

To whom can we go?

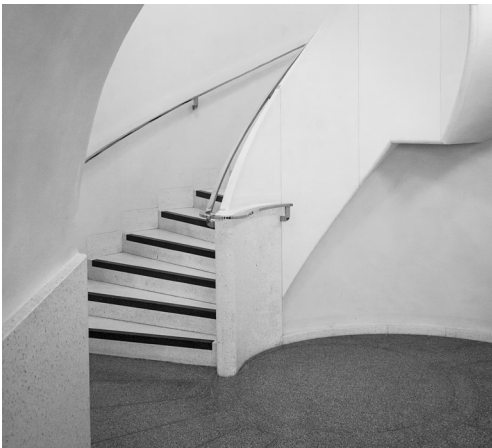
 John 6.56-69

The disciples struggle to understand Jesus' teachings. What he says is challenging, but also encouraging, as he tells them that the words he speaks are spirit and life. After hearing what Jesus has to say, some of his followers decide to walk away. When Jesus asks those who have remained if they want to leave, they say, '...to whom can we go?' There is no alternative, Jesus is the Holy One – even if it is sometimes difficult to fully understand his teaching.

Now read **John 6.56-69** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

How do you feel when you don't understand something? Now imagine how the disciples must have felt in this instance. They had given up everything to follow Jesus, and here he is, speaking in what must have sounded like riddles. Yet those that made the difficult choice to continue following him did so because of their belief in him. How can these words be a message of hope and assurance in your own faith journey?



Ask yourself: How does it feel to follow a path to somewhere unknown?

WALK

Go outside to somewhere you can safely walk barefoot. Take a moment to feel the ground beneath your feet. Take a step and, as you do so, think of one reason you follow Jesus. Continue, pausing between each step as you make this walking prayer.

PLAY

The disciples are at the beginning of an exciting story as they choose to follow Jesus. However, they don't know where it will lead. Play the simple game, 'Consequences', where you don't know how the story will unfold. Each player starts with a piece of paper. The players each write a phrase as the first step in a story, and then fold the paper to hide the phrase before passing it to the next player; continue passing between players for eight steps. The steps are as follows, where the things in brackets should be replaced by the chosen words or phrase: (boy's name); met (girl's name); in/at/on (where they met); He said (what he said); She said (what she said); He (what he did); She (what she did); The consequence was (what happened). When the players have completed all eight steps, the pieces of paper are unfolded in turn, and the players read out the completed, usually funny, stories.

WATCH

Watch a film or documentary about someone who has given things up to follow a dream or passion, such as *The Pursuit of Happiness* [PG] or *Free Solo* [12A]. Why do you think the disciples chose to follow Jesus? What answers might they have wanted?

ROCK REMINDER

Find a rock to decorate with some of the words from the verse, 'We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God'. There is a certainty in Simon Peter's response – this rock can serve as a reminder of this. Leave it somewhere in your community for someone else to find.

FOLLOW

Create one positive message, window display, meme or social media post every day this week, to share with your 'followers' or those you come into contact with, influenced by the words of Jesus about following him. What is it about Jesus that compels you to follow him? How does following him help you in your daily life, even when you don't have all the answers?

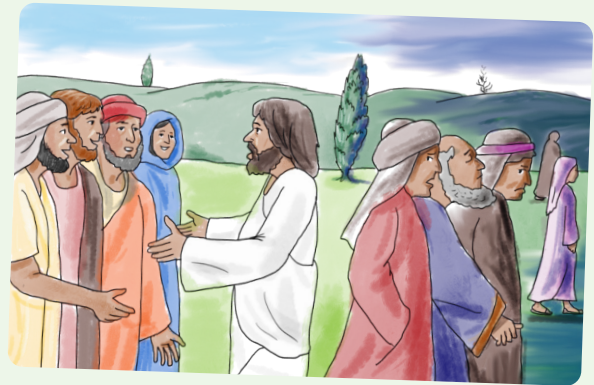
Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Jesus said, 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, lives in me, and I live in them. Just as the Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is what I mean by the bread that has come from heaven; not like the manna that your ancestors ate, and they died. Anyone who has this bread inside them will live for ever.'

Many of Jesus' followers complained. 'This is too difficult to understand. How can we believe it?'

'Why are you upset?' Jesus asked. 'Suppose you saw the one sent by God, go back to God? Would you believe then? It's the Spirit of God, not the body, that gives life. My words are Spirit and they are life.'

He looked around sadly and said, 'But I see that some of you do not believe.' And he knew that one of them would betray him. He went on, 'That's why I told you that people will only come to believe who I really am if their hearts are led by God.'



Because of what he was saying, many of Jesus' disciples turned away from him and stopped following him. Jesus asked his twelve disciples: 'And what about you? Will you leave me too?'

Simon Peter answered, 'Lord – where would we go? You have the message of eternal life. We believe, and know, that you are the Holy One of God.'

John 6.56-69

Did you know?

- To 'abide' means to stay or remain.
- 'Manna' is the food God provided for the people of Israel during their time in the wilderness.
- 'Ancestors': members of your family who have lived before you, also the people of Israel, whom Moses led out of Egypt and into the wilderness, where they spent 40 years.

John 6.56-69 (NRSV)

'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.' He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives

life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'