

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

The Question of Motives

John 6:60-66

Intro: We've now come to the end of the "Bread of Life" discourse. After feeding the 5000 and the storm on the Sea, these event lead up to Jesus giving this amazing teaching concerning eternal life and the fact that He Himself is the "Bread of Life" (48-50). Jesus had challenged the crowd at the start of His teaching that they were following Him **not** because they saw and understood the significance of the miracle He'd performed the day before. No, they were only following Him because they got free food! He then tells them in vs27 to stop laboring for the food that perishes but labor for the food that endures to everlasting life which the Son of Man will give to those who believe on Him.

Then, Jesus challenges both the people and the religious leaders by telling them that He is the living bread that must be eaten in order to receive eternal life (51) and the bread He gives is His own flesh! We cringe every time we hear that even though we actually know what He is talking about. Imagine how this clueless crowd felt about this topic. Well, we don't have to imagine because John tells us in vs52. They began to quarrel about it (heated argument). Jesus then says, "Most assuredly, I say to you..." Right here I can imagine the disciples have noticed the crowd getting agitated and they're probably thinking Jesus will smooth this out since He's gotten Himself into a little jam but that doesn't happen. On the contrary, Jesus doubles down on the metaphor and drives home His point once again; only this time, He uses much stronger terms (53). As far as the disciples are concerned, this is all going downhill fast.

(54) This is not communion (the Eucharist) – it doesn't save us. This is simply partaking of Jesus Himself, imbibing in Him. It's a recognition that the thing that's always gnawing on us, the thing we are longing for our entire life, the thing that people try to fill with alcohol, drugs, sex, money, fame, etc., the thing all human beings are missing – is Jesus!

60- It appears His teaching not only upset the religious leaders and common folk, but many of His disciples too! Jesus had left Judea to minister in Galilee and for a while people were attracted to His teaching and began to

follow Him around. The miracles He'd performed in the area attracted so much attention that He had quite a congregation but as the true nature of His claims became more apparent in His teaching, most of those "followers" turned back and didn't walk with Him anymore. We saw this in Judea and it's happening now in Galilee. Jesus was popular and drew crowds but as He began to teach, His doctrine became the measure of true discipleship and most dropped out.

Why did those who appeared to be disciple turn away? It's because the teachings of Jesus were hard to accept! The Greek word used here doesn't mean hard to understand, it means hard to tolerate! As long as His followers didn't understand Him, they stayed around and asked questions. It was when they did understand Him that they went elsewhere. They left because what they heard was so contrary to their own views that they refused to accept it.

This attitude is prominent in our day as well. Many are quick to criticize someone who is really giving out God's truth. They complain that the teaching is hard but the problem is not in the difficulty of the doctrine but their unwillingness to accept what they hear. Maybe it conflicts with their personal views or the traditions they have been taught. But, instead of allowing Jesus to address their difficulties by His word, they grumble among themselves and turn away.

The teachings the crowd found difficult are the same one people find difficult to accept today. The incarnation of Christ – that He was not just man but God; that He existed before His physical birth and had a unique relationship with the Father. He also taught that He needed to go to the cross (51). Most folk believe salvation can be earned but to hear that Jesus had to earn salvation for them and they would then have to receive it as a free gift from Him or not receive it at all—that was all just too much. He even dared to suggest that it was impossible for them to believe on Him unless the Father acts first to call them unto the Son. Nothing stirs up the ire and rebellion of the human heart more than this particular teaching. But it's true and Jesus didn't hesitate to proclaim it. In this discourse, Jesus is demanding complete allegiance to Himself and that everything else (even literal bread) be put in 2nd place

Each of these teachings ran counter to the normal way of thinking of those

in Christ's day, and they run counter to the normal way of thinking today. The question is: Are we willing to change our opinions to conform to the teachings of Christ? Or will we continue in error? Obviously, we need to have our discipleship corrected by Christ's doctrine, and we need to learn not to evaluate spiritual things by the measure of our own understanding.

61-63- Jesus didn't preach to please His audience – He challenged and confronted them! “Does this offend you?” Clearly it did! He wasn't questioning their mindset, just the motivation behind it. “If all this has offended you, what will you think if you see Me in glory and have to answer to Me in judgment?” Better to be offended now and get over it, than be offended then with no chance repent. Or, Jesus could be saying, “Are you offended at My teaching? What if I retracted it? In fact, what if I retracted the whole plan of salvation and returned to the Father? What would you do then?” What would we do? What could we do? Our situation would be desperate, hopeless! Thank God, Jesus didn't do that. Instead, He went to the cross and gave His life as a ransom for our sins. The point is, it's far better to have Jesus' ministry, even though it had doctrines that are difficult to accept, than to have no ministry at all. Jesus goes on to say something else (**63**). This could very well be the theme statement of the whole discourse. You see, it's only through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that we can understand His doctrine. The truth of this is evident in the earthly ministry of Jesus. Wouldn't it have been fantastic to walk with Jesus while He was here? Many people did just that and really didn't believe; they eventually turned back and no longer followed Him. Knowing Jesus in the flesh didn't necessarily profit those who were with Him. Jesus is saying that it is His doctrines, words and actions that will bless them (not His outward appearance) and these have to be revealed by the Holy Spirit for blessing to come.

This same truth is restated in another way in **Luke 11:27-28**. This woman wanted to honor Jesus and His family. But, while not dishonoring His mother, Jesus points out the greater and more important connection between Himself and those who hear the Word of God and keep it. This is the true place of blessing. Think what this means! His disciples were more blessed in hearing Jesus than His mother was in bearing Him! Jesus continually called men and women to place their hearts and focus their minds on spiritual realities, not fleshly things.

This principle is just as true for us today. It's not the external trappings of religion that bless the soul, but the Word of God as it is revealed to us by the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit. This is true of any outward form of religion. Baptism is a good thing; it is commanded by God. But baptism does not save an individual. In fact, it's even become a curse in some denominations where it's practiced upon unbelievers, because it gives the impression that all is well with their souls when actually they are still children of wrath and still under the condemnation of sin.

Communion can be a blessed event. But it's observed regularly by thousands who have never truly committed their lives to Jesus so it's totally ineffective. The works of the flesh profit nothing if the Spirit does not give life. Bible reading, prayer, church membership. Each of these things is good and spiritually valuable but only if the Holy Spirit is blessing us through them and only if we are seeking His blessing in them. But, they each can also be used in an unbelieving, formal way and when they are so used, they achieve nothing. We grow in the doctrine of Jesus only when we allow the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ to interpret His words and apply them to our hearts.

64-66- Jesus knew all along who believed and who didn't, even with Judas. Then, He goes on to reiterate again the necessity of the Father's initial work in men's hearts (65). More than just a statement of doctrine, Jesus is rebuking their carnal, fleshly motivations for following Him. If they don't start seeking Him by the Spirit instead of seeking Him as just a walking bakery, then they have not come to Him at all. It's not that they stop following Him; it's that they never really were following Him, not in spirit and in truth. The same can be said of anyone who comes to God out of fleshly motivations. They do not actually come to God; rather, they come to a false god, a "gimme" god; a god of their own making – which can neither save them nor satisfy the deepest longings of their hearts.

Whether this was the straw that broke the camels back or just an explanation of the mass exodus, John tells us that it's here these "followers" no longer followed Jesus. It's clear that what these people wanted, Jesus would not give; and what He had to offer them, they would not receive! Of course, once Jesus effectively discouraged every fleshly motive for following Him, many stopped following. If we could do the same thing today on a larger scale – effectively discourage every fleshly motive for following Jesus

– how many would stop following Him in churches today?

The sad truth of our times is that, unfortunately, many churches actually encourage people to follow Jesus for fleshly motives, promoting Him as a “product” to “fix” their lives – just like bread will fix their hunger. Those who come to Jesus under such a sales and marketing approach will always have a much more difficult time of seeing Him for who He truly is, in all His majesty and glory. It’s hard to grasp the concept of the Holy One of God when you’re only looking for a Monty Hall or a Santa Clause. I’m not saying it’s impossible for some such person to eventually come to Jesus in spirit and in truth but if they do, it will be in spite of what they are being taught, not because of it.

So, what will you do with Christ’s words? Will you accept them and follow them, allowing the Holy Spirit to bless you through them? Or will you turn away from them, as many of Christ’s followers did? It’s true that no one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him, but this does not eliminate human responsibility to heed Christ’s words. Notice the balance of truth in Christ’s statement in [vs63](#). He said, “The Spirit gives life.” That is the divine side. In this work God operates alone and no man participates. But Jesus also went on to say, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” The phrase “to you” speaks of human responsibility. The teachings of Jesus are directed to you but the real question is simply this: Do you believe them?

If you are not a born-again Christian, then your obligation (your responsibility) is to read God’s Word and see both yourself and your need reflected in it. In addition to this, you are further obligated to follow that true Word of God wherever it leads you and to come to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior (for the Word leads in this direction).

On the other hand, if you are already a Christian then what is your obligation? Our obligation is to take these words to those who are lost and who will certainly die in their sins without them. This is our prime responsibility. We have other obligations too, of course. We’re obliged to care for our families, honor the Lord at our workplace and represent Him accurately in our neighborhoods and communities. We cannot neglect these good works. But even as we do them we must still remember that the truly great and lasting changes in this world, those that determine history and

human destiny, are those that take place in the realm of the spirit through the preaching of God's Word. You must give yourself first and foremost to that work. How can we do this?

You must feed on Christ's words, allowing them to digest in your hearts then live out those words to the point that you exude them. Many pressing concerns will attempt to dissuade you from this necessary work. People will try to discourage your commitment. Do not be discouraged. Proclaim the teachings of Jesus to those who will receive them and to those who will not. Proclaim them to everyone. As you do, God will use them to draw men and women to the Savior.

Many people walked away from Jesus that day but some stayed. What will you do with the claims of Jesus? Will you accept them or reject them? There are no other options. If you reject them, you must deal with the consequences of your own sin by yourself. I've got to be honest with you – I don't know how you're going to do that. At least, not in a way that is pleasant. The wages of sin is death and death means separation. If you're going to pay for your own sin, you'll do so for eternity separates from God. But Jesus Christ went to the cross for your sin, He's already paid the price – all you have to do is accept His payment and you do that by accepting Him into your heart. Will you do that today? Will you become a follower of Jesus Christ; enjoying all the benefits and accepting all the responsibilities that come with it? 😊