

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?”

For individual study or group discussion

DATE: May 31, 2026

SPEAKER: Frank/Wil

SERIES: The Gospel of John

PASSAGE: John 6:60–71

Tensions rise as Jesus concludes his *Bread of Life* discourse in John 6:60–71. When the crowd realizes Jesus has not come merely to satisfy their material desires, many grumble at his “*hard sayings*” and turn away. Jesus’ popularity quickly fades as thousands abandon him. He then asks the twelve, “*Do you want to go away as well?*” Peter responds with a remarkable confession of faith: “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*” (v. 68). In the end, this passage confronts every reader with the same question: When Jesus’ words are difficult, will we walk away, or will we confess with Peter, “*Lord, to whom shall we go?*”

The difficulty of Jesus’ teaching (vv. 60–62, 66)

It isn’t hard to understand; it is hard to accept. Jesus’ call to total surrender, faith, and obedience offends them. The first thing we note in this passage is the difficulty of Jesus’ teaching. Many of his disciples recoil at his claims because his words confront human pride and self-sufficiency. They want bread for their stomachs, but Jesus offers himself as the *Bread of Life*. His teaching demands faith, surrender, and dependence upon him alone. Instead of clarifying his message to make it more acceptable, Jesus intensifies it by pointing to his future ascension. If they stumble over his teaching now, how much more would they struggle with his death on the cross? D.A. Carson asserts: “*The moment of Jesus’ greatest degradation and shame is the moment of his glorification, the path of his return to the glory he had with the Father before the world began.*”¹ As a result, many disciples abandon him and “*no longer walked with him*” (v. 66).

- Jesus’ words confronts their expectations, challenges their desires, and demands genuine faith. What teachings of Jesus do people today often find difficult to accept, and why? Read Romans 8:7–8. How does sin affect our response to Christ’s teaching?

The necessity of divine intervention (vv. 63–65)

Jesus emphasizes the necessity of divine intervention. He declares, “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all*” (v. 63). Human effort and natural understanding cannot produce saving faith. Spiritual life comes only through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ words are “*spirit and life*” because through the Spirit, God awakens dead hearts. This explains why some believe while others turn away. As theologian Herman Bavinck explains: “*At the same time both Scripture and experience teach that the word does not always have the same effect. In a sense it is always efficacious; it is never powerless. If it does not raise people up, it strikes them down. If it is not ‘for the rising of many,’ it is for ‘the falling of many’ (Luke 2:34); if it is not ‘a fragrance from life to life,’ it is ‘a fragrance from death to death’ (2 Corinthians 2:16).*”²

- Read John 6:37, 39 and 44; 10:25–27. Why are some of the disciples having trouble with Jesus’ statements?
- Jesus states that it is the Spirit who brings spiritual life. Read John 3:5–8. How does Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus help us understand why spiritual rebirth is necessary for a person to truly believe in Christ?

The essence of true faith (vv. 67–71)

Finally, this passage reveals the essence of true faith. After many leave, Jesus asks the twelve if they also wish to go away. Peter responds with one of the clearest confessions in the Gospel: “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*” (v. 68). True faith recognizes that Christ alone brings life (John 14:6). Though believers may not understand everything Jesus says, they know salvation is found in no one else (Acts 4:12). Peter then confesses that Jesus is “*the Holy One of God,*” affirming that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Peter’s words highlight a central truth of the Christian faith: We come to Christ not because we have discovered God on our own, but because God has first come to us in grace. As Os Guinness explains: “*We cannot find God without God. We cannot reach God without God. We cannot satisfy God without God—which is another way of saying that our seeking will always fall short unless God’s grace initiates the search and unless God’s call draws us to him and completes the search. The decisive part of our seeking is not our human ascent to God, but his descent to us. Without God’s descent, there is no human ascent. The secret of the quest lies not in our brilliance but in his grace.*”³

- Peter confesses, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.*” Read Isaiah 41:14b; 43:3a, 15; 47:4; 48:17; 54:5; Luke 4:34; Acts 2:27; and 13:35. Based on these passages, how does Peter’s use of the title, “*Holy One of God*” demonstrate the depth and authenticity of his faith?

Family Dinner Table

Deus dicit, ergo sum

Many of Jesus’ disciples grumble and walk away in John 6, stumbling over the hard sayings of Jesus (vv. 41 and 54). Jesus entirely upends the crowd’s autonomy in John 6:63 by declaring, “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*” Contrast Jesus’ words with French philosopher René Descartes’ famous dictum, “*Cogito, ergo sum*” (“*I think, therefore I am*”). Descartes anchors certainty and existence in self-awareness, suggesting that human consciousness is the ultimate starting point for reality. But Genesis 1 and John 1:1–3 teach a different truth, one where “*God speaks, therefore we are*” (“*Deus dicit, ergo sum*”). The tragic departure of the crowds illustrates the definitive issue facing humanity since the Garden of Eden: Will we embrace God’s Word as “*spirit and life*” or will we join those who fell away saying, “*This is a hard saying*” (v. 60, cf. Genesis 3:1)? The defecting disciples, relying on their own understanding, find Jesus’ words offensive. They can’t consent. In contrast, Peter confesses, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*” (v. 68). Jesus’ *Bread of Life* discourse in John 6 reminds us that we truly live only because the Holy One of God has spoken.

- In what ways are we tempted to judge Christ’s words by our own understanding rather than submitting to them as “*spirit and life*”? How does Peter’s confession model a different response of faith? Read Proverbs 3:5–6 and 1 Corinthians 1:18–25. How do these passages challenge human wisdom and call us to trust God’s revelation instead?

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¹D.A. Carson. *The Gospel According to John*. 1991, Apollos an imprint of IVP. 301

²Herman Bavinck. *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 4, Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*. 2008, Baker Academic. 459

³Os Guinness. *The Call*. 2018, Thomas Nelson Publishers. 12