we look at the purpose of man in that light, then the next question would have to be, is how? How can man glorify God? The answer is, given right here, that is, by what one believes.

You will recall that I opened up the last Bible study by spending probably about 20 or 25 minutes talking about tradition, and how much of an impact it has on us when we come into the church. I showed you back in I Peter that Peter said that this is what we have been delivered from, we have been delivered from the traditions received from our fathers.

Faith has much to do with this same subject. The reason is that belief colors every aspect of life. That is, what we believe determines what we are going to do. If we believe that Christmas is to be used to celebrate, or to honor, or to worship God, then

we will do it. We do this in ignorance, before conversion; we do it because we do not know any better. We do it because we sincerely and honestly think that it is the right thing to do. The same thing holds true for Easter. I might put it into this category.

Let us suppose that you grew up in a culture in which it was not kosher for you to kill your neighbor, but it was alright to kill the person across the river, across the ocean, or wherever, if you were angry at him. Now that is not hard to relate to, because every nation basically believes that. Every nation believes that it has the right, and they believe that it is the God-given right to defend themselves or to fight against an aggressor of some kind. And so nations go to war with one another, and they believe in all sincerity that they are doing the right thing. You see, in World War II, we had the Lutheran minister in Germany blessing the troops over there, and the Lutheran minister in the United States blessing the troops over here, so that we could all go out on the same battlefield and shoot bullets at one another, because we believed that was right.

Now that may seem a little bit overblown to you, I do not know, but yet the principle that I am talking about is very important, and that is, what we believe colors every area of our life.

Let us take this one step further. Is Jesus really getting at something a little bit more precise, than the generality that I just gave to you? I think that the answer to that is "yes." Let us go back to II Corinthians 11.

II Corinthians 11:3-4 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus who we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit that you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it.

Do you think Paul was concerned about the source of our belief? Yes, he very definitely is.

That is what Jesus is talking about back here in John 6. If Christ is the source of our belief, then we are going to glorify God, because we are going to look to Christ as the final authority on everything in life pertaining to God, to man, to the Kingdom of God, whatever, you see, and so it is going to affect what we do, on a daily basis, very specifically on a daily basis. We are going to try to conform with what Christ said our responsibility is to God, if we believe in Him.

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If we do not believe in Him, then we are left to the devices of this world. We have to rely upon the traditions of men.

That is what happened back in the Garden of Eden. See? The source of belief was changed by the decision of Adam and Eve. Instead of being the Tree of Life and God, the source of man's beliefs became Satan the Devil. And so man, then, has been held captive by what he believes, and the only way to break that is through the processes of conversion.

Let me show you another place. Turn to II Thessalonians 2.

II Thessalonians 2:7-9 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way, and the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders.

Do you think it is going to make a difference, how you perceive these things? You think it is going to make a difference, what you believe regarding signs, power, and wonders? You bet it is going to make a difference, because what you believe about those things is going to affect the result, the impact that this is going to have on you.

Jesus warned there in Matthew 24 that this is going to be so wonderful, fantastic, awe-inspiring, that if it is possible, the very elect will be deceived. What you believe is going to make a difference.

II Thessalonians 2:10-11 With all unrighteousness and with all unrighteous deception, among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason, God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie.

You see how the mind is preconditioned is going to determine whether a person is going to be deluded and believe the lie. What you believe already, in regard to Christ, is going to determine the outcome there.

II Thessalonians 2:12 That all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

So I think we can conclude that section by saying that this is important, because what we do proceeds from what we believe. See, the choices that we make are going to be determined very greatly by what we believe.

Turn back to John 6.

John 6:30 Therefore they said to him, what sign will you perform then, that we may see it and believe you, what work will you do?

Now what they are doing is, they are asking Jesus for his credentials. And they say that what they will believe is some kind of a miracle. "What kind of a sign are you going to give us that will credential you?"

John 6:31-34 Our fathers ate the manna in the desert, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said to them, most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. And then they said to him, Lord, give us this bread always.

What they asked for—they not only asked for a sign, they asked for a specific sign. They were trying to find out whether he was "that prophet." If he was "that prophet," that is mentioned there in Deuteronomy 18:15, if he was "that prophet," then he would be the Messiah. So they wanted to make a comparison with him to Moses.

The first thing that Jesus does is straighten them out in regard to who really gave the manna. Just in case there was any doubt in their mind, it did not come from Moses, it came from God. Moses was merely the instrument through which it was given. What they were saying, without saying it, when they asked for the specific sign that they did—they were reflecting back on what we saw at the beginning of the chapter where Jesus fed the five thousand. What did he feed them with? He fed them with common bread, probably barley loaf; something that was common to the land, something that anybody could go out and get by milling the loaf of barley.

What they were saying, without saying it was, "Well look, the bread that you gave us, there was nothing special about that, that was just common, ordinary bread. Now, if you're greater than Moses, you ought to at least be able to give us manna from

heaven." So that they were making a comparison to Moses, and in a sense were saying, "Well, we won't accept anything less than the same kind of bread that Moses gave." They were pretty smart-alecky, I think.

But nonetheless, that is what they asked. So they were saying, "Well, you need to do something better than what you did there, back on the side of the sea, because that bread wasn't unique at all."

The second thing that He straightened them out on was that though the manna was real—I mean that manna that came while the children of Israel were in the wilderness—it was really only a symbol of the true bread. The true bread—the spiritual bread—is represented by Christ. He is the true bread.

We can, and we will as we go through here, break that down a little bit further as to what he meant by that.

John 6:35-40 Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me, and yet you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me, I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me. This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all He has given me, I should lose nothing, but to raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Let us look at this bread comparison. I think the word that is translated here, "bread," could more literally be translated, "food," but we will use the word that the Bibles that we commonly read have used, and that is the word, "bread."

Bread sustains life. It has within it what we need for the continuation of life. It gives us strength and energy and vitality, it gives us the minerals that we need for the repair of our bodies, and the maintenance of those things. If we do not have bread, we die. So bread sustains life.

But the real question here, I think is, "What is life?" That is really what the important thing is, "What is life?"

Certainly the life that Jesus is talking about is more than a physical existence. What he is talking about, of course, is the kind of relationship that a person can have with God. See? That is missing—that is what happened at the Garden of Eden. Man's relationship with God was severed. We have had no access to God. We have had no Holy Spirit, which will connect us to Him. And, because we have no access to God, there is no relationship with God, there is no family atmosphere with God, we have no hope of being God. So whatever this life is, it has something to do with having a relationship with God. That is what man needs.

In this relationship with God, what should dominate in a person's life is the spiritual, not the physical. And, from this spiritual relationship, will flow faith, obedience, love, joy, peace, and all those spiritual fruits, which gives a dimension to life that Christ is talking about here.

All of this, of course, is not contained right in this section, but other sections of the Bible have to be added to it, and we are just adding them here for convenience so that we understand what He is talking about.

We can reach a conclusion, here, that what He is driving at is this relationship with God is possible only through Him.

Again, there a couple of ways of looking at this. Since He is the payment for our sins, as long as we are in the condition that we are before we believe in Him, and accept His blood for the forgiveness of our sins, there can be no relationship with God; therefore, He is the door through which we have to go to establish this relationship.

Then we find in another place, John 15, that without Him, we can do nothing. Even though we have access to God, Jesus is absolutely essential in any progress that we make after that, because as Mediator, as High Priest, He is in effect the distributor (if I can put it that way) of God's Holy Spirit. He is the Head of the body.

So, we absolutely need Him. He is the bread of life. Even as physical bread sustains physical life, so does the spiritual bread, Christ, make possible and sustain the spiritual life, which is this relationship with God.

Now we can make a conclusion. From what He is saying here, then, it is possible to have existence without life. We can have a physical existence, something that we all have, and yet you do not have life, in the terms in which Christ is speaking of here. See? He is the true bread and through Him can come the true life.

He says that He is going to raise those who believe. He is not going to lose any, and He will raise them up in the last day. The reason He is saying that is that if we follow through on what He is teaching about Him being absolutely essential to this spiritual life—this relationship with God—we ought to be able to be absolutely sure of having this life here, and it will also be eternal. How many people understood that when He was talking to them, I do not know. We are going to see a little bit later that some, apparently, did get at least some of what he was talking about.

I would say that one of the more important things that we have to get from this is that we have to be able to see God being accessible through Christ. Christ is not just someone who is there to support a theological argument. He is not just a vaporous extract of someone's imagination. He is a reality, and He is absolutely essential to eternal life. And we have to see Him, as not only making accessibility to God possible, but we also have to be able to see Him as being active in His creation.

Jesus Christ is actively working in our behalf, in order to maintain and sustain this relationship with God. He is our High Priest. He is actively working, as the Head of the church, for our salvation. "He is interceding for us," is the way Paul put it in Romans 8. So all these things fit together, and really, John 6 is an excellent summary of it.

John 6:41-47 Then the Jews murmured against Him, because He said "I am the bread which came down from heaven." And they said, is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then, that He says "I have come down from heaven?" Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "do not murmur among yourselves, no man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. As it is written in the prophets, 'they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore, everyone who has heard, and learns from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God, He has seen the Father. And most assuredly I say to you, he who believes in me has everlasting life."

That is how important believing in Christ is. That is why He said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him." Because what you believe in is going to determine what you do, all the spiritual work that we do proceeds from this belief.

If we do not believe Him; if we do not believe that He is real; if we do not believe that He is accessible; if we do not believe that He really is the bread of life; if we do not believe that He is the Head of the church; if we do not believe that He is the administrator of

God's Holy Spirit; if we do not believe these things, then our response in our life is going to be weak. It is going to determine the intensity, the zeal, the understanding with which we pursue things relative to the Kingdom of God.

John 6:48 I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.

Looking at this whole section in an overall sense, and especially at the beginning part of it there in verses 41 and 42, there are several things that we can get from it that help us to see why these people rejected Christ. The first thing that has to hit your mind is that they thought carnally. There was not any spirituality in their mind. They said, after He said that He was the bread that came down from heaven, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

We may look back on that as being a somewhat strange response to the Son of God—God in the flesh. I mean, it is kind of like rejecting a huge gift. Suppose somebody sent you a million dollars. You were not all that sure what was in the envelope that it came in, but nonetheless, you rejected it, did not even open up the envelope, because the envelope did not meet your standards somehow. You could not perceive that anything really good could be in the envelope, because the envelope did not look good. However, maybe if it came with gold gilt all over it, like "this is from the king, and it contains a gift to you," we might accept it.

You see, because God as man, came as man, He was wrapped in that package, and there was nothing in Him that Isaiah says in chapter 53, that would particularly draw men to Him because of the way that He looked. He was just a common, ordinary Jew, and He fit in with society. And so they did not listen to the words of life, because they just kept associating Him with Joseph, the carpenter's son. I mean, "No carpenter's son could teach you words like this."

Verse 43 then contains, "Do not murmur among yourselves, Jesus said." It is another reason why they rejected Him. They argued with each other, rather than asking God for His opinion. God was there in the flesh.

In addition to that, they had the scriptures of the Old Testament that they could have looked at, which we have already seen in John 5, that Jesus used as a basis for credentialing Himself. He said, "You have the scriptures, and if you do not believe Moses, you are not going to believe Me." You see, they argued among themselves.

Now, a way that we would look at this today is that they were so anxious to let other people know what they thought about this man, that they did not listen to what the man was saying. They were not listening to what He was saying, because they wanted to give their opinion. And, it was not so much to Him, as they did to each other. They did not seem to care too much about what God thought.

This goes over into a third reason, and that is that they listened in the wrong attitude. Now we cannot only speak in the wrong attitude, we can speak in anger, we can speak in criticism, and self-righteousness, but we can also listen in the same way. These people were constantly listening in an argumentative frame of mind.

Again, we can understand that they did this because of what they believed. They were preconditioned by their culture. They had the traditions of men ground into their mind, and their mind was not open to a new perception of things that Christ was giving to them. And so they were always listening defensively.

That is why Christ said that you have to become as a little child. If you are going to be converted, if you are going to be in the Kingdom of God, you cannot be listening with the idea of defending your particular position while listening to God's Word.

So, we can pick out a number of attitudes that they would have listened in. They may have resented Him, because what He said stung them. That is one way. They could have listened in an attitude of indifference, "Oh, you're the carpenter's son; who are you to teach me anything?" Or, "I've been to rabbinic school, I learned at the seat of Dr. So-and-so." And so they did not really listen to what he said. Their mind was rather indifferent to what He said, and so they just passed it off casually. You see Nicodemus, back there in John 3, what Jesus said did not register with him, so Jesus chided him, and said, "I can't even teach you earthly things, let alone heavenly things," and here he was, a doctor of the law. So they took pride in what they were about to say, and as a result, they listened critically.

So what they did is, that they resisted. All of us have done this, and again, I have to keep reminding you and myself, because I can get kind of "snippy," I guess is the word, at them or something, but I really do not want to put them down, because they represent the way we are. They are typical of what we would have done too, had not God called us.

I want to give you an angle to verse 44 that most of the time we pass right over. Mr. Armstrong emphasized, correctly, that no man can come to Christ unless God draws him. There is something interesting here, and that is in the word "draw." This word

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always has the implication of resistance. It is not that God sends out a lasso that goes around our waist, and He just pulls on us, and we come trotting right in. No, rather, He casts the lasso out, and we fight Him. We drag our heels, and He has to pull us in.

I will show you an example of where this exact same word is used, back in John 21. In fact, I will give you two or three places that it is used, so that you get the idea.

John 21:6 And He said to them, cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some [that is, fish]. So they cast, and they were not able to draw it in.

That is the same word as in John 6:44. Do you think there was not a weight on that net? See, there was a resistance there.

John 21:11 Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish.

The word is "dragged;" it was full of fish, and he dragged it. It was a hard job to drag those fish in.

Acts 16:19 But when her master saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place to the authorities.

Again, this is the same word as in John 6:44. Now perhaps you can look back on your life, at the time that God was beginning to call you and you were beginning to prove things, it almost invariably happens that on the one hand, we are very excited, and on the other hand, once we begin to be able to see some more of the picture than we could at first, we begin to realize that this might cost us something. So we begin to slow down. It might be the Sabbath day, it might be tithing. We might begin to realize that this is going to cause problems within the family. Believe it or not, in my own ministry, I have run into people who have gotten *The Plain Truth* for dozens of years, and have done nothing with it at all. I am sure that somewhere in the background, there is a fear, so they are dragging their heels, and resisting the drawing of God.

So understand that this drawing of God continues right on in to our Christian lives. It is not something that stops at the time that we are baptized; but rather it is something that

continues, and maybe some of the more difficult things that we have to overcome will not come to light until after we are in the church quite a number of years. We will begin to become face-to-face with some weakness of character, something that might involve submission to government, something that might involve a change that has to be made in our thinking, and boy, our humility is really tested. We hang on for dear life to the pride that we have, and do not want to give in. But God is still drawing us to become more like Him. So we have to be careful, and think that the drawing that God has given us is over. He is still got the line attached to us, and is pulling us into the boat. We are not in there yet, not into the Kingdom of God, and like a fish on a line, we fight every once in a while, like a trout.

John 6:51-52 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever, and the bread which I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying "how can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

There they are arguing again. It seems to be a proclivity of those people over in the Middle East—they just love to argue. I have just seen pictures of Arabs over there, nose-to-nose, really chewing one another out. I guess the Jews—maybe it is the weather that affects them, in the air or the water or something. But, they just love to argue. This is my own observation, but I think of all the Israelites, there is nobody who loves to argue like the Jews. They just seem to get—well, they strain at gnats. They were the ones that put together the Talmud, and the Mishnah with its 1,521 laws regarding the Sabbath. You would never see any Josephite do that. He would just push the law aside, and say, "Forget about it. Let's just go do what we want!" A Jew would argue over it though.

John 6:52-59 The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying "how can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. And he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and as I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as your fathers ate the manna and are dead, he who eats this bread will live forever." And these things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

The metaphor that is used here is taken from sacrificing. Both the Hebrew and the Gentile world at that time were offering animal sacrifices. Many times we tend to think of it as being something that was done only by the Jews, but it was not. Both the Jew and the Gentile world had similar ideas about sacrificing—similar beliefs.

And this is understandable: the true church, and the Christian churches of the world have ideas and beliefs that are quite similar. In many cases, many practices are similar. So it was not unusual that the sacrifices of the ancient world, both in the Jew and Gentile world, were similar in their beliefs. Again, they were not precisely the same, but they were similar. This is an area that we are not real familiar with, and it is an area that I am going to get into in a series of sermons, probably around the end of January, going to go through a series of sermons on the sacrifices leading up to the Passover.

Very rarely was the whole animal burned on the altar. The whole animal was sacrificed, but usually only God's portion was burned on the altar. Normally what was done was that the animal was taken, and the priest who was on duty at that time sacrificed it. And then the law of God specified that certain portions of it were to go to the priesthood. When the animal was sacrificed, those portions were cut away from the animal and separated to the priests, and another portion of it was offered to God on the altar. Then the person who offered the animal took the remaining portion. Normally what he did, as it was roasted right in the area of the Temple, he and his friends and family sat down and had a meal together.

So whenever a person made a sacrifice, it was a time of rejoicing; it was a festive spirit approach to things, because a man then shared his offering with his friends. Now the unseen, un-visible portion of this was that which was offered to God. Because it was burned on the altar and consumed, it was understood that God had consumed it, so God was a part of the festive meal that the offerer had with his friends. Those friends might have been his family, we will not specify there. So part was burned, part to the priest, part to the offerer so that he could eat with his friends, and then God was considered to be a guest at the meal.

There was another aspect of it—it is not wrong; you will see this when I go through the sacrifices—all of those sacrifices represented Jesus Christ. They were all types of Christ. He was the bull that was sacrificed. He was the Lamb of God that was sacrificed. He was the thank offering that was given. He was the sin offering that was given. He was the trespass offering that was given.

What happened when the person who made the offering ate the meat? You see, it was just as though he was eating to God—he was eating God. Because the meat became a

part of him, then God was in him, literally. That meat became strength for his body, and so God was literally, in a physical sense, feeding that person, and He became the strength.

What Jesus is doing is taking this analogy and applying it to Himself. He is the bread of life, and if we do eat of Him, we are going to have eternal life. Now you understand, this is what Passover is about. We take the symbols of His blood and of His flesh, and we eat them, do we not? Sure we do. So the Passover represents His broken body. But here, He is not using that symbolism. He is talking about His flesh, which He says that we have to eat.

Here is what I think that He is talking about: He was God. He became a man. He became flesh and blood. He was living life in the flesh, and so His life becomes the example, to us, of how life is to be lived. This has to be taken into us and used. There is a lot of symbolism involved here, a lot of metaphors being used, a lot of spiritual understanding, and it is difficult because we are not accustomed to this line of thinking.

Sacrificing, in this way, in this regard, is something that we just do not do anymore. But I feel sure that these people would have understood it more clearly than we do. So when we take and eat his flesh, it is almost as if we are filled with the dynamics of God Himself, and all that is shown about His life—His literal life; what He did by the way He conducted it.

What about His blood? The life of the flesh is in the blood is what the scripture says. So the blood actually represents eternal life. And unless we eat of His flesh and drink of His blood, unless we strive to live the kind of life He lived, and actually ingest this, and make it a part of us, we do not have eternal life.

There is another aspect to this, which is I think is easier to understand, and that is that Jesus is the Word of God. And unless the Word of God becomes a part of us—unless it is ingested in us—then we have no sustenance for our spiritual needs. So we have to take His Word in daily in order to provide the strength for spiritual life, or we die spiritually.

If I were asked to summarize that, what He is saying is this: We have to quit thinking of Christ as being merely a subject of theological debate, as being something merely academic. We have to think of Him as reality, as really involved in our life, as really sitting on the right hand of God on high, really being our High Priest. We are to be involved with Him daily, in prayer, Bible study, and in the application of the things that He teaches us to do. We have to eat and drink Him daily, the way we do food.

John 6:60-65 Therefore, many of His disciples when they heard this, said "this is a hard saying, who can understand it?" When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured about this, He said to them "does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend, where He was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they 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 would betray Him, and He said "therefore, I have said unto you, that no man can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by my Father."

Now back to verse 60, "A hard saying?" It does not mean that it is hard to understand, but rather, it is hard to accept. Jesus has been saying here that He is God in the flesh. And no one can properly face life, without being deeply involved with Him.

Why should this be hard? Well, it is not intellectual difficulty; Paul called it, "The simplicity of Christ." It is not hard to understand. What is hard? It is committing yourself to it.

That is what is hard. It is the moral and ethical demands of Christianity that are difficult. It is easy to say, "I believe in Christ," but it is hard to live up to the standards that He set down. So it is the challenge of meeting the moral demands that was hard.

This is why people drag their heels, and why when God draws us, He practically has to drag us. So we have presented to us in Christianity a moral demand of the very highest level. There is none higher than Christianity. There is no religion on earth that demands so much of its people, in terms of morals.

There are other religions that demand more in terms of disciplining the body, in asceticism. Now the false religions may demand asceticism of some kind. The false religions may demand that a man become a celibate priest, or a woman become a nun, but you cannot find that in the pages of the Bible. It is much more difficult to live life out on the street without sinning. It is much more difficult than going into a nunnery, or a convent, or to a monastery. That is conducting your life in the business world, without sinning.

Have you read the book, *In His Steps*? It is interesting to read it. It is not quite right, but it is a good attempt, though. These people took a vow to live, as Christ lived, to walk in His steps, and what the book details is how everybody turned aside. They could not do

it. One person could not do it for this reason, another person could not do it for that reason, another person could not do it for another reason. They could not walk in the steps of Christ, because the demands, the moral and ethical demands, are the highest that there are on earth.

That is what they (the Jews) were complaining about here (John 6), and so they murmured, and they began to withdraw themselves, because they were frightened. Because they knew that if they submitted to Him as the final authority, on anything relating to God and to man, it was going to demand of them something that they were not willing yet to give.

So in verse 62, He actually is giving another credential. He says, "Well, what then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?" What He is saying in effect here is that the resurrection and the ascension were going to prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that He was, indeed, the Bread of life. They would have their proof then.

He could see already that they were arguing with Him, and they were not going to believe Him. When they would see Him resurrected, when they would see Him ascending—remember, He is talking to disciples here—then they would know for sure that He indeed was the Bread of life.

Verse 63 says that it is the "spirit that gives life. The flesh profits nothing; the words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life." Life-giving power is in the spirit. Now again, you can see life here, as not in the terms of ordinary physical life that we all have, which I called "existence" just a little while before, but He is talking about life involved with God, having a relationship with God, and having an end result that will be in the Kingdom of God. And so He is saying here, then, this is really a long discourse here, because it goes all the way back to verse 27 when He said, "Do not labor for the food which perishes." Those things are not going to give you life.

You can see this in two senses. Anything that is physical does not contain within it—is not inherent within it—cannot produce the abundance that people want out of life. All of us have the desire to live in happiness, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, a feeling of contentment and good-will, a feeling of peace, understanding, and wisdom. These are desires that everybody has.

The flesh, or anything that is physical, Jesus is saying, cannot give those things. Probably the best example of all of this is food. Every morning you get up, and you are hungry and want to eat, and you go out in the kitchen and you eat some bread or whatever it is, and some cereal and an egg, and boy, after breakfast is over, you feel

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good! Lunchtime? Your stomach is growling again, your blood sugar has dropped low, and you do not feel so good anymore. That is how temporary physical things are, in terms of producing abundance to life.

It does not matter what it is, whether it is a new car you get, a new suit you get, a new purse, some new shoes, you get a new hair-do, you get a new house, you work in a new environment, you get a new job, you get a raise in pay—it does not matter what it is, those things do not contain within them whatever is needed to produce life, as Christ is talking about here. Only spiritual things have those qualities within them.

Since He is the bread of life, these things have to be nurtured, produced, gotten-from, increased, or whatever through Him. He is the keystone, the important part of this whole complex in our relationship with God. He is the key element.

Solomon saw this, and he put it very simply.

Ecclesiastes 1:2 Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

And so hHe introduced his subject, "How can a person get something out of life that is really profitable? How can life be lived so that there is real quality, so that a person is not just existing, but living?" And so he went all through his experiments, wrote the book, and at the end he said, "The conclusion is, fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole man." That summarizes it. The rest of the Bible expands upon it.

In effect that is what Jesus is saying here, "the flesh profits nothing."

There is a certain amount of good received from physical things, but it is only temporary; it does not lead to, and cannot produce, life. It can sustain our existence, and it can give us temporary good qualities to our existence, but it cannot produce life.

Remember that verse in John 17? What is the definition of eternal life? It is to know God, to have this relationship with God, so that we are really intimate with Him. That is what will produce life. That is what Jesus is getting at.

The Word of God has a great deal to do with this, because the words that He speaks, they are spirit. And thus, if they are obeyed, if they are submitted to, if they are followed, if they are used, they will produce life. Not existence, but life. They will produce an abundance.

When He says that if you eat His Word, or drink His water, you will never thirst, or you will never hunger, He does not mean that it will happen immediately. Eventually, it will come, when we are in the Kingdom of God, and we have the Spirit of God without measure, when we are spirit, and we are always doing spiritual things, then, we will never hunger, we will never thirst in any way; we will always be living an abundant life. The time that we have right now is to get practice in doing it, to experience it, and to build the character that results from going this way. That will produce life.

So, we can reach a conclusion. The real value of anything—I am talking here about physical things, or physical activities—the real value of anything is in the purpose for which it is done, the motivation or the reason for which it is done, and the attitude in which it is done.

What this means is that we have to do everything in relation to God. We have to do everything in relation to the Kingdom of God. We have to do things with a spiritual mind. We have to follow the Word of God. That is how a spiritual mind is produced. That is what reveals whether or not we have a spiritual mind. If we believe Christ, we will do what He says, we will have a spiritual mind.

Let me illustrate it this way: If we eat, simply for the sake of gratifying our own desires, we will receive gratification, but it will not produce life. And the chances are, we will then tend to eat in an unbalanced way. We will eat things that are not good for us, in amounts that are not good for us. That will be the tendency, and all we are doing, really, is gratifying our own desire.

Mr. Contardi was talking about his father living on wheat. See? He was really gratifying his own desire in the sense that he had this knowledge, he believed this knowledge, and he followed it, because he felt it would supply him with what he wanted. But that was not spiritual. His purpose was only to get good physical life out of eating wheat all the time. So the purpose was wrong, and so he ended up sick.

What we have to do is turn these common, ordinary, everyday acts into spiritual acts, by turning them toward the Kingdom of God. You see, this is how character is built, because this old body, this old mind, does not want to do that. It wants to gratify itself.

If we really eat to glorify God, if we really believe Christ, really believe His message about the Kingdom of God, if we really believe in the building of character, really believe all those things, how will we eat, then, brethren? Are we not going to eat the right foods, in the right amounts, to maintain good physical fitness, so that we will always be in the peak of condition, to bring honor and glory to God? Sure we will. But boy, does that

demand the discipline. Boy, does that demand the character. Oh! This is a hard saying.

You see, these people began to understand where Christ was headed. And that is what frightened them off. They were going to have to keep their bodily desires in check or in accordance with the will of God, with the Word of God. See, that is why believing in Christ is eternal life. It goes much further than just the word "belief," because belief affects everything we do.

Are you beginning to understand why James says that, "by works our faith is proved?" What we do shows what we believe. And if we do not really believe Christ, our works will show it.

Now, we tend to be unbalanced, if I can put it this way. We tend to be strong in one area and weak in another. That is the way we all are; we are all a mixed bag. And so some of us are able to, maybe really, discipline ourselves, in the area of food or exercise or whatever, but we might have a tendency to lose our temper, or we might have a tendency to be weak in another area. And so what we have to do is bring it all into right balance. That is a life-long process, until we all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Until we all have the right kind of faith, the right kind of belief, in every area.

And so like I told you in another Bible study, what God is always judging by is our attitude. If we have the right attitude, then our tendency is always going to be to go in the right direction, even though we fail from time to time. And so there is hope for us, even though we slip and fall, and we fall short of the mark, and sin. God in His patience will pick us up, dust us off, forgive us, and say, "Okay sonny, get going again in the right direction." So He is merciful in that way, and He does not count us dead the first time we slip and fall.

But Christianity does require a great deal of discipline, and dedication to the principles of God's Word.

John 6:63 The words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life.

If we believe them, we will follow them. So, the things of the flesh then gain their value, or their real value, only as they are used for spiritual ends. And that is why Solomon said, "Fear God and keep the commandments, that is the whole man."

So we can have physical things, and if we use them toward the right ends, they will be

profitable for us toward life. But if we use them only for our own gratification, then it will give us gratification, but it will not produce life. And so God wants us to be able to enjoy the physical things of life, the good things of life. He wants us to have good clothing, He wants us to be able to have a fine automobile, and live in a nice neighborhood, and have a nice house, or a nice apartment, and nice furnishings within there. But they are good only as we use them toward the Kingdom of God and the glorification of Him.

So we can have them, and not use them in the right way, and so they really lose their value, because all they're doing is gratifying us physically. And there is a powerful tendency for us to be gratified that way, that is why Jesus said, "How difficult it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God"—that tendency to trust in his riches for his gratification, so he becomes deceived by it.

John 6:66-71 From that time, many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. And then Jesus said to the twelve, "do you also want to go away?" And then Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and to know that you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." So Jesus answered them, "did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.

This marks another stage in Jesus' ministry, and we might almost say that this was the beginning of the end. Up until this time there was some antagonism from the authorities, the scribes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and they were alarmed. But now, we begin to see people leaving who believed, and we are only into about the second year of His ministry. Already, people who believe are beginning to drop aside.

There are three things here that I think are interesting to bring out. First of all, there were the defections of His disciples. Why did they defect? I think there were two reasons. One is mentioned directly, that what He was saying was hard, and they began to see the demands that were going to be made on them. And so, they defected because they did not want to face those demands.

The second reason, I think, could have been that they began to perceive that He was headed for disaster. Already the questions of the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin were getting more insistent. We are going to see this very clearly in John 7. They were getting more insistent, and getting more threatening, and they did not like the idea of staying with a sinking ship.

So we can reach a conclusion about those people, and that is that they were there to get something from Him, and not to give themselves to Him. See, that is why He said at the beginning of the chapter, "You are here because you want to eat food." And that precipitated the whole discourse that He gave on the importance of understanding the difference between the physical and the spiritual. The physical can satisfy, but it is only for a short time. And so He said not to labor for that. But these people wanted to be gratified, and they wanted it the wrong way. So they just drifted away.

Then there was the second one (the mention of Judas) is that Jesus already saw the deterioration of Judas' loyalty, or sticking with it. Perhaps He is beginning to see a drifting of his enthusiasms, regarding Jesus, and what Jesus was going to accomplish, so he began to shrink back. So there was deterioration there.

But then there is good old Peter. Now there is a statement of determination. Now I am sure that Peter did not understand a great deal. But in his zeal he said, "Where else can we go?" He at least saw that much. "You only have the words of eternal life. Who is like you?" So he was ready to take up the challenge. Apparently he felt that regardless of what it was going to cost him, that even though he did not understand everything, there was nowhere else that was better to be, than to be with Christ. So at least there was some determination, as opposed to the defection and the deterioration of Judas' zeal.

John 7:1-9 Now after these things, Jesus walked in Galilee. For He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him. [Remember I said earlier, they were beginning to become more threatening to Him.] Now the Jew's Feast of Tabernacles was at hand, and His brothers therefore said to Him, depart from here, and go into Judea, that your disciples may also see the work that you are doing, for no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world. For even His brothers did not believe in Him. And then Jesus to them, "my time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me, because I testify that its works are evil. You go up to this feast, I am not yet going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." And when He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.

There is a bit of confusion here in some people's minds, regarding what seems to be a contradictory statement. "No I'm not going up, the time has not yet come," but then He did go up, and he kept the Feast of Tabernacles. There is a tendency to think of this in terms of a predetermined time, as if He is saying, "There is a destined time for Me to go

there." No, it does not mean that. He was not talking about something that was immovable or unavoidable, like it had already been determined, what time He should go up.

This word "time" does not mean that. It is more akin to our word "opportunity." It can be used in the sense of "time," but it is more akin to our word "opportunity." And so what He is saying is, "It is not yet the best time for Me to go there; it is not the right opportunity." Another way of saying it might be, "It is not the right psychological moment."

Remember, we just read that He was in Galilee, but where was the Feast held? It is held in Judea in Jerusalem. And the people in Judea were beginning to plot to kill Him. Jesus wanted to make the very best use of His time, so when would be the best time to go to the Feast?

The people expected Him to show up, we are going to see that every clearly, it is right in the context. When could He arrive there that would create the right kind of attitude in the people who were going to be listening, where they would be in sort of suspenseful anticipation: "Where is He?" "Where is He?" "Have you seen Him?" "Have you heard Him?" "Is He here?" That is what He was doing. He was waiting until the right moment, when anticipation had reached its peak, and then He would show up. That is exactly what He did. When they were fully expectant, He arrived.

There is a couple of things that we can learn from here, from what He did here. His brothers, who did not believe, but yet they were related to Him through blood, and had the same mother. I think that He undoubtedly felt very close to them, and that He was protective of them, that He wanted to make sure that it was still His responsibility to lead the family, that He would take care of them, and certainly they could have quite an emotional appeal on Him. But I think that this context shows that it is impossible to force Jesus' hand. In a sense we might say, He was his own man. We might almost call this a dare. Did you see what they said? Look at what they said. It is almost as if they were taunting Him.

John 7:3 His brothers therefore said to Him, depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples may also see the works that You are doing.

Why do you think they said that? All you have to do is go back to the beginning of the book of John and count up where He did His great works. Where did He do His great works? He did them in Galilee and in Samaria. Of all the things that He did, only John 5 records one thing that He did in Judea, one sign. Everything else up to this point had

been done in Galilee, or we might say more generally outside of Judea.

So what His brothers are doing, they are taunting Him, "Why do not you go down to Judea, and show the people *down there* what You can do?" Now for most of us in our vanity, that would be pretty hard to resist. But He resisted.

Another thing that they were saying,

John 7:4 For no one does anything in secret, while he himself seeks to be known openly.

"Well, Jesus, if you're going to witness for this God of yours, do not you have to get out there among the public? You cannot become well known being secretive and hiding in a corner, Jesus. If people are going to hear the words that you have to say, you have to get out there in front of them. Jesus, Jerusalem is the key. That is the capital city. That is where all the big people are. If you are going to be known, it does not do any good for you to be up here in Galilee, you have got to be down there in Jerusalem."

Those are good arguments, carnally. And in the end, Jesus could not argue, could not refute what they were saying, that if a witness was going to be made, it had to be made in Jerusalem. You see, they could not force His hand. He was his own man, and we are going to see again and again, Jesus ran the show, wherever He was. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, no matter how big the crowd, no matter how important the people were who were questioning Him, He ran the show, He dominated it.

Well, He was God, and that is why. He was strong. He was not an anemic, "meek and mild," pale-faced Jesus that we see pictured. He was a strong personality. In fact, He was the most interesting person who ever lived.

The next thing that we are going to see here is something we did not really read yet, but I think that this will prepare your mind for the next section, and that is, that you are going to see that it is impossible for people to treat Him with indifference. We are going to see that people's perceptions of Him were really divergent, and they could not treat Him with indifference. Everybody seemed to see Him from their own perspective, and come up with different ideas about Him.

So one more thing that we might add here is verse 7,

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you...

Meaning His brothers. What Jesus was telling them was, "Look, it does not matter when you go up to the Feast. Nobody is looking for you, nobody wants to kill you, nobody is going to expect you to do a miracle, you could go there and nobody would even know you were there."

Well why? His brothers were in tune with the world. They fit right in. But if Jesus went up there, it would be different because He was not tuned in to the world, and you could not remain indifferent to Him. This section is going to show that very clearly, because He disturbed people.

Remember what I told you last Sabbath? Prophets disturb people. That is part of their responsibility, and Jesus was the greatest of them. He said things that set people's minds whirling, either in anger, or in agreement, or He confused people, one or the other. And so He could not be treated with indifference. If He went up there, He knew He was going to speak, and He was going to stir things up. So He said to His brothers, "Look, if you go up there, it is not going to make one whit of difference. But if I go up there, people are going to hate me. So I am going to choose the time that I go, and when I get good and well ready, when I gauge that it is the right time, when the crowd is expectant enough, they are looking around for me, and they are asking questions, I am going to be there, I am going to show up."

So in a sense we might say (please do not take this wrongly) Jesus knew how to play the game. He knew how to work the crowds. And He did not do it selfishly to gain a following for Himself. He wanted to make sure that there were enough people there who were in tune to listen to what He had to say, on behalf of God and the Gospel. So He used psychology in the right way so that the very best witness possible could be made.