

**"Breaking Point"**  
**John 6: 56 – 69**  
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Breaking Point, everybody has one. That point in which you just cannot go any further or you have taken all you can, and it is time to put a stop to it or to bail out; just walk away. When I was a kid, I found my breaking point in baseball. I loved playing baseball. I won't say that I was good at it because I wasn't a good hitter. I think my batting average was something like 1.25, but I was a decent catcher and fielder.

From Pee-Wee to Little League, I had fun, and I bought into the idea of going on into Pony League. That is until I arrived at our first day of practice being led by a head coach who was no more than 4 to 5 years older than myself at 15. It was his style of coaching that I just could not bear. His motivation style was something that on the playing field I had not been used to. It was to call us names, and I mean by that bad names, and basically to just cuss us out. So after that practice, I went home and talked with my parents, and the decision was mine whether I would keep playing or call it quits after six or seven years of playing.

I enjoyed playing the game, but I knew that if that were the way it would be, I would no longer enjoy it. So I decided to quit if I could not get the coach to change. First, I had to call the coach and tell him. I explained that I did not care for the nasty name-calling and put-downs, and his response to me was, "you're in Pony League now, and if you can't hack it, that is your problem, I will tell the others you decided to quit." I told him to go ahead, and it was all the more reason that I needed to get out. I had reached my breaking point.

A similar thing happened to me when I had joined the Memphis Blues Brass Band Drum and Bugle Corps. I had been marching with the corps for nearly three years. Again, I will tell you I was not a star performer. I played baritone bugle, and I was ok, but my marching skills were lacking. The director brought in a new marching instructor. Again a young guy, who technically was young enough that he could have been marching with us. In a marching drill, he called me out in front of

everybody, again telling me that I looked like you know what, without explaining to me what I was doing wrong. It embarrassed me. But this time, instead of waiting till after practice in a private conversation or over a phone call, I yelled back in front of everybody there. "Hey, don't tell me I look like \*%@\* and then walk away; that's not teaching. Show me what I am doing wrong, so I know what to work on." He came back over to me and did what I asked. Needless to say, I did not quit. I went on to march my last year, and that year I tied for 'member of the year' with another member. Breaking points can come in a lot of different ways. They can often be from a lack of understanding, trust, or having a good relationship.

Take those who were following Jesus as he traveled about. These many disciples heard him preach and were intrigued. Some may have even been baptized. They had been listening to Jesus talk about being the bread of life and that in order to have eternal life, they must eat of his body and drink his blood. He was the bread that came down from heaven, not like the manna that the ancestors ate. His body, he said, was the bread of life. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever. It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh, the body, is useless. But among you are some who do not believe.

Many of his would-be followers at point had reached their breaking point. It was their opportunity to drop out. They did so because they simply could not wrap their minds around Jesus' words. They had not built the relationship with him of trust and faith that Jesus had with his other disciples like Peter, James, and John. Sort of like me with the Pony League baseball coach.

But when Jesus asked the disciples he had chosen, like Peter, if they too wanted to walk away (for Jesus knew that Peter and the others were also at a breaking point), Peter's response was, "Where else would we go? You have the words of eternal life. Spirit and life. We have believed, and we have come to know that you are the Holy One of God."

Even though Peter was still confused and troubled, he also knew he could trust Jesus because he had a relationship with him built on that trust and faith.

The difference in anything between quitting and walking away or deciding to go the distance is in the trust we have of the one who speaks either words of wisdom, truth, and Spirit or if we think it just goes too far. For me in baseball, what made me decide to go ahead and quit was not so much what the coach said on the field that day; it was the Spirit with which he reacted to my concerns when I called him on the phone afterward. I knew he didn't care, which was pretty much what I expected from him.

With my marching instructor, who also used similar language with me as the baseball coach, there were a couple of reasons I stayed. One: I had been marching for two years with the same group of people. It was the relationship I had with the group, even if I didn't know this new marching instructor that well. The other reason was he heard me. He did not dismiss my voice. He came over, and he showed me what I was doing wrong and how to fix it. When I did it, he said it was much better. Because I had a better or stronger relationship with the corps than I did with the Pony League team and because I felt heard, I stayed the course, even though, in some ways, I had hit another breaking point.

Jesus tells us that his words are the bread of life because they are the gift of eternal life if we choose to believe in them, live by them, and form our communities of faith around them. And to take in his life, accepting it as our own. For some of us, that is hard to wrap our minds around. It can be confusing. But again, to Jesus' point, it is not something that is going to be a tangible physical reality, but rather a spiritual one.

While we may see a sign of it in the physical universe, it will always be a spiritual reality we will see if it is of God. But ultimately, it is God who allows it to happen and to whom it happens.

Have you reached a breaking point in your life? Are you struggling with so many things that it has just become too much? Are you looking for physical answers to spiritual questions? I know I have felt in recent times like I just don't understand what is going on; like Peter and those many disciples, I feel overwhelmed by it all.

I don't know where those many disciples who walked away from Jesus went when they reached their breaking point. But I can say that, like Peter, I do know who I can trust. I do know where I can go, for even though I cannot see a physical Jesus, I can see his living words of life because Jesus is the Holy One of God. It is in him and not this world that I have my life and being. Do you?

If you are at a breaking point, you can do one of three things. 1. You can freeze up, do nothing, and stick your head in the sand. Two, you can give up, walk away, quit, drop out. Or three, you can put your trust into the Living Word, even if you do not understand it all. Jesus, the bread of life, given to us that we may have life in his Spirit eternally.