

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 9-9-18

To Adult Teachers:

September 9 we will study John 6: 60-71. Discussion questions are:

1. Ask your class to share a story about vending machines not working. What do you think Bud was getting at when he said, "False Christianity is sort of like someone trying to get the coin to drop in the vending machine?"

A. Have you ever felt like the person who says, "After all these years of going to church the coin has dropped. For such a long time I wouldn't let the coin drop. But now I get it!"

(1.) If that sounds like you what happened that enabled you to "get it"?

2. Why is it more dangerous to follow Christ with the wrong motives than to not follow Christ at all?

3. What do these 3 parables all illustrate: the 10 bridesmaids, the 2 men who built houses on the sand and the rock, and the 4 kinds of soil?

4. Why do the disciples think Jesus' saying, "*Eat my flesh and drink my blood*" is such a hard saying?

5. What was Jesus getting at when he said in vs. 64 "*among you there are some who do not believe.*"?

6. What was the precipitating event that caused many of his disciples to turn back and no longer go about with him? (vs. 66)

7. Why does Peter not also turn away?

a. Is his comment in vs. 68 a sign of belief?

8. Agree/disagree: "*A false Christian comes to church, maybe leads a prayer every now and then, takes his turn serving communion and maybe even teaches a Bible class but when it comes right down to it with the demand, 'Eat my flesh and drink my blood.', he has no intention of even trying.*"

9. Other than partaking of the Lord's Supper, in what way could it be said that you "eat Christ's flesh and drink his blood"?

10. Agree/disagree: "*Real Christian sincerity is to know that you are not sincere.*"

Sermon: True Discipleship vs. False Discipleship

John 6:60-71

If Christianity is true which of the following is the more dangerous position to hold? Is it more dangerous to say, "I have no interest in Christ." or to follow Christ with the wrong motives? Jesus taught that non-Christianity is nowhere near as dangerous as false Christianity because you can remedy non-Christianity. False Christianity is unbelief under the veneer of belief. It is like cancer working in a person's body and everyone is unaware of it for some time because the person looks and feels healthy.

One of Jesus' greatest concerns was that someone would think they are a Christian when they are not. For example, in the parable of the 10 bridesmaids they all look the same on the outside but 5 are actually waiting for the groom and 5 are not and in the end 5 are rejected. In the parable of the 2 houses, they both look alike from the outside but underneath one is built on sand and one on rock. The one built on sand collapses. In the parable of the soils the 4 soils are like 4 hearts. The word falls on 4 different kinds of hearts like seeds on the soil. Three of the 4 kinds of soil produce vegetation. Something is growing and at first they all 3 look promising and productive but in the end only one of them produces any kind of fruit.

At the end of the gospel of Luke there is a man who shows up and says, "Jesus, I will follow you wherever you go." You'd think Jesus would say, "Wonderful. At least this guy gets it." Instead Jesus gives a rather cold response, "*Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.*" He is saying, "Do you really know what it will cost to follow me? Are you sure you want to do this?" At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says that at the end of time there will be Christian leaders who will come up to him and say, "*Lord, Lord we did great deeds in your name....*" And he will look at these Christian leaders and say, "*I never knew you.*" So Jesus often taught it is more dangerous to be a false follower than to be a non-follower because a non-follower has a much greater chance of dealing with who Jesus is than a false follower.

In today's text Jesus talks to us about:

1. The danger of false discipleship.
2. Kinds of false discipleship.
3. The essence of true discipleship.

THE DANGER OF FALSE DISCIPLESHIP

In vs. 60 the disciples are troubled when he speaks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. They say, "*This is a hard saying.*" They did not mean it is hard to understand. They meant it is hard to accept. They meant this is too hard to swallow. As Jesus begins to respond to their concern he says in vs. 64, "*...but some of you do not*

believe." They are disciples, followers, but they are not genuine. According to vs. 66, at that point many of them stopped following him. Like cancer in your body, false discipleship eventually shows itself.

What is the danger of false discipleship? False disciples do not come to grips with the incredible Lordship claims of Jesus. False Christians just don't get it. They do not grasp who Jesus is. Jesus says, "*You must eat my flesh and drink my blood.*", and they don't get it. When does it mean when Jesus says, "*I must be your meat and drink.*"? Your "meat and drink" is what makes you tick. It's what gives you the basic energy to keep you going. So, be honest with yourself for a moment. What is it that really keeps you going? Is it career success? Is it relationships? Is it material things and money? Is it knowing that somebody needs you? Whatever it is that keeps you going, that is your meat and drink. Jesus says, "I have to be that in your life. I have to be preeminent in your life. It's not enough for me to be your inspiration or your teacher or your rescuer. I must be your nucleus, your center." That is what the false disciples choked on.

In 1988 a major league baseball player killed his wife and committed suicide. His friends said he had begun to go downhill when at the end of one season he had given up a run in a crucial game. The game took place on October 12, 1986. The Angels held a 3 games to 1 lead in a best-of-seven against the Boston Red Sox. In the 9'th inning the Angels held a 5-4 lead. There were 2 outs, the count was 2-2 with a runner on first base when the 32-year-old reliever entered the game. The Angels were just one strike from getting into the World Series. Dave Henderson hit a 2-2 pitch for a home run, giving the Red Sox a 6-5 lead. Boston won the game and 2 games later the angels were eliminated from the playoffs. After that Donnie Moore lost his confidence and performed poorly. His friends said when he failed as a baseball player he lost meaning in life. He starved because baseball was his meat and his drink. That's what he was eating. That's what he was drinking. Do you see what happened to his soul? When baseball was gone his soul dried up and blew away.

Back in the days of slavery a white slave owner called his chief slave to him and said, "I am leaving for several months. While I am gone I want you to take care of my child. I want you to take care of his clothes, his shoes, his every need." Months later the slave owner returned and the slave rushed to meet him carrying a bundle of clothing. He said, "Master, I washed and ironed your child's clothes. I shined his shoes. But I lost your child." One day our Master will return and demand an accounting. And some of us will give a feeble report, "Master I took care of my body. I wined it and dined it. I huffed it and puffed it. I rested it and recreated it. But I lost my soul. I lost the part of me that is most like You."

Non-believers get it. A non-believer will tell you, "It says that Jesus is the only way to God and he has absolute authority and I must listen to his word and obey it no matter what I feel." A non-believer says, "I understand the demand and I reject it." Real Christians say, "To give him that authority is very hard but he created me and redeemed me. Though I don't know how I will do it, I owe him and I intend to try. I will need lots of help from him." But a false Christian comes to church, maybe leads a prayer every

now and then, takes his turn serving communion and maybe even teaches a Bible class but when it comes right down to it with the demand, "*Eat my flesh and drink my blood.*", he has no intention of even trying.

Did you ever put a coin in a vending machine and nothing came out because the coin didn't drop. Unless the coin goes all the way down it doesn't trigger the machine to deliver the product. What do you do when that happens? There is a process for dealing with that situation you must carefully follow. The process must be printed on the machine because everybody does it. You must bang on the machine and if necessary shake it. When you bang on the machine and it works, you get this little grin and think to yourself, "I'm pretty good with vending machines." If you can't get the machine to work you go away frustrated and angry. A few years ago I was going into Braum's and there was a lady struggling to get the newspaper vending machine door open. She was shaking and shaking the door and nothing was happening. With some pride I walked up to her and said, "Can I help you? Sometimes I can get those things to work." She replied, "No thanks. I am the vendor."

False Christianity is sort of like someone trying to get the coin to drop in the vending machine. False Christianity is somebody saying, "I believe in Jesus." but who has never come to grips with the magnitude of his claims. They've never had the coin drop. They've never received the promised product. Listen, until the coin drops, you will never come to grips with who he claims to be and what believing really is. Christianity will never deliver on its promises in your life until the coin goes all the way down. You may read about how early Christians took over the Roman Empire and changed the world. You may read about how Christians did great deeds and died cheerfully for their faith. But you don't see that kind of greatness growing in you at all and you wonder why. It's because the coin hasn't dropped all the way down. I absolutely love it when people come up to me and say, "After all these years of going to church the coin has dropped. For such a long time I wouldn't let the coin drop. But now I get it!" And you know what usually triggers that comment? Grace! When you get grace the coin drops. How do you get the coin to drop? You have to bang on the machine. What do you think I am doing right now? I am banging your machine! But you need to start banging it yourself. You start by saying, "Christianity has not produced in me much of anything. What's missing in my spiritual life?"

So that's the danger of false discipleship. Now let's look at some kinds of false discipleship.

KINDS OF FALSE DISCIPLESHIP

What are the kinds of false discipleship? If you look through chapter 6 you will see several different forms of false discipleship. For instance there are those who really aren't following Jesus they are just following the crowd. Like the people described in vs. 2 - "*...a great crowd of people followed him....*" It is very hard to go against the crowd. It is very hard to believe something different from the crowd. In C. S. Lewis' "The Great Divorce" there is a minister who doesn't believe in the resurrection or the miracles or the

infallibility of the scriptures. A Christian friend comes to him and says, "Friend you know we didn't abandon the historic views because we were argued out of them. No, we found ourselves in contact with a certain current of ideas and we plunged into it because it seemed modern and successful. We started automatically saying the kind of things that won applause. We were afraid of a breach with the spirit of the age. We were afraid of ridicule." The power of the crowd can get someone to disbelieve. But the power of the crowd can also get someone to follow Christ without thinking. Some of you attend church because your family took you to church when you were young or because your friends attend or because it is appropriate in this culture but you are not really interested in spiritual things. You are just being carried along by the stream.

Another kind of false discipleship is people who follow him for the miracles. In vs. 26 Jesus says, "*You followed me because I fed you the bread.*" This is the kind of person who sees Christians changing. They see Christians dealing with their grief, their anger, their depression, their fears, so they say, "O.K. I'll try Christianity. I'll make a little investment and if I get a little bit back I'll invest a little more. I need some of those things Christians have. So I'll make an investment as long as there is a return." So you hold on to the terms. You determine what the terms are. You stay with God as long as he stays with the terms. To you God is not a Father, not a savior, but a business partner. Real discipleship says, "Yes I have some problems and I need some help. But first I am a sinner who needs pardon."

Then there is the kind of person who follows Christ because they want Jesus to be their king but the kind of king they want is a political king. Listen to vs. 14 –15, "*After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.'* *Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.*"

Peter seems to get it by vs. 67 when Jesus turns to him and says, "*You do not want to leave too, do you?*" It's as if he were saying, "Peter, everyone else is leaving. Are you staying and, if so, why are you staying?" Peter answers, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*" "To whom shall we go?" Have you come to that point in your life yet? Have you discovered that Christ is not the best option but the only option for you? "You have the words of eternal life." Martin Lloyd Jones said, "Anyone who has a conceivable alternative to Jesus Christ is not a Christian." If you believe that anyone else offers eternal quality life, you are not a true follower of Jesus.

THE ESSENCE OF TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

So what is the essence of true discipleship? Jesus expressed it uncompromisingly in vs. 53 with, "*You must eat my flesh and drink my blood.*" In other words Jesus was saying, "You are not good enough. I am going to have to die for you. Everything is going to have to come through grace." And most of those listening couldn't handle that. They choked on it. But Peter didn't choke.

If somebody gives you a book for your birthday titled "How to Lose Weight," it would be hard to say "Thank you. I am fat and I was hoping someone would notice and give me a book on weight loss." When you receive the gift of eternal life it is like Jesus giving you a book titled, "You Are a Sinner." And your task is to say, "Thank you Lord. I know I am a sinner and can't save myself. Help me."

I may have gotten you a little concerned about your motives this morning. Real Christian sincerity is to know that you are not sincere. It is to know that your motives aren't always right. There is something deep inside of us that makes us want to be our own savior. So we say, "I can't go to God in prayer now because my motives aren't pure." There you go trying to be good enough again. You think that by purity of motives you can earn God's ear. Real Christian sincerity is to say, "Now I see that even my motives aren't sufficient to save me. I don't even trust my sincerity anymore. I only trust what God did for me on the cross."

Some of you today may be feeling your love is a little stagnant. You don't love the Lord like you used to. Look at how Jesus reclaims people. Hear him say to you this morning, "Will you also go away?" This morning would you place yourself under the tender power of that question? Jesus is urging you. He is saying, "I have broken my body for you. I have poured out my blood for you. Do you really think this little issue of comfort or pride or lust is worth leaving me for after all I've done for you?" Jesus doesn't order you back. He woos you back. "Just think of what I've done for you." As we sing this morning, if you are carrying a load of guilt don't spend a moment beating yourself up about it. Spend a moment asking, "What have I done to the heart of God and how does God feel about me now?" Let the coin drop all the way down and experience the power of the kingdom released in your life.