



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

The Sifting: Difficult Words & Dropout Disciples

Bible Reading: John 6:59-71

[Watch LIVESTREAM at 10am](#)

SUMMARY:

Jesus fed 5,000 people with bread, then proclaimed himself as the Bread of Life, offering his flesh for the salvation of the world. This produced a sifting: the crowd was disappointed, the Jews took offense, and numerous disciples abandoned Jesus. Amidst this turmoil, the Twelve Apostles, led by Peter, remained steadfast. The latent unbelief of many disciples was exposed. It's a cautionary tale. Not all who deserted were "false believers"; the 'dropout disciples' included genuine Christians. This holds true even today. We witness believers, including pastors, who stop following Jesus. Some even deny Christ, becoming 'exvangelicals,' no longer identifying or living as Christians. Peter's confession during this crisis highlights crucial principles to remaining faithful, devoted disciples over the long run. Let's explore and apply the lessons in our own lives.

I. The Sifting of Jesus' Disciples John 6:60-71

A. Sifting of the Crowd

B. The Sifting of 'Dropouts' from the 'Many Disciples'

- "The 4th Gospel alone records explicitly the presence of 'drop outs' from Jesus' disciples." –Kikuo Matsunaga

C. Jesus Challenges 'the Twelve'— 'Do you want to leave too?' (6:67)

II. The Disciples' Response to Jesus, the Life-giving Bread (6:60-66)

A. The 'Many Disciples' Response (6:59-66)

B. "This is a difficult saying!"—Disciples; Jesus: "Does this offend you?" (6:60-61)

1. The scandal of the incarnation (6:41-42)
2. The scandal of 'eating Jesus' flesh & drinking his blood' (6:53-57)
3. The scandal of the way of the cross (6:61-62)
4. Jesus' question implies "get over your offense" (6:61-62)
5. Jesus' words—"Hard Sayings' or "Spirit & life"?

III. Dichotomies— Unbelievers/Believers & Non-disciples/Disciples (6:60-61, 64, 66)

- “What’s significant is...discipleship is no longer identical to the category of those who believe.”—Kevin Quast
- A. Unbelief Among Jesus’ Disciples
- “Unbelieving disciples blur the distinction between ‘the Jews’ [non-believers] & ‘the disciples’”—Robert Kysar
- B. Diagnosing ‘Dropout Disciples’—Unbelieving/False Disciples, Defeated/Secret Believers?
- C. A Way Forward: The ‘Many Disciples’ as a Group
- “True & false disciples, those who...believe, & those who [don’t]...characterize the disciple [group]”—S. Hulen
- D. Why Do Disciples Depart & Christians De-convert?
1. The Scandal of Jesus’ Exclusive Claims (6:35; 14:6)
 2. Unresolved doubts &/or unanswered questions about the Bible &/or Christian practices
 3. Observing or affected by moral failures of religious leaders (e.g. pastors) &/or institutions
 4. Unanswered Prayer, unfulfilled promises
 5. Unexplained trials &/or sufferings—“Why did this happen to me?”
 6. Opposition &/or persecution to your being a Christian

IV. The Contrast: ‘The Twelve’ Remain, while ‘Many’ Retreat (6:66-71)

- There’s “a contrast between the 12, who remain faithful, & those who retreat in disappointment”—Kevin Quast
- A. Jesus’ Question—Freedom & Opportunity (6:67)
- B. Peter Confession—a Positive Example (6:68-69)
- C. Peter’s Positive Response (6:69)
- “We’ve come to believe (& continue to believe) & come to know (& continue to know) you’re God’s Holy One.”
- D. Jesus ‘damps down’ Peter’s enthusiastic confession (6:70-71)
- E. Judas’ Negative Example (6:70-71)