



John 6

I am going to start with a rather bold statement. In general, Christians are intellectually lazy. Not all of you of course, the other Christians out there somewhere. That's not just flattery. I really mean it and let me explain why it is true to a large extent.

By your very presence here, it means that you have rejected atheism. You have also rejected liberalism and legalism. Many of you literally came out of those arenas. Furthermore, you have rejected hyper-charismania. That's not to say that some of you don't speak in tongues and may have more of a charismatic bent. I think that's great but since you have chosen to worship at Grace Church, even though you have charismatic leanings, you have rejected the more extreme forms of charismania.

In saying this, it may sound like I am boasting about our church, that we are better than liberals, legalists and charismaniacs. This is a difficult distinction to make. What I want for myself and for all of you is a church that is as Biblically faithful as possible. If I did not think that our church and our denomination modeled solid Biblical faithfulness, I would be somewhere else right now. And so would you, I think. So I am not saying we are better than everyone else. There are a lot of solid churches in our area and I fellowship monthly with many of them at a pastor's prayer breakfast.

So you and I are not better but I do believe that on average, we are seeking a solid Biblical faithfulness that many other Christians are missing. But that does not mean that you and I still can't be intellectually lazy. And nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the insane election process we have been experiencing. Ryan has taken a particular interest in the election this year

and I just keep telling him that this is one for the record books. I have never seen and may never see a crazier election cycle.

Here is one example of the intellectual laziness I am talking about. In an article about why Christians should vote for Trump, the author made the following points.

1. God often chooses evil people to lead nations.
2. We know that God has not chosen Hilary Clinton.
3. Therefore, God has chosen Donald Trump.

Another man said that five years ago God told him through an angel that Donald Trump would be president and bring the country back to greatness. I can't judge this statement too harshly because it is yet to be determined, but it is certainly a bold statement. Plenty of mental laziness to go around.

Now don't think I am bashing Trump right now. Though they are obviously out of the race, Rubio and Cruz have both made disgusting jokes about Trump, things that a Christian ought never to think, let alone say in public. So I wasn't too keen on them either.

I don't raise the contentious topic of politics to tell you how to vote but to make sure we are thinking rightly. We are studying John chapter six this morning. What Jesus did and what Jesus taught in this chapter caused all manner of reactions from his followers. Now notice I did not say reaction from people in general or from the religious elite who had always hated him. All of the people in this chapter were following Jesus for one reason or another. Many of them were just like you and me. We find something very attractive about Jesus and so we follow him.

But the more they learned about Jesus the more their opinions changed. I would say that they were not thinking rightly. They were intellectually lazy, yes, but it's always more than that. Faith decisions are never purely intellectual decisions, are they? When we decide to pursue a certain path or make a certain decision, our minds, our emotions and our wills are all bound up in that decision. So going back to my original statement when I said in general, Christians are intellectually lazy, I meant that they are not careful in all areas when it comes to making decisions.

I am calling the people who followed Jesus "fickle followers." As we work through these, hopefully they will not apply to us, but if they do we need to make sure we are willing to admit where we are at and commit to aligning ourselves with both who Jesus is and what he asks of us.

1. Fickle followers want free stuff.

This chapter is really interesting. We have both the feeding of the five thousand followed immediately by Jesus walking on the water. Matthew and Mark both put these two stories together. Luke doesn't have include the story of Jesus walking on the water but all four gospels have the feeding of the 5000.

Normally, the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus walking on the water would be sermons unto themselves. But John's gospel is different than Matthew or Mark. John is telling a different story than Matthew or Mark. First, let me read these stories and then show you how John is different.

1 After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. 3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. 5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" 10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." 13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

15 Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. 20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

22 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 26 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

You can quickly tell how John is crafting his story by looking at how the same story is introduced by all four gospel writers.

Mark 6:34—When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Luke 9:11—When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing.

Matthew 14:14—When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

The other three gospels paint a similar picture. Jesus had deep compassion on the crowd. He healed their sick and taught them about the Kingdom. This is Jesus being Jesus. We see his vantage point and motives for doing what he did.

But the John's gospel has a completely different vantage point. John is telling the exact same story from the perspective of the people—of those following Jesus.

John 6:2—And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.

Fickle followers want free stuff. These people followed him—all 20,000 of them or so—precisely because he was doing these things for them. Now by itself, that's not necessarily a bad thing. Jesus did miracles and healings for this very purpose—so that people would know that he was the Savior of the world. But Jesus also knew that his signs would cause people to follow him for the wrong reasons. And Jesus clearly knew this. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves (26).*

They wanted what Jesus offered but they did not want Jesus himself. They wanted free stuff from this powerful magician but they did not care who he was or why he did this amazing miracle. If we are not careful, we can easily slip into this this mentality. Jesus gives us salvation. We may have his free gift but not even care what he demands of us. He demands obedience. Obedience not so that you can earn your salvation or to prove that you were indeed worthy of this infinite gift. But rather we obey because of the gift. Gratitude and humility drives us to right obedience. Our obedience shows that we want Jesus himself, not the free stuff.

2. Fickle followers force human solutions to spiritual problems.

This principle is exemplified in verse 15. *Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.* Now how do you force someone to be king? We need only ask Paul Ryan that question, am I right? We may not see a contested Republican convention but if we did, if the nominee were someone other than Trump, it would be like forcing someone to be king.

In Jesus' case, you had approximately 20,000 people who has just been miraculously fed by him. 20,000 people make up a pretty sizeable mob and that would have been especially true in the first century Galilee. They saw in Jesus someone who could help them overcome the oppressive Roman government. This was equivalent to an early longing for Barabbas. At Jesus' trial the crowds screamed for Pilate to release Barabbas the insurrectionist instead of Jesus. They mistook Jesus for Barabbas. They wanted a powerful king who could lead them to victory with a sword instead of a Savior. They were longing for someone like Barabbas, not someone like Jesus. They were trying to force a human solution to a spiritual problem.

But this was the opposite of what Jesus was actually giving them. True, he fed them real fish and real bread but his reason for doing so was so that the crowds would know that he was the bread of life. Here we see another way that John is different from the other gospels. John told the feeding of the 5000 not as a separate story but as an introduction to Jesus teaching that would follow. This is also why John downplayed Jesus walking on the water. In the other gospels the big focus is on Peter walking on the water. “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Then Peter actually did get out of the boat and walk on water. Yes, his faith began to fail as he took his eyes off of Jesus, but why in the world did John not include the part of the story where Peter got out of the boat? It seems crazy, doesn’t it, but he skipped it because it was not vital to the larger story. For John the gospel writer, the part about Jesus walking on the water was just a transition to the part where Jesus taught them. John was not concerned so much with the disciple’s reaction to Jesus but to the crowd’s reaction to Jesus, so he just skipped the Peter part.

Can you imagine what must have went through his mind when he wrote this gospel? “Hmmm, should I put that bit in about Peter getting out of the boat? I know Matthew and Mark did. Nah, it’s not that important.” And it wasn’t because John was in a hurry to get to the teaching. The teaching section of chapter six is usually called the Bread of Life Discourse. It’s really what John was aiming at all along.

But once again, our default setting is too often forcing human solutions to spiritual problems. Take money problems for example. If you are constantly having money issues, the human solution would be to either to figure out a way to make more money or spend less. Now these are clearly the right reasons but in some cases, money problems have deep spiritual roots to them. You should ask why you spend too much money. Sometimes we spend too much money to impress other people. Sometimes we spend money to feel better or to relieve stress. Shopping, like eating, can be a sinful coping mechanism for a much deeper problem. So I am not saying that all money problems are actually spiritual problems, but a good deal many are just that. And it will do you more harm than good to force a human solution onto a spiritual problem.

3. Fickle followers forge their own spiritual paths.

After Jesus miraculously fed them and crossed the Sea of Galilee on foot, the crowds started in with some interesting questions.

- “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” (28)
- “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” (30-31)

All of their questions show that they completely fail to understand what Jesus is teaching them. They are stuck on Moses and manna in the desert rather than see the bread of life standing in front of them. They wanted to forge their own spiritual paths.

The world is filled with people who are trying to forge their own spiritual paths and that can be true to some extent even in the church. These common Jewish people were holding to tradition and what they had always known to be true and in the process, they rejected what Jesus wanted

them to know. Again, that can happen even to us. For born again believers, the Bible is meant to be a continual course correction.

I am reading a book about three famous aviators in the 1920's who changed history. Right now I am reading about Charles Lindbergh who was the first man to fly across the Atlantic, from New York to Paris. In 1927 navigational instruments did not exist. He used this very navigational chart marked off in 100 mile increments. Every 100 miles he would check his chart against a special compass and then he would make slight corrections to his course. He flew alone for almost 40 hours and without these constant course corrections, he would have certainly perished. But notice that he did not just guess where he was. He constantly checked his course against 2 fixed points—the charts and a compass.

This is one of the reasons we are to routinely pick up our Bibles and read—so that the Holy Spirit can make course corrections in our life. But the problem is that we look at the fixed point of the Scriptures and fail to realign ourselves by it. This is what is required when Jesus answered the questions of the fickle crowd.

Let me give you three key verses and show you why they hang together so tightly. Verse 39 is a wonderful promise about Christ keeping us to the very end. Verse 40 is the basic gospel message—believe on the Son and you will have eternal life. Verse 44 peers behind the scenes of salvation and tells us that it is impossible to come to the Son unless you are first drawn by the Father. These three verses are tightly woven as they all end with the same phrase—and I will raise him up on the last day. That is clearly a statement of salvation. Only those who are saved will be raised up on the last day.

None will be lost but will be raised up on the last day.
 Everyone who believes in the Son will be raised up on the last day.
 Everyone who is drawn by the Father will be raised up on the last day.

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
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
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

Let me put this into statements which flow from Jesus' teaching.

- **No one** can come to the Son **unless** they are drawn by the Father. (44, 65)
- **All** who are given by the Father to the Son **will** come to the Son. (37)
- **All** who come to the Father **will never** be cast out (37) or lost (39).
- **Only** those who believe **will** have eternal life (29,40, 47)
- **All** of those who are drawn by the Father, given to the Son and believe on the Son **will** be preserved until the end and “raised up on the last day.” (39, 40, 44)
- Not everyone is drawn by the Father because not everyone believes.

Here is the order of events in what Jesus taught.

- Drawn by the Father
- Believe in the Son
- Kept until the end
- Raised up on the last day.

So the key is first being drawn by the Father. If you are given by the Father to the Son you will come, you will believe. Have you ever thanked the Father for drawing you? Honestly, I had never done that before this week. We can't forge our own spiritual paths but we can be thankful for the sovereign work of the Father in our salvation.

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