



## Digging Deeper Week 3 *Christ's Encounter with People Losing Faith*

### Opening Question

What have you done that you were afraid to do, but once you did it your fears decreased and it became easier? How is it similar to faith in God?

### Watch Video

As we pick up the study this week let's look at Max Lucado's description of how Jesus reacted when He asked his disciples how they would feed the 5000 people. (Read Max's story page 3)

- 1. Compassion. Jesus extends compassion to those that disappoint him instead of chastising them for their actions. Think of some situations where compassion was not your initial reaction when someone disappointed you.**

**How would you have reacted if you were in Jesus' place? Discuss as a group.**

At the conclusion of John 6, many initial followers of Jesus have turned away from him for a variety of reasons: miracles weren't enough, His claims of divinity were too incredible, the message was too simple or mystical or too hard to accept. Even his disciples had doubts.

### Read John 6:67-69. What impresses you about Peter's answer to Christ?

- 2. How do you relate to this answer in regard to your own faith?**

**How do you think Jesus felt when so many people deserted him? Obviously, he knew it was going to happen since he was Jesus. But he was still human with human emotions. How would you have felt in his place? What can you learn from his reaction?**

It's fascinating to me that throughout the Bible, even *believers* find following God to be too unpredictable, or simple, or incredible, or mystical, or uncomfortable for their taste. Similar questions were expressed by Moses, David, Job, Mary, Thomas and other disciples, yet somehow their doubts could co-exist with their walk of faith.

- 3. How do you explain the difference between people who choose to have faith while they have questions versus those who allow their questions to short-circuit their faith?**

**Have you ever struggled with any of the reasons listed above?  
How have you overcome your questions?**

**Have you ever been really impressed with or moved by Jesus, only to turn away from Him the next day or the next moment? Why does that happen?**

**Where are you faced with the question, “do you want to leave me too?” When times are hard, what keeps you from leaving your own faith and going on to something else?**

### **Read John 7**

Jesus' brothers are encouraging him to attend the Feast of Tabernacles. That he needed to be seen doing more miracles if he was to become the public figure he wanted to be. John says that even his brothers did not believe in him. Jesus says it is not the right time for him, yet after telling his brothers this, he also goes to the festival, only secretly.

His own brothers did not believe in him, even after seeing the miracles that he performed.

**4. What does it say to you about Jesus, that even though his brothers don't believe, he still has a relationship with them? Why would Jesus not try to convince them before trying to convince the population?**

People were looking for Jesus at the Feast. Some spoke highly of him and others spoke negatively. He's a deceiver or demon possessed. But they did this among themselves and not publicly for fear of the Pharisees.

John 7 is a fascinating chapter that follows up on Christ's encounter in John 6 and goes into more detail about the varied reactions to Jesus in his lifetime—in fact, you can find just about all the modern reactions to Christ right here!

**Read the following passages and list the reactions to Jesus:**

**John 7:3-6**

**John 7:12**

**John 7:15**

**John 7:20**

**John 7:31**

**John 7:40-44**

**John 7:45-47**

**5. Why do you suppose John – who says he wrote this Gospel “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...” (John 20:31) – includes so many candid examples of unbelief, not only in this chapter, but throughout his book? What do you think might have been happening in the early church that would have motivated John to write about these events in Christ’s life?**

### **Prayer Requests**

**Interestingly**, the stress seen that day is not on Jesus' face, but on the faces of the disciples. "Send the crowds away," they demand. Fair request. "After all," they are saying, "You've taught them. You've healed them. You've accommodated them. And now they're getting hungry. If we don't send them away, they'll want you to feed them, too!"

I wish I could have seen the expression on the disciples' faces when they heard the Master's response. . . .

"You give them something to eat." . . .

Rather than look to God, they looked in their wallets. "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

"Y-y-y—you've got to be kidding."

"He can't be serious."

"It's one of Jesus' jokes."

"Do you know how many people are out there?"

Eyes watermelon wide. Jaws dangling open. One ear hearing the din of the crowd, the other the command of God.

Don't miss the contrasting views. When Jesus saw the people, he saw an opportunity to love and affirm value. When the disciples saw the people they saw thousands of problems.

Also, don't miss the irony. In the midst of a bakery – in the presence of the Eternal Baker – they tell the "Bread of Life" that there is no bread.

How silly we must appear to God.

Here's where Jesus should have given up. This is the point in the pressure-packed day where Jesus should have exploded. The sorrow, the life threats, the exuberance, the crowds, the interruptions, the demands, and now this. His own disciples can't do what he asks them. In front of five thousand men, they let him down.

"Beam me up, Father," should have been Jesus' next words. But they weren't. Instead he inquires, "How many loaves do you have?"

The disciples bring him a little boy's lunch. A lunch pail becomes a banquet, and all are fed. No word of reprimand is given. No furrowed brow of anger is seen. No "I-told-you-so" speech is delivered. The same compassion Jesus extends to the crowd is extended to his friends.

(from *In the Eye of the Storm* by Max Lucado)