



For the Week of April 22, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:
hard truths, part 2

Life Notes for Missional Communities

Introduction

This week's passage digs deeper into hard teaching from Jesus. We watch as people follow him but then turn away because they cannot step from their own paradigm into his. When he asks those closest to him if they'd also like to leave, Peter replies, "*We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God*" (6:69).

Pastor Mark encourages us all to make up our minds and truly follow Jesus.

The Word: John 6:41-71

At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

Jews: "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

Jesus: "Stop grumbling among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Jews (arguing sharply among themselves): "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Jesus: "I tell you the truth, 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 real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever."

He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. On hearing it, many of his disciples spoke.

Disciples: "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

Jesus was aware that his disciples were grumbling about this.

Jesus: “Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” ‘

Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to speak further.

Jesus: “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

Jesus (to the Twelve): “You do not want to leave too, do you?”

Simon Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Jesus: “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!”

(Jesus meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

hard truths: a review

Pastor Mark taught us that Jesus often spoke in metaphor. As you read through each passage, journal the metaphor Jesus used and your thoughts on what he meant.

- John 3:3
- John 4:13-15
- John 4:31-34
- John 4:35-38

See if you can tie all the metaphors together in one insight.

Write a metaphor that describes your relationship with God - today.

hard words: John 6:41-66

Read John 6:41-52

What's the metaphor Jesus uses here and how do you think his words relate to the manna experience? How do his words relate to you today?

Jesus severely collided with the Israelite's culture. Jesus collides with everyone's culture. How is he colliding with yours right now?

Where have you been turning to God's bread instead of your own - to God's eternal spiritual truth instead of your human truth?

Where do you find yourself returning to your own idea of good bread?

Do you have an example where you once used your human truth to explain something but God's spiritual truth broke through?

Where do you need God's truth to break through in your life right now?

Now read further: John 6:53-66.

What are the spiritual truths Jesus is communicating to you in these verses?

Spend a few silent moments literally asking the Holy Spirit to help you understand what God is trying to say to you.

How is this teaching difficult for you?

What do you have to change in your life to eat Jesus' bread instead of the bread you desire? To drink his blood instead of the fulfillment you desire?

hard truths: two truths that are still difficult today

Pastor Mark spoke candidly with us about two hard truths Jesus was communicating. These are truths that literally help us make a decision to follow Jesus or leave. In John 6:66, we learn that many left.

Hard Truth #1: Left to ourselves, we will reject God. Romans 1, Romans 3:12, Romans 3:23

What do these verses tell us about humankind apart from God? About our natures?

Pastor Mark said, *"Unbelief is part of the fabric of fallen humanity; the intervention of divine awakening is necessary to transform it to faith. Our only hope is divine intervention. Yes, you have free will, but left to yourself you will use that will to go your own, selfish, God dishonoring way."*

What is difficult for us to hear in these words? In the Scriptures in Romans? Can you think of a personal way to illustrate this truth - either from your life or the life of someone you know and love?

When is it hard for you to tell God's truth to someone else and when is it hard for you to receive God's truth from someone else?

Hard Truth #2: The uncommitted were repelled by Jesus. 2 Corinthians 2:14-17

Think through your feelings about Jesus before you became a disciple.

What were some of the assumptions or hypotheses you had about Jesus or about being a Jesus-follower that were unfounded or that you'd inherited from some other source or experience? What's it been like to encounter and change those old beliefs?

Be honest with yourself. How does Jesus smell to you right now? Do you like being close to him? What does Jesus know about you that you try to hide from yourself or others?

What in your life could be an example of Mark's message about his daughter's dog not eating the good food but turning instead to the "leftovers?"

In John 6:67-71, we see those who were closest to Jesus struggling with the tough conversations they'd just witnessed and the loss of some who'd been following Jesus with them. Peter said *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

Without nourishing our relationship with God, we get grumbly...we miss what he's doing...we start listening to our own truths...we become the "bad smell" or feel satisfied with the leftovers...we forget that he is the living water, the bread of life and that we've been born again. It's vitally important to grow our relationship with the living God and gratefully receive the daily bread.

What is your plan for receiving your daily bread - for staying close to the heart of God? Are you talking much to God? Are you listening? Do you spend time reading God's Word? Do you meditate or journal? Do you listen? Do you communicate with God outside or sing? In what ways do you grow your ability to stick close to God and hear from him? (A question from the individual devotion time: How do you pay attention to God's eternal spiritual truth instead of your own human truth?)

for missional communities not doing life notes

Spend a few moments at the beginning or ending of your time responding to the following:

What is the bread you find yourself desiring in this world? What do you have to change in your life to eat Jesus' bread instead of the bread you desire?

What is the fulfillment you are looking for in this world? What do you have to change in your life in order to trade your idea of fulfillment for God's idea?

Next Week

To prepare for more discussion in John in the coming weeks, read John 7 and pages 107-114 in Metzger's *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town*.

Don't forget to email questions you might have on these passages in John to Pastor Mark at markc@mission68.org.

see next page for facilitator suggestions

Facilitator Suggestions

The main idea this week is the difficulty of Jesus' life-transforming message. His truths are hard to hear, and sometimes people walk away from them. This week, we saw that some of his followers even walked away.

So start there with your groups. Invite everyone to participate (Try to guide the conversation from general comments to personal, more specific comments) and invite everyone to spend time reflecting as well. / To help with this, spend at least one full minute in silence between each topic, allowing everyone in the group time to think about or process what s/he has just shared or heard.

The Message

Other than the cultural or religious reasons, why do you think people were so upset with Jesus and his message? Why did they walk away?

Where are you personally wrestling with Mark's messages (Jesus through Pastor Mark's style!) in John 6? What thoughts, ideas or convictions keep resurfacing in your mind?

What aspect of Jesus' message do you need to modify or change in your life in order to take one more step in intimately following him?

(silence)

The Person of Jesus

Write a metaphor that describes your today-relationship with Jesus.

Jesus severely collided with the Israelite's culture. Jesus collides with everyone's culture. How is he colliding with yours right now?

(silence)

The Meal

Where have you been turning to God's bread instead of your own - to God's eternal spiritual truth instead of your human truth?

Where or when do you find yourself returning to your own idea of good bread?

What is the bread you find yourself desiring in this world? What do you have to change in your life to eat Jesus' bread instead of the bread you desire?

What is the fulfillment you are looking for in this world? What do you have to change in your life in order to trade your idea of fulfillment for God's idea?

(silence)