

## Facilitator Notes – Lesson 21 – Do You Love Me? John 21

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.  
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

### QUESTIONS

#### John 21:1-8

1. Why are the disciples back in Galilee instead of Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified and where they had seen him at least twice after his resurrection (**Mark 14:27-28; 16:6-7**)?

The disciples probably remembered that Jesus said he would see them in Galilee. There is also the possibility that they just wanted to "go home" after the traumatic events of the crucifixion.

- ♥ How might have "going home" to Galilee have comforted the disciples after all they had been through over the last two weeks?
- ♥ What do you do or where do you go to get away from it all?
- ♥ How many disciples were involved in this incident (**21:2**)? **7** What are some reasons why the disciples might have decided to go fishing (**21:3**)? There could be several reasons: It could be that the disciples were tempted to go back to their old way of life. More likely, however, was the fact that a night of fishing was good therapy. The disciples had been on an incredible emotional roller-coaster. In the space of a week they had gone from the excitement of Palm Sunday to the depths of despair at the Crucifixion and back to the heights of glory with the Resurrection. It's easy to see that a night of fishing would be calming and relaxing to them. Also, there is the possibility that they need food or money to live on and fishing was a way to get both.

*The disciples did not realize it was Jesus (21:4).* The Bible records a number of times the risen Jesus was not recognized (**21:4; Matthew 28:17; Luke 24:16,37**). Why wasn't he readily recognizable? It could be that his resurrected body looked different, or it could be that he intentionally prevented recognition as he did on the road to Emmaus (**Luke 24:15-16**). Jesus' resurrected appearance seemed to include some traits that gave everyone pause: He was the same Jesus, but the events of Easter also made him unmistakably different.

2. What about the fishing incident made the disciples realize that the person on shore was Jesus and how did it reconfirm Jesus' call on their lives (**Luke 5:1-11**)?

The fishing incident in John 21 is a re-enactment of what had happened to the disciples 3 years earlier when Jesus first called them to follow him as disciples to start fishing for people. When the nets came up full after a whole night of not catching anything, the disciples knew that it was Jesus on shore. Jesus was intentionally reminding them that they were still his disciples and that were still called to be fishers of souls.

- ♥ Do you think the disciples still felt qualified to be fishers of men? Why or why not?
- ♥ Have you ever experienced a failure that made you feel unqualified to do what God has called and gifted you to do? How can **Romans 11:29** help reassure you when you are in this situation?

God doesn't go around changing his mind about the gifts and call he has given us, even when we might fail him. God is patient and his purposes will be fulfilled. He will use even our failures for his glory.

3. What spiritual lesson was Jesus reminding his disciples of again when he caused them to have such a large catch of fish after they had fished unsuccessfully all night (**John 15:4-5**)? Why would this be important for the disciples to remember in the future?

We can't do anything of lasting value apart from Jesus and we must stay connected to him. Without Jesus, the disciples caught nothing. With Jesus, their nets were full. To stay connected to Jesus would be of vital importance after Jesus ascended to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The disciples were given the charge to go into all the world – teaching, baptizing and making disciples of all nations. They needed to stay connected to Jesus if they were to be successful. Apart from him, they could do nothing.

4. What do Peter's actions in **21:7** tell you about Peter's heart? What conclusions would an observer of your life come to about your enthusiasm to meet with Jesus?

Peter's quick reaction revealed his real feeling toward Jesus and was consistent with his previous professions of loyalty. Even though Peter had failed and denied Christ, his heart was still drawn to him and he was not afraid to come into Jesus' presence.

- ♥ On a *scale of 1 to 10*, rate the strength of your heart's desire to meet with Jesus. Are you satisfied with your rating? Why or why not? Do you think Jesus is satisfied with your rating? Why or why not?
- ♥ Share a time when Jesus unexpectedly revealed himself to you. What happened?
- ♥ What steps will you take to spend time with Jesus? What are you willing to sacrifice in order to spend time with him? Is there anything that holds you back?

#### John 21:9-14

5. What is the significance of Jesus feeding the disciples *bread* and *fish* (**John 6:1-11**)? This would have reminded the disciples of Jesus miracle in the feeding of the Feeding of the 5000 from two fish and five loaves. Again, this would have reminded the disciples of their past ministry with Jesus and he was revealing to them that this ministry was going to continue.
- ♥ When has God miraculously and abundantly provided for your needs? Did Jesus get your attention through this blessing? How so?
6. Why would Jesus ask the disciples to bring some of the fish they had caught, when he already had fish cooking on the fire (**21:9-10**)? What spiritual principal is Jesus demonstrating?

In the Feeding of the 5000, Jesus took what the disciples provided and multiplied it and used it to meet the needs of many. Here, he is again showing that he will continue to multiply and bless their efforts if they (the disciples) would bring him what they had. Our call to follow Jesus and to be a disciple and do what Jesus has called us to do is a true partnership. He will multiply and bless what we bring to the partnership.

7. What memory would the charcoal fire have raised in Peter's mind and heart (**18:17-18, 25**)? Do you think this was deliberate on Jesus' part? Why or why not?

Peter denied he knew Jesus three times as he warmed himself by a charcoal fire. There is no doubt that this type of fire would always trigger this memory in Peter just as certain smells or objects remind us of past experiences. One could argue that Jesus knew this and deliberately used the fire to remind Peter and to prepare him for the conversation that was coming where Peter would be reinstated in his call to feed and take care of Jesus' followers. It could have been Jesus' intent to replace the memory of failure by the fire with the memory of forgiveness by the fire.

- ♥ What does this vignette (**21:1-14**) reveal about Jesus' concern for his disciples? What needs of the disciples does he fulfill? We see that Jesus is concerned and takes care of the whole person – our physical, emotional and spiritual needs.
- ♥ How does Jesus show concern for you? What needs of yours has he fulfilled recently?
- ♥ Through what ordinary events in life have you encountered Jesus? When do you usually experience fellowship with Jesus?

#### John 21:15-25

8. Why do you think Jesus singles Peter out in this conversation after breakfast? What is the significance of Jesus asking Peter three times if he loved him (**John 18:17, 25-27**)? Why do you think Jesus asks his questions of Peter in front of others instead of privately?

Jesus asks Peter three times and publicly if he loved him because Peter publicly denied knowing Jesus three times. Jesus is confronting Peter with his own weaknesses and limitations so that Peter would entrust himself to a new way of following of serving and Jesus. After Peter publicly denied Jesus three times, Jesus gives him the opportunity to publicly reaffirm his love and loyalty three times.

9. In **21:15**, there is debate as to what Jesus meant when he asked Peter, "Do you love me more than *these*? Jesus could have meant **1)** the boat, nets and Peter's fishing career, or **2)** "Do you love me more than you love the other disciples?", or **3)** "Do you love me more than the other disciples love me?" Read **John 13:37; 18:10** and **Matthew 26:33** and explain what you think is the most logical answer.

Because of Peter's past statements and actions that reflected his bold and loyal love for Jesus, (regardless of what others did) Jesus was probably asking Peter if he still loved him more than the other disciples loved him. Jesus wasn't comparing Peter's love to the other disciples (as in a contest to see who loves Jesus more); rather, Jesus was asking Peter if he still felt as strongly about his love and loyalty to Jesus as he used to feel.

- ♥ Imagine Jesus asking you, "Do you love me more than *these*?" With what Jesus knows about your heart, what would "these" refer to?

**21:15 - "Do you love me?" "You know that I love you."** Some interpreters point out that Jesus and Peter use different Greek words for love in this exchange. Peter uses *phileo* (love between friends and relatives) all three times, but Jesus uses *agapao* (unconditional, sacrificial love) the first two times and *phileo* the third. Is this significant? Bible scholars do not agree, but it should be noted that John tends to use *phileo* and *agapao* interchangeably throughout the whole Gospel of John. Also, Jesus and Peter were probably speaking in Aramaic (not Greek) which does not have two slightly distinct words for love. The more important fact is that Jesus asks Peter *three times* about his love.

10. Who are Jesus' *lambs* and *sheep*? What is the connection between loving Jesus and caring for others? Why must the two go together?

Jesus sheep and lambs are other followers of Christ – today known as the church or the universal Body of Christ. Following Jesus and loving Jesus means accepting responsibility for Jesus' people. Commitment to Christ involves commitment to the church of Christ. Jesus Christ is not a "single" person in the sense that he comes to us without attachments to other people. He is a "married" person and he comes to us with a bride whom he loves and for whom he has sacrificed himself (Ephesians 5:25). It is not acceptable to be in relationship to Christ and ignore or even despise his bride whom he loves. If we accept Jesus, we must also accept and care for his bride. Jesus' love for his bride, the church, remains undiminished even though the church, in some places, might be torn, poorly clothed, dirty or malnourished or diseased (both physically and spiritually). If we are to follow Christ and show our love to him, he still speaks his words to us today: "Feed my lambs, Take care of my sheep, Feed my sheep."

- ♥ We all have different gifts and abilities. Right now, how would you most likely fulfill Jesus' commands of "Feed my lambs and sheep" and "Take care of my sheep?"
- ♥ What evidence is there in your life that you truly love Jesus? What actions has your love for Christ produced? Has Jesus ever given you specific instructions? How well are you fulfilling them?
- ♥ What would you say if Jesus, knowing all you have done this week, asked you, "Do you love me?" What would this question reveal about your life?

11. Even though Peter failed and denied Christ, Jesus reinstates and re-commissions him. Why was it important that Jesus confront Peter with his failure? How can we apply this principle to our own lives?

Until the barrier of sin and failure between Jesus and Peter has been removed, Peter was not ready or equipped to follow Jesus and to love and take care of Jesus' sheep. Sin is always a barrier between us and God until we confess it and Jesus forgives and cleanses us of it. The process of confession restores our relationship with Jesus so that we can see and hear him again in order to follow him. Before Jesus can be followed and served, the sin in our lives must be addressed. "Without holiness no one will see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14). The experience of being forgiven clears the way for serving Jesus.

♥ Do you think you can expect to be restored from every fall and failure? Why or why not? What is your part and what is God's part in the restoration process (1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:5; 51:2; Proverbs 28:13)?  
No matter how desperate our failure or deep-seated our shame, Jesus can and will forgive and renew us and then use us in his service. Failure is never final with God (1 Timothy 1:12-16). The wonder and miracle of forgiveness is that we are trusted again by God in the place where we once disgraced him.

As the above verses show, forgiveness and cleansing is not automatic. We must confess (agree with God) about our sin and not cover it up or conceal it. When we do that, God promises to forgive, cleanse and wash us of our guilt and to show us her **mercy** (NOT giving us what we DO deserve.)

♥ If Jesus was able to forgive Peter and to forgive us, how should we act toward those who have wronged us? Who do you know who needs to feel forgiven by you? What will you do?

12. If out of your love for Jesus you accept his call to feed and care for his lambs and sheep, what is an essential requirement (21:19, 22)? **Following Jesus**

♥ From what you have learned in the *Gospel of John*, how would you explain to someone what it means to follow Jesus? Do you consider this a hard or easy task? How so?

♥ What is the closest you have come to going back on your promise to follow Jesus? What did you discover about God and about yourself through this experience?

♥ Following Christ is not always pleasant. Persecution and suffering may be involved. Where did following Jesus lead Peter (21:18-19)? **Jesus told Peter that he would eventually be a martyr for Christ. Jesus said that Peter would serve Jesus until old age, but that in the end he would die with his hands "stretched out" (v. 18), which indicated crucifixion. The details of Peter's death are not known with certainty, but there is a fairly reliable tradition that Peter was crucified under the Emperor Nero in the early sixties of the first century. Tradition also states that Peter did not feel worthy to be crucified that way the Jesus was, so he asked to be crucified upside down. His request was granted.** Are you prepared to endure hardship as you walk with Christ? Do you think you would be willing to die for Jesus if necessary? Why or why not?

13. How do Jesus' words to Peter in 21:22 apply to you? When are you tempted to compare your situation or degree of hardship with that of others? What is the answer to this dilemma?

♥ Do fellow Christ followers sometimes distract you from following the Lord (21:21)? How so? How can you keep your undivided attention on Jesus?

♥ What might cause you to be more concerned about someone else's relationship with Jesus than your own? How might this affect your desire to do what you were supposed to do?

### **Response**

- What one insight from **John 21** seems personally significant to you? What effect would you like this insight to have on your life and your love for Jesus?
- Which do you find more challenging: Loving Jesus, taking care of others, or following Jesus? Why?

### **Encounter with Jesus**

Take a few moments to be still and quiet in the presence of Jesus. See Jesus with you and hear him speak to you, just as he did Peter. What is *your response* to each of the following statements?

*Do you truly love me?                      Take care of my sheep.                      You must follow me.*

Spend some time with Jesus expressing your willingness to do whatever he asks you to do.

**BELOW IS THE EXTRA SCRIPTURE FOR LESSON 21 THAT YOU CAN PRINT OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME**  
(Excluding the longer passages from the Gospel of John)

**NIV**

**Mark 14:27-28** “You will all fall away,” Jesus told them, “for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ **28** But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

**Mark 16:6-7** “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. **7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

**Luke 5:1-11** One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, **2** he saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. **3** He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. **4** When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” **5** Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” **6** When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. **7** So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. **8**

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” **9** For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, **10** and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.” **11** So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

**Romans 11:29** for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.

**John 13:37** Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”

**John 18:10** Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)

**Matthew 26:33** Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

**1John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

**Psalms 32:5** Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”— and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

**Psalms 51:2** Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

**Proverbs 28:13** He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

**NLT**

**Mark 14:27-28** “All of you will desert me,” Jesus told them. “For the Scriptures say, ‘God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ **28** But after I am raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there.”

**Mark 16:6-7** but the angel said, “Do not be so surprised. You are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He has been raised from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. **7** Now go and give this message to his disciples, including Peter: Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died!”

**Luke 5:1-11** One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. **2** He noticed two empty boats at the water’s edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. **3** Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. **4** When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper and let down your nets, and you will catch many fish.” **5** “Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, we’ll try again.” **6** And this time their nets were so full they began to tear! **7** A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. **8** When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m too much of a sinner to be around you.” **9** For he was awestruck by the size of their catch, as were the others with him.

**10** His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!” **11** And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

**Romans 11:29** For God’s gifts and his call can never be withdrawn.

**John 13:37** “But why can’t I come now, Lord?” he asked. “I am ready to die for you.”

**John 18:10** Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest’s servant.

**Matthew 26:33** Peter declared, “Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will.”

**1John 1:9** But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.

**Psalms 32:5** Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.” And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone. Interlude

**Psalms 51:2** Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.

**Proverbs 28:13** People who cover over their sins will not prosper. But if they confess and forsake them, they will receive mercy.