

## Would you still "go to church" if?

Written by Josh Winslett

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In the gospel of John, our Savior explicitly names two problematic reasons why people followed him and solicits a third reason from his closest disciples (John 6:26,68).

The first reason Jesus mentions is that people followed him because of his miracles (John 6:26). This can be broken into two subcategories. Some people followed him to be healed (Luke 5:17-39) and some people followed him to see the miracles themselves (John 6:2).

The second reason Jesus mentions was that people came to fill their appetite (John 6:26). They came because he fed them with the fish and the loaves. Christ negatively compares this with the first reason showing that this motivation is worse than the first.

The third reason that Christ solicited from his disciples is that they followed him because he was "Christ, the Son of the living God" and only from him can they find a hope of salvation (John 6:68-69).

Now we all must ask ourselves the question, why do we follow Christ? Do we follow him

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because we want to satisfy our appetites delight? Do we follow him to see the show? Or do we follow him because he is our only hope for salvation?

We must remember that Jesus reminds his hearers in John 6 that the only way that they can enjoy him as their hope is if he has worked in their hearts. Christ first declares to them that only those given of the Father in election will be brought into a living relationship with him (John 6:37), but he further reinforces this fact by declaring the absolute inability of humans to enact or acquire this relationship in their naturally depraved condition, "No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Christ is speaking about the new birth, which is also called regeneration. In essence, if we have the ability, sensibleness, and conviction to follow him then it is because he has first worked in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

With that said, there were three groups of people there at that time. There were those that had not been drawn by God that were left in their sinful condition, as exemplified by wicked Judas (John 6:64). This group cannot truly follow God in their present state and will always seek self gratification. Yet, there were also some disciples to whom walked no more with Jesus after this harsh rebuke (John 6:66). This group seemingly tripped at the "hard" message of sovereign grace. Then there were those like Peter, that knew that Christ himself was all their salvation, and all their desire (John 6:68-69).

Making this more practical, we should all exam our own motivations and reasons for attending our specific assembly. In John, Christ questioned their motives and they were left exposed before him. I suspect that the reaction today would generally be just like that we see in this instance. Most would return home. Now, this is not to say that certain modern amenities are unlawful. Nor is this to say that we should not come expecting a blessing and looking to be filled. Worship and discipleship should be a joyous experience. But our desire should first be Christ and his kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

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Furthermore, our Lord did not just point out their what's-in-it-for-me motivation. He further tested their loyalty by uplifting the truth through an explicitly sovereign grace oriented sermon. He tore down their fickle, self serving reasons and presented them with "hard" doctrine. How do we react to truth? How do we react when we read such passages as John 6:37 and 6:44? Have we "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11)? Or do we immediately take offense to the word and reject it?

Take a moment to mediate on this occasion found in the gospel of John. Consider if American Christianity were to be stripped of all of its modern bells and whistles. And all the stages and dramatic lighting was removed. All sensationalism and novelty evaporated. Think about if there was simply the preacher and God's unadulterated truth. What would be your reaction?

"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, 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 6:67-69