

Series: Receiving life by believing in God's Son (a Gospel of John study)

Sermon Text: John 6:48-71

Kids Word: Jesus

(This part of the story is only told in John)

How do you feel when people question their beliefs or your beliefs? Ever feel defensive, angry, or afraid? I met a Somalian refugee recently, who was canceled by his Muslim family for becoming a Christian. He said he became attracted to Christianity, in part, because of a pastor letting him do what Muslim leaders don't permit...asking questions about faith. Something is wrong when we can't do that. As we're working through real-life stories of how it looked when people met Jesus in John **1:19-11:57**, we find Jesus welcomed questions, enjoyed getting people to contemplate truth, and was never in a hurry. So far, in chapter 6, Jesus claimed to be just like His Father who feeds, protects, rescues, and guides people through the wilderness. He also claimed to be the only food that satisfies eternally and more essential than bread and water. While these words were meant to be comforting, they upset people whose beliefs centered on something other than God. John used the word belief (Grk. *pisteuō*) over 98 times, which means "*to have faith in something.*" He challenges us to wonder, "*What person, place, thing, or idea has become the true object of our faith?*" All of us, even atheists, believe in some path to fulfillment and abundant life. While many claim to believe in God, life's pressures have a way of unveiling the true objects our faith. Of course, if you dare point that out like Jesus did, it's likely to upset people who trust human strategies more than the person of Jesus Christ. John tells us "*fullness of life is found only through believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*". Chapter 6 is one of Jesus' most game-changing teachings where He vividly, and somewhat gruesomely, contrasts faith in Him with belief in a created person, place, thing, or idea. This will be our...

BIG IDEA: Jesus offers us Himself, not a system.

Let's consider some key ideas and applications in our text.

We must feast on Jesus, not His provisions. (6:47-55)

- Back in verse 35, Jesus linked the ideas of *belief*, *bread*, *eternal life*, and *Himself*, "*I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*" He did it again in *verses 47-48, Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life.* Then He offered a history lesson in *verse 49, your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.* Listen to how the Apostle Paul tells this story in 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, "*Don't forget that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed*

through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.” They **ate** God’s provisions but kept desiring evil things instead Him. It’s like they said, “Thanks for your stuff, God, but we’ll take it from here!” If you’ve ever had “takers” in your life or people who seemed to be your friends until you stopped doing things for them, then you can relate. According to Romans 1:25, humans have a sad tendency to exchange glorious things for lesser things. In the case of God, we exchange Him and His truths for lies and devote ourselves to creation instead of Creator.

- Now, look what Jesus said in **verses 50-51**, ***This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.***” Their shock and repulsion at His words was apparent in **verse 52** as ***the Jews disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"*** This imagery understandably upset Jewish people whose law forbade the eating of **blood**. Leviticus 17 explains God’s reasoning for this rule, “*For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.*” Jesus pressed the imagery further in **verses 53-55** and **said to them, "Truly, truly, 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 feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.** So, **faith** is like **eating** and **drinking**--it’s a taking possession of Jesus, like ingesting **food** and **drink**, and being wholly nourished with **eternal life** in this life and in the age to come. This **life** obviously comes with the guarantee of **resurrection**. Think about it...if Jesus provides the **food** and He is the **food**, then what He **gives** us is Himself. To **give** His **flesh** implies death, so He is promising to voluntarily **give** His **life** as the payment for sin, so that we might have **eternal life**. Jesus is the **true food** or **true drink**, and so whatever He provides is meant to point us to Him and stir up a desire to spend time with Him, which is our second statement...

We must abide in Jesus to find true life. (6:56-62)

- In John 15:5, Jesus used the following analogy for what *faith* is like, “*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*” Here, Jesus linked His *flesh* and *blood* talk with this more familiar concept of *abiding in Him*. In *verses 56-58* He said, *whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” Again, Jesus is *the bread that came down from heaven* and *faith* is equal to *eating His flesh and drinking His blood*. Jesus is clearly laying out for us the meaning of the Lord’s Supper, which later instituted. It’s a sacrament conveying our unbreakable communion with Him that empowers our lives. Obviously, eating and drinking are useless without faith and the Spirit working in us as we’ll soon see in *verses 63–64*, but it’s clear what kind of *faith* relationship Jesus seeks. It’s not reading instructions but consuming and digesting His Words as necessary food (cf. Job 23:12). It’s not just praying but communicating with a vital friend. It’s not using Him to achieve our social-political and religious agendas but surrendering to the ways of His kingdom, so that through us, His will is done on earth as in Heaven. Jesus wants us to be “*all in*” like the first church in Acts 2 “*...devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers...And were selling their belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*” If you’re thinking, “*Man, being ‘all in’ would consume a lot of time and make it hard to pursue the life I want.*” Well, that’s the point! If you’re more consumed with daily life than with Jesus, then you’re *abiding in* or trusting in the wrong source of *life*.*
- Sadly, the crowd *at Capernaum* was like that. We’re told in *verses 59-60*, *Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"* His words weren’t the issue, it was their unwillingness to exchange earthly living for *eternal life* or exchange human solutions for divine alternatives. We’re told His words *offended* then, which meant they felt scandalized or trapped by them. *Verse 61* says, *knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about*

this, Jesus said to them, "Do you take offense at this?" The Apostle Paul often implied Jesus is an intellectual and moral trap for the self-righteous who oppose God cf. Romans 9:33; 11:9; 1 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 5:11). God's demands and claims seem outrageous to us when our *faith* is built on human ideas. In **verse 62**, Jesus stated the obvious conclusion, ***then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?"*** i.e., *"If you won't accept me being the bread of life that's come down to earth (6:38), then you won't believe me when I'm ascending back to heaven."* This moves us to our third statement...

We must live by His Spirit, not by our flesh. (6:63-65; cf. Galatians 5:16-26)

- **Verse 63** reminds me of when Jesus was chatting with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, specifically when He dropped the *water* metaphors and spoke of the *Spirit* and truth. They both *believed* in systems that were failing them, and Jesus basically told them what He said here, ***it is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*** It's not that Jesus ends our hunger or thirst, it's that His Spirit is an endless supply of refreshment. Jesus said *human effort* cannot *give* this kind of *life* because it keeps demanding more of us. How many sermons did the world preach to us last week about joining a cause or doing your part to restore life, or dignity, or rights, or justice to someone? They make it sound as if we only need to stand up and fight and everything will be better. How does that seem to be going? Now, imagine Jesus being interviewed by CNN or Fox and saying ***it is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*** They'd be like, *"Listen buddy, we need action, not words"*, and Jesus would say, *"I already took action, but you just don't believe me."* That's His point in **verses 64-65...But there are some of you who do not believe.** (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, *"This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."* We will inevitably *betray* Jesus if our *faith* is in human efforts instead of the gospel. Psalm 20:7 says, *"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God."* The gospel claims Jesus lived, died, and rose again to fix what's wrong with this world! This leads to our fourth and final statement, which is a massive takeaway...

We must keep believe, even if friends walk away. (6:66-71)

- This chapter ends with a rather ominous warning. *Verses 66-71 say, after this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.* Gospel work is *hard* to measure. Something caused a guy who did life with Jesus and His inner circle to eventually *turn back* and *betray* Jesus! His defection was probably one of the toughest hurdles for the disciples to overcome. I mean, what do you do when someone you've loved and served with quits following Jesus? Even the most resolute believer might question if it's worth it to follow Jesus. I've been there, and I promise you it is! I mean, "*Did Judas' betrayal make Jesus any less worthy?*" Absolutely not!
- *Judas* had the same issue as the crowds that *turned back*...Jesus didn't pan out to be what they wanted. These were by definition, "*good and faithful Jewish people*" who anticipated the Old Testament promise of a Messiah whose kingdom would end poverty, injustice, and evil (cf. Deuteronomy 30:9-10; Isaiah 9:7; Jeremiah 29:14, 30:3, 18; 32:44; Ezekiel 37:24-26). Sadly, when Jesus didn't instantly assume the role of a socio-political Messiah, fill their bellies, and liberate their nation, they lost interest. Remember back in verse 15 where they tried to kidnap Jesus to serve their agenda? It is so easy to do what they did, isn't it? We're like, "*Jesus offers me unlimited heavenly bread? Great! I have tons of recipes and can turn this bread into all sorts of things!*" Jesus presents Himself as our greatest need, but it seems we don't know the difference between needs and indulgences. We fail to realize that "*just because we can, doesn't mean we should*", and we use Jesus as the means to fulfill our dreams, agendas, and political ambitions! I'm not saying Jesus doesn't care about stuff we care about, but the solution *He brought down from Heaven* is the gospel, not a socio-political agenda or human strategy. We all want a solution to the world's problems, but *Judas* and the other *disciples* who *turned back* are a stern warning to us to not let hurts, social concerns, or other human causes eclipse Jesus' agenda and our *faith* in His gospel. If we don't heed this warning and forget that the end does not justify the means, we will eventually become impatient and *turn back*.

- Speaking of which, did you catch the difference between those who turned back and those who endured? The key is found in what Peter said to Jesus in *verse 69, we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God*. Those who *turned back* had to “*see to believe*”, but those who kept going did so because they *believed* in Jesus without demanding to have all their questions satisfied or see immediate results. If you’re the kind of person who must “*see to believe*”, you’ll probably leave a wake of broken relationships as you bounce from church to church and eventually fall out. Do you realize it takes *faith* to *believe* in God’s plan to use a group of selfish and messed up people to change the world with a message about what God has already done to fix it? It what Jesus did with His original 12! Let’s not be impatient, results-oriented person who quit on Jesus and people. Let’s remember *it is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all*. And no matter who *turns back*, even if it’s a long-term member of our inner circle, let’s not allow them to erase our confidence in Jesus. Let’s keep praying for them and believing in Jesus who said, *no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father*.

Let’s pray...Father, forgive us for continually missing the point, even when we don’t realize we’re missing the point. Our sinful nature causes us to crave things and to turn you and your message into our means of getting those things instead of our means to you. While we should be plugging into you and abiding in you as our source of power and life, we too often are joining ourselves to lesser things that can never satisfy the cravings deep within us. Sadly, our missing the point can keep others from seeing the point and knowing how a relationship with Jesus really looks. Help us to believe “it is the Spirit who gives life, and the flesh is no help at all”, so that we can become the vessels for you to do your will on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Let’s stand and declare to one another in song the true source of eternal power. Join us in singing, “There is power in the blood.”

So, what’s your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

Quotes/Additional thoughts:

- **Book Context:** The Gospel of the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, provides a clearly stated purpose. *John 20:30-31* says, “*Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*” Some people demand to have all their questions satisfied before bowing to Jesus, yet John claimed

his limited account was enough to bring anyone to faith. As we read it, our Savior and friend emerges from the pages as a real person in the real world. Jesus shows us what we could become, if we too would rely on His infinite Father who will gladly supply whatever we need.

- **Life in his name:** Life is the Greek word, “zōē”, which means “Life, Living, Lifetime, Life-Giving” and is where we get the word, “zoology” in English. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says it's “used in the NT of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, that which the Father has in Himself, and which He gave to the Incarnate Son to have in Himself, Jhn 5:26, and which the Son manifested in the world, 1Jo 1:2. From this life man has become alienated in consequence of the Fall, Eph 4:18, and of this life men become partakers through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jhn 3:15, who becomes its Author to all such as trust in Him, Act 3:15, and who is therefore said to be 'the life' of the believer, Col 3:4, for the life that He gives He maintains, Jhn 6:35, 63. Eternal life is the present actual possession of the believer because of his relationship with Christ, Jhn 5:24; 1Jo 3:14, and that it will one day extend its domain to the sphere of the body is assured by the Resurrection of Christ, 2Cr 5:4; 2Ti 1:10. This life is not merely a principle of power and mobility, however, for it has moral associations which are inseparable from it, as of holiness and righteousness. Death and sin, life and holiness, are frequently contrasted in the Scriptures.”
- **Context of chapter 6:** “The reference to the Passover in verse 4 gives an indicator of duration. A year has passed since the cleansing of the temple (2:13f.) During this time Jesus has ministered largely in and around Galilee, as described by the other three evangelists...This sixth chapter is the only section of teaching in this gospel which is set in the Galilee region. The Galileans were a distinct type, peasants living close to the soil and laboring hard for a subsistence wage. The primary issues for them are the down-to-earth matters of food and the means of livelihood. This was in contrast to the more sophisticated audiences Jesus had encountered in the south, whose concerns were more theoretical: the fulfilment of scriptural prophecies, wrangling about the law and the theological implications of Jesus' claim...Like the audiences in the south, the Galileans are also attracted by Jesus' miracles (cf. 2:23f.; 4:48). The reference to the Passover (4) is critical for the interpretation of this section. The movement from the miracle to the discourse, from Jesus to Moses, and above all from bread to flesh is almost unintelligible unless the reference to the Passover picks up 1:29, 35, anticipates 19:36, and governs the whole narrative.” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Passover context:** “We need to pause and underscore some of the motifs that were well known in the Passover story, motifs that every Jew understood fully as shaping the background to Jesus' deeds in Galilee...Among Moses' many miracles in Egypt, two stand out as particularly remarkable: (1) his departure through the sea (Ex. 14), and (2) his miraculous feeding of the people with manna for forty years in the desert (Ex. 16:35; Ps. 78:24)...These were potent symbols of God's preservation of his people: rescuing them from harm and sustaining them in a desert. In John 6, Jesus appears at Passover, repeating many of these themes. The people are a multitude not unlike those in the desert; Jesus feeds them with 'heavenly' bread; and following the feeding, when the disciples are on the sea, Jesus comes to them walking on water...Moreover, the question of Jesus in 6:5 ('Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?') echoes that of Moses in Num. 11:13, 'Where can I get meat for all these people?' In fact, Numbers 11 provides numerous parallels to the present story...They provide a growing impression that in some fashion the hero of Passover, Moses, has now been superseded by

Jesus, who not only provides ‘bread from heaven’ but is himself ‘the bread of life’ (6:35).” John has written this chapter (and the others) with a literary mastery that should not be missed. To read, for instance, the feeding of the five thousand in isolation from the closing theological debate in Capernaum is to miss the sweeping interpretation Jesus gives to the miracle...to forget that the entire chapter is included under John’s heading of “Passover” is to miss its many nuances to Passover and its many symbols embedded in the story, as I have pointed out above...Throughout the story, we are presented with the idea of sustenance, material and spiritual...the discussion moves from the obvious (bread on a hillside), to the symbolic (“I am the bread of life!”), to the spiritually mystical (“You must eat my flesh and drink my blood!”).
Professor Gary Burge

- **The manna test:** “They were so consumed by physical concerns they couldn’t comprehend Jesus’ figurative language...the nature of spiritual blindness, which is caused by one’s stubborn fixation on physical, earthly matters...Those who choose to serve the fallen world system become increasingly self-absorbed, proud, shortsighted, and unable to look up long enough to comprehend such things as spiritual hunger and God’s grace...The people said earlier that, for them, seeing is believing (6:30)...These people claimed that a miraculous sign would give them the ability to believe...According to Jesus, faith responds to God when He reveals Himself. The presence of God, then, becomes a sort of litmus test. Those who are His respond in belief and are attracted to Him, while those who are not respond in disbelief and reject Him...The manna was both His provision of grace and a test (Exod. 16:4; Deut. 8:16). How they received the manna and whether they followed the Lord’s instructions revealed the genuineness of their faith.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **Jesus is the true lamb:** “(6:52–59) Clearly the sacrifice of the cross is in his mind. We cannot forget that he is already proclaimed as ‘the Lamb of God’ (1:29), and the one who will be ‘lifted up’, as was the serpent (3:14). His broken body, and blood poured out, on the cross, need to be personally appropriated in an act of faith in Jesus which is akin to the personal act of eating food (53–57). **cf. Augustine, ‘Believe and you have eaten.’** Interpreting the passage in this way, however, does not preclude our recognizing that Jesus’ imagery came to life in a new way in the later experience of the church as it shared the meal Jesus instituted ‘on the night he was betrayed’ (1 Cor. 11:23). This section is certainly not out of place when read in the context of the Lord’s Supper, provided we never lose sight of the cruciality of faith, both for coming to Christ and for the renewal of our communion with him in the feast he has instituted.” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Giving His flesh:** “To give one’s flesh can scarcely mean anything other than death, and the wording here points to a death which is both voluntary (‘I will give’) and vicarious (‘for the life of the world’) ...When we recall the apt description of this Gospel as ‘the gospel of fulfillment’, we may think of the voluntary and vicarious self offering of the Servant of the LORD in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. The Servant’s death was to bring blessing to ‘the many’ (Isaiah 53:11 f.), from Israel and the Gentiles alike (cf. Isaiah 49:6), and so Jesus takes the widest view of those who are to benefit by his death—he will give his flesh ‘for the life of the world.’”
Professor FF Bruce
- **Seeking wrong saviors:** “Most people admit to wanting a savior; however, just what kind of savior they desire depends upon what kind of crisis they hope to escape. People struggling with loneliness want a companion. People suffering an identity crisis want someone to give them

meaning. The hungry want a provider; the oppressed want a champion; the discontented, a revolutionary; the hopeless, an inspiration. The proud? Why, they need no savior at all! ...The multitude in the wilderness thought they needed a savior to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey, someone to fill their bellies and rout their enemies.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll

- **Manipulating Jesus:** “We are encouraged and warned simultaneously. We are encouraged to come and feed at the meal served by Jesus, to learn ultimately that the bread he offers is more than bread; it is life itself hidden in his sacrificed life. But we are also warned, because misapprehension and confusion can overtake us and we may unwittingly find ourselves grasping after religious things (bread, a religious king, sacraments) that in themselves are misdirected...There is a deep revelation of Christ at work here that divides the audience...The climax of the story is unsettling and perverse: The crowd fits Jesus into their religious categories (‘This is the prophet!’) and decide that they can control, promote, and fashion something religiously constructive out of this event...They want Jesus for their own ends; they want to pursue a political agenda (revolution? social upheaval? dissent?), and Jesus must flee...In the end the picture is penetratingly clear: They have no clue what they have just witnessed. In their arrogance they wish to exploit it like a marketing company exploits a new household invention...The subsequent Capernaum discourse (6:22–59) supplies one of the most open and candid discussions by Jesus concerning his identity and mission...Religious questions (6:25) turn to grumbling (6:41), which in turn leads to sharp argument (6:52)...The pursuit of bread—spiritual or otherwise—is a universal compulsion of human civilization. It often takes wrong turns...Thus the question remains: How am I fed by God? How can I find bread that lasts forever? How can I discover God in a way that will not diminish before my next meal? The obvious answer is that we should find this in Jesus. But it is not so easy. People twist and distort religion, manipulating it to their own ends...In the end, being fed by God is beyond our natural comprehension. It is utterly mysterious and will evoke feelings of fear and confusion and in some cases anger. As difficult as it might be, you and I must remain committed to Jesus and His gospel, no matter who decides to walk away.” Professor Gary Burge
- **The Passover connection:** These images recall the Passover story in Exodus 12 where the only beneficiaries were those who went “*all in*” with their **belief** and utilized the **blood** of the lamb. That first Passover began with Egypt’s 10th plague where God instructed His people to sacrifice a lamb, smear the **blood** all over their doorframes, and eat the meat as part of a special meal. Yes, it was an odd way to survive a plague and be rescued from slavery, but those **believers** were spared when God’s death angel passed through the land by an active faith whereby, they utilized **the flesh and the blood** from the sacrifice. Now, if you’re wondering if you must sacrifice the family pet to be a better Christian, the answer is no. Obviously, the Passover and Jesus’ words in John 6 looked ahead to His ultimate sacrifice for our sins. The question then is, “*How do we take possession of such a sacrifice and become part of the true Exodus?*” The answer is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ!
- **An endless supply of life:** “Christ satisfies a man not by banishing his thirst, which would be to stunt his soul’s growth, but by bestowing upon him by the gift of his Spirit an inward source of satisfaction which perennially and spontaneously supplies each recurrent need of refreshment” (G. H. C. Macgregor) ...The fountain of living waters may thus be found resident in the personal life of men and women. With joy they may draw water from the wells of

salvation (Isaiah 12:3) and know that, as they partake of that saving draught, they are tasting the true heavenly gift, the life of the age to come.” Professor FF Bruce

- **Never try to do the Spirit’s job:** “To an audience that took great care to remove blood from any meat they consumed, He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves” (6:53). It would seem that Jesus deliberately made the gospel difficult to accept rather than easy . . . something today’s “seeker friendly” approach would find strange...The purpose of the gospel message is not to convince detractors or to turn the hearts of rebels; that’s the role of the Holy Spirit. The gospel message is the means by which prepared hearts respond to their Creator...The good news is the call of God; belief is the response of “His own” (see 5:25; 10:14)...Seeing how Jesus presented the gospel and how each individual responded according to the leaning of his or her heart gives me great comfort when I share the gospel...Another person’s soul is not yours or mine to win or lose. We have been charged with the responsibility to tell the “good story” as best we can; an individual’s response is a private matter with God.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **The cost of discipleship:** “This concluding paragraph of the chapter vividly expresses the cost of following Jesus. Being a true believer will involve going the way of the cross...Among other things, that will mean remaining true to Jesus when he and his word are dismissed. Being a true believer will mean following him loyally when his truth is hard to understand and even harder to apply, when his claims seem largely contradicted by tangible realities, and when the multitudes turn away from him and we find ourselves part of a small and ostracized minority. It will mean being loyal too when, among the company of the ‘faithful’, we discover the work of the evil one in those who, in life and word, betray their Lord...But, when all these are weighed, the cost is real, and he does not shield us from it. Will you also go away?” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Unbelieving churchgoers:** “Churches all across the United States have experienced remarkable growth and the “megachurch” phenomenon has encircled the globe. It’s exciting to see. However, the burgeoning numbers packing these sanctuaries include multitudes caught up in a movement, who listen week to week but have never given themselves over to the message of Jesus Christ and placed their absolute trust in Him. Many listen and learn and nod in agreement, but they do not believe. They have not submitted their hearts and wills to the truth of Jesus Christ—His identity as God and His offer of eternal life through faith alone. Another important aspect of John’s call to belief is that we are invited to believe in Jesus Christ, the person. Not merely His message, not merely His teaching, not merely His example, not merely His challenge to live a certain way. We are called first and foremost to believe in Him. This was the intellectual and moral crisis presented to people of all kinds in John’s narrative, many of whom responded with pistis [4102]—belief, complete trust.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Articles/Songs/Videos:

Helpful thoughts for discussion leaders:

1. Go for a single, not a home run...don’t drag the night out; realize more people = less deep sharing.
2. Keep discussion around 30mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.

Challenge Questions

Review the BIG IDEA: Our belief in Jesus must be all consuming.

-Simple questions...What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Preparation questions for John 6:48-71.

- How does Jesus differ from the manna His Father fed Israel after the Exodus? (6:48-50)
- What do you think Jesus meant by eating his flesh and drinking His blood? (6:51-58)
- Everyone had questions about Jesus, so why did many turn away and some stay? (6:59-66)
- Based on Peter's response on behalf of the 12 and what Jesus said about Judas, how was the faith of the disciples similar to and different from those who walked away? (6:66-71)

Application questions from John 6:48-71.

- Where do you find yourself worshipping God's stuff instead of God? How have His provisions helped you know and encounter Him as your ultimate, true gift?
- In what ways do you struggle to exchange earthly living for *eternal life* or human solutions for divine alternatives? Why do you think that's such a trap for us?
- Read Galatians 5:16-26 and then try to describe how believing the gospel different than having faith in human effort. Is your life exhibiting the fruit of the flesh or of the Spirit? Please share some examples to help us all process this concept.
- How does it affect you when people walk away from the faith, especially when it's someone you've loved and served with? When you think about it, what were they trying to get from Jesus that He wasn't trying to offer, and where do you see that tendency in yourself?

Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://toddengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://toddengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>