

The question

by [Sofia M. Starnes](#) in the [July 15, 2008](#) issue

Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"

John 6:68

Never the I-dare-you gauntlet in his sack,
Full as it was with fishhooks and the like,
A whittled bird—industry of Nazareth,
A cowl his mother wove;

And when he looked at twelve men lingering,
Some women, too—intrepid girls
Whom others labeled bold,

Where boldness grew transparent.

As I was saying, when he looked . . . he thought,
How numbered, wayward, pitiful,
Their feet, caked from their trekking back and forth,
Poolside to shade, where he would speak

Of busheled lamps and fig trees.
Should he demand excess, when all the rest
Had shuffled back to portals and to sleep?
And, if he did, how many—if any—would say, yes?

John's mother would be horrified, of course,
So young, and he had mesmerized her baby. Would
Golgotha go quicker by his side? And what
Of Peter's wife: another net suspended.

The sun basted the hillocks purple-green;
The men shifted their feet, the women pulled

Blue cotton, hid their hair—*Now what?*

And so—at odds, the flesh of his heart hefting his

Love, he looked at each and asked, full knowing

They had nowhere, not any where, to go.