

believe

A STUDY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



A FINAL INTIMATE MOMENT WITH PETER

John 21:15-19

Main Point: Jesus extends grace to the broken, reorients our lives and calls us to truly follow him.

To truly follow Jesus there is a barrier to be removed (vs. 15-17).

We have all been in Peter's situation, it is a universal truth for us as humans. We are prone to sin. We are prone to denial. We are prone to rebellion. And it is this universal truth that haunts us in our relationship with Jesus. After the crucifixion, Peter struggled with his denial. He was the one who not only raced to the tomb, but into the tomb, with a heart hopeful but heavy. We have all been guilty of going back to the things that are comfortable and to the things that we know best from our former way of life, just as Peter went back to fishing. It is our way of coping with the consequences of our denial. We hope that a return to the familiar will ease the heaviness of our heart and mind. But after having walked with Jesus there is no peace in the familiar things of old. Behind the specifics of Peter's denial, and ours as well, lies a principle of universal application. Before Jesus can be followed and served, the sin in our lives must be addressed. And so, Jesus in his great love for Peter, addresses the sin, three confessions to replace the three denials. As Jesus probed the wound of denial, it brought pain, but he applied the salve of mercy and grace to bring about healing of the wound. In his loving hands he brings Peter back and restores him. But this truth remains, for us to truly follow Jesus the barrier of sin must be removed.

1. When you sin against the Lord, what are you tempted to do instead of repenting? Why is it that we often return to old familiar things when our fellowship with God is hindered by sin? Do we find true comfort or peace in those things of old? Why not?
2. If dwelling in the old ways of life brings not comfort or peace, where do we find true comfort and peace? Repentance is required, and what do we receive from the Lord when we repent? Do you believe that God's mercy truly covers your sin? How does that affect the way you live your daily life? Who do you know that needs to hear about the mercy and love of Jesus and the peace that it can bring in their lives?

To truly follow Jesus there is a responsibility to accept.

Jesus not only restores Peter, but he commissions him to the role of an under-shepherd. When Jesus first called Peter, he called him to be a fisher of men. This was something that Peter could wrap his brain around, I mean fishing was something he knew and understood. And for 3+ years Peter followed Jesus and learned from him the concepts of fishing for men. But now Jesus has raised the bar, not only was Peter to fish for men, he was to shepherd them as well. If this had been Jesus' first call on Peter's life, I am not certain Peter would have followed, he knew little about shepherding, because he was a fisherman. But Christ calls him to "feed his lambs", "take care of his sheep" and to "feed his sheep". Jesus was about to leave this earth to ascend to the Father, and he was commissioning Peter to be the shepherd in his absence. The truth is following Jesus and loving Jesus means accepting responsibility for Jesus' people, not just for Peter but for all who follow Jesus. Our commitment to Christ involves a commitment to the church, the body of Christ.

1. As followers of Jesus, we all have a responsibility to accept, a responsibility to the body of Christ. What are some of the things we should be responsible for when it comes to caring for the body of Christ? What specifically do you think Jesus meant when he said, "feed my lambs"? How do we "Take care of his sheep"?
2. Read Ephesians 4:11-16. How do these verses help us to see Jesus' plan for us to accept the responsibility of loving, caring for and holding one another accountable in the church. How can we better love and serve the Lord, by loving and serving the body?

To truly follow Jesus there is a cross to carry.

John 10 told us about the Good Shepherd, and of course we know that Jesus is the good shepherd. He is the one who cares for his sheep. He knows his sheep, and his sheep know him. His sheep know his voice and follow him. But the most poignant truth of the good shepherd is that he lays down his life for the sheep. The hired man runs in the face of danger, for the sheep are not his, but the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep because they belong to him. As Jesus was preparing to ascend to the Father, he has commissioned Peter to be the shepherd of his sheep. And because Peter has now accepted this commission, the Lord Jesus explains the cost, the good shepherd will lay down his life. As followers of Jesus, we are all called to carry the cross, for the path of Discipleship is the way of the cross. For Peter, this was a literal truth as he was later in his life, led to be crucified by Nero (crucified upside down, at his request, as he felt unworthy to die as Jesus had), but it is also an allegorical truth for all believers. As Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me." We are to carry our cross daily, to crucify our self-will to live for God's will.

1. We all will face a cost for following Jesus, what cost do we face? Are we willing to face those costs every day? Where do we find the strength to face the cost of following Jesus?
2. Read John 12:25-26, Mark 8:34-38 and Galatians 2:20 – What can we learn about the cost of following Jesus? How do they illustrate this truth, "Death for Christ is the door to living with Christ?" How do these verses encourage us to live as Christ calls us to live?