

Our Journey  
The Season of Formation

Foundational Text

Romans 8:29 -- Mirror Translation

"For those He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the exact image of His Son."

April 12, 2026

Sermon Title -- Where Most Turn Back

Sermon Text -- John 6:60-71 New Living Translation

"Many of his disciples said, 'This is very hard to understand. ... How can anyone accept it?' ... Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, 'Does this offend you? ... Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascend to heaven again? ... The Spirit alone gives eternal life. ... Human effort accomplishes nothing. ... And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ... But some of you do not believe me.' ... At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. ... Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, 'Are you also going to leave?' ... Simon Peter replied, 'Lord, to whom would we go? ... You have the words that give eternal life. ... We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God.'"

### **Introduction**

For the past several weeks -- we have been on a journey together ... A journey of formation -- awakening -- and ascent ... We have talked about pitfalls that derail us ... We have stood at the base of our spiritual mountain ... We have discussed what it means to leave base camp behind and begin climbing.

But this morning – I want to stop – and set up what I am calling Base Camp 1 ... Let me explain what a base camp actually is ... In the world of serious mountain climbing – a base camp is not the bottom of the mountain ... It is the last established point of safety before the real ascent begins ... Climbers go there to assess their condition – acclimate to the change in altitude – check their equipment – and make any critical decisions before they proceed.

Base camp is also where most people make the decision to stop their climb and return to the bottom of the mountain ... Not because of some failure – but because the mountain begins to reveal something at that altitude – that wasn't visible from the bottom ... It also exposes whether you are climbing out of desire – or out of commitment.

That is exactly what is happening in John 6 ... Jesus has just delivered one of the most disruptive teachings of His entire ministry ... He spoke about eating His flesh and drinking His blood ... And the crowd that had been following Him – committed disciples – began to grumble – to the place where most of them decided to walk away.

I want us to reflect upon that for a moment ... Hard truth caused such internal pressure that those disciples decided to leave the journey they were on with Jesus ... Unfortunately – the same is true today ... Hard truth – uncomfortable truth – biblical truth that goes contrary to the cultural beliefs – still exerts internal pressure upon His disciples today – but why?

## **When it Comes to Spiritual Truth - The Flesh Profits Nothing**

### **John 6:63 Mirror Translation**

"The words that I speak to you are spirit and life ... The flesh has no ability to contribute anything to this."

Now catch this critical point ... Jesus didn't apologize to His disciples for being misunderstood ... He didn't try to correct their misconceptions ... He didn't change what He said to bring

clarity ... He clearly identified an internal condition with surgical precision ... A condition that needed to be identified and rectified if they were going to go further with Jesus in their journey.

Jesus was putting His finger on a common condition – that every believer will eventually deal with – at some point in their life ... This condition is this ... **Trying to understand spiritual truth – and walk them out through the flesh** ... Let this blended version of 1Cor. 2:14 speak to your heart ... "The natural man -- living on an entirely human level -- does not welcome the things of the Spirit of God ... They are foolishness to him ... He is not able to know them -- not because he hasn't tried -- but because they are only discovered by the illumination of the Spirit."

Dwell on that for a minute ... This scripture is so profound and deep that we just gloss right over it ... Yet it is a clear diagnosis of the primary reason the formation journey stalls and even fails in most believers' lives ... The flesh – in all of its forms – has no ability to contribute anything – to what the Spirit desires to do in our life.

Religion has done a great job of programming us with religious ideology ... Making us believe that maturity and new creation formation is done through our human effort ... Rather than by the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit ... We have been convinced that theological education – ministry experience – spiritual disciplines – emotional sincerity – along with faithfulness and perseverance – will bring about the new creation lifestyle.

Now catch this ... The disciples who turned back and walked away from Jesus – were not weak people ... Verse 60 calls them disciples ... Committed followers ... These were people who have been walking with Jesus ... They witnessed miracles – and sat under His teaching for months ... They had enough flesh-based equipment to get them all the way to base camp 1 ... But base camp 1 is where flesh runs out of its ability to continue forward ... It lacks the capacity to handle what lies ahead in the next leg of the journey up the mountain ... If you have remained on this journey – I'm sure you are discovering – the flesh doesn't surrender quietly ... It will cycle through every option possible – before it ever considers letting go ... Let's examine this fleshly cycle as it is critical we discern it properly at this stage of our journey.

## **Three Desperate Stages the Flesh Cycles Through**

### **Galatians 3:3 Passion Translation**

"How could you be so stupid? ... After starting your journey in the Spirit by faith -- are you now going to finish it in the flesh -- by your own works?"

Paul is asking a very straightforward and blunt question ... You started in the Spirit – but you are going to finish in the flesh? ... He is clearly saying you can't finish what the Spirit starts ... This is why Jesus was also clear and direct when He said – “Human effort accomplishes nothing”

Now catch this key Kingdom principle ... When the flesh hits a certain spiritual altitude – it loses its ability to carry you forward ... And loses its capacity to bring any deep meaningful change ... Let me give you a personal example for clarity ... It is no secret that I was a sin pit before I got saved ... Now when I got saved – that brought about changes in my life – changes in my behavior ... I no longer drank – I went to church – read my bible – quit swearing – etc. ... So – there was a certain level of change that occurred through the intellectual knowledge I gain through religious disciplines ... Does that make sense?

Now – what we need to grasp is this change I just described will only get you so far in the journey ... Yes – we started in the Spirit – we got born again ... Religious ideology brought about further change because we discovered truths we previously didn't know – and we saw visible change in our life ... But this is the issue Paul and Jesus is addressing here that we need to discern properly ... Are we actually still trying to continue in the flesh?

### **Stage One -- The Mind Tries to Comprehend Spiritual Truth**

#### **Romans 8:7 Mirror Translation**

"The mind of the flesh is hostile toward God -- it does not submit to the law of God -- neither indeed can it."

Did you catch that? ... The mind is hostile towards God? ... How can this be when it served me so well in my early days of my faith walk? ... See - - The natural mind is not equipped to receive what the Spirit is speaking at this altitude ... It isn't a character flaw – it is a capacity issue ... The natural mind can't properly harmonize with the Spirit at this altitude level – like it did when you were functioning at this earthly – low-level frequency.

So – when spiritual truth arrives at this level of the journey – the natural mind cannot process it ... So – this is what happens instead ... The mind immediately tries to fit this higher revelation into its existing theological grid ... It asks questions ... It analyzes ... It debates ... It searches for a framework that makes this disharmony feel manageable ... And when it can't find one – the tension intensifies ... Because the mind of the flesh isn't just limited ... Romans says it is actually hostile toward the things of God ... Which means the harder spiritual truth presses in – the harder the natural mind pushes back ... That is not the enemy attacking you from the outside ... That is the flesh resisting surrender from the inside ... And no amount of mental effort – theological study – or doctrinal precision will ever change that ... Because you cannot think your way into what only the Spirit is trying to reveal to your spirit.

## **Stage Two -- Our Feelings Try to Confirm It**

### **Proverbs 14:12 Mirror Translation**

"There is a path that seems right to a man – but its end is the way of death."

When the mind can't comprehend the hard truth – the flesh doesn't quit – it cycles to another option – Feelings ... Now it looks for an emotional experience to validate what the intellect couldn't process ... If I feel something – then it must be God speaking to me ... If I don't feel something – He must not be speaking ... Now – the emotional experience becomes the measuring stick for this higher spiritual reality the mind can't process.

But feelings are just as fleshly as the mind ... They fluctuate ... They are completely circumstantial ... What felt like unshakeable emotional certainty at the bottom of the mountain – won't feel like anything at this altitude ... The crowd in John 6 had powerful feelings ... They

followed Jesus across water ... They tried to make Him king by force just one chapter earlier ... They were running on spiritual adrenaline ... But feelings couldn't metabolize what He was saying ... And when the emotional confirmation didn't come – the tension became unbearable ... But did the flesh quit there? ... Nope – it cycled into stage three

### **Stage Three -- Performance Tries to Manage It**

#### **Isaiah 29:13 Amplified Classic**

"Forasmuch as this people - - draw near Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips - - but remove their hearts and minds far from Me - - and their fear and reverence for Me are a commandment of men - - that is learned by repetition."

When the mind tweaks out because it doesn't have the capacity to comprehend at this level of the journey ... When the emotions wig out due to atmospheric pressure of the climb ... Then the last fleshly cycle will kick in to try to make sense of it all – Performance ... This is where the flesh decides to double down with a “works mentality” ... That simply means – we will do what we have always done – when it comes to our spiritual disciplines – but we will also double down on our efforts ... Why – doing gives the illusion of forward movement ... Action gives the impression of understanding and growth.

But did you catch what Isaiah exposes? ... He said you talk a good game – but your heart is far from God ... You look spiritual doing all your religious activities – but you are unaware of God presence ... This is what is crazy – the crowd in John 6 cycled through all three stages in one afternoon ... They couldn't comprehend it intellectually ... They lost the spiritual adrenaline they had been running on ... And when the performance of following Jesus could not resolve the internal tension, they were dealing with – they turned back and left Jesus ... They didn't leave because Jesus failed them ... They left because their flesh exhausted every option available to it.

Then we come to another profound question asked by Jesus to His 12 apostles ... “Are you going to leave too?” ... What Peter says leads us to our take away this morning.

## Takeaway

### John 6:68-69 New Living Translation

"Lord – to whom would we go? ... You have the words that give eternal life ... We believe and we know – YOU are the Holy One of God."

Most people read Peter's response and their brain immediately says – YES – I get that ... But what your brain is actually confirming is a doctrinal position – not the revelational truth Peter is declaring ... See – Peter is declaring something much deeper – than his natural mind can actually comprehend.

Notice what he said ... There is nowhere else to go ... You have the words I need to hear ... I know who You are ... These three declarations – came from an internal transformation – rather than from religious teaching ... The crowd who left knew the same facts about Jesus that Peter knew ... They witnessed the same miracles ... sat under the same teaching ... felt the same internal tension of that hard saying ... Yet they left and Peter stayed ... The difference was never information – but revelation

So, I am not going to give you answers this morning ... I want to leave you with something far more valuable than answers ... I want to leave you with an invitation to sit ... Take Peter's three declarations into a quiet place this week ... Not to study them – not to pray about them in the way you normally pray – but to sit with them – one at a time – in stillness and honest reflection ... Let the Spirit do within you what your natural mind simply does not have the capacity to do.

Don't rush anything ... Don't try to make it work ... Just be still – and let Him awaken what the flesh could never produce on its own ... Because that is exactly what this journey is designed to do.