

INTRODUCTION

Spring is a time for cleaning. When it gets warmer, we will gradually wash and pack up our winter clothes and blankets. Besides, there may be other things we need to clean. People devise fascinating tricks called “life hacks” to clean just about anything. If your towels or jeans smell bad even after laundry, you can put them in a freezer overnight to kill the germs that cause the odor. To clear soap scum from faucet heads, all you have to do is to cut a lemon into halves and use it to rub against the stains. Also, do you know Cola soda can take care of rust on coins and even engine oil stains on your driveway? Just imagine what Cola will clean in your digestive system after you drink it! You may wonder: do these life hacks really work? Well, there is only one way to find out. Just try them! If you do not believe, then you will not follow the instructions. The same principle also applies to our relationship with Jesus. There are many people standing outside every church door. They wonder what it means to become a Christian. What is a true belief? Today is baptism Sunday. We Baptists see baptism as important, and we should. However, the ritual of baptism means nothing if people do not commit their lives to Jesus. Many people signed their marriage certificates but they do not commit to their spouse. Whether marriage or baptism, the ceremony means nothing if there is no commitment. In the passage today, Jesus told us that a true believer must also be a follower. At the beginning of John chapter 6, Jesus performed the miracle of the five-loaves-and-two-fish to feed five thousand people. The crowd began to chase after Jesus. Then Jesus invited His listeners to follow Him. Jesus is making the same request to us today. We see two types of audience in the story.

EXPLANATION

1. The Sneakers 機會主義者

I call the first group of people the “sneakers.” By the name, it is not about athletic shoes. The sneakers creep in to see what they can get from Jesus. But they quickly sneak out when Jesus fails to offer what they want. There were a lot of sneakers among the five thousand people. Let us listen to a hypothetical dialogue between two of them:

Bob: Johnny, my man, what are you doing here? Boss was looking for you all over the places.

Johnny: Yo, fat dude! Then what are YOU doing here? Check this out man, this Jesus is legit. He can do miracles. I saw Him heal a blind man. I even heard that He raised two dead persons!

Bob: Are you the last person following His Twitter? Everyone knows that Jesus cast out demons and calmed the storm too. He also taught people with authority, and yes, He even called the Pharisees hypocrites. That is so funny!

Johnny: So... what do you think? Is Jesus the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament?

Bob: How can I know? Do my bald-head and beard make me look like Moses or Isaiah?

Johnny: No sir! But your bad breath surely stinks like the big fish that gobbled up Jonah!

Bob: But seriously, the miracle Jesus just performed was truly epic. Where did all the bread and fish come from?

Johnny: Beats me! But who cares? We don't need to work again if He gives us free food every day! Chill, bro, looks like Jesus is about to speak again.

The mentality of these two fellows may represent a lot of sneakers. In fact, the apostle John told us why Jesus' "fans" were there. Look at **verse 2**: a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. They found Jesus' miracles quite entertaining. Then in **verse 15**: Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. Remember Pastor Bill's message two Sundays ago that people at that time expected Jesus to become a military leader to overturn the Romans? Jesus also made it clear in **verse 26**: "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill." Those people were not looking for miracle shows only, but they were interested in what Jesus could offer from His supernatural power – food, healing and relief from demonic force. From the first century we will jump to the 21st century. Why are sneakers in the modern time attracted to Christianity? They may go to church for a peaceful and solemn religious experience. They may enjoy the songs we sing. Perhaps they think that the moral values in the Bible can make the society a better place. Then Christians also show love and care when people ask for help. Believers pray for people and provide practical assistance. While those are good reasons that cause people to come to God, there are some hidden problems. We know how short-lived and unreliable feelings can be. Also, will people stay after their problems are solved? What if God does not give an instant answer to their financial crisis, marriage conflict or immigration status, or when God seems to be silent? It is true that God concerns about all of our needs. But Jesus did not come to replace what some people worship in the temples. He is not Amazon or Alibaba where we can order what we want. Whether it is through miracles or answered prayers, God is telling us that He rules over the universe and He rules over our lives. Jesus came to build an eternal relationship with us. He invites us to follow Him.

2. The Seekers 誠心尋道者

The sneakers may be looking for a short-term solution to their needs. But Jesus is delighted to see genuine seekers to come to Him. Jesus challenged the crowd to look for an eternal solution to their spiritual needs. Please listen to the conversation of our two friends again:

Johnny: What in the world? Jesus asked us to eat His body and drink His blood!

Bob: Unbelievable! I am going to puke. My wife says my medium-rare steak is disgusting. What Jesus said was simply offensive.

Johnny: Yeah, man, what kind of teacher is He? Didn't He know that the Law forbids us to taste blood? And chewing His meat too? Goodness! Is He planning to do a five-hamburger-patty and two-sparerib miracle from His body to feed all of us?

Bob: Am I the only person who is really confused here? Tell you what, I'm out of here.

Johnny: Jesus even asked us to follow Him. Is He going to start a head-hunting tribe or what? I guess rabbi Goodman was right. We have to watch out for Jesus' new teaching. After all, our ancestors have been obeying the Law for over a thousand years. How wrong could that be?

Bob: Dude! That is the wisest thing you have said all day. Finally, you learn something from me.

Johnny: Whatever! See you at work tomorrow. Duh, I'll be lucky if boss still wants me. This is in the middle of nowhere. I wonder if I can catch an Uber ride home.

These two sneakers were disappointed because they could not make sense of Jesus' request. Of course, Jesus was not asking the crowd to eat Him alive. He was speaking in metaphors. In both verses 35 and 48, Jesus said He was the bread of life. Also, twice in verses 50 and 58, Jesus stated that He was "the living bread that came down from heaven." Jesus quoted the example of manna in the wilderness wandering of the Israelites. The people grumbled to God that they did not have anything to eat. God showed mercy and dropped manna from the sky. This special provision foretold that one-day Jesus, the true Bread of Life, would come down from heaven. Back then the Israelites ate manna, but a few hours later they were hungry again. But those who feed on Jesus would have eternal satisfaction. He told the people in **verse 53**: "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." We have to receive Jesus into our hearts by faith, as if we consumed His body and blood, to obtain eternal life. In other words, we have to build an ever-lasting relationship with Jesus to be saved. How did the audience respond to Jesus' invitation? They dispersed because they found Jesus' offer offensive. Jesus then asked His twelve disciples if they wanted to depart from Him too. Peter served as the spokesman for his brothers. Look at **verses 68-69**: 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." Jesus' disciples were true seekers. They sought after the way to eternal life that only Jesus could give. They also believed that Jesus was the Son of God, even though their understanding was not complete until Jesus rose from the dead. They could see that Jesus was unlike the religious teachers. He brought the good news of the Kingdom of God to break away from the bondage of sin. Jesus invited everyone to follow Him. He reached out to people young or old, male or female and rich or poor. Today, when we come to Jesus, we have to believe that He is God. He has power not only to solve our life problems, but also to save us from sins and to give us eternal life. The deepest need of our life that only Jesus can provide is to restore our relationship with God.

CONCLUSION

A true believer of Jesus must also be a follower. Jesus does not want people to come to Him as sneakers, but as seekers. The sneakers simply want what they can get from God. But seekers humbly receive what only God can offer. On that day, Jesus asked tough questions to separate the seekers from the sneakers. The crowd did not understand how to eat Jesus' flesh and drink His blood. Jesus is giving us the same invitation. The world cannot comprehend nor is it willing to follow Jesus' unusual teaching. Jesus asked us to deny ourselves. He told us to forgive those

who offended us and even pray for our enemies. He said that our life goal should not be for our own gain, but for the ultimate glory of God. He assured us that our eternal home is not down here, but up there. Will you believe in Jesus, and will you follow Him? To the two candidates who will receive baptism today: your spiritual journey has just begun. Trust in Jesus, and He will guide your path.