



LESSON 21 ~ DO YOU LOVE ME?

John 21

DISCUSSION STARTER

- Where is your favorite place for breakfast? What is your favorite breakfast food?

INTRODUCTION

John 21 seems to be a postscript or epilogue to the Gospel of John because it comes after the natural conclusion to the Gospel in **20:30-31**. However, this chapter contains some important and valuable information and we are the richer for having it included. It ties up loose ends and informs us of new beginnings and there is no doubt that it is an integral part of the main narrative.

The purpose of the Epilogue is to show how the faith and belief the disciples had come to would be lived out in everyday life. The disciples had completed their earthly time with Jesus and were ready to undertake the **responsibilities** of discipleship. The last chapter of this Gospel opens the door to the future and shows how love and faith in Jesus translates into service and care for others.

PREPARATION

1. Before you read **John 21**, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (**John 16:13**). You may want to make the following prayer your own:

Spirit of the Living God, the One who comforts, strengthens and encourages me.

I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.

I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.

So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

I ask this in the powerful Name of Jesus (as if Jesus were asking it).

Amen

2. Read **John 21** slowly and thoughtfully in your own Bible. As you read and reread, **underline or highlight** any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a **question mark** beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

You may also want to read this chapter in another translation. The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *Amplified Version* of the Bible. It is important, however, that you don't try to answer the questions in the lesson from just the *Amplified Version*. The questions are phrased to be answered from the *New International Version* (NIV), the *New Living Translation* (NLT), or something similar. Using **only** the *Amplified Version* may be confusing. It is given only as a supplementary text.

3. Write one question that you have about this chapter that you would like answered as you do this lesson.

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**)?

- ♥ 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**)? What are some reasons why the disciples might have decided to go fishing (**21:3**)?

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**)?

- ♥ 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?
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?

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?

- ♥ 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)?
 - ♥ 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?
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?
 - ♥ What does this vignette (21:1-14) reveal about Jesus' concern for his disciples? What needs of the disciples does he fulfill?
 - ♥ 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?
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.
 - ♥ 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?

- ♥ 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?

- ♥ 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**)?
- ♥ 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**)?

- ♥ 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**)? 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.