

Top of the class

Heather Cooke *reflects on* John 6:56-69



Lord God, our teacher, you guide us daily with your loving word. As we seek to learn more about your will, help us not just to listen with our ears, or to read with our eyes, but to open our hearts. Amen.

This teaching is difficult." Did you ever feel like that at school? Or in church, have you ever listened to a sermon and felt you didn't really understand it? Perhaps you even disagreed with what was being said. Either way, you're not alone. And even the great teacher, Jesus, didn't always reach his listeners in quite the way he hoped to.

As the readings about the bread of life finally come to an end today, the grumbling we've heard all month also reaches its climax. Many people in the Capernaum synagogue found the teaching hard, even among the broader group of disciples. Since "disciple" means "student", we can see that the lesson was a bit over their heads – even with Jesus as a teacher.

But Peter, who often got things wrong, wasn't the dunce today. He went to the top of the class. He trusted that if Jesus said it, then it must be true. Jesus had the words of eternal life. Peter might not have understood at that point quite how Jesus could offer eternal life, but he was willing to take it on trust that Jesus was the Holy One of God. We don't always understand God's ways, and much of the Bible's teaching is difficult to fathom. Peter would carry on learning all his life, even as he taught others about Jesus. Are we prepared to do both? 🍷

People of the New Testament *Introduction, part 3*

by Caroline Fletcher

Caroline continues her series in which she shares the inspiration behind writing her book.

Paul may have been a groundbreaking missionary and an inspirational leader, but he needed the help of faithful co-workers like Luke, Priscilla and Timothy, while Jesus valued the friendship and practical support of Mary of Bethany and Joanna.

I hope that learning about these people's lives – whether by reading the book or the articles in *Sunday Link* – will not only provide a glimpse into biblical times, but will also be an encouragement, reminding us that each of us has an important part to play, even if we are not big characters with upfront roles. None of us works in isolation. We are all part of the body of Christ, just as these Christian brothers and sisters before us and, like them, we all have vital roles to play. 🍷

“God loves people because of who God is, not because of who we are.”

Philip Yancey (born 1949), author, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*

Characters from the Common Worship lectionary

Monica

by Caroline Hodgson

Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine of Hippo, is commemorated on Tuesday. Born in the fourth century in Thagaste, North Africa, she embraced Christianity as a young woman and married a pagan man named Patricius. It is said that he had a volatile temper and it is well documented that their son, Augustine, was a wayward, worldly youth, who indulged in hedonistic practices. His mother's faith, however,

never wavered, and she prayed ceaselessly for her husband and son. Her steadfast devotion eventually bore fruit, when both Patricius and Augustine converted to Christianity.

Of course Augustine would go on to become one of the most influential theologians and philosophers in the early Christian Church. His mother's story inspires Christians in the transformative power of devotion and maternal love. 🍷