

# Bible study on John 6.51-58

## Begin with an opening prayer

Jesus, our living bread,  
we have an appetite for you,  
and we come wanting to feed on your word.  
Jesus, you offer life to the world,  
eternal life, raising us up on the last day.  
Keep us hungry for you,  
with the anticipation of a feast  
of the finest food – food that brings life.  
**Amen.**

## Read the passage

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

## Explore and respond to the text

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

### Bible notes

The lectionary repeats the last verse of last week's section just so we remember we are in mid-conversation. The context is still the contrast between Israel in the wilderness and these people here with Jesus. Every day the manna came, and just enough for that day. Is that why Jesus taught us to pray 'Give us this day our daily bread'?

But what does Jesus mean by this visceral image of eating his flesh? That would be repellent to a Jew as it is to us. The close association he makes with feeding on him and living suggests that every day we need Jesus to nourish our lives – hence the graphic imagery (vv.53-56). Is eating his flesh about taking in his word, the Word made flesh? This is an echo we see because we have read the prologue – 'the Word became flesh and lived among us' (John 1.14). God has come to us so that we can have the closest of encounters with him. Blood and life are closely connected in the Old Testament through the idea of sacrifice – one that John makes central in his Gospel.

The image of blood transfusion and organ donation gives a clue about giving so that others might live.

There are echoes of communion here: Jesus invites us to an intimate table fellowship of talk, laughter, stories, advice, care, prayer, belonging. Jesus wants to be at the heart of our deepest experience of all that is possible this side of glory. Eating and drinking suggests a very close and intimate relationship between Jesus and those who follow him, as does the word about life coming through the intimate fellowship implied in this that Jesus spells out in verse 57. And, in verse 58, he again spells out the difference between then (Israel in the wilderness) and now (this crowd in the desert), and the implied contrast between Jesus and Moses.

## Reflection

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

There are some things in the Bible, and at the centre of our faith, that are difficult to grasp and even harder to communicate. John 6 is one of them. Jesus links the bread he gives with his flesh, and asserts that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood will have eternal life. How can we talk about this in a way that people in our community will understand? Does it help to link this passage to John 1.1-14 with its focus on the Word becoming flesh and living among us? Perhaps Jesus is talking less about communion here and more about the meaning of the incarnation.

## Questions for reflection

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.*



- What do you see in this image, titled 'The gift of self'?
- Jesus offers himself for us; how might we receive him?
- How might we offer ourselves to others?

## Prayer

### A prayer of adoration

O God, your Word became flesh and lived among us.  
Thank you that you moved into our neighbourhood,  
that you are present with us right now,  
dwelling in our hearts and our homes.  
Holy God, you are worthy to be praised.  
Holy Spirit, we worship you.  
Living bread, we adore you.  
**Amen.**

### A prayer to end the Bible study

After being fed by you, Jesus the living bread,  
send us out to feed others.  
Now that we are filled with your Holy Spirit,  
guide our hands as we offer your life to others.  
Now that we have the promise of eternal life with you, Lord God,  
give us your love to share with the world.  
**Amen.**