

I'M STAYING — WEEK IV

STAYING **WITH** JESUS

JOHN 6:60–71

LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?



STAYING WITH JESUS

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Part IV — The Final Installment of the “I’m Staying” Series

John 6:60-71

*“Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”
— John 6:68-69, KJV*

When Following Is No Longer Popular

The truest test of discipleship is not whether we follow Jesus when the bread is multiplying, the sick are being healed, and the crowd is cheering. **The truest test is whether we will remain when Jesus is questioned, His words become difficult, and the people around us begin walking away.** It is easy to follow Jesus when following is popular. It is another matter to **stay with Him** when discipleship becomes costly. **John 6 begins with abundance and ends with abandonment.** At the beginning of the chapter, thousands are seated on the hillside while Jesus multiplies bread and fish. By the end of the chapter, many who had been called disciples have turned back and no longer walk with Him. The miracle attracted a multitude, but the message exposed motives. Some wanted what was in His hand without surrendering their lives to His heart. They wanted bread from Jesus, but they were not prepared to receive Jesus as the Bread of Life.

This is the final movement of the *I’m Staying* Series. We have learned to stay in the house, stay out of Egypt, and stay on the wall. Now we arrive at the most relational preposition of them all: **with**. To stay **with** Jesus means more than remaining in the vicinity of religion. It means **remaining loyal to His person, submitted to His word, and connected to His life**—even when others decide that following Him is no longer convenient.

From a Multitude to a Minority

After Jesus fed the five thousand, the people searched for Him again. Jesus confronted their motive: they sought Him because they had eaten the loaves and were filled. They were pursuing another meal, but Jesus offered something greater than another meal. He declared that He was the Bread of Life and that eternal life required receiving Him completely. He would not permit the crowd to reduce Him to a bread supplier, miracle worker, political celebrity, or temporary solution.

When Jesus’ teaching moved from provision to participation, the atmosphere changed. Many disciples murmured, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” These were not merely distant critics. They had walked with Him, listened to Him,

and benefited from Him. Yet **proximity to Jesus had not produced surrender to Jesus**. John 6 warns us that people can walk behind Jesus without truly giving themselves to Jesus. **Not everyone who follows is following.**

Stay With Jesus — When the People Question Him

People question Jesus for different reasons. Some questions are honest. They arise from confusion, grief, unanswered prayer, intellectual struggle, or a sincere desire to understand. Jesus was never threatened by honest inquiry. He received Nicodemus at night, answered the Samaritan woman at the well, and met Thomas in his doubt. Faith does not require us to pretend that we have no questions. Other questions, however, arise not from a desire to understand Jesus but from resistance to His authority. Sometimes people question Christ because **He refuses to become the Christ they designed**. They want a Jesus who supports every preference, confirms every decision, removes every consequence, and never confronts their conduct. When the actual Christ challenges the imagined Christ, questioning becomes murmuring.

The disciples in John 6 were offended because Jesus disrupted their expectations. They had witnessed a miracle of bread, but Jesus would not remain merely the One who filled their stomachs. He demanded faith, dependence, and surrender. Their questions revealed that their commitment had conditions: they would stay as long as Jesus remained understandable, useful, and agreeable to them.

We do not have to become defensive or disrespectful. We can listen carefully, distinguish honest inquiry from hostile resistance, answer with Scripture, admit what we do not know, and demonstrate the character of Christ in the way we respond. A harsh answer can make a sincere questioner believe that Jesus is as impatient as we are. Truth should be spoken with clarity, but also with grace. At the same time, we must not allow somebody else's uncertainty to become the compass for our discipleship. Jesus did not panic when they murmured. He named the offense, clarified the spiritual nature of His words, and continued telling the truth. **We can make room for questions without allowing the questions to take Christ's seat of authority. Our faith is not secured by everybody agreeing with Jesus; it is secured by who Jesus is.**

Stay With Jesus — When His Words Are Hard to Accept

Jesus spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. To His hearers, the language was shocking and offensive. Jesus was not inviting cannibalism; He was using

forceful spiritual language to describe **complete dependence upon Him** and participation in the life He would give for the world. He was saying that eternal life could not be obtained by admiring Him from a distance. They had to **receive Him as their very life**. The saying was hard **not merely because it was complicated, but because it was uncompromising**. Jesus declared that the flesh profits nothing, that His words are spirit and life, and that no one can come to Him unless enabled by the Father. He removed human pride, religious self-sufficiency, and casual association as paths to eternal life. They could not simply add Jesus to their existing lives; Jesus required that their lives be found in Him.

The Cafeteria Christ

A cafeteria allows us to move down the line and select only what appeals to us. We can take the entrée and leave the vegetables, choose the dessert and reject everything else. Many people attempt to approach Jesus the same way. They want a **Cafeteria Christ**—a Christ from whom they can select promises while refusing commands, embrace grace while rejecting repentance, receive forgiveness while refusing to forgive, claim the crown while avoiding the cross, and celebrate heaven while resisting holiness. Christ cannot be divided into acceptable and unacceptable portions. He is not one item among many on a religious menu. If we only obey the teachings with which we already agree, **we are not following Jesus—we are following ourselves**. Mature discipleship does not say, “I will stay as long as Jesus says what I like.” It says, “Because I know who He is, I will remain while He teaches me what I do not yet understand.”

What do we do when others will not accept Christ's words, doctrines, and teachings?

We must resist two opposite mistakes. **We must not weaponize doctrine as though truth gives us permission to be cruel**; and **we must not water down doctrine as though love requires us to edit Jesus**. We teach the whole counsel of Christ in context, explain patiently, live consistently, and trust the Holy Spirit to convict. We cannot force acceptance, but we can make certain that people are rejecting what Jesus actually taught rather than a distortion created by our poor example or careless explanation.

When people still refuse the teaching, we remain loving without becoming unfaithful. We keep the relationship open where possible, continue praying, and refuse to turn disagreement into personal hatred. But we do not rewrite the gospel to make discipleship less demanding. **Jesus did not call us to make His words popular; He called us to make His words known.**

Stay With Jesus — When the Crowd Leaves

John records one of the saddest sentences in Scripture: “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” Jesus watched people who had

heard Him, followed Him, and eaten at His table turn their backs and walk away. Yet He did not run behind them offering a revised sermon. He did not remove the difficult parts, promise another meal, or negotiate a less demanding definition of discipleship.

Jesus did not chase them because truth was not available for negotiation. He loved them, but He would not manipulate them. He respected their agency, understood their motives, and refused to build a following through false promises. Rather than chasing the departing crowd, Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, “Will ye also go away?” **He did not change the message to retain the multitude; He challenged those who remained to examine their own commitment.**

The Campaign Christ

Political campaigns study poll numbers. When approval rises, the campaign repeats the message. When approval falls, advisers may change the language, reposition the candidate, or soften an unpopular stance. Governance can become controlled by the next poll and the next election. But **Jesus was not campaigning for Messiah.** He was not governed by poll numbers, focus groups, applause, attendance, or public approval. He did not ask, “What message will keep the most people?” He asked, in effect, “Who will receive the truth?” A Campaign Christ changes according to the crowd. The biblical Christ remains the same when the hillside is full and when the road is empty. **Jesus cared about the crowd, fed the crowd, taught the crowd, and had compassion on the crowd—but He was never controlled by the crowd.** Popularity did not establish His identity, and rejection did not diminish His authority. **Truth does not become error when its approval rating falls.**

Crowds create energy—they provide affirmation, visibility, momentum, and a feeling of success. In a crowd, singing sounds stronger, excitement spreads faster, and individuals feel protected by the presence of many others. Crowds can be beautiful—Pentecost was a crowd experience, and multitudes gathered to hear the gospel. The danger is not the presence of a crowd; the danger is confusing a crowd with committed discipleship.

A crowded room is not automatic proof that God is pleased, and a thinning room is not automatic proof that God has left. Crowds can amplify worship, but they can also conceal motives. It is possible to enjoy the atmosphere without embracing the assignment. Jesus was not satisfied merely because people were present. He wanted people who would continue walking with Him after the excitement faded.

Jesus’ refusal to chase the crowd was not indifference. The same Jesus who allowed these disciples to leave also described a shepherd searching for a lost sheep and a father welcoming a returning son. Love notices absence. Pastoral care reaches out, asks questions, prays, listens, clarifies misunderstandings, and keeps the door open

for reconciliation. We must also be humble enough to ask why someone left. **Are they walking away from Christ, from a local congregation, from our leadership, or from an injury we helped cause?** Those are not the same thing. **People can leave us without leaving Jesus.** If our pride, neglect, inconsistency, or wrongdoing contributed to their departure, faithfulness requires confession, apology, and repair—not labeling them rebellious. But when people demand that we compromise truth, abandon calling, or become somebody God did not assign us to be in order to keep them, we must practice **concern without captivity. We can love people who leave without leaving Jesus to follow them.** We can grieve their departure without bargaining away our convictions. **We can leave the door open without moving the foundation.**

We must avoid chasing crowds as we redefine success as faithfulness rather than popularity. We build disciples rather than consumers. We measure fruit, growth, love, obedience, and transformed lives—not numbers alone. We remain willing to examine our methods, but we refuse to alter Christ's identity or message merely to increase attendance. **Methods can change; truth cannot.**

We also learn to tolerate the grief of departure. Every leader feels the pain when people walk away, but **pain must not become panic.** Jesus did not measure His worth by who left. Neither should we allow someone else's departure to erase our identity, invalidate our calling, or make us chase approval. Love them, pray for them, reach out appropriately, receive them graciously if they return—but keep walking with Jesus.

Ultimately, Why Do We Stay With Jesus?

When the crowd left, Jesus asked the Twelve, “Will ye also go away?” Peter answered with one of the greatest confessions of discipleship: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” Peter did not say, “Lord, we understand everything.” He did not say, “Lord, Your teaching is easy.” He did not say, “Lord, the crowd is still with us.” **His decision rested on something deeper: he knew who Jesus was.**

Peter's question was not, “Where shall we go?” It was, “To whom shall we go?” Christianity is not ultimately a place, program, crowd, denomination, or religious experience. **At its center is a Person!** We stay because Jesus possesses the words of eternal life. We stay because alternatives may entertain us, affirm us, or temporarily satisfy us, but they cannot save us. We stay because we have believed and have come to know that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. We stay with Jesus when people question Him because our confidence is rooted in His identity. We stay when His words are hard because eternal life is found in His truth. We stay when the crowd leaves because the crowd did not call us, the crowd cannot

keep us, and the crowd cannot save us. **Our loyalty is not to the popularity surrounding Jesus; our loyalty is to Jesus Himself!**

He Stayed With Us

Our decision to stay with Christ is made possible by the truth that **Christ stayed with us**. He stayed faithful when He was questioned. He stayed obedient when His own disciples misunderstood Him. He stayed on course when the crowd rejected Him. In Gethsemane, when His friends slept, Jesus stayed. At Calvary, when disciples scattered and mockers gathered, Jesus stayed. He remained on the cross until redemption's work was finished.

They laid Him in a borrowed tomb, but early Sunday morning He rose with all power in His hands. The risen Christ still promises, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He does not abandon us when our faith struggles, when our understanding is incomplete, or when our crowd grows small. **The One who calls us to stay with Him has already promised to stay with us.**

When they question Him—I'm staying with Jesus!

When His words are hard—I'm staying with Jesus!

When the crowd leaves—I'm staying with Jesus!

Lord, to whom shall we go?

WE HAVE DECIDED—WE ARE STAYING WITH JESUS!