

LIFE GROUP LESSON

John the Life-Giving Gospel • Week of August 30

Introduction

Where is your safe space ... the place you hide when life is out-of-control? What is your default when anxiety overwhelms you ... or when you carry the mental anguish of letting down someone you love ... what about when regret and self-disappointment take away joy? Do you run? Do you isolate? Do you seek distraction? Do you escape by self-medicating?

After seeing Jesus alive twice, Simon Peter goes back to what he knew before he met Jesus: fishing. What else is he to do after denying three times, just days before, that he even knows the Lord. Surely his relationship with Jesus was beyond repair ... or is it? Peter goes back to his former life as Simon son of John, fisherman. Was it all for nothing? What do you do when you fail to live into the new name Jesus gives you *Petrus*, the Rock?

Like Peter, there may be times we see the Lord work miracles, even give us a new name, and failure causes us to go back to old patterns and habits. Maybe you have denied Jesus by word or action. Maybe like a secret disciple, there have been times you stayed quiet and denied him through your silence. We can all relate to Simon Peter. But as we step into John, chapter twenty-one, pay attention to how Jesus handles our moments of shame and regret.

Read John 21:1-14

- Who is present, according to vv 1-2?
- Where does Peter say he is going in v3? (how do the other disciples respond?)
- Consider the weight Simon Peter must be carrying after denying Jesus in a weak moment. Have you ever felt like you let the Lord down? Notice they get in the boat, go out all night, but fail to catch any fish. What happens at daybreak? (vv4-6)
- Is this *déjà vu*? What was the life Simon knew when he met Jesus? What parallels do you find in their first encounter, according to **Luke 5:1-11**?

Like their first encounter, Jesus instructs them to cast their net *again* (this time on the right-hand side of the boat) and declares: *you'll catch some!* They can hardly haul in the catch of 153 large fish. We understand the 'disciple Jesus loved' is, in fact, John the Beloved, and when he says to Peter, *'It's the Lord!'*,

Simon Peter puts his tunic back on and jumps in the chilly waters of the Sea of Galilee. Can you see Simon swimming to Jesus? Can you see Jesus' love for Simon at this moment, maybe smiling, maybe laughing?

Peter needs the Lord to repair his broken heart. Maybe this is why he jumps in and swims to shore while the others stay with the boat. When they get there exuberant (Peter is soaked and probably dripping) they find breakfast waiting for them. Jesus is broiling fish over a hot charcoal fire ... and there is bread. Jesus loves his disciples.

- Read of another time the Lord makes breakfast for someone he loves, someone who is discouraged and on-the-run? See **1 Kings 19:3-9**. What do 'breakfasts prepared by the Lord' teach us about how the Lord meets us in our fear and discouragement?
- When Jesus says: "Bring some of the fish you just caught" notice who goes on board and drags the net to shore: Simon Peter! (v11). What does this say about Peter?

Read John 21:15-25

- After breakfast, what question does Jesus ask Peter three times; what is Peter's response, and what imperative does Jesus give Peter, according to vv 15-17?

According to the Greek translation, the first two times Jesus asks Peter: "Simon son of John, do you *agape* me?" – *agape* meaning love unconditionally – Simon Peter is unable to respond with the full weight of *agape* love. Each time Peter responds by saying, "Lord, you know I *phileo* you" (love like a brother). Simon knows his weakness. He had failed Jesus on the night of his arrest. Simon also recalls upon their first encounter and the miracle that followed, he had told Jesus: *'Oh Lord, please leave me – I'm too much of a sinner to be around you'* (Luke 5:8). Yet Jesus simply said: *Simon, follow me!* He chose Simon and invited him to follow, knowing full-well who he was.

- Jesus also knew full-well who Simon would become. This may be why Jesus gave Simon a new name (Matthew 16:18) ... you are Peter, and one day you (and your very confession) will be a foundational rock upon which I will build my church. What do you learn from this marvelous love (and patience) Jesus has had for Simon Peter?

The Lord's call upon Simon Peter was irrevocable. Though Simon had gone back to fishing, Jesus knew exactly where to find him. As with Peter, Jesus searches for lost sheep and knows where to find each of us. He looks deep into Simon

Peter's eyes and asks: "Simon son of John, do you love me? How will you respond when Jesus asks: " _____ (your name) Do you love me?"

- The third time Jesus uses the word *phileo* to ask, "*Simon son of John, do you at least love me like a friend?*" ... Scripture says Simon Peter is hurt that Jesus asked this question the third time (v17). Why is it important to be honest before the Lord? What does Jesus see in your heart today? Remember he meets us where we are.

Simon responds: "Yes, Lord ... you know I love you (v15) ... Yes Lord, you know I love you (v16) ... Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you (v17). Jesus meets him where he is emotionally, spiritually – and yes, physically by the Sea of Galilee having dragged to shore not only fish, but shame and regret as well ... and maybe, a bit of hope. Jesus fully redeems the ugly memory Peter carries, for he has more work for Peter to do. This is not the end; only the beginning. Peter will step forward on the day of Pentecost and preach for a catch of 3,000 + souls when the Holy Spirit births the Church (Acts 2:14, 38-41). What do you need Jesus to redeem in your distant or recent past? The Lord has more work for you. It is not the end, but the beginning! John concludes —

"This disciple is the one who testifies to these events and has recorded them here. And we know that his account of these things is accurate. Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:24-25).

One Year Bible Reading

August 30: Job 34:1-36:33, 2 Corinthians 4:1-12, Psalm 44:1-8, Proverbs 22:10-12
August 31: Job 37:1-39:30, 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:10, Psalm 44:9-26, Proverbs 22:13
September 1: Job 40:1-42:17, 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, Psalm 45:1-17, Prov. 22:14
September 2: Ecclesiastes 1:1-3:22, 2 Corinthians 6:1-13, Ps. 46:1-11, Prov. 22:15
September 3: Ecclesiastes 4:1-6:12, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:7, Ps. 47:1-9, Prov. 22:16
September 4: Ecclesiastes 7:1-9:18, 2 Cor. 7:8-16, Ps. 48:1-14, Prov. 22:17-19
September 5: Ecclesiastes 10:1-12:14, 2 Cor. 8:1-15, Ps. 49:1-20, Prov. 22:20-21



Text: John 21

PLAIN TRUTH:

Loving Jesus is _____ Him,
_____ for the lost, and
_____ people.

August 30, 2026