

## Jesus is the Only Way -Choose Him

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-Are you the type of person who reads directions or tosses them to the side and starts to work?

-Are you more likely to work from a recipe when preparing a dish in the kitchen or just work from scratch?

-Do you need quiet when you read, or can you get lost in a good book anywhere regardless of what is going on around you?

-We are all wired a little differently. In many things, there's not really a "right" or "wrong" way.

-But there are certainly contexts in our life that our approach and response is vital to our experience.

-I'm not extremely handy or an expert with many home projects or car repairs, but I'm willing; which means I'm extremely dependent on instructions.

-Google can give you a false sense of confidence you can fix anything! But it can also provide very helpful directions, that if followed, can bring about the desired outcome.

-You have to understand the terminology and follow the instructions, often in a specific order, to accomplish the task and complete the project successfully.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Share a time when you tried to cook or assemble something? Did you follow directions or a recipe? How did that impact the experience?**

-For the past 3 weeks, we've been walking through the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John.

-Jesus has fed a multitude miraculously, walked on water, and been teaching those following him about His true identity as the source of eternal life.

-Many see this moment in the life of Jesus as the pinnacle of his public ministry, as well as the turning point, a line in the sand moment, for his followers.

-Jesus has just finished a lengthy discourse where He has described Himself as Living Bread, Bread from Heaven, the Bread of Life. His point is very clear: I am the source of life. True life is found only in me.

-He speaks of "eating his flesh and drinking his blood" as a strong metaphor to stress this reality: feeding on Jesus is the only way we have eternal life.

-This isn't really a new message. Life in Jesus has been a central theme all throughout John:

- John 1:4, In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.
- John 1:12-13, To all who receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.
- John 3:15-16, Everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
- John 4:14, Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
- John 5:24, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

-Jesus has not been mysterious or evasive about His true identity. His use of OT references, analogies and metaphors have all clearly communicated His message and his identity.

-In vs 60-71, John records a variety of responses that we want to look at today and identify how we should respond to this same clear message of his identity: Jesus is the only way.

**John 6:60, On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"**

-The message translation makes a little play on words referring to the "eating and drinking" by saying this teaching was "too tough to swallow."

-Let's keep reading

### **John 6:61-65**

-The "it" in vs 60 & "this" in vs 61 is Jesus' strong declaration about his identity and sufficiency: **Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life (John 6:40)**

-It wasn't what Jesus said was difficult to understand, but it was difficult to accept

-He doesn't recant or retract his statement, but speaks to it more clearly by saying, "If this offends you, just wait until you see the Son of Man "ascending" to where He was before!"

-This is a reference first to his death by crucifixion, with the original language paralleling Jesus' statement to Nicodemus about being "lifted up on a pole" like the snake in the desert in chp 3

-If the people were disappointed that He didn't come to earth to be a political deliverer or an endless supply of physical bread or miracle worker, they would certainly find His being arrested and executed a disappointment, even scandalous.

-This is also a reinforcement of His divine origin in Heaven mentioned by John in chapter 1 and repeated multiple times to stress His deity and oneness with God as Messiah = "Son of God"

-In Acts 7, Steven, one of the first martyrs for following Jesus, was stoned and as he was dying, Luke records, **"Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:55-56)**

-Jesus then repeats the same declaration He gave to Nicodemus and the promise He had been offering to all: My words are full of the Holy Spirit and bring life! "Word of Life" (1 John 1:1)

-One of the clearest characteristics of the Holy Spirit in the OT is the giving of life and Jesus has continually indicated and demonstrated the work of the Holy Spirit in and through him to bring life to those who accept His teaching and following Him.

-He was challenging the common thinking that ancestry, moral behavior, obedience to the Law would give a person the right standing before God and achieve life to the full, eternal life

-Paul compares living according to the flesh or according to the Spirit in Romans 7&8. (Take time late to read it these verses)

-And again, this was hard for those listening to accept, they got choked on what He was saying

-F.F. Bruce, "What they wanted, He would not give; what He offered they would not receive."

-vs 66, **"From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."**

-The verse is probably better stated, "For this reason...many turned back"

-It is clear that the disciples referred to in this statement were not the 12, but those who were following Jesus only interested in the miracles and the benefits

-N.T. Wright, "He had made a huge hole in their world view and they preferred not to think about it anymore"

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: What has been a difficult truth to accept about Jesus? Why?**

-Jesus was not overwhelmed by the loss of commitment on the part of many who had professed some allegiance to him, nor was he shocked.

-John stated in vs 64 Jesus knew from the beginning which of them did not believe, a similar statement to John 2:25. Jesus as fully God is fully omniscient. He knew the state of their heart.

-He wasn't shocked or thwarted in fulfilling His mission to bring life to all those who do believe

-Listen to what He says to the 12 disciples

**JOHN 6:67-68**

-Peter, who seems to be a self-appointed spokesman for the others, and typically has more wrestling to do with what Jesus says, speaks confidently of what he and the others have come to understand and believe- **Jesus is the only way!**

- **He is the source of eternal life**
- **His words are true**
- **He is the Holy One of God** (1 with God, set apart/appointed to do God's work, Jn17:19)

-This declaration seems very similar to the other 3 gospels recording Peter making the Great Confession (Matthew 16, Mark 8, Luke 9) and contains the same saving faith through believing in who Jesus truly is, proclaiming the deity, power, authority, and exclusivity of Jesus

-It truly is the line of demarcation of Christianity...

-If you believe there is any other way to be saved, you've probably found Jesus' words hard to swallow. It is a claim of sufficiency, supremacy, and certainly exclusivity: Jesus is the only way

-If you're trying to be good enough...you won't

Ride the coattails of your parents or spouse...you can't

Thinking showing up for church is what it's all about...it's not

Or thinking you are NOT worthy to follow him...you're wrong...You ARE worthy!

-You need to listen closely and truly process what Jesus is saying, what He's offering

-It's certainly exclusive and challenging, but how we respond makes all the difference

-Do you see the difference in how the masses responded compared to how Peter and the disciples responded?

-Those who turned away understood that being a follower of Jesus involves steadfast allegiance to him, to his claims of deity and the only source of eternal life. They turned away and refused to accept these demands. They were willing to accept the free meals but not submit to the Lordship of Jesus. They maintained their integrity but lost their soul.

-Peter has come to understand the cost of believing in Jesus. Remember, he and the others left everything (family, professions, security, comfort, reputation) to follow Jesus, yet knows there is no one else that brings eternal life. He understands and believes Jesus is Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the Living Water, the Bread of Life, the Holy One of God, the one who brings eternal life. **Jesus is the only way.**

-It could be in this same moment when Peter makes his Great Confession that Jesus explains the cost of following him. (after the feeding of the 5K, Jesus asked "Who do you say I am?", Peter says, "You are God's Messiah!")

**LUKE 9:23-25. "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life**

for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

-The cost is great but finding life to the fullest now and eternal life in Jesus forever is greater!

-But we can't ignore the fact that Jesus clearly knows not everyone is willing to pay the cost

**JOHN 6:70-71**

-Every mention of the 12 in the 4 gospels mentions Judas and also refers to him as the one who will betray Jesus

-There is actually another disciple named Judas son of James that goes by Thaddeus. I'd want to be known by another name as not confused with the person who betrays Jesus!

-Jesus, fully God and all knowing, knew from the beginning and before inviting him to be his disciple, that Judas would betray him. So why would he allow Judas to be one of the 12?

-Because Judas wasn't in control, God was. It wasn't Judas' plan that led to Jesus being crucified, it was God's love and His desire to see everyone have eternal life by believing in Jesus. The cross was necessary to accomplish God's mission!

-It's very clear from Scripture that Satan entered Judas to try to accuse and slander Jesus

-In fact, Jesus calls Judas "the devil" not "a devil" in the original language, "adversary"

-Satan found a foothold in Judas and led him toward destruction.

-He wants to do the same to each of us to keep us from finding life to the fullest. Jn 10:10

**1 Peter 5:8-9, Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.**

-To be a follower of Jesus means to accept his claims to deity and to trust him as the only way for salvation and eternal life. We resist the devil by standing firm in our belief of who Jesus is.

-Belief is not just a mental exercise or even just an allegiance of the heart. It's a matter of control.

[Spirit Walk by Steve Smith, quote about commitment vs surrender]

-That's what separated Peter from Judas and from the crowds. Peter was surrendered.

-Everybody else wanted lots of things from Jesus, and when he demanded absolute authority, they choked and split. They wanted fulfillment but not surrender.

-Where do you find yourself today?

- Have you seen some of the miracles Jesus has done for others and wonder if he could help you overcome your addiction, bring peace to your marriage, straighten out your finances, give you wisdom as a parent, or just make sense of this crazy world around us?
- You've found yourself in a crowd of people who seem to be listening to Jesus' words and talk about how wonderful He is, but you find yourself debating whether or not to truly let him have control of your life. It sounds like too tall of an order to choose him over everything else, including yourself, even though His offer seems authentic
- Or maybe you have been hanging around Jesus for quite some time, attending worship services, reading the Bible, praying, even serving, but it still has been a wrestling match between you and Him for control of your life...it's been on your terms...and you can be easily disappointed, even cynical, when things don't go your way/play out like you wish

-Peter's confession is a declaration of surrender: there's no one else!

- He knew he was a sinner and couldn't save himself.

- He had seen first-hand the demonstration of deity in Jesus and was a firm believer
- He relinquished control of his life and entrusted everything to Jesus as Savior & Lord

-Belief must be surrender, recognizing Jesus is the only way. I hope you will choose him today!

**"To believe is to have been brought to the place where one knows that one has to rely completely on Jesus and on Jesus alone." Lesslie Newbigin**

-If you are tired of trying of looking everywhere else, and at anything else or even yourself as the source of life, I hope you hear Jesus' offer today and accept Him as the only Savior and Lord.

-He offers life to the fullest now and eternal life when this life is over!

-Peter's confession and example is a great one to repeat and follow

-He surrendered his life to Jesus, learned how to live and love like Jesus, and was saved and satisfied.

**1 PETER 1:3-9, 18-21 (full slide)**

-If you are ready to accept Jesus offer of salvation and his gift of eternal life, I want you to pick up your phone and text NOW to 812-858-8668. We have friends who are ready to help you accept Jesus as Savior and Lord and take your next steps in following him right now.

-Anyone may have eternal life if they will receive Jesus, trust him as the only way for salvation, surrender to his Lordship, and be satisfied with all that God is in Jesus.

-We've been praying for you to respond and I pray you will choose Jesus as the only way!

-For those of us who have surrendered our lives to Jesus as Savior and Lord, I want to invite you to celebrate his life, death, and resurrection with us in a time of communion.

-We declare in this act of worship that Jesus is our only source of salvation, strength, hope, and peace, and we declare our dependence on and our satisfaction in Him.

-Wherever you are worshipping with us and whomever you are gathered with today, take the time to thank God for giving us Jesus as the Only Way and thank Him for the eternal life we find in Jesus alone.

PRAY

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Steve Smith in Spirit Walk: The Extraordinary Power of Acts for Ordinary People (pp. 56-58).

The essence of control is surrender. And surrender is not the same as commitment.

The late pastor Dr. Adrian Rogers told of a conversation with a Romanian pastor, Josef Tson, who suffered during the Communist reign in his country. Dr. Rogers asked Josef of his impression of American Christianity. With some reluctance, Josef shared his impressions:

“The key word in American Christianity is commitment.... The word commitment did not come into great usage in the English language until about the 1960s. In Romania we do not even have a word to translate the English word commitment. If you were to use commitment in your message tonight, I would not have a proper word to translate it with.”

Josef continued, “When a new word comes into usage, it generally pushes an old word out. I began to study and found the old word that commitment replaced. Adrian, the old word that is no longer in vogue in America is the word surrender.”

“Josef,” I asked, “what is the difference between commitment and surrender?” He said, “When you make a commitment, you are still in control, no matter how noble the thing you commit to. One can commit to pray, to study the Bible, to give money, or to commit to automobile payments, or to lose weight. Whatever he chooses to do, he commits to it. But surrender is different. If someone holds a gun and asks you to lift your hands in the air as a token of surrender, you don’t tell that person what you are committed to. You simply surrender and do as you are told.”

He said, “Americans love commitment because they are still in control. But the key word is surrender. We are to be slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Commitment can be self-centered and cause-centered. Commitment is fundamentally about “me.” How strongly am I devoted to someone or something? Surrender is all about the other person. I relinquish my rights and give up control to someone or something else. Our churches are filled with nominally committed churchgoers who have “prayed the prayer” and show up at services occasionally. Scattered among them are a few committed Christians who show up regularly, are earnest in their faith, and do most of the work. But how many surrendered disciples do we have—disciples completely sold out to Jesus and His agenda for their lives? **Commitment is not a bad thing, except when it gets in the way of surrender.**