**Bible Study on Christian Discipleship**

**John 21:1-25**

**Background:** This Bible Study focuses us on an event in Jesus’ life after his resurrection when he visited his disciples along the Sea of Galilee. He used this visit to restore Peter and to call him to selfless sacrificial devotion. Peter’s devotion to Jesus would reveal itself in faithful apostolic ministry to Jesus’ lambs, that is; the Christian church.

**Read John 21:1-3 – Peter and Six Other Disciples Go Fishing**

Why would Peter and his friends go fishing at this time in their lives? – *Fishing was their livelihood and most likely one of their favorite pastimes. They had been told to wait for Jesus in Galilee where he had first called them to discipleship. To fish while they waited for Jesus to appear was natural way to use their time.*

They didn’t catch anything all night. Of what significant event does this remind us? (See Luke 5) – *When Peter, James and John had first been called to follow Jesus they had not caught any fish the night before. Jesus used the great catch of fish the first time to demonstrate his power over all things in their lives and to provide a metaphor of how they would catch people with his word just as they had caught fish by his word.*

Why does Jesus sometimes make us “catch nothing” right before he blesses us tremendously? – *We were born full of ourselves and our own opinion about everything. Sometimes we won’t listen or follow Jesus unless he brings us to an end of our plans, or the end of our thinking, or our pursuits. Then when we seem to have nothing from our efforts he will reveal his grace and power at a time we cannot deny it was him and his love that did it all for us.*

At Your Table: Tell about a time when God came through in a big way in your life. – *Sharing our story of how God blessed us allows us to join the psalmist in glorifying God. (Psalm 50:15)Stories of God’s deliverance are very encouraging for everyone.*

**Read John 21:4-9 – Jesus Gives Great Fishing Advice**

Why would throwing their net on the other side of the boat seem ludicrous to the fishermen? *– Fish are always on the move, so are boats. When fishing with a net in a big lake one side of the boat does not seem to be any better than the other.*

How would this event take the disciples back (especially Peter) to when they were first called by Jesus at this lake? – *They would remember how the first event changed their trust in themselves, gave them fear and trust in Christ and marked the beginning of their great adventure with Jesus.*

With the fishing advice and the fish at the fire, what is Jesus telling the disciples? (more than one thing) *1) They would realize that Jesus was still calling them to follow him and be his apostles even though they had abandoned him during his passion. 2) They would realize that he would still be present to bless them in every way. 3) They would feel Jesus’ tender mercy toward them in the catch of fish and the prepared breakfast. 4) Others?*

**Read John 21:10-14 – They Count the Fish and Eat Breakfast**

Why would John tell us how many large fish they caught? – *The number of fish underscores the legitimacy of the catch and also shows how wonderful it was. Also, this could be stylistic of men and their fishing stories. Men love to tell how many and how big their fish are.*

Why would Jesus feed his disciples at this time and place? – *Jesus takes care of both our bodies and our souls. Who he is as our God who made us, who provides for us and who saves us – is something he always wants us to experience.*

This is the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples. Find the other two appearances in John 20. – *On Easter Evening and a week later when Thomas was with them.*

**Read John 21:15-19 – Jesus Recalls Peter into Apostleship.**

Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him? (There is more than one possible answer.) *1) Some people think the three questions are restorative and help Peter state three ties that he loved Jesus just as he had denied knowing him three times. 2) Some believe that the questions grow in intensity just as Peter’s response gets more emotional as he continues. 3) Some think that Jesus is asking three times to emphasize that he wants us to express our love for him by sacrificially taking care of those he loves. I think this last explanation is the most plausible. Of course two or all three answers could be true at the same time.*

 What did Jesus mean when he asked, “Do you love me more than these?” (Verse 15) (Three possibilities)

1. *He could mean, “Do you love more than you love these men.”*
2. *He could mean, “Do you love me more than these men love me.”*
3. *He could mean, “Do you love me more than these nets, the boat and the fishing. (i.e. your worldly pursuits) Number 2 and 3 seem equally possible. Discuss which one you think it is.*

What affect did Jesus’ triple question have on Peter? – *Peter was hurt that Jesus kept asking as if to say, “I’m not so sure that you do love me, Peter.”*

Peter’s love for Jesus was unquestionable both to Jesus and Peter. So, what was Jesus teaching Peter? *– Jesus was teaching Peter that the bond that holds any soul to Jesus is love for him as our God and Savior. And any motivation for serving his church should come from our love for Christ and the people he loves.*

What insight can we take from this conversation for us? We say that we love Jesus with all of our heart! *– That the first and most important way we can show our love for Christ is by taking care of the people in his church both their bodies and souls. Every Christian is called to show their love for Christ by demonstrating that they love even the least of his people (Matthew 25).*

Why do you think Jesus added how Peter would glorify God by dying against his choosing? – *Jesus was preparing Peter by having him contemplate the end of his life for the rest of his days. By giving him a word about the end and about the attitude with which Peter was called to die, Jesus was defining for Peter how he was to live sacrificially for Christ from this day forward. Christians are called to live completely for Christ and not the passing pleasures of this world. (1 John 2)*

 Jesus is teaching us that following him is not about seeking a fantastic earthly life. Then what is it about? - *Our Christian lives are about love and service for Christ and his church nothing more and nothing less.*

**Read John 21:20-25 – Peter asks about John**

 What would make Peter ask about John at this time? – *Peter was a sinner. He was tempted to judge whether Jesus was fair in how he was treating Peter by asking if John would have a yoke of suffering and service like Peter’s. It is interesting that by the time this story was recorded by John in this, his Gospel, Peter had already died for Christ and John was in captivity for Christ as an old man. Most elderly people will tell you that being the last of their contemporaries to pass on is not necessarily the “prize” of life. The prize is Jesus and the opportunity to live and die for him in thanksgiving. All Christians get that, even though their stories and the lengths of their lives vary greatly. A comparable passage is the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 22.*

 What do you like about Jesus’ answer to Peter? *– Jesus doesn’t answer Peter’s question in the way that Peter asked it. Jesus wants us to follow him without playing God by trying to figure out how all of our lives match up to one another.*

 How does Jesus’ answer help us learn what questions to avoid and what pursuits to follow?

 *A. We will want to avoid questions about how our lives match up with others.*

 *B. We will want to avoid demanding to know how all of our own lives make sense and “work out.”*

John was 95 years old when he wrote his Gospel. Peter was already gone for a few decades. How do you think this factored into John’s writing? – *John had the benefit of seeing Peter grow and mature to be the kind of man Jesus intended. You can see Peter talk a lot about suffering in his first epistle. The entire letter is to guide the heart and mind of suffering Christians.*

Some might think that John was more blessed than Peter. How is this simply not true? *– Living longer in a broken world and suffering pain and sorrow longer than others is a cross that those who have passed on to glory don’t have to carry. Since we carry our own cross out of faith and love toward Christ it is never a matter of who gets it worse or better than another.*

What big truth are you going to take from this story for your own discipleship as you follow Jesus? – *Jesus loves me more than I will ever fully realize. He will never let me go. The meaning of my life is found when I lose my own desire to know and run everything for myself and my own gain and focus on serving Christ and his church with my whole heart and life.*