# To Whom Shall We Go

David Kim · The Gospel of John (Part 2) · John 6:53-60; John 6:61-66; John 6:67-71

## AT A GLANCE

Preaching the second installment of Westgate's series through the Gospel of John, David Kim carries forward last week's message on Jesus' welcome and turns to the hard pivot in John 6, where the same crowds who saw miracles now hear a teaching so hard they walk away. Kim argues that spiritual highs can inspire faith but cannot sustain it — only dying to self, and returning to Jesus after failure, can.

- Spiritual highs and miracles can inspire faith, but only a willingness to die to self sustains it through hard teaching.
- The teachings of Jesus that offend us most often reveal exactly where he wants to transform us.
- Faithfulness isn't never failing Jesus — it's returning to him again and again, as Peter did.

> *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

## EXPOSITION

### Scripture engaged

John 6:53-60 — [53]Jesus said, "Believe me when I say that you must eat the body of the Son of Man, and you must drink his blood. If you don't do this, you have no real life. [54]Those who eat my body and drink my blood have eternal life. I will raise them up on the last day. [55]My body is true food, and my blood is true drink. [56]Those who eat my body and drink my blood live in me, and I live in them. [57]The Father sent me. He lives, and I live because of him. So everyone who eats me will live because of me. [58]I am not like the bread that your ancestors ate. They ate that bread, but they still died. I am the bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever." [59]Jesus said all this while he was teaching in the synagogue in the city of Capernaum. [60]When Jesus' followers heard this, many of them said, "This teaching is hard. Who can accept it?" (ERV)

John 6:61-66 — [61]Jesus already knew that his followers were complaining about this. So he said, "Is this teaching a problem for you? [62]Then what will you think when you see the Son of Man going up to where he came from? [63]It is the Spirit that gives life. The body is of no value for that. But the things I have told you are from the Spirit, so they give life. [64]But some of you don't believe." (Jesus knew the people who did not believe. He knew this from the beginning. And he knew the one who

> would hand him over to his enemies.) [65]Jesus said, “That is why I said, ‘Anyone the Father does not help to come to me cannot come.’” [66]After Jesus said these things, many of his followers left and stopped following him. (ERV)
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> John 6:67-71 — [67]Jesus asked the twelve apostles, “Do you want to leave too?” [68]Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, where would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. [69]We believe in you. We know that you are the Holy One from God.” [70]Then Jesus answered, “I chose all twelve of you. But one of you is a devil.” [71]He was talking about Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Judas was one of the twelve apostles, but later he would hand Jesus over to his enemies. (ERV)

## The argument

### Miracles Inspire Faith But Cannot Sustain It — the pivot from wonder to hard teaching in John 6

David Kim frames the hard teaching of John 6 against what came before it — the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus walking on water, a crowd riding a spiritual high. Then, without warning, 'Jesus stops performing miracles and he starts preaching' things that are difficult to hear, and the same eager crowd begins to walk away. Kim's point is not that miracles are unimportant but that they are insufficient: 'Spiritual highs, breakthroughs and miracles and awesome ways that we encounter God can inspire our faith but they cannot sustain it.' The deepest work of discipleship, he insists, happens not on the mountaintop but where Jesus' words confront our assumptions.

> **Insight** — *Wonder can start a faith that only obedience through hard words can carry.*

### Life Is Born Through Death — eating Christ's flesh as an invitation to die to self

Kim reads Jesus' command to 'eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood' as foreshadowing his body and blood poured out — an invitation not merely to believe in Jesus' death but to be joined to it. He presses the distinction: 'The question is not merely, do you believe Jesus died for you… but also, are you willing to die to yourself? Are you willing to partake in that death?' Drawing on Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 3:10, he names this the defining pattern of discipleship — 'life is born through death' — and calls it a death to comfort, ego, and self-control, which is precisely why the teaching offended its first hearers.

> **Insight** — *Receiving Christ's life requires surrendering the life you have been trying to control.*

### Offense As Diagnostic — hard teachings expose our functional gods

When the disciples grumble, Jesus does not retreat: 'Does this offend you?' Kim treats that question as permanently open — every disciple eventually meets a teaching that collides with a cherished assumption. 'The teachings of Jesus that offend us often reveal where Jesus wants to transform us most,' he says, citing Keller's line that a God who never disagrees with you may be an idol of your own making. Kim makes this personal, recalling a season he wanted to leave a

difficult relationship and a whole church rather than forgive — until he sensed God asking whether he'd keep preaching forgiveness while refusing to practice it himself.

> **Insight —** *The teaching you most want edited out of Jesus' mouth is likely the one aimed at your idol.*

### **Discipled By Convenience** — quitting culture and the illusion that changing context changes us

Kim names a reflex he sees everywhere — quitting IKEA furniture, parallel parking, diets — and applies it to faith: 'We've been discipled by convenience. So when something becomes difficult, our reflex isn't to endure, it's to leave.' He warns that walking away from Jesus rarely looks dramatic; it can look like changing churches, relationships, or jobs while the actual issue — Jesus asking for change in us — goes untouched. 'You can change your context and never change,' he says, and adds that even reading Scripture more can become a way of learning without obeying: 'the issue isn't that we don't know what Jesus is saying. The issue is that we know and we don't want to do it.'

> **Insight —** *Changing your surroundings is not the same as letting Jesus change you.*

### **Faithfulness As Return, Not Perfection** — Peter's confession and the difference between Judas and Peter

When many disciples turn back, Jesus asks the Twelve, 'Do you want to leave too?' Peter answers, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.' Kim notices that Jesus warns Judas of his betrayal but never warns Peter of his coming denial — 'because Jesus knows something about Peter that Peter does not yet know about himself. Peter will fail Jesus, but he will always come back to him.' The good news of the passage, Kim says, is not a Savior looking for flawless disciples but one who receives those who keep returning: 'Where would we go? We've tried other places.'

> **Insight —** *Maturity in following Jesus is measured by the return, not by the absence of failure.*

### Cross-references

- Galatians 2:20 — used to show dying to self as the pattern of Christian discipleship
- Philippians 3:10 — used to show participation in Christ's sufferings as the path to knowing him

## DEVOTIONAL

Picture the crowd that once pressed in for bread and now backs away from a sentence. They had eaten until they were full, watched a body walk across water, called Jesus a king in their hearts — and then he opened his mouth again, and something in them recoiled. That is the strange rhythm of this passage: wonder gives way to offense, and offense becomes the doorway

to deeper following. David Kim does not let his congregation stand safely outside that crowd. He asks what teaching of Jesus you have quietly wished were not in the Bible. The question does not accuse; it exposes. Every one of us edits Jesus somewhere, keeps a version we can manage, and calls it faith. Yet the force of John 6 is that the parts of Jesus that offend us are not obstacles to knowing him but the very places he intends to remake us. To eat his flesh and drink his blood is to stop treating him as a supplier of miracles and to let him become the ground of a different kind of life — one purchased, oddly, by dying. Peter does not resolve this tension so much as live inside it. He does not have the hard sayings figured out. He simply has nowhere else to go. That may be the truest faith available to any of us: not certainty, not mastery over every hard word, but a stubborn, repeated turning back toward the only one who has ever spoken life. Failure will come. So, mercifully, does the way home.

### Reflection

- What teaching of Jesus have you quietly edited or avoided because it costs you something you don't want to give up?
- Where have you changed your context — a church, a job, a relationship — hoping it would spare you from a change Jesus was actually asking of you?
- When you consider Peter's words, 'Lord, to whom shall we go?' — what would it look like for you to return to Jesus this week rather than walk away?

### Closing prayer

*Jesus, it is sometimes hard to follow you, to obey what you ask of us — we don't know how else to say it, but your words are difficult. Yet where else would we go? We have tried other places. We have come to believe and know that you hold the words of eternal life, that you are the Holy One of Israel. So we come back to you again and again as a church family. May we be marked not by perfect obedience — there is no such thing — but by people who say, over and over, Jesus, we have failed, but we come back to you. Let your grace and mercy sustain us. We will build our lives around you. Amen.*

## FORMATION

### One thing to remember

Practicing 'I'm sorry, thank you, I bless you' is how dying to self stops being abstract and starts being obedience.

### This week

This week, name one person you've been avoiding an honest word with, and say one of three things to them: 'I'm sorry,' 'thank you,' or 'I bless you.' Before you do, bring the hard one to Jesus in prayer and ask him for the honesty it costs.

*Return to* Galatians 2:20