

John 21:15-25

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me." ²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had been reclining at table close to him and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" ²² Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" ²³ So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" ²⁴ This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. *ESV*

Please read John 21.

Like driftwood, Peter felt like a washout after he learned of Christ's resurrection. His thrice denial of being a follower of Christ, colored with cursing words, left him feeling like a total failure. Deep down he felt that he wouldn't even be useful as kindling for a fire. So, he returned to his career—fishing. The slimy nets, rusty boat and bristling sea breeze were his comfort zone. At least he could catch fish. Or could he?

We are beginning a new series entitled, "Joy for the Journey," a study in 1 Peter. But first we need to learn a little bit (in John 21) about how Peter came to the place where he could be used of God to give encouragement to us! Peter had to come to grips with the question: What is essential to having a proper relationship with Jesus Christ?

The most important question in all the world is, "What is your relationship with Jesus Christ?"

- Not your relationship to your church
- Not your theology or religion
- Not who your family is or who your friends are

What is the condition of your relationship with Jesus Christ? How would you define it? Is your relationship to Jesus reduced to some system of little formulas or a list? Is it only as deep as a prayer prayed years ago? Or activities you are involved in? That really is your Christian life (no matter the varying degrees of experience in church, gifts, etc....).

Let's gather some background information on Peter. Peter spent 3 years in an intense relationship with Jesus Christ. He understood Christ to be the Messiah, the God in human flesh. He understood His miraculous power, and that there was none like Him. He even felt so bold as to rebuke Jesus "you aren't going to the cross—I won't allow it," "I won't forsake you even though everyone else will!" He was overconfident with his own testimony. But

then during Jesus' trials he denied Jesus three times in just a few hours, even vowing an oath to add to his passionate denials.

He was an Apostle, a leader of the twelve, their spokesman. He walked on water, spoke profound revelation, and, acting in fearful cowardice, grabbed a sword to defend Jesus in the garden.

And yet, in John 21 after Christ's resurrection, we find Jesus searching Peter out for a one on one conversation to restore him to usefulness for the Lord. As we follow his conversation with Christ we understand that He is indeed a believer in Christ and has deep remorse and repentance for his denial. But he feels useless because of his severe disloyalty, so he returns to his main-stay – the fishing industry.

How did the Lord reconstruct a proper relationship with Peter? Earlier, Christ told the disciples to go to Galilee and wait on a mountain and He would meet them there. But instead, Peter and others returned to their fishing nets. Likely, the others felt guilt for not following Christ through His trials, or coming to His defense during those critical hours. They all felt like failures.

Peter knew how to fish better than how to follow Christ. Jesus had to go down to find them because of their disobedience. He asked them if they had fish. They said no! He redirected the fish from the sea into their nets! (see v. 6 - there were so many fish!)

Peter wanted a proper relationship, yet he didn't know how to maintain it. It was essential that Jesus restored the relationship. Jesus repeated three questions. "Simon, do you love me?"

Note: Notice that Jesus calls him "Simon"—not Peter—going back to the beginning of their relationship to rebuild the foundation.

That's a really good question for us to consider too! Do you love Jesus Christ? For Peter, the questions were building in their intensity.

Did Peter love Jesus more than he loved his disciple friends or even the nets, boats, and his livelihood? Christ

spoke of a perfect, God-like love that is supreme in its nature. It is an exclusive love. Did Peter love Christ more than he loved anything or anyone else? Peter's answer was basically, "I have a deep affection for you."

Question 2 was the same and the answer was identical. But Question 3 was a twist on the same question. Christ asked if Peter could even claim to have that type of love for Jesus. Peter answered in the affirmative. The answer to that question is really the revealing of the nature of a person's relationship with Jesus Christ.

Do you love Him more than family, education, fame, fortune? It is the kind of answer that must be demonstrated by obedience, not just by warm feelings or mere words.

Christ went on to prophesy to Peter that he would serve Christ until he was unable to walk. He would learn what it was to abandon everything, even sacrifice his life, in testimony that Jesus truly is the Christ, the Messiah. (vv. 18-19)

Christ was saying, "It is inherent in your love for me that you will give your life for me. Follow me. By following me you will end up in a situation where you will pay the supreme price. Are you willing to follow me?" Any legitimate relationship with Jesus means that we will obey him at all cost...even a sacrifice of death. ("take up your cross or you will not be my disciple" (Matt. 16:24)

If there is anything in your life that you sacrifice or are willing to sacrifice for Christ, that is evidence of your love. If there is anything that you are not willing to sacrifice, that is evidence of the shallowness of your love.

--to be continued next week, Lord willing.

CAPITOL SQUARE COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

**Legislators, Staff, Lobbyists &
Capitol Community Welcome!**

Statehouse Room #45

Thursdays, 12:05-12:45 PM