



For the Week of April 22, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:
hard truths, part 2

Daily Life Notes for Individuals & Couples

Introductions

Welcome to this week's **Life Notes**. This week, we'll be concentrating on some very hard truths of Jesus. We've seen him have compassion on crowds, gently expose people's lives to truth and faithfully walk with his disciples, and today we'll see what happens when he...tells the truth.

The passages selected by Pastor Mark this week are copied below in their entirety, but it's great to use your own Bible so you can make note of things that interest you or speak to you in some way. It's always good to read a passage at least twice, so that your mind begins to get involved with what the Holy Spirit is saying. It's also great to read a second version so you can compare what's going on. The following is the NIV. You can view various Bible versions online at sites like www.biblegateway.com

Note: Saturday is used as a "sabbath" or "rest from our every day work responsibilities" experience, but you might work on Saturday and be off some other time during the week that would be more appropriate to celebrating rest. Please feel free to adjust the **Life Notes** schedule to fit your own.

The Word: John 6:41-70

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!"*

Life Notes: this week in view

Last week, the passage inspired us to think...to meditate...to be still and listen to God's voice...to discover ourselves in the story, both then and now. This week, Pastor Mark brought us to an understanding of hard truths that Jesus taught and the result of those hard truths.

This week, just as last week, we'll continue with fewer questions and more time to listen to the Holy Spirit and learn from Father and Son. Some people call listening a "spiritual discipline" but whatever it is called, listening is simply an integral part of any relationship. We are in relationship with the living God - and he longs to have us fully engaged in that relationship. Since he isn't sitting next to us in the flesh, learning to engage involves a number of options - silence, talking with God (prayer), listening to the Spirit, listening to music, journaling, reading the Word, worshipping God in a variety of ways, reading the Word aloud, reflecting on various devotionals, creating through music or art or the written word or other expressions, seeking God's mind on a particular subject or situation, intercessory prayer for others in the world, serving, resting, fasting, enjoying communion, giving, reciting psalms - there are many options!

One suggestion: read Matthew 6: 9-13 each day, focusing on receiving the daily bread God has for you.

Monday: hard truths, the metaphor

Today, we want to focus on the metaphors Pastor Mark presented to us. Jesus often used metaphor and parable to communicate, and we reviewed several of those metaphors together to prepare for the John 6 teachings. Take some time to ask God to reveal insights from these passages and then read the following metaphors, making notes about their main theme and other ideas or questions that come to mind.

- 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.

As you bring your time to its end, ask God to bring your metaphor to mind many times today - helping you to better understand your current relationship with him.

Tuesday: hard truths, the message

As you begin your time today, read Jon 6:41-71 at least two times, asking God to help you hear the message presented in Jesus' dialogue. Every time you discover something you think is worthwhile, write it down. At the end of your journaling, review those things you listed, asking God to give you further insights that will strengthen your relationship with him and your engagement in this world.

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 in 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 adopt or change in your life in order to take one more step in intimately following him?

As you close your time today, rewrite Jesus' dialogues in your own words for today's audience. What do you notice?

Wednesday: hard truths, the God-man Jesus

Read John 6:41-59 at least two times. As you read, write every observation that comes to mind about Jesus himself.

Who was/is Jesus?

What did people see in Jesus versus what did people want to see?

What do you see in Jesus versus what do you want to see?

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

Do you see a need to change your perception of Jesus? Where do you think your perception or your desires about Jesus differ from the picture painted in Scripture?

As you complete your time today, ask Jesus to begin to reveal truths about himself that you might be missing, misunderstanding or simply ignoring/avoiding for your own comfort.

Thursday: hard truths, the meal

Begin your time by reading John 6:41-60 at least 2 times, concentrating on Jesus as bread and as blood, as answer to our need and Son who obeys the Father.

Pastor Mark talked with us candidly about our weak commitment to Jesus' words - particularly the kind of words spoken in this passage of Scripture. We learned that Jesus was using metaphor to talk with his followers (and the curious but uncommitted) about our spiritual inability to cure ourselves, his job as our bread and drink and our need for daily sustenance from him.

First, write a paragraph that expresses your understanding of 6:43-59.

When and what do you try to feed yourself?

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 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?

Friday: hard truths, our response

As you begin your time today, pray that the bread of life will be evident to you - that you'll be aware of God's gifts in your life and be able to receive what he is offering.

Read John 6: 60-71, paying particular attention to the perspective of the twelve. They've just lost some friends to their mentor's teaching and he's now asking them where they stand.

This portion of Scripture is about the Jewish leaders who were curious and yet repelled. It is about the larger circle of disciples who were following Jesus. It is about the twelve who were devoting their lives to following Jesus. And it's about us - his disciples in 2012.

Where do you stand in your relationship with Jesus? Are you one of the twelve, one of the curious, one of the disappointed, one who's unsure, one of the confused or one who is moving toward devotion? (There is a story that compares a man who is standing next to Jesus with his back turned with a man many spiritual miles away but just now hearing salvation's song. The man many miles away is, in fact, closer because he's headed toward Jesus.)

We are known by God. And we are safe in our quest and with our doubts and questions. This teaching is not meant to drive the seeker away but, instead, to note the difference between those who are headed toward Jesus and those who are walking away.

Put your belief in a sentence, much like Peter did when asked (6:68,69).

Since we started the week with metaphor, write a metaphor that describes your today-relationship with Jesus.

As you close today, simply imagine yourself taking one step closer to Jesus. Wherever you are on the journey, you are his.

Saturday: Sabbath

We encourage you to let Saturdays be a "mini Sabbath" moment. If Saturday is a work day for you, simply exchange this day in Life Notes for the day you have off. It's really important to learn to simply "be" with Jesus, with yourself, with those you love, without an "agenda." Sabbath simply means "cease" and "rest." So, today, spend moments truly resting with God the Father, Son and Spirit. "Cease" all of the detailed work and worries that creep into your life everyday.

Couples, if possible, spend some Sabbath moments together reading, taking a walk, drinking coffee outside, sharing a song you both like, inviting friends over and cooking for them, taking a drive or a bike ride, exercising, watching a movie. Whatever you might like to do to truly rest, do it together. You might laugh or cry with God about things that have happened in your life together this week. Just let the time unfold. Sense God's love for you; seek his peace and pursue it.

Families, spend a Sabbath day together. Let different members of the family choose what to do each week. Simply enjoy God's company together. Or maybe serve somewhere as a family or invite neighbors over, simply because you care.

Discover Jesus in all you do. He'll delight and amaze you.