

The Gospel of John

1. John 21:15a – *So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?”* Now the scene changes to a **conversation** specifically between Jesus and Peter. During Jesus’ trial, Peter denied Christ three times and now Peter was back to living his old manner of life.
 - a. In this narrative Peter and the others had been out all night and caught nothing. Then Jesus appeared on the shore. Jesus wanted to **talk** to Peter, but first He gave Peter and those with him one of the largest catch of fish they had probably seen in a very long time, if ever. Then He fed them all a hearty breakfast.
 - b. Finally, when Peter’s stomach was full, Jesus had a question for him. Notice that Jesus **initiated** this conversation with Peter. Jesus had not given up on Peter. He loved him and wanted to include him in His service.
 - c. He asked Peter, “*Simon, son of John* (Jonas KJV = Jonah), *do you love Me more than these?*” Jesus did not say, as some **speculate**, “Do you love me more than these other disciples do?” That kind of comparison is not likely (2 Cor. 10:12). In fact, in this same passage, in verses 20-22, Jesus told Peter not to meddle in other’s affairs.
 - d. The best way to understand this question is to look at the greater context. Earlier Jesus had told the disciples He was sending them out as the Father had sent Him (Jn.20:21), but Peter, like Jonah of old, was going in the **opposite** direction of God’s call.
 - 1) Peter may have gone back to fishing for several **reasons**. He may have felt he was too much of a failure for God to use, or he may not have wanted to face imminent persecution, or maybe he simply went back to what was familiar. Fishing is what he had done all his life until three years before when Jesus first called him.
 - 2) Whatever the case, since the night of the Upper Room, Peter had tended to function in his **own** strength, starting with not wanting Jesus to wash his feet.
 - 3) Notice Jesus here used his **old** name, Simon. In Luke 22:31-32, Jesus used the same name when He told Peter, “*Simon, Simon... Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat .*” Jesus knew Peter would deny Him, but Peter claimed he was ready to die with Jesus; nevertheless, that very night he sadly denied Jesus three times.
 - e. By questioning Peter, Jesus sought to restore him to fellowship and to his calling. **Questions** are a great way to help people sort out their motives. Jesus often used them. When Jesus asked Peter, “*Do you love me more than these?*” He was referring to the net full of fish. Jesus was in no way encouraging comparison with the other disciples.
2. John 21:15b – *...He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs .”* Jesus asked Peter if he *loved* AGAPAO Him more than the huge catch of fish onshore. AGAPE love is **unconditional** love. Peter responded to Jesus question with, “Yes, Lord, I PHILEO love you.” PHILEO love is a fellowship type love, comparable to “I like you.”
 - a. Peter was somewhat evasive in His response to Jesus. When he answered Jesus, Peter used a weaker word for love than Jesus used. He basically said, “You know I **like** you.” Despite his response, Jesus replied with the command: “Feed my lambs.”
 - 1) Peter had been so certain he would follow Jesus until **death** (Mt. 26:33, Mk. 14:29), but sadly he failed miserably. Failure easily results when we know God has called us to an important task, but we set out to do it in our own strength. John 15:4-5
 - 2) Later when we face failure, we want to give up. That place of weakness is ironically just where God wants us to be. Those are the times when we can finally **hear** His voice and learn to do His work in His way, in His timing and in His strength.
 - b. Peter had followed Jesus and Jesus had taught him to fish for people. Now Jesus wanted Peter to **care** for His soon-to-be-born-again flock of lambs. Thousands of newborn believers would very soon be added to the church. This fledgling flock of lambs would need tender feeding and care. Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 1 Peter 5:13
3. John 21:16 – *He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.”* **Again**, the Lord asked Peter about his love AGAPAO for Him. Peter’s again responded with, “Yes Lord, You know I like (PHILEO) You.”
 - a. This time Jesus told Peter, “Be a shepherd of my **entire** flock.”

- b. Jesus used the verb *shepherd* (POIMAINO, to **shepherd** or guide a flock) to emphasize the need for Peter to guide Christ's entire flock into truth through protecting and feeding both young (*lambs*) and maturing believers (*sheep*). Psalm 23:1-3, Acts 20:29-31
- c. Jesus commanded Peter to **demonstrate** his love by teaching foundational truths that would establish the flock in fruitful service. John 14:15, 15:10
4. John 21:17 – *He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.”* The reason Jesus asked Peter three times is likely because Peter denied Him **three** times.
- a. This third time Jesus asked, “Simon, do you like PHILEO me?” The Lord shifted to Peter's word for love PHILEO to emphasize the priority of His command (to shepherd the flock) rather than the quality of Peter's love. This third time of questioning deeply **troubled** Peter, maybe because it painfully reminded him of his three denials of Christ.
- b. Peter said something significant here. He affirmed that as God, Jesus knows everything; therefore, Jesus knew Peter cared for Him. To which Jesus responded, “**Tend My sheep.**”
- 1) By using the term *tend* BOSKO in the present tense, imperative mood, and active voice, the Lord emphasized that Peter must reflect Christ's love to the flock immediately, willingly, and **actively** through careful communication of truth and loving care. Jeremiah 3:15, 23:4
- 2) We now know the flock to which Jesus was referring was going to become the **church** of Jesus Christ. Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11-14
- 3) In 1 Peter 5:1-3, an older and more mature Peter encouraged the elders of the church saying, “*as your fellow elder... shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, ...nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.*”
5. John 21:18 – “*Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.*” Years later, after Peter had learned to follow Christ, he was **crucified** upside down in Rome. Psalm 139:16
- a. Jesus guaranteed Peter he would **suffer** in the future. Earlier Peter had said he would die for Christ, and now Jesus assured him that that would indeed be the case. 2 Timothy 3:12
- b. This is interesting because Peter had said he would die for Jesus, but then he denied Him three times. Now Jesus asked him three times if he loved Him, as if **undoing** those denials, and then Jesus added he would indeed suffer for Him.
- c. Jesus told Peter that as a young man he did whatever he **wanted** to do. That in fact is where Peter had been the last 12 hours, doing what he wanted to do, going fishing.
- d. Although Peter had boldly claimed he would die for Christ, in truth he did not really want to suffer, as proved by his three denials of Christ. But Jesus was now calling Peter to maturity, to the point where eventually, as an old man, he would hold out his hands to willingly be **martyred**. John 13:37
6. John 21:19 – *Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!”* Peter would die for Christ after all, but only after he first learned to **follow** Christ.
- a. Peter ministered for about 30 years after the resurrection and then he was martyred in Rome by **Nero** in about AD 67. Roman historian Eusebius said Peter was crucified upside down at Peter's own request.
- b. The verb *follow* as used here by Jesus is in the present tense, active voice, imperative mood. As Christ stood up to walk away, He commanded Peter to immediately, willingly and resolutely follow Him. Peter had a **choice**. He could stay with the boat and the great catch of fish or willingly follow Jesus Christ. What would it be? What did he love most?
- c. As He walked **away** from the seashore, the fish and the nets, Jesus told Peter, “You, follow Me.” We can see from this context that that's exactly what Peter did. Peter was never again a fisherman. On that very day, he became a shepherd.
7. John 21:20 – *Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?”* Peter may have inquired about John to **divert** the focus from himself.
- a. As they walked away, Peter saw that John was also following. It is of note that John always spoke of himself

- in the 3rd person. This was likely to turn the spotlight away from him. He also often described himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. John seemed **secure** in Christ's love and without the need of the praises of man. John 3:29-31
- b. John's Gospel, as well as his first epistle, focuses a lot on love and **fellowship**. Here John added that he was the one who asked Jesus about the betrayer at the last supper.
8. John 21:21 – *So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?"* According to tradition, John was the only apostle to die of **natural** causes. He died around AD 100, having lived well into his nineties.
- a. Since Peter was predicted to die as a martyr, he was **curious** to know what would happen to John. Therefore, he asked this question of the Lord.
- b. Although most of us would have been tempted to ask the same question, John's life was not Peter's **concern**.
9. John 21:22 – *Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"* Jesus rebuked Peter. Peter needed to focus on his **own** life. Now that Peter was restored to fellowship, Jesus simply commanded Peter to focus on following Him. Galatians 6:4
- a. This is an appropriate rebuke for all of us. We often spend time and energy fretting over the next person and their relationship with the Lord, when that in reality is not our **business**.
- b. Romans 14:4 says, "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will **stand**, for the Lord is able to make him stand."
10. John 21:23 – *Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"* Because of this statement, the **rumor** spread that Jesus had predicted that John would be alive until Christ returned.
- a. John wanted to **clarify** here that that was not what Jesus had said. Jesus only told Peter to mind his own business and not worry about John.
- b. We should note the use of the word **brethren** in this context. This term developed over time as a Church Age description for believers in Christ, slowly replacing the term disciples. This is another clue to the late dating of this Gospel (circa AD 95).
11. John 21:24 – *This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true*. John stated here that he was the **author** of this book. John wrote what he saw, and he wrote the truth.
- a. 1 John 1:1-2 – *What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— and the life was manifested, and we have seen and **testify** and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us.*
- b. John provided a trustworthy, or **legal**, testimony **MARTUREO** of the life and times of Jesus the Christ.
12. John 21:25 – *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.* Jesus performed many other miracles and taught often. We have only a small **portion** of His life preserved for us in God's infallible Word.
- a. The NET Bible reads: *There are **many** other things that Jesus did. If every one of them were written down, I suppose the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.*
- b. This verse tells us that John was very **selective** in the events he included in his account. We will have to wait until eternity to learn about all the many other things Jesus did.
- c. Maybe heaven hosts a **library** filled with books containing accounts of all that Jesus did while He was here on earth. Do you have your library card in hand? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Acts 16:30-31