

**Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective:
iShare—Encounters with Jesus in John's Gospel –
An Encounter with Departing Disciples**

John 6:57-71

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July 1, 2012, Sunday morning

We are in John 6 in this study with the encounter with the disappearing disciples. Now let's look to God's Word in John 6:57-71 which says

[57] 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. [58] 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." [59] Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. [60] When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" [61] But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? [62] Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? [63] 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. [64] 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.) [65] And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." [66] After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. [67] So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" [68] Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, [69] and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." [70] Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." [71] He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever, and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

The heady movement of the ministry of Christ comes in this record, inspired by the Holy Spirit, John comes to a screeching halt, more than a halt, seemingly an absolute total disappearance. I think there is a possibility in this chapter that

Jesus might have lost His job as a pastor. The church that has gathered to follow Him and congregating around Him in His first full year of ministry has been pretty exciting, but in one day, in one sermon, five thousand are reduced to eleven. By the way, the five thousand was probably just counting the men. So we are probably looking at eight to nine thousand that in one day, one sermon, is now eleven. Why? What had Jesus said? Why did they respond that way? What would Jesus do in response to that and what would the disciples do in response to Jesus' response to this? This has been pretty heady stuff up until now.

We have followed these encounters of Jesus and this is His ninth encounter. This is His encounter with disciples, then two disciples and then it doubles to four. There are more disciples that are added and now there are twelve disciples. There is this tremendous response at a wedding feast. There is a significant response when He goes to Jerusalem to the temple. Beyond that there is a response when He leads a woman at a well to a saving relationship with Him and then the whole city of Sychar comes out to respond to Him. The movement is on the way! Then He gets back up to Capernaum and a Gentile responds. Beyond that He now goes to Cana and there's another miracle where more are responding.

He goes back to Capernaum and thousands are coming where this significant miracle is taking place, the feeding of the five thousand and that's probably just counting the men. Jesus goes out on the boat and at night walks on the water. The disciples respond and then the five thousand see Him on the other side of the lake and wonder how He got there. They are so motivated that they transverse all the way around the lake just to get to Him. Then when they get to Him He begins to preach this sermon in John 6 and by the time this sermon is over they are all gone and we're down to eleven. Clearly that contrast was shown to us in the reading of this passage.

Not only has there been this growing movement of multiplication and discipleship that's been taking place so gloriously and powerfully but now hear how they began to grumble, question, took offense, walked away, turned back, did not believe, and no one was walking with Him any longer. In just a moment the air is gone. The deflation of what has been building over weeks and months seems gone in a moment. What happened? What was the occasion for it? What would happen out of that occasion?

What is the occasion? Jesus preached the message that His disciples said. John 6:60 says [60] When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" He had just preached a sermon that they identified as a hard saying. So how is Jesus going to respond to this critique of this sermon by His twelve in this moment? Let's go back and take a look at this sermon and see if they are right when they say it is a hard saying. I think it is a hard saying because of what He says and how He says it, especially in a synagogue. What

He is saying is challenging and uncomfortable. Let's go back and look at John 6:35 where He had fed the five thousand and they have followed Him around.

So now with that miracle feeding in the backdrop He said to them in John 6:35-40, [35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. (Notice that hunger and thirst is parallel to believing. You satisfy hunger and thirst by eating and drinking. To eat and drink of the Bread of Life means to believe in Him and on Him. This sounds very familiar to what was said to the woman at the well.) [36] But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. [37] All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (In other words, the five thousand hear Him say "You're here but you have not believed in Me. You haven't ate, you haven't drank of Me. Yet let Me assure you that all who the Father give Me will believe Me and I won't lose one of them.) [38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. [39] And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. (The reverse of this is also true that if you're not in Him you will not be raised up to Him but to judgment.) [40] For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." So let's look on to what they did who were around Him. John 6:41-51 says [

41] So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." [42] They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" [43] Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. [44] No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (Basically He is saying you may as well not grumble because you can't come to Me unless the Father draw you. Do you hear the echo again from the time with Nicodemus? Jesus told him he could not see or hear the Kingdom unless you are born again.) [45] It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—[46] not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. [47] Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. [48] I am the bread of life. [49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. [50] This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. [51] 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."

He says "I am the Bread of Life and how will this life come to you? I will give My body to bear your sin." He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He says the reason I'm the

Bread of Life is because the Father sent Me in this body and in this body I will bear your sin on the cross so that you will have the gift of life while I take what you have earned – the wages of sin is death. They respond in John 6:52, [52] *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"* They are not getting the word picture here. John 6:53-59 says

[53] So Jesus 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. [54] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. [55] For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. (That what I do in My body, there is the true food and drink that satisfies the soul.) [56] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. [57] 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. [58] 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." [59] Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

You can see where this is pressing against them. Is this cannibalism? Didn't our ceremonial laws tell us you can't eat something with the blood in it? They are trying to deal with this word picture but they can't get through to it and why not? Our Lord is about to tell us but clearly what is Jesus teaching here? With the woman at the well He'll use water. In John 15 He'll talk about Himself as a vine using the same language here – abide in Me. He is saying He is the Bread of Life. In My body I will bear your sin and in My body I will shed My life blood so that I'm paying for your sin, bearing your judgment so that you can have eternal life. So you must eat and drink of Me and He has already told you back in John 6:35 what that means. It means to believe in Him, not about Him, not admire Him and not be fascinated with His miracles but to believe in Him.

In other words, salvation is not nodding our head intellectually to Jesus. It's not tipping our hat to Him with a one day appearance at a church service. It is a personal identification. You are in Christ and Christ is in you. So He is using the very language of gestation. You have to ingest Christ by faith and feed upon Him. Christ is in you and you are in Christ. It is not a partnership relationship in Christ. It's not a life coach you are getting. It's not a genie in heaven that you rub to get what you want. He is calling for you to make Him your life and He will lay down His life. You are abiding in Him. That is what He is pressing home to them but they will not listen to it. They will not listen to the call that says "By faith, eat and drink of Him", to ingest Him that He becomes your life and everything in your life.

So why will they not? Jesus begins to tell us in the next verses. John 6:60-61 says [60] When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" [61] But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Let me assure

you, salvation by grace through faith in Christ and surrendering to Him for the gift of eternal life, is an offense to the world because it says that unless God gives us eyes to see and ears to hear you won't have it. We're offended by it because it tells us we need a Savior, you can't save yourself and religion won't save you. You have to come to Me fully and completely and surrender to Me. It's a hard saying and even as you share it, unless God works in the hearts of people they will not respond to it but take offense at it.

That's what Jesus develops for us. Let's look on in John 6:62-63 which says [62] Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? [63] 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. What is the flesh? There is none who is good, no not one. There is none who seek for God. There is none who understand. The poison of asp is upon their tongues. We are dead in our sins. There are is no avail in the flesh. It is the Spirit who gives life and again it's the echo of the words that were given to Nicodemus. You must be born again. What does the Spirit of God use to give life? It is the Word of God. We're born again by the imperishable Seed, the living and abiding Word of God. The Spirit of God and the Word of God are what give life to those who are offended and instead of offense there is surrender, instead of death there is life, instead of religion there is Christ, instead of self-reliance, self-exaltation and self-absorption there is self- denial and Christ exaltation.

John 6:64-65 says [64] 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.) [65] And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." Now let's go back to John 6:44 which says [44] No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. This is repeated and why He said "This is why I told you..." How does He grant it to you? He does this by drawing you. John 6:66 says [66] After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

So what does Jesus do? Does He need to re-think His methods and message? No, now His sermon turns to the twelve that are left. John 6:67-71 says [67] So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" [68] Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, [69] and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." [70] Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one (forget the 5,000 but one of you) of you is a devil." (Editorially John gives you the word of who the one will be who will become the personification of the devil.) [71] He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him. So in actuality Jesus is not down to twelve but eleven. It's just that one has not yet revealed it as the thousands just did, their lack of belief and coming to Christ. So there was the occasion, the hard saying. There was the

question and there was the answer of to whom shall we go. You alone have the Words of Life.

So now I want to give you the takeaways. There are three takeaways from this text as we would share the Gospel of Christ with others. What do we learn from this encounter with disappearing disciples? We have picked up lesson after lesson with encounter after encounter and this is our ninth encounter. The first lesson from this particular text is unbelief and rejection is not unexpected but inevitable unless and until God's sovereign saving grace intervenes. As these thousands go away what is Jesus saying? Jesus is saying "This is not amazing. This is reality. It is the Spirit of God who gives life and no man can come to Me unless the Father draws him." The word 'unless' means a necessary condition for a desired effect. For men and women to be saved what is the necessary condition? They have to believe. What has to happen for them to believe? The Father must intervene by the Spirit of God and draw them to Himself. That is why He said to Nicodemus "You can't see or enter the Kingdom of God unless which is the necessary condition, you are born again." You can't come to Me unless the Father draws you.

Now may you come? Absolutely, the door is wide open. The work of Jesus Christ and its glorious sufficiency and the breadth of His proclamation is to the whole world. Whosoever will, may come but, who will? Dead people can't will unless there is an intervention. They may – permission but they can't – ability. The way I learned this was in the fifth grade and I raised my hand to ask to go to the bathroom. I became an object lesson in the class that day. I said "Mrs. Lamb?" "Yes, Ike?" "Can I go to the bathroom?" "Yes, Ike." I got up to go to the bathroom. "Sit down, Ike." "But you said I could go to the bathroom." I'll never forget this moment where my teacher bullied me. She said "You asked, can you go to the bathroom and I'm absolutely convinced you can go to the bathroom but you're not leaving this room until you ask permission." Christ's work has opened the door with permission but we can't come unless He intervenes by His grace to bring us to Himself. We can't come unless He draws us.

What does the word 'draw' sound like? It is like the woman at the well who went to the well to 'draw' the water up. You can go to a well when you're thirsty and look down to see if there is water. There is water so you say "Water, I'm giving you permission to come up out of that well to refresh my thirst." My desired effect is to have a drink of water. Will the water come up when I say that? No and do not try that for very long or they may put you in a mental hospital somewhere. The reason the water won't come up when you tell it to is because the water is under the law of gravity. It can't come up, but if you put a bucket down and overcome the law of gravity and draw it up, now it's there. You may come but we can't come until the Father draws us. It's a hard saying and for some of us right now it's grating on us because we really want to believe we supplied the permission to God. The only freewill in salvation is God's and then God exercises His to free you that you will come. All those He sets free will come and I will lose

not one of them. Those whom the Father gave Me, I lose not one, but will raise them up on the last day.

Here is this glorious work of grace and so you might be reading this today and you haven't come to Christ yet. Our desire is that you come to Christ. Only the Father by His Spirit can draw you but your very presence reading this today, has it been the drawing of God that brought you to His message. We had a lot of forbearers who died so that we could share this with you. Up until the 16th Century the church said "We will save you" but we're not here to save you because we can't but we can be part of what He does to draw you to Himself. Come. Eat. Drink. Believe in Christ, Christ in you. With the food of this world you get hungry everyday but the Bread of Life, Christ, will satisfy your soul. That leads me to my second takeaway.

When Jesus says to the twelve "Do you want to go too?" and Peter says "To whom shall we go? You alone have the Words of Life. We have come to believe that You are the Holy One of God." So the second takeaway is once you have truly come to Christ by God's "drawing grace" personally and fully, no one or no thing can ever satisfy. I'm not saying as a believer that we don't get distracted or get detoured. We can even get distracted back to a pig trough but we know that in the Father's House is our satisfaction. Who can satisfy my soul? It is Christ alone. Once you have tasted of Him then all that is in the world you know won't satisfy. Maybe today you are seeking for Jesus and I want you to know that He will satisfy your soul and Satan is bringing you all kinds of false things to consume you so that you will eat and drink power, money, fame, limitless sex or whatever else is out there where life is in you but it is really death that's in you. I plead with you to come to Christ.

When you come to Christ your very soul will be satisfied. The woman at the well said to Jesus "This is Jacob's well. Are you greater than Jacob who gave us this well?" Jesus said "Yes, I am a Well that is springing up water where you can be satisfied and from you will flow rivers of living water. Come to Me and drink." She had been going to Jacob's well every day because of thirst but that was not the only well she had been going to. She had gone to the well of marriage five times. She had gone to the well of sex. She had gone to the well of immorality and there was nothing but emptiness at those wells, but when she came to Christ, now she had fullness of life evermore. There is where Christ is calling us now. When you come to Him He will satisfy your soul.

That's what the church is here to offer you. We have forbearers who died so that we would be liberated from the notion that the church can satisfy your soul. I love the church and when you come to Christ you're going to love His church because it's there that you get fed, nurtured and are a part of the body of Christ. You'll love the church of Jesus Christ because you'll love everything that Jesus loves and Jesus loves His people, His bride, the lost, His Word and all of that. So you'll love all of that but it's not the church that saves you. I'm not trying to be

rebellious or doubting motivations on using this sort of language but when people say “We want to reach the unchurched” your notion is that the unchurched are unsaved and that may or may not be true. The flip side of that is that the church is okay and that’s why I want to give you this third takeaway.

The third takeaway is being numbered in the company of God’s people does not secure salvation for anyone only being “in Christ” and “Christ in you.” Judas was with the twelve. Salvation is only being in Christ and Christ is in you, not just being numbered with His people like Judas. Here is a moment where we would think that Jesus would be utterly devastated and clearly He has not been to a school to learn seeker centered preaching yet. The hard saying He turns on the twelve. He brings the truth of the Gospel home to their heart because He knows God is sovereign over unbelief and belief. It’s the echo of Caesarea Philippi where Peter said “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!” Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you Simon Barjona for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but My Father who is in heaven. Why have you confessed Me and why do you believe in Me? It’s because My Father has drawn you.”

He does the same thing in this passage. He said in John 6:67-69, [67] So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” [68] Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, [69] and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” I’ll tell you what I would have done. If I was Jesus I would have said “Thank You Lord, at least I have these guys” but that’s not what Jesus does. [70] Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve?” (John 6:70a) Do you know why you said that Peter? Do you know why you were free and alive and not dead in your sins to declare by choice that you’ve believed in Me? It is because I chose you. I’m not only sovereign over belief but I’m sovereign over unbelief. I chose Judas too.

Do you see what comes into our lives? In the challenges of life you don’t need a small god, you need a big God. This is a big God who is sovereign over everything. When five thousand walk away that’s not the end of it for we were just led in a glorious hymn calling America to come home. I long for that and pray for that. We want to share the Gospel for that to happen but the fact is if America doesn’t come to Christ the Lord our God will not be stopped.

His Kingdom will spread from the rising to the setting of the sun. In fact, He can even use the rejection of this nation for His own glory. He is not shortened by man’s unbelief. He is sovereign over unbelief and opposition and rejection.

Then He brings it down to one individual. Here is Judas who will not only walk away and turn away but he will betray Him. What will the sovereign God do with that betrayal? He will send His Son to a cross and when He goes to that cross, through that betrayal the sovereign God will provide for you an everlasting life through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Therefore as one person said to me

after the first service, “Here is why I can sleep at night. I rest in the unmerited, sovereign grace of God.” It doesn’t mean passivity but it means all that I do, I do because of what He has done and is doing in me. My hope is not in me but it is in Him. When I share the Gospel and people reject, I’m not amazed but I’m hurt. I want the desired effect that they would come but I’m not amazed, for unless the Lord intervenes they will not come. Unless the Lord had intervened I would not have come but if you have come, it is because He came for you. Praise His Name forever!

God’s sovereign work in the lives of men and women I cannot direct. God did not take me into the counsels of eternity. I cannot send the Spirit of God. I can pray and God works through the prayers of His people but I cannot send the Spirit of God. Here is what I know from this text. God’s Spirit of life always works with the Word of Life. Only the Father through the Son can send the Spirit of God to do His work but the Father has sent His Word to me and now He has sent me with His Word to the world. It is not the flesh that profits anything. The smartest people in the world don’t have a leg up into Christianity and those precious children that we are ministering to that are fighting all those learning disabilities, in reality sometimes the lack of the sophistication of our human learning ability is just actually being removed so that it’s simpler for them to hear the truth of the Gospel. Our problem is not our intelligence, our problem is our heart. You have the Word of Life to take to men and women and it is that, that the Spirit of God uses to bring life.

I can’t send the Spirit but He sent the Word to me and He has sent me with this Word to the lost. Aren’t you grateful that the Spirit of God brought you from death unto life? Aren’t you grateful that the Spirit of God sent someone with the Word of Life and my guess is that it was more than one person who sent to you the Word of Life? Now He has brought you to life. He has given you the Word of Life and He sent you. Watch what He does as He brings a harvest by His own grace and mercy. He will draw them by His Spirit using His Word that He brings through you, but salvation is from the Lord. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You O Jesus for all that You do in and through our lives. Thank You that we might lift up praise to You this Lord’s Day. As we conclude, giving glory to God, would you in your heart give thanks to the Lord that His unmerited grace drew you out of the love of Christ through the Word to Himself and you believed, you’ve ingested Him by faith and repentance? You are in Him and He is in you and He will lose not one. That’s you. Father, even as we wander, remind us that satisfaction is only in Christ and we don’t want to wander but we want to be sent to the world to bring the Word of Life and watch the Spirit of God bring life to men and women. Bring it Father, we pray, from Birmingham throughout the world and

we will give You the glory in Jesus' Name, to God be the glory, great things He has done, Amen.

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