

# John 21 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

([John Commentaries](#))

[John 21:1](#)

[John 21:2](#)

[John 21:3](#)

[John 21:4](#)

[John 21:5](#)

[John 21:6](#)

[John 21:7](#)

[John 21:8](#)

[John 21:9](#)

[John 21:10](#)

[John 21:11](#)

[John 21:12](#)

[John 21:13](#)

[John 21:14](#)

[John 21:15](#)

[John 21:16](#)

[John 21:15](#)

[John 21:18](#)

[John 21:19](#)

[John 21:20](#)

[John 21:21](#)

[John 21:22](#)

[John 21:23](#)

[John 21:24](#)

[John 21:25](#)

Click chart to enlarge

Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
Another Chart from Charles Swindoll

Click to enlarge

**John 21:1** After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way.

- **these:** John 20:19-29
- **Jesus:** Mt 26:32 Mt 28:7,16 Mk 16:7
- the sea: John 6:1,23

## Related Passages:

John 6:1; 23+ After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the **Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias)**.....23  
There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

Matthew 26:32+ "But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

Matthew 28:7,16+ "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going

ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”.....16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.

Mark 16:7+ “But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.’”

## JESUS MANIFESTS HIMSELF AGAIN

**After these things** - What **things**? The resurrection and post-resurrection appearances of Jesus and the concluding words expressing the purpose of John's Gospel (John 20:31+).

**NET NOTE** - The time reference indicated by μετ τατα (meta tauta) is indefinite, in comparison with the specific “after eight days” (μεθ’ ἡμερας κτω, meth’ hēmeras oktō) between the two post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in 20:26.

**Jesus (Iesous) manifested (phaneroo) Himself again to the disciples (mathetes) at the Sea of Tiberias** (of Galilee) - **Jesus manifested (phaneroo) Himself again** as He had manifested Himself in the locked room (Jn 20:19-29). The resurrected Lord became visible and caused Himself to be known to the disciples in Galilee. Note the adverb **again** (palin) means in this context means "once more," after His appearances to them in John 20. In His previous post-resurrection appearances, human eyesight was insufficient to see the glorious resurrected Lord and He had to supernaturally enable men to see Him (e.g., Jn 20:14, 15,16+, Lk 24:13-15, 16+). Recall that Jesus had told His disciples "after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." (Mt 26:32) And on resurrection day the angel had informed Mary Magdalene to "tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him." (Mt 28:7). So now we find the disciples (at least 7 of the 11 disciples) in Galilee. However they were on the sea and not on the mountain that Jesus had designated (Mt 28:16).

**Sea of Tiberias**- called also the **Sea of Galilee** and of **Gennesaret**. In the Old Testament it is called the Sea of **Chinnereth** or Chinneroth. John (Jn 21:1) is the only evangelist who so designates this lake. His doing so incidentally confirms the opinion that he wrote after the other evangelists, and at a period subsequent to the taking of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). Tiberias had by this time become an important city, having been spared by the Romans, and made the capital of the province when Jerusalem was destroyed. It thus naturally gave its name to the lake.

**And He manifested (phaneroo) Himself in this way** - John proceeds to tell the **way** in which the resurrected Christ became known to the 7 disciples who were fishing.

### Related Resources:

- [What is the significance of the Sea of Galilee in the Bible](#)

---

**Manifested** (disclosed, revealed) (5319) **phaneroo** from **phanerós** = manifest, visible, conspicuous in turn from **phaino** = give light; become visible in turn from **phos** = light) is literally "to bring to light" and primarily means "to make visible" or to cause to become visible. The basic meaning of **phaneroo** is to make known, to clearly reveal, to manifest (see Vine's below), to cause to be seen or to make something clear. **BDAG (borrow)** summarized - 1, to cause to become visible, reveal, expose publicly (w. relatively more focus on the sensory aspect than on the cognitive 2. to cause to become known, disclose, show, make known **Liddell-Scott** - to make manifest, N.T. II. to make known or famous:-Pass. to become so, Hdt. The invisible God Who in the Person of His Son was made visible to human eyesight by assuming a human body and human limitations.

**PHANEROO** - 43V - **appear(1), appeared(6), appears(3), become visible(1), becomes visible(1), disclose(1), disclosed(1), displayed(1), made...evident(2), made known(1), made manifest(2), make...clear(1), manifested(18), manifests(1), revealed(7), show(1), shown(1).** Mk. 4:22; Mk. 16:12; Mk. 16:14; Jn. 1:31; Jn. 2:11; Jn. 3:21; Jn. 7:4; Jn. 9:3; Jn. 17:6; Jn. 21:1; Jn. 21:14; Rom. 1:19; Rom. 3:21; Rom. 16:26; 1 Co. 4:5; 2 Co. 2:14; 2 Co. 3:3; 2 Co. 4:10; 2 Co. 4:11; 2 Co. 5:10; 2 Co. 5:11; 2 Co. 7:12; 2 Co. 11:6; Eph. 5:13; Col. 1:26; Col. 3:4; Col. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:3; Heb. 9:8; Heb. 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 Jn. 1:2; 1 Jn. 2:19; 1 Jn. 2:28; 1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Jn. 3:5; 1 Jn. 3:8; 1 Jn. 4:9; Rev. 3:18; Rev. 15:4

**Disciples** (3101) **mathetes** from **manthano** = to learn which Vine says is "from a root *math*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor". Gives us our English = "*mathematics*" - see [matheteuo](#)) describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Another sources says mathetes is from from **math**- which speaks of "mental effort that thinks something through" and thus describes is a learner; a follower who learns the doctrines and the lifestyle of the one they follow. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf [inductive Bible study](#)) and thus **mathetes** is more

than a mere pupil. A **mathetes** describes an adherent of a teacher. As discussed below **mathetes** itself has no spiritual connotation, and it is used of superficial followers of Jesus as well as of genuine believers. The Lord calls everyone to grow as a disciple (a learner of Christ; cf. also Mt 11:29,30+), one who lives in faith, who lives in and by His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. Note in the Great Commission that the implication is that the disciple is not just a hearer and a learner from another, but is a doer of what he learns for Mt 28:20+ says "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." As **followers** of Jesus we are to be, first of all, **learners**. We are to learn from Him by listening to Him, learn the truth that will set us free (John 8:32+) and keep us from error. **Barclay** writes that "All his life a Christian should be learning more and more about Jesus. The shut mind is the end of discipleship!" ([Matthew 5](#))

In summary **Mathetes** simply means "learner" or "follower" and in Acts is the most common term for believers, however **not ever use of mathetes describes a genuine follower of Christ**(eg, Jn 6:66 describes "disciples" who choose to no longer follow Jesus). The Bible also speaks of the disciples of the Pharisees (Mk 2:18; Lk 5:33) and of John the Baptist (Mt. 9:14; 11:2; Lk 5:33; 7:18-19; 11:1; Jn 1:35; 3:25). In this present context clearly mathetes refers to a genuine follower of Christ. The important corollary is that every genuine follower of Christ is also a disciple. In other words, there is not a false division (as promulgated by a number of evangelical teachers) between believers and then an "elite" group known as disciples. **This is a false and potentially dangerous teaching!**

**NIDNTT - (EXCERPT FROM 8 PAGE DISCUSSION OF MATHETES)** - A man is called a mathētēs when he binds himself to someone else in order to acquire his practical and theoretical knowledge. He may be an apprentice in a trade, a student of medicine, or a member of a philosophical school. One can only be a mathētēs in the company of a **didaskalos**, a master or teacher, to whom the mathētēs since the days of the Sophists generally had to pay a fee. An obvious exception to this is when mathētēs refers to spiritual dependence on a thinker long since dead. Socrates never wanted to have any mathētēs and never regarded himself as a didaskalos... It is used to indicate total attachment to someone in discipleship (**Ed**: But see distinction below between a true disciple and a pseudo-disciple of Jesus). The secular Gk. usage of the word in the sense of apprentice, pupil or student is not found... **Mathētēs** in Jn. is often simply a term for "Christian" (Jn. 8:31+; Jn 13:35+; Jn 15:8+)... mathētēs has the general sense of "Christian", one who believes in Jesus. (See online 8 page article on Mathetes in the [New International Dictionary Of New Testament Theology, volume 1, page 490](#))

**MATHETES IN GOSPEL OF JOHN** - Jn. 1:35; Jn. 1:37; Jn. 2:2; Jn. 2:11; Jn. 2:12; Jn. 2:17; Jn. 2:22; Jn. 3:22; Jn. 3:25; Jn. 4:1; Jn. 4:2; Jn. 4:8; Jn. 4:27; Jn. 4:31; Jn. 4:33; Jn. 6:3; Jn. 6:8; Jn. 6:12; Jn. 6:16; Jn. 6:22; Jn. 6:24; Jn. 6:60; Jn. 6:61; Jn. 6:66; Jn. 7:3; Jn. 8:31; Jn. 9:2; Jn. 9:27; Jn. 9:28; Jn. 11:7; Jn. 11:8; Jn. 11:12; Jn. 11:54; Jn. 12:4; Jn. 12:16; Jn. 13:5; Jn. 13:22; Jn. 13:23; Jn. 13:35; Jn. 15:8; Jn. 16:17; Jn. 16:29; Jn. 18:1; Jn. 18:2; Jn. 18:15; Jn. 18:16; Jn. 18:17; Jn. 18:19; Jn. 18:25; Jn. 19:26; Jn. 19:27; Jn. 19:38; Jn. 20:2; Jn. 20:3; Jn. 20:4; Jn. 20:8; Jn. 20:10; Jn. 20:18; Jn. 20:19; Jn. 20:20; Jn. 20:25; Jn. 20:26; Jn. 20:30; Jn. 21:1; Jn. 21:2; Jn. 21:4; Jn. 21:7; Jn. 21:8; Jn. 21:12; Jn. 21:14; Jn. 21:20; Jn. 21:23; Jn. 21:24

**John 21:2 Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.**

- **Thomas**: John 20:28
- **Nathanael**: John 1:45-51
- **Cana**: John 2:1,11 Jn 4:46 Jos 19:28
- **the sons of Zebedee**: Mt 4:21-22

#### **Related Passages:**

John 20:28+ Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Matthew 4:21-22 Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of **Zebedee**, and John his brother, in the boat with **Zebedee** their father, mending their nets; and He called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed ([akoloutheo](#)) Him.

## **SEVEN MEN IN A BOAT**

[Simon Peter](#), and [Thomas](#) called [Didymus](#) (twin), and [Nathanael](#) of [Cana](#) in [Galilee](#), and the sons of [Zebedee](#) (James and John), and two others of His disciples ([mathetes](#)) were together - Seven out of eleven (including 2 unnamed) disciples would fit in one boat (Jn 21:3) it must have been a large boat.

**THOUGHT on TWO OTHERS** - "They are unnamed, and I believe purposely unnamed. They represent the anonymous and hidden multitudes of faithful souls, whose names are never published in human documents, and whose deeds are never recorded in human reports. To these He manifested Himself, as surely as to the others. Those "two other" represented the majority of the saints. Let all such remember that of His fullness they also receive. Manifestations are needed for fidelity in obscure places of service, and they are granted. To all His own, He ever comes with unveilings of His glory, with ministrations of His grace and truth." (BORROW G Campbell Morgan in [Life applications from every chapter of the Bible PAGE 324](#))

**Spurgeon** - It was well to keep together and enjoy the communion of saints. Good society makes good men better. (The Interpreter)

**NET NOTE** surmises (and it is only a guess) that "The two other disciples who are not named may have been Andrew and Philip, who are mentioned together in John 6:7–8 and Jn 12:22."

**John 21:3** Simon Peter \*said to them, "I am going fishing." They \*said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

- **I am going fishing:** 2Ki 6:1-7 Mt 4:18-20 Lu 5:10,11 Ac 18:3 20:34 1Co 9:6 1Th 2:9 2Th 3:7-9
- **and that night they caught nothing:** Lu 5:5 1Co 3:7

#### Related Passages:

Luke 5:1-11+ (**THIS PASSAGE HAS PARALLELS TO THIS SCENE IN JOHN 21**) Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; 2 and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. 4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "**Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch**" 5 **Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets."** 6 **When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break;** 7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "**Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!**" 9 **For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken;** 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.



"The Jesus Boat"

## THE SEVEN DISCIPLES GO NIGHT FISHING

**Simon Peter** said to them, "I am going fishing." They \*said to him, "We will also come with you." - **Simon** is the name he had before he met Jesus Who gave him the name **Cephas** (Aramaic for rock) (Jn 1:42+). As usual we see Peter is the leader and the others follow the leader. In fishing for fish, it appears that all of the disciples seem to have forgotten Jesus' prophetic promise to

make them "fishers of men!" (Mt 4:19+). In fairness, Jesus was not with them as He had been for the previous 3 years, so they went back to their previous profession. After all they needed to make a living and provide for their families.

**They went out and got into the boat (ploion)** - It is surprising that they still had a **boat** because Matthew records when they heard the call of Jesus to "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men," they left their nets (and this had been over 3 years earlier). (cf Mt 4:19,20+). While they had initially left the fishing profession, it is quite possible that Zebedee still had a fishing boat they could use (Mk 1:20+).

**And that night (nux) they caught (piazo) (absolutely) nothing (oudeis)** - **Fishing** at night was the best time to catch fish, but they had been fishing for some time (possibly the entire night) and yet come up empty handed. God is sovereign and He was setting up the scene for the miracle that would help open the eyes of the disciples to see their Lord on the shore. This scene would also serve as a poignant reminder to the disciples of their inadequacy (insufficiency) and His adequacy (sufficiency)!

**THOUGHT** - The phrase **they caught** (absolutely) **nothing** reminds me of what we can do without Christ, when we fail to abide in the Vine. We can do absolutely nothing (**oudeis**)! (John 15:5+). Dear disciple (represented by the "two others" Jn 21:1) the world is growing exponentially darker each day and as children of the light and of the day, John 21:1-3 begs the question "Have I been "fishing" (whatever that means specifically in my spiritual life) all night and yet caught absolutely nothing? Perhaps I need to come to the recognition that I am not adequate for fruitful spiritual work in my own strength, but that my adequacy is from God Who made me adequate as a servant of the New Covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2Co 3:5-6+)?

**Spurgeon** - As they had as yet no directions to go upon their spiritual business, they acted commendably in following their daily callings, for nothing is more dangerous than indolence. (The Interpreter)

---

**David Black** says "The **historical present** describes a past event as though it were actually taking place: λέγουσιν ατ περ ατ ς, they spoke to him about her (Mark 1:30). Here the present is a pictorial tense, displaying the action vividly before our eyes. In English we often use the historical present when recounting personal experiences ("then he says to me"). (BORROW [It's Still Greek to Me page 106](#))

**Historical presents** in John 18-21 - Jn 18:3 - came; Jn 18:4 - said; Jn 18:17 - said; Jn 18:26 - said; Jn 18:29 - said; Jn 18:38 - said; Jn 19:4 said; Jn 19:5 - said, Jn 19:6 - said; Jn 19:9 - said; Jn 19:10 - said; Jn 19:14 - said; Jn 19:15 - said; Jn 19:26 - said; Jn 19:27 - said; Jn 20:1 - came, was, saw; Jn 20:2 - ran, came, said; Jn 20:5 - saw; Jn 20:6 - came, beheld; Jn 20:12 - beheld; Jn 20:13 - said, said; Jn 20:14 - beheld; Jn 20:15 - said; Jn 20:16 - said, turned, said; Jn 20:17 - said; Jn 20:18 - came; Jn 20:19 - said; Jn 20:22 - said; Jn 20:26 - came; Jn 20:27 - said; Jn 20:29 - said; Jn 21:3 - said, said; Jn 21:5 - said; Jn 21:9 - saw; Jn 21:10 - said; Jn 21:12 - said; Jn 21:13 - came, took, gave; Jn 21:15 - said, said; Jn 21:16 - said, said, said; Jn 21:17 - said, said; Jn 21:19 - said, Jn 21:20 - saw; Jn 21:21 -said; Jn 21:22 - said; Jn 21:25 - were, would, were

---

**John 21:4 But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.**

- **but:** John 20:14 Mk 16:12 Lu 24:15,16,31

### **IT'S BEEN A HARD DAY'S NIGHT & NETS ARE EMPTY**

**But when the day was now breaking** - So the fishermen must have been heading back to shore, frustrated with their failure to secure even one single fish after a night of laborious effort. The sun was just coming up before them, but little did they know that they would soon see the risen Son standing before them!

**Jesus (lesous) stood on the beach; yet the disciples (mathetes) did not know (eido) that it was Jesus** - As we have seen in the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, finite men could not see the infinite God unless He revealed Himself to them. **Did not know** is the verb **eido** that in this context speaks of supernaturally given knowledge. At this point the Spirit had not yet given this knowledge to them, but He soon would!

---

**John 21:5 So Jesus \*said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No."**

- **Children:** 1Jn 2:13,18
- **you do not have any fish, do you:** Ps 37:3 Lu 24:41-43 Php 4:11-13,19 Heb 13:5

## THE DIVINE STRANGER ON THE SHORE

So ([oun](#)) is a [term of conclusion](#).

**Jesus** ([lesous](#)) **\*said to them**, “**Children** ([paidion](#)), **you do not have any fish, do you?**”- In this Greek construction, Jesus expects a “**NO**” answer, which of course implies He knows in His omniscience that they have caught no fish!

Jesus calls out to the disciples using an interesting designation “**children** ([paidion](#)),” a term He has not used before in John to describe His disciples. It is no accident then that this word **children** ([paidion](#)) stresses the need for moral training and guidance of the addressee! **Paidion** is used by Paul to address believers in Corinth who were deficient in spiritual understanding, exhorting (commanding) them “Brethren, **do not be** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) **children** ([paidion](#)) in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.” (1Co 14:20+) In other words, Paul commanded the disciples at Corinth to grow up and exhibit spiritual maturity, to become spiritual adults, mature in the faith. That same sense of [paidion](#) would apply to Jesus’ use of this designation to His disciples, who had been called to be fishers of men but had regressed to be fishers of fish!

**They answered Him**, “**No** - This must have chafed at least a little that these experienced fishermen had returned with empty nets.

**NET NOTE** - The word προσφάγιον (*prosphagion*) is unusual. According to BDAG 886 s.v. in Hellenistic Greek it described a side dish to be eaten with bread, and in some contexts was the equivalent of ὄψον (*opson*), “fish.” Used in addressing a group of returning fishermen, however, it is quite clear that the speaker had fish in mind.

**Children** ([3813](#)) ([paidion](#) diminutive of [pais](#) = child) is a little child of either sex, ranging from an infant (Mt 19:13, 14; Mk 10:13-15; Lk 18:16, 17, etc) to children who are older (Mt 11:16; Mt 14:21; 15:38; 18:2-5, etc) **Paidion** is used repeatedly of the infant Jesus in Matthew (Mt 2:8-9, 11, 13-14, 20-21) **Paidion** is used as a term of comparison, Jesus making the point that we are to become like a little child (Mk 10:15 Lk 18:17), the implication of course being that this is not an infant but a child old enough to express saving faith in the Messiah!

**Gilbrant - In classical Greek** the primary meaning of **paidion** (diminutive of *pais*) is an “infant” or “young child” up to 7 years of age (Liddell-Scott). The saying “chip off the old block” can be traced back to the use of *paidion* in classical Greek (*ibid.*). In the Septuagint *paidion* is used of a newborn child as in Genesis 17:12, “And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations.” The word *paidion* is also used spiritually of the family of God (cf. Isaiah 8:18; Hebrews 2:13). It can also mean a young slave, either male or female.

In the New Testament **paidion** is used in a number of ways. It can be used of an infant, as in Luke 2:21 where Jesus is described as an 8-day-old child. It can also be used of a child old enough to believe in Jesus (Matthew 18:2,6). *Paidion* can also signify a father and child relationship. In Luke 11:7 the father said his children were with him in bed. The Lord Jesus used *paidion* as a term of affection in John 21:5 where He warmly addressed His disciples as His children in much the same way a father addresses his children.

An interesting usage of this family aspect is seen in 1 John 2:13 where *paidion* is used to address the youngest believers in the family of God. In that usage it is to be distinguished from *teknia* ([teknion](#)), the term John used to address all his readers (1 John 2:1,12,28). Here *paidion* seems to emphasize the fact that a child is a learner, one who needs guidance, while *teknia* stresses the fact that the child was born into the family.

**Paidion** can also be used to address believers who are deficient in spiritual understanding. In 1 Corinthians 14:20 Paul exhorted the Christians at Corinth not to be childish in understanding. Instead they were to grow up and exhibit mature spiritual intellects. They needed to become spiritual adults, that is, mature. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**PAIDION - 52X/49V - boy's(1), Child(10), child(21), child's(2), children(17), children's(1).** Matt. 2:8; Matt. 2:9; Matt. 2:11; Matt. 2:13; Matt. 2:14; Matt. 2:20; Matt. 2:21; Matt. 11:16; Matt. 14:21; Matt. 15:38; Matt. 18:2; Matt. 18:3; Matt. 18:4; Matt. 18:5; Matt. 19:13; Matt. 19:14; Mk. 5:39; Mk. 5:40; Mk. 5:41; Mk. 7:28; Mk. 7:30; Mk. 9:24; Mk. 9:36; Mk. 9:37; Mk. 10:13; Mk. 10:14; Mk. 10:15; Lk. 1:59; Lk. 1:66; Lk. 1:76; Lk. 1:80; Lk. 2:17; Lk. 2:27; Lk. 2:40; Lk. 7:32; Lk. 9:47; Lk. 9:48; Lk. 11:7; Lk. 18:16; Lk. 18:17; Jn. 4:49; Jn. 16:21; Jn. 21:5; 1 Co. 14:20; Heb. 2:13; Heb. 2:14; Heb. 11:23; 1 Jn. 2:13; 1 Jn. 2:18



John 21:6 And He said to them, “**Cast** the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch.” So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

- **Cast**: Mt 7:27 Lu 5:4-7
- **They cast**: John 2:5 Ps 8:8 Heb 2:6-9
- **the multitude**: Ac 2:41 4:4

## PROFESSIONAL FISHERMEN OBEY STRANGER'S STRANGE COMMAND

And He said to them, “**Cast** the net on the right-hand side of the boat ([ploion](#)) and you will find a catch.” - This is a strange passage. Here are men who were professional fisherman and a Man Who is not even in a boat giving them a command and a promise. The command is very specific (right-hand side of the boat) and the promise is certain, not "you might catch a few fish" but "**you will find a catch.**"

So ([oun](#)) is a [term of conclusion](#). What did the disciples conclude? We cannot be dogmatic, but surely they sensed something different about this Stranger on the shore who called them by the usual title **children** ([paidion](#)) (Jn 21:5) and seemed to have uncanny knowledge regarding their failure to catch any fish. How could He be so certain? And so their "conclusion" was "Let's obey this Stranger's strange command!"

**They cast** - This is a short description but is a critical cog in the entire scene. Had they not obeyed, they would not have found the catch the Man had promised. Or if they had decided to cast on the left-hand side, they would not have received the promise of a catch.

**THOUGHT** - There is a lesson for all of us. First, when Jesus commands, do not hesitate to obey. Second, obey the specifics of His command and do not deviate from His direction. Third, and somewhat related to the second, is we are to obey even if His command seems strange. Is there a specific command Jesus has given to you and you are choosing to disobey? Then do not expect a "catch" (whatever that is specifically in your life)! [Trust and obey](#) for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey!

**And then** - This phrase is an important connective (**and**) marking progression (**then**) in the narrative.

**They were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish**- This miraculous event should have set off bells in the minds of Simon Peter, James and John who had all been present at the similar miraculous catch in Lk 5:1-11 ([see above](#))! And remember that there are 7 strong men in the boat and they are still unable **to haul it in because of the great number of fish**. We find out later that there were 153 fish, but clearly these were not minnows but all of them were surely "keepers" to account for the heavy weight of the catch! And do not miss the crucial point that the disciples' obedience brought about the **catch** the Stranger had promised. In this case the **catch** was an "Ephesians 3:20+ type" of **catch** "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think." As a corollary obedience is the key to abundant life in Christ!

---

**Stephen Olford** - "Cast the net on the right side of the boat." – John 21:6

Months and years have come and gone. Yes, gone forever. If I dare take stock of how I spend my time, what answers would or could I sincerely give to such questions as: "What progress have I made spiritually over the last year? What have I done to help extend the kingdom of God? How many souls have I won for Him? What fruit is apparent as a result of my ministry among God's people?" To such questions, I have to confess by way of answer that I have toiled all night and, generally speaking, have caught nothing.

Give me grace, Lord, to obey Your message to my heart –"Cast the net on the right side of the boat." Amen.

---

**Greg Laurie - REAL SUCCESS - John 21:6** (borrow [Every day with Jesus page 324](#))

FROM ALL OUTWARD APPEARANCES, the ministry of missionary George Smith was a failure. He had been in Africa only a short time when he was driven from the country, leaving behind only one convert, a poor woman. He died not long after that, while on his knees, praying for Africa.

Years later, a group of men stumbled onto the place where George Smith had prayed. They also found a copy of the Scriptures he had left behind in Africa. Then they met the one convert of Smith's ministry. A hundred years afterward, a mission agency discovered that more than 13,000 converts had emerged from the ministry George Smith began.

Now that's what I call a successful ministry! But I'm sure it didn't seem so successful to George Smith. To all outward appearances, his ministry was a failure. One convert, that's all.

What if George had thrown in the towel before the woman came to Christ? What if he had fled the country without bothering to leave behind a copy of the Scriptures? What if he hadn't taken time to pray for those in Africa and had chosen instead to keep them out of sight, out of mind? But he remained faithful in the little things, and reaped a reward he would not see until he reached heaven.

John 21:6 reminds us of the importance of obeying Christ even in the little things. The disciples had gone fishing on the Sea of Galilee shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection. They were probably discouraged, confused, and frustrated. Their beloved leader, Jesus, had been crucified just days before, many in the group had deserted Him, and most recently, Jesus had surprised them all by appearing to them in His resurrected body. Yet He didn't stick around.

They were plainly confused. You might have expected that Jesus' miraculous appearance to them behind locked doors would have given the disciples renewed zeal and excitement in their work for the Lord, but instead the group decided to go back to their old jobs. Jesus wanted them to be fishers of men; they decided to be fishers of fish.

Perhaps they thought they were no longer qualified for serving and representing Him. Or maybe they thought Jesus would never forgive them for deserting Him in His time of need. Whatever the case, they soon discovered that fishing wasn't as easy as it once was. They fished all night and caught nothing.

Then Jesus showed up on the shore and told them to try fishing on the other side of their boat. They took His advice—without yet realizing it was their Master—and when they did so, they quickly caught so many fish that the nets could barely contain their catch!

I think it would have been fascinating to eavesdrop on their discussions before they followed Jesus' advice. I'm sure that Peter, the professional fisherman, thought the instructions were downright ridiculous. Put their nets down one more time on the right side of the boat? They had tried that side before! Why would doing it again give them any different results? But for some reason, the disciples complied with Jesus' command—and reaped a blessing so huge they knew in an instant that it had been Jesus who had given the order.

The disciples found success that day because they listened to and obeyed the Lord. By being faithful to His one simple request, they received above and beyond what any of them thought was possible.

There are times when God calls us to the simple. The mundane. The ordinary. Our willingness to do those things may well qualify us for greater service later on. Scripture reminds us not to despise "the day of small things" (see Zechariah 4:10).

Jesus Himself taught us, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will you commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:10–11).

Think of David, whose place as a young man was in the pasture with smelly sheep. But one day God plucked the shepherd boy from obscurity and decided it was time for him to slay a giant. And so began the public career of Israel's greatest king.

Or think of Stephen in the New Testament, who was chosen by the disciples to wait on tables. In time, God said to him, "Stephen, it's time to stop waiting on tables and to serve the Word of God." His sermon recorded in Acts 7 is the longest message in the whole book.

Like David, Stephen, and even George Smith, God may be asking you to do things that seem mundane, unnecessary, or even impractical. But I guarantee that God will use you in ways you never dreamed of if you just let Him be the One in charge. Yes, He may call you to even greater work for His kingdom. But He may also call you to a task that will not bear fruit until years down the road.

Do you want to be successful? Then follow the advice of the Master Fisherman, Jesus, no matter how trivial or humbling that advice might seem. His directions might seem simple, but remember that the One who gives it is the fountainhead of all wisdom.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:5–17. There you will find what is needed in your work for the Lord for it to be of any lasting value. Will your life's work stand the test of time? If you have any doubt, begin making some changes right now.

---

John Bennett [Day by Day: Bible Commands](#) **CAST THE NET ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE SHIP, AND YE SHALL FIND**

Seven of the apostles had returned to the familiar scenes around the Sea of Galilee. With Peter in the lead, they set off on a fishing expedition. A night of toil yielded no catch. As they neared the shore, the weary fishermen caught sight of a stranger. His voice sounded over the waters of the lake, 'Cast the net on the right side ... and ye shall find'.

Under a strange constraint, the men in the boat took the stranger's advice. Did their memories begin to stir? Did they recall another day when the familiar voice of Jesus had told them to let down their nets for a catch? They cast the net. The catch was overwhelming yet the net did not break. In an instant of insight, John realised that the stranger on the shore was none other than the risen Lord. Once again, the Ruler of Nature had unerringly guided His friends to a mighty shoal of fish.

On a day, long months before, Galilean fishermen had been commissioned to catch men for Christ. On this day, the Lord Jesus had performed a sign which displayed to them how that commission would be fulfilled. The sign of the great catch of fish is an acted parable of mission and evangelism.

The seven were seasoned fishermen. They knew the waters of the Sea of Galilee. They had all the know-how they needed. Yet after



a night's hard work they had caught absolutely nothing. Their voyage was fruitless until they heeded the voice of the stranger on the shore. When they did so, they knew immediate and incredible success.

The Lord had already taught them that apart from Him, they could do nothing, 15:5. They learned that lesson again that day. What really counts in evangelism is knowing the Lord's direction and His blessing. Without these, nothing will be accomplished. We must recognise our own powerlessness and rely wholly on the Lord.

The huge catch symbolises the world-wide scope of the task of mission. A vast harvest from all the nations would be brought in. The gospel net would never break however many converts it contains. It is well able to hold them all.

**John 21:7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved \*said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.**

- **that disciple:** Jn 21:20 Jn 13:23, Jn 19:26, Jn 20:2
- **It is the Lord:** John 20:20,28 Ps 118:23 Mk 11:3 Lu 2:11 Ac 2:36 10:36 1Co 15:47 Jas 2:1
- when: Song 8:7 Mt 14:28,29 Lu 7:47 2Co 5:14
- fisher's coat: Or, upper coat, great coat, or, surtout, (ependutes from epi = upon, and enduo = clothe).
- naked: That is, he was only in his vest, or under garment; for [gumnos <Strong's G1131>,] naked, like the Hebrew {arom,} is frequently applied to one who has merely laid aside his outer garment. See 1 Sa 19:24; 2 Sa 6:20, on which see the note. To which may be added what we read in the LXX, Job 22:6, "Thou has taken away the covering of the naked," [amphiazo,] the plaid, or blanket, in which they wrapped themselves, and besides they had no other. In this sense Virgil says, {Nudus ara, sere nudus,} "plough naked, and sow naked," i.e., strip off your upper garments.

## JOHN'S ASTUTE SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

**Therefore** ([oun](#)) is a [term of conclusion](#). Based upon what he had seen and with perception enabled by the Spirit John arrives quickly at his conclusion!

**That disciple** ([mathetes](#)) **whom Jesus** ([lesous](#)) **loved** ([agapao](#)) **said to Peter,** "It is the Lord ([kurios](#))." - This is John's moniker if you will for himself (See Jn 21:20 Jn 13:23, Jn 19:26, Jn 20:2 - [See note](#))

**NET NOTE** - the 'beloved disciple ([mathetes](#)),' This individual also is mentioned in Jn 19:26, Jn 20:2, Jn 21:7, and Jn 21:20. Some have suggested that this disciple is to be identified with Lazarus, since the Fourth Gospel specifically states that Jesus loved him (Jn 11:3, 5, 36). From the terminology alone this is a possibility; the author is certainly capable of using language in this way to indicate connections. But there is nothing else to indicate that Lazarus was present at the last supper; Mark 14:17 seems to indicate it was only the twelve who were with Jesus at this time, and there is no indication in the Fourth Gospel to the contrary. Nor does it appear that Lazarus ever stood so close to Jesus as the later references in John 19, 20 and 21 seem to indicate. When this is coupled with the omission of all references to John son of Zebedee from the Fourth Gospel, it seems far more likely that the references to the beloved disciple should be understood as references to him.

**So** ([oun](#)) is a [term of conclusion](#). Peter's conclusion is reached quickly. He does not question John's perception, but immediately jumps in the water!

**When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord** ([kurios](#)), **he put his outer garment on** ([diazonnumi](#) - girded himself around) **(for he was stripped** [[gumnos](#)] **for work), and threw** ([ballo](#)) **himself into the sea** ([thalassa](#)) - Peter was either naked or only minimally clothed for his work. But presumably to be respectful to the Lord, he girded a piece of clothing (towel, etc) around himself. I suppose he swam to shore but the text is not clear.

**NET NOTE** - Greek "for he was naked." Peter's behavior here has been puzzling to many interpreters. It is usually understood that the Greek word γυμνός ([gumnos](#), usually translated "naked") does not refer to complete nudity (as it could), since this would have been offensive to Jewish sensibilities in this historical context. It is thus commonly understood to mean "stripped for work" here (cf. NASB, NLT), that is, with one's outer clothing removed, and Peter was wearing either a loincloth or a loose-fitting tunic (a long shirt-like garment worn under a cloak, cf. NAB, "for he was lightly clad"). Believing himself inadequately dressed to greet the Lord, Peter threw his outer garment around himself and dived into the sea. C. K. Barrett (St. John, 580–81) offered the explanation that a greeting was a religious act and thus could not be performed unless one was clothed. This still leaves the improbable picture of a person with much experience around the water putting on his outer garment before diving in. R. E. Brown's suggestion (John [AB], 2:1072) seems much more probable here: The Greek verb used (διαζώννυμι, [diazonnumi](#)) does not necessarily mean putting

clothing on, but rather tying the clothing around oneself (the same verb is used in Jn 13:4–5 of Jesus tying the towel around himself). The statement that Peter was “naked” could just as well mean that he was naked underneath the outer garment, and thus could not take it off before jumping into the water. But he did pause to tuck it up and tie it with the girdle before jumping in, to allow himself more freedom of movement. Thus the clause that states Peter was naked is explanatory (note the use of **for**), explaining why Peter girded up his outer garment rather than taking it off—he had nothing on underneath it and so could not remove it.

---

**Stripped** (1131) **gymnos** cp our English “**gym**”) means not covered, nude or naked but not necessarily descriptive of absolute nakedness as it was used of a person wearing only an under-tunic (descriptive of the mode of dress in the ancient gymnasiums in Greece and Rome). As such it could mean one who was comparatively naked or scantily dressed. It was used of one poorly dressed (Jas 2:15). Figuratively in this verse gymnos means uncovered, manifest, disclosed, exposed, not hidden and easy to be known. Gymnos can refer to being inadequately clothed (Mt 25:36, 38, 43,44) or lightly clothed (Jn 21:7) naked, stripped, bare, lightly dressed, inadequately dressed. Undressed, either wearing no clothing or insufficient clothing. The term gymnos can refer to an absence of all clothing (e.g., Mark 14:52) but may also refer to someone wearing a tunic (chitōn) only, being inappropriately dressed for a given context, or wearing an incomplete array of armor. The term may also be used figuratively, in the sense of something being fully uncovered, i.e., disclosed (e.g., Heb 4:13).

The first use in the Septuagint describes Adam and Eve as “naked and were not ashamed.” (Ge 2:25) but when sin entered through Adam (Ro 5:12), “they knew that they were naked,” (Ge 3:7) and sought to cover themselves. Similarly because of his sin Adam realized he was naked and tried to hide from God (Ge 3:10-11). In one of the more famous uses of gymnos in the Lxx Job declared “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:21, cp Lxx use of gymnos in Eccl 5:15) “Naked is Sheol before” God alludes to His all seeing eye (Job 26:6).

The NT use of gymnos and its group is the same as in secular Gk.:(a) It is found 16 times and varies in meaning from completely naked (Mk. 14:52) to forcibly stripped (Acts 19:16) and inadequately dressed (Matt. 25:36, 38, 43f.). In Jn. 21:7 the meaning is somewhat different. RSV renders well “he was stripped for work”, for a boat-man worked without his outer garment on. Peter put his outer garment on, so as not to stand gymnos before Jesus. The fig. use, unveiled, disclosed, revealed, made clear, is found in Heb. 4:13; 1 Cor. 15:37; 2 Cor. 5:3; Rev. 3:17; and 16:15 (cf. NT, 2)

**GYMNOS - 16V - bare(1), naked(11), open(1), stripped(1), without clothing(1).** Matt. 25:36; Matt. 25:38; Matt. 25:43; Matt. 25:44; Mk. 14:51; Mk. 14:52; Jn. 21:7; Acts 19:16; 1 Co. 15:37; 2 Co. 5:3; Heb. 4:13; Jas. 2:15; Rev. 3:17; Rev. 16:15; Rev. 17:16

---

## A TRANSFORMED FISHERMAN - J H Jowett

“Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing.” —John 21:1-14.

SIMON PETER had often gone a fishing, but never had he gone as he went in the twilight of that most wonderful evening. He handled the ropes in a new style, with a new dignity born of the bigger capacity of his own soul. He turned to the familiar task, but with a quite unfamiliar spirit. He went a fishing, but the power of the resurrection went with him.

This action of Simon Peter’s is the only true test of the reality of any spiritual experience. How does it fit me for ordinary affairs? A spiritual festival should do for the soul what a day on the hills does for the body—equip it for the better doing of the duties in the vale.

This action is also a preparative to a renewal of the gracious experience. The road of common duty was just the way appointed for another meeting with his Lord, for in the morning-light there came a voice across the waters: “Children, have ye any meat?” “And that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter: ‘It is the Lord.’”

---

## QUESTION - [Who was the disciple whom Jesus loved?](#)

**ANSWER** - The Gospel of John is the only Gospel which mentions “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” John 13:23 tells us, “One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to Him.” John 19:26 declares, “When Jesus saw His mother there, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, ‘Dear woman, here is your son.’” John 21:7 says, “Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’” This disciple is never specifically identified, but the identity of the disciple whom Jesus loved is clear. The disciple whom Jesus loved self-identifies as the author of the gospel (John 21:24), whom most scholars believe to be the apostle John, the son of Zebedee and brother of James.

First, only the Gospel of John mentions the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” Second, John 21:2 lets us know who was fishing with Peter: “Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together...” The apostle John was a son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21). Third, there were three disciples who were especially close to Jesus: Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17:1; Mark 5:37; 14:33; Luke 8:51). The “disciple whom Jesus loved” could not be Peter, as Peter asks Jesus a question in regards to this disciple (John 21:20-21). That leaves us with James or John. Jesus made a statement about the possible “longevity” of the life of the disciple whom He loved in John 21:22. James was the first of the apostles to die (Acts 12:2). While Jesus did not promise the disciple whom He loved long life, it would be highly unusual for Jesus to say, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?” if the disciple whom He loved was going to be the first disciple to die.

Church history tells us that the apostle John lived into the A.D. 90s and was the last surviving apostle. Early church tradition was unanimous in identifying John as the disciple whom Jesus loved. It seems that John had a closer relationship with Jesus than any of the other disciples. Jesus and John were essentially “best friends.” Jesus entrusted John with the care of His mother, gave John the vision of the transfiguration, allowed John to witness His most amazing miracles, and later gave John the Book of Revelation. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

---

## F B Meyer -

John 21:7 That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.

This miracle was also a parable. When we go fishing apart from Jesus, we may indeed toil all the night and take nothing. But when through the darkness Jesus comes, and speaks to us across the wave, and tells us where to let down the nets; when we are in blessed partnership with Himself; when, though we see Him not, we obey his slightest promptings — then the nets are filled to their uttermost.

**Those who are loved, love.** — It was the consciousness that Jesus loved him which made John the Apostle of Love. Love casts such a wondrous spell over its objects, that they begin to shine in its rays and reflect them. Nothing will make a coal glow with heat but to plunge it into the heart of the fire. Do you want to love the Lord Jesus? — dwell on his love to you.

**Those who love Christ see Him.** — Not Peter, the man of eager action, but John, the man of devoted love, saw the Master amid the haze that lay on the lake shore. Love will penetrate every disguise; will detect Him by the slightest sign; will strip from our eyes the film that sense and sin draw over them. If you loved Him more, you would see his hand in that disappointment, that crushing sorrow.

**Those who seek Christ cannot keep it to themselves.** — They must tell it out to their next companion, with beating heart and thrilling speech. John said unto Peter, It is the Lord. How often has the affirmation of a pensive, quiet heart been the torch to ignite all the soul of another, who was more fitted to execute than plan. Is not this what we may all experience as we draw near to eternity? Shall we not see Jesus standing on the shore, with preparations beyond all thought, to welcome us as we arrive from the night cruise?

**John 21:8 But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.**

- De 3:11

## OTHER DISCIPLES DRAG NET OF FISH TO SHORE

**But the other disciples ([mathetes](#)) came in the little boat ([ploiarion](#)), for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging ([suro](#)) the net ([diktuon](#)) full of fish ([ichthus](#))** - It is interesting that they brought **the net full of fish ([ichthus](#))**

**NET NOTE** - “about a hundred meters”; Greek “about two hundred cubits.” According to BDAG 812 s.v., a π χυς ([pēchus](#)) was about 18 inches or .462 meters, so two hundred πηχ υ ([pēchōn](#)) would be about 100 yards (92.4 meters).

---

**Little boat** ([4142](#)) ([ploiarion](#) from [ploion](#) - ship or from [pleo](#) = to sail) refers to a relatively small boat of any kind, a skiff or a small vessel. A diminutive of [ploion](#). **Moulton-Milligan** states that by the Second Century A.D. this diminutive form was hardly distinguished from [ploion](#) and was used interchangeably with it.

**PLOIARION - 5V - boat(1), boats(1), little boat(1), small boat(1), small boats(2).**Mk. 3:9; Mk. 4:36; Jn. 6:22; Jn. 6:23; Jn. 21:8 No uses in the Septuagint.

**Fish (2486)**(ichthus) fish, generally referring to creatures with fins and scales, inhabiting the water of rivers, lakes, or seas. Note that all 20 uses refer to literal fish. An animal that lives in the sea. Fish are mentioned in the miraculous feeding stories (Matt 14:17; Matt 15:36; Mark 6:38; Luke 9:13) and in the stories of miraculous catches by fishermen (Luke 5:6; John 21:6).

**Gilbrant** - Although this word has symbolic meaning within Christendom, the literal usage is “fish.” Its meaning throughout classical Greek, the papyri, and the Septuagint is consistent with its reference in the New Testament to “fish” or the “flesh of fish” as a source of food. Believers in the First Century used ichthus acronymically as a symbol for Christianity because the first letters of the Greek words for Iēsous Christos Theou Huiōs Sōtēr, “Jesus Christ God’s Son Saviour,” spell ichthus. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**NIDNTT** - The NT use of ichthys reflects much of the OT background. The whole Galilee narrative of the Gospels implies commerce in fish, but neither here nor throughout the OT is there any stress on different species of fish, nor are any particular varieties named, even though Galilee abounded in many sorts....The word does not necessarily mean “small” fish, as Jn. 21:9 ff. indicates. 1 Cor. 15:39 offers the sole NT observation on zoology, but its interest is clearly theological, the subservience of all creation to the Creator’s will and design and it is this truth which receives vivid illustration in the nature miracles of Jesus, the two feedings of the multitudes (Matt. 14:17; 15:36, with parallels), the tribute money (Matt. 17:27) and the miraculous catches of fish (Lk. 5:6; Jn. 21:6). The single thread of truth linking these narratives is that by the mere exercise of his will Jesus subdues creation to his plan throughout in works of mercy for the well-being of people, and thus is manifested as the incarnate Creator.

**ICHTHUS - 20X/18V - fish(20).** Matt. 7:10; Matt. 14:17; Matt. 14:19; Matt. 15:36; Matt. 17:27; Mk. 6:38; Mk. 6:41; Mk. 6:43; Lk. 5:6; Lk. 5:9; Lk. 9:13; Lk. 9:16; Lk. 11:11; Lk. 24:42; Jn. 21:6; Jn. 21:8; Jn. 21:11; 1 Co. 15:39

**ICHTHUS IN SEPTUAGINT** - Gen. 1:26; Gen. 1:28; Gen. 9:2; Exod. 7:18; Exod. 7:21; Num. 11:5; Deut. 4:18; 1 Ki. 4:33; Neh. 13:16; Job 12:8; Ps. 8:8; Ps. 105:29; Eccl. 9:12; Isa. 50:2; Ezek. 29:4; Ezek. 29:5; Ezek. 38:20; Ezek. 47:9; Ezek. 47:10; Dan. 2:38; Hos. 4:3; Hab. 1:14; Zeph. 1:3 In the Septuagint, ichthus describes all created life living in the water (e.g. 1 Ki. 4:29 (33); Job 12:8), whether fresh (Exod. 7:18; Ezek. 29:4) or salt (Hos. 4:3) water.

**John 21:9 So when they got out on the land, they \*saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread.**

- **they saw:** 1Ki 19:5,6 Mt 4:11 Mk 8:3 Lu 12:29-31

## PREPARATIONS MADE FOR BREAKFAST

So (oun) is a [term of conclusion](#).

**When they got out on the land, they \*saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread** - The text does not say if Peter beat the boat to land but just that all 7 disciples were there.

**Spurgeon** - Everything tended to remind them of their old times with their Lord. Fishing in the old place, the old failures, the old miracles, and the old repast, would all help them to identify their Master. But what a new light was over all! (The Interpreter)

**John 21:10 Jesus \*said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have now caught.”**

**Jesus (Iesous) \*said to them, “Bring (aorist imperative) some of the fish which you have now caught (piazō)** - The catch of fish would not be wasted.

**John 21:11 Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there**

were so many, the net was not torn.

- and for: Lu 5:6-8 Ac 2:41

## SIMON'S RETRIEVES 153 LARGE FISH

Simon Peter went up ([anabaino](#)) and drew ([helko](#)) the net ([diktuon](#)) to land ([ge](#)), full of large (megas) fish (ichthus), a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net ([diktuon](#)) was not torn ([schizo](#)) - Why this specific number? For one thing, this supports the eye witness account of John. The other point is that fisherman would be expected to number their catch. Finally, the number of 153 related to obedience to Jesus' word is in striking contrast to the zero obtained by the seasoned fisherman. In short it was indicative of a significant miracle of either creation, omnipotence, sovereignty or a combination of all of those aspects. It is notable that Jesus used these men to bring about this miracle. These same men would be involved in the near future in the carrying out of miraculous signs authenticating their message of salvation in the Gospel. He could have easily simply filled their net with **153** fish. There is no symbolism (in my opinion) to the number **153**.

**Spurgeon** - "Be of use! Forward! To Christ!" These were the watchwords of Peter, and should be ours. (The Interpreter)

**NET NOTE** - Here the author makes two further points about the catch of fish: (1) there were one hundred fifty-three large fish in the net, and (2) even with so many, the net was not torn. **Many symbolic interpretations have been proposed for both points** (unity, especially, in the case of the second), but the reader is given no explicit clarification in the text itself. **It seems better not to speculate here, but to see these details as indicative of an eyewitness account.** Both are the sort of thing that would remain in the mind of a person who had witnessed them firsthand. For a summary of the symbolic interpretations proposed for the number of fish in the net, see R. E. Brown (John [AB], 2:1074–75), where a number are discussed at length. Perhaps the reader is simply to understand this as the abundance which results from obedience to Jesus, much as with the amount of wine generated in the water jars in Cana at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (Jn 2:6). (**ED**: I agree but even that thought is somewhat "symbolic." Could it be as simple as this specific number emphasizes the detailed truth of the Scripture. It might have a spiritual meaning but it is not clear from the context.)

---

**QUESTION** - [What is the meaning of the 153 fish in John 21:11? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**ANSWER** - After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to the disciples on a number of occasions. John 21 records the third of those instances and includes the notable mention of 153 fish. Peter and the others had just witnessed another miracle of Jesus involving a large catch of fish, and "Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn" (John 21:11).

On this occasion Jesus appeared to His disciples on the shore of the [Sea of Tiberius](#), as they were in their boat returning from an unsuccessful night of fishing (John 21:1–3). Jesus, whom they had not yet recognized, called to the disciples from the shore, asking them whether they had caught any fish (John 21:4–5). After the disciples responded that they had not, Jesus instructed them to cast their nets on the right (starboard) side of the boat. They did, and they caught so many fish in the net that they couldn't bring the nets in (John 21:6). John quickly realized the man on the shore was Jesus, and he told Peter. Peter jumped in the water—presumably to swim to shore to see Jesus (John 21:7). The other disciples, meanwhile, came in the boat, being only about 200 cubits (or 100 yards) from the shore (John 21:8). When they arrived at shore, Peter went back into the boat to help them collect the fish, and they counted 153 fish—and large fish, at that. While there were so many fish, the net did not break (John 21:11).

The meaning of the 153 fish in John 21:11 is evident from the context. As career fisherman, the disciples would not have been strangers to the process of tallying their catch. These were apparently big enough fish to put strain on the fishermen and the nets (though, miraculously, the nets were not torn). That John mentions the number of 153 fish emphasizes the fact that something extraordinary had happened, because Someone extraordinary was there. The 153 fish provided further evidence to the disciples that the resurrected Jesus had power over nature just as He had demonstrated before His crucifixion. Earlier, John had recorded that Jesus turned the water into wine (John 2), healed an official's son (John 4), healed a lame man (John 5), fed 5,000 people from five loaves of bread and two fish (John 6), walked on water (John 6), healed a man who had been born blind (John 9), raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11), and rose from the dead Himself (John 20). The 153 fish in John 21:11 might seem insignificant compared to these [magnificent signs](#), but to an audience of fisherman who had failed to catch even one fish during an entire night of work, this remarkable catch provided more evidence that their belief in Jesus was well placed.

Just a few verses before John records the catching of the 153 fish, John explains that his purpose in writing was so that people would believe in Jesus and have life in His name (John 20:30–31). There were many signs and works of Jesus that John could have recorded, but he chose to record those included in the Gospel of John so his readers could have confidence that Jesus is the Christ,

the Son of God (John 20:31), and that He is indeed equal with God (John 5:18).

There is no reason to understand the number of fish caught that morning as anything but 153 literal fish. They have no hidden meaning or symbolic significance. The meaning of the 153 fish in John 21:11 is straightforward: their appearance in the disciples' net was important to these fishermen by trade and also to every reader of John's Gospel, as we have 153 more reasons to believe in Jesus the Christ.

**John 21:12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord.**

- Come: Ac 10:41
- dine: The word [ariston <Strong's G712>] like {prandere} was used for any meat taken before the {coena,} or supper.
- durst: John 4:27 16:19 Ge 32:29,30 Mk 9:32 Lu 9:45

**Jesus ([lesous](#)) said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ([mathetes](#)) ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord.**

**Spurgeon Study Bible** - 'Come and have breakfast,' Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord." I cannot tell how our Lord provided that fire of coals, or how he procured the fish broiling on the fire. But there was the fire and there was the fish, and these men were in a needy condition. They were wet, cold, and hungry, besides being weary from a night's fruitless toil. And so, in the Lord's own way, it will be seen that the Lord will provide. He who taught us to say, "Give us today our daily bread" (Mt 6:11) did not teach us an empty phrase. Those whose need presses so closely as even to make them acquainted with hunger may see how Jesus pities them and look to him for aid, for he is the same now as he was by the lake of Galilee. And as Jesus is so careful of the condition of his people that he will have their bodies fed, we may be sure that he will nourish our souls.

---

#### **C H Spurgeon - "Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine."—John 21:12 Morning and Evening**

In these words the believer is invited to a holy nearness to Jesus. "Come and dine," implies the same table, the same meat; aye, and sometimes it means to sit side by side, and lean our head upon the Saviour's bosom. It is being brought into the banqueting-house, where waves the banner of redeeming love. "Come and dine," gives us a vision of union with Jesus, because the only food that we can feast upon when we dine with Jesus is himself. Oh, what union is this! It is a depth which reason cannot fathom, that we thus feed upon Jesus. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." It is also an invitation to enjoy fellowship with the saints. Christians may differ on a variety of points, but they have all one spiritual appetite; and if we cannot all feel alike, we can all feed alike on the bread of life sent down from heaven. At the table of fellowship with Jesus we are one bread and one cup. As the loving cup goes round we pledge one another heartily therein. Get nearer to Jesus, and you will find yourself linked more and more in spirit to all who are like yourself, supported by the same heavenly manna. If we were more near to Jesus we should be more near to one another. We likewise see in these words the source of strength for every Christian. To look at Christ is to live, but for strength to serve him you must "come and dine." We labour under much unnecessary weakness on account of neglecting this percept of the Master. We none of us need to put ourselves on low diet; on the contrary, we should fatten on the marrow and fatness of the gospel that we may accumulate strength therein, and urge every power to its full tension in the Master's service. Thus, then, if you would realize nearness to Jesus, union with Jesus, love to his people and strength from Jesus, "come and dine" with him by faith.

---

Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast" (John 21:12).

By the shores of the Sea of Tiberias with His disciples, Jesus served a breakfast of fish and bread. Just as He had done when He washed the disciples' feet, He was setting an example. And like Jesus, we are to serve one another, even our close friends and loved ones, for whom it is sometimes difficult to do humble tasks.

Professor Bill Brown of Bryan College told about a missionary who went to a tribe of Indians to present the gospel. At first the people received him with hesitation, referring to him as "the white man." As they got to know him better, they began to call him "the respectable white man." Later, when they saw the goodness o'f his heart and his desire for their well-being, they spoke of him as "the white Indian," indicating that they were accepting him as one of their own. When one of the Indians injured his foot in an accident, the missionary took the man into his home, washed his foot, and gave him medical attention. The people were amazed that he would do such a gracious thing. After this, they began to call him "the man from God."



That missionary displayed a Christlike attitude, for Jesus did not come to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45). If we humble ourselves and follow our Lord's example, we too will become known as the man or woman from God. —D.C.Egner (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

We can do great things for the Lord if we are willing to do little things for others.

---

**William Dawson - CHRIST AMONG THE COMMON THINGS OF LIFE -- John 21:9, 12.**

I can not read these words without indulging for a moment in a reminiscence. Not long ago, in the early morning, while all the world slept, I stood beside the Sea of Tiberias, just as the morning mist lifted, and watched a single brown-sailed fishing-boat making for the shore, and the tired fishermen dragging their net to land. In that moment it seemed to me as if more than the morning mist lifted - - twenty centuries seemed to melt like mist, and the last chapter of St. John's gospel seemed to enact itself before my eyes. For so vivid was the sense of something familiar in the scene, so mystic was the hour, that I should scarce have been surprised had I seen a fire of coals burning on the shore, and heard the voice of Jesus inviting these tired fishermen to come and dine.

Now if I felt that, if I was sensible of the haunting presence of Christ by that Galilean shore, how much more these disciples, in whose minds every aspect of the Galilean lake was connected with some intimate and thrilling memory of the ministry of Jesus.

Christ once more stands among the common things of life; the fire, the fish, the bread -- all common things; a group of tired, hungry fishers -- all common men; and He is there to affirm that in His resurrection He had not broken His bond with men, but strengthened it -- wherever common life goes on there is Jesus still.

**I. Notice the words with which the story opens, and you will see at once that this is the real clue to its interpretation.**

"When morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." A strange thing that! Why did they not know Him? Because they were not looking for Him in such a scene. It had seemed a natural thing, if Jesus should appear at all, that He should appear in the garden, a vision of life at the very altar of death. It seemed yet more probable and appropriate that He should appear in the upper room, that room made sacred by holiest love and memory. If any words of Christ yet lingered in the mind and had power to thrill them, they were surely these words, "Ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven," glorified, triumphant, lifted far above the earth and its humble life. And so, if they were looking for Christ at all that morning, I think they watched the morning clouds, expecting Him to come down the resplendent staircase of the sunbeams to call the nations together and vindicate Himself in acts of universal judgment. And behold! Jesus comes as a fisherman standing on the lakeside, busy over a little fire, where the morning meal is cooking; and behold! Jesus speaks, and it is not of the eternal mysteries of God, not of the solemn secrets of the grave, but of nets and fishing and how to cast the nets -- the simple concerns of simple men engaged in humble tasks.

No wonder they did not recognize Him. Once more the Son of Man comes eating and drinking, and even the eyes that knew Him best can not see in this human figure by the lakeside the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. They looked and saw but a fellow fisherman, cooking his meal upon the shore, and they knew not that it was Jesus.

**II. Think for a moment of the earthly life of Christ, and you will see that it was designedly linked with all the common and even the commonest things of life.**

If you or I could have conceived the great thought of some human creature that should be the very incarnation of God, what would have been the shape of our imaginings? Surely we should have chosen for this earthly temple of the Highest some human form perfected in grace and beauty by the long refinements of exalted ancestry; the child of kings or scholars; the delicate flower of life, in whom the elements were so subtly mixed that we should recognize them as special and miraculous -- so we might think of God manifest in man. But God chooses for the habitation of His Spirit a peasant woman of Nazareth, humble, poor, unconsidered.

If we could have forecast the training of such a life, how should we have pictured it? Surely as sheltered from the coarseness of the world, delicately nourished, sedulously cultured; but God orders that this life should manifest itself in the house of the village carpenter, out of reach of schools, in a little wicked town, under the commonest conditions of poverty, obscurity, and toil.

If you and I could have imagined the introduction of this life of lives to the world, how should we picture that? Surely we should have pictured it coming with pomp and display that would at once have attracted all eyes; but God orders that it shall come without observation, unfolding its quiet beauty like the wayside flower, which there are few to see and very few to love. Commonness: that is the great note of the incarnation and the purposed feature of Christ's earthly life.

He reaffirms His fraternity in common life. The disciples could not imagine that as possible; nor can we. And why not? For two reasons, one of which is that we have forgotten the dignity of common life.

**1. Dignity is for us almost synonymous with some kind of separation from common life** it dwells in palaces, not in cottages; it inheres in culture, but is inconceivable in narrow knowledge; and to the great mass of men it is, alas! the attribute of wealth, of fine raiment, of social isolation. But we have not learned even the alphabet of Christ's gospel unless we have come to see that the only true indignity in human life is sin, meanness, malevolence, and small-heartedness; and that all life is dignified where there are love, purity, and piety in it, whatever be its social category.

I read the other day that it is probable that the very mire of the London streets contains that mysterious substance known as radium, the most tremendous agent of light and heat ever yet discovered by man; so in man himself, however low his state, there is the spark of God, an ember lit at the altar fires of the Eternal, and it is because we forget this that we forget the dignity of common life. For we do forget it. We may make our boast that a single human soul is of more value than all the splendors and immensities of matter; but in our actions we treat the boast as a mere rhetorical expression. There is nothing so cheap as men and women -- let the lords of commerce answer if it be not so. But Christ acted as tho the boast were true. He deliberately inwove His life into all that is commonest in life. He has made it impossible for us, if indeed we have His spirit, to think of any salient aspect of human life without thinking of Him. Where childhood is, there is Bethlehem; where sorrow is, there is Gethsemane; where death is, there is Calvary; where the toiler is, there is the poor man of Nazareth; and where the beggar is, there is He who had no place where to lay His head. There is not a drop of blood of Christ, nor a throb of thought in our brains that is not thrilling with the impact of this divine life of lives. And so the true dignity of life is this, that Christ is in all men, faintly outlined it may be, defaced, half-obliterated, but there, and the Church that forgets this has neither impulse nor mandate for Christ's work among men.

**2. And then, again, there is a second reason** we have not learned to look for Christ among the common things of life.

"Let us build three tabernacles," said the wondering disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the speech betrayed a tendency of thought which was in time to prove fatal to the Church.

The Christ without a tabernacle, the free, familiar Christ of the lake or the wayside was everybody's Christ; but the moment Christ is shut up in a church or a tabernacle He becomes the priest's Christ, the thinker's Christ, the devotee's Christ, but He ceases to be the people's Christ.

I remember five years ago standing in the great church of Assisi, which has been erected over and encloses the little humble chapel where Francis first received his call. You will scarcely be surprized if I confess that I turned with a sense of heart-sick indignation from the pomp of that splendid service in the gorgeous church to the thought of Francis, in his worn robe, going up and down these neighboring roads, touching the lepers, calling them "God's patients," pouring out his life for the poor; and I knew Christ nearer to me on the roads that Francis trod than in that church, which is his mausoleum rather than his monument. And as I felt that day in far-off Umbria, so I have felt to-day in England; my heart goes out to Catherine Booth; to Father Dolling, to these Christs of the wayside, and it turns more and more from the kind of Christ who lives in churches and nowhere else. My brethren, you will let me say that we do but make the church Christ's prison when we forget that all the realm of life is His. Oh, you good people, you do love your church, but often think and act as tho the presence of Christ can be found nowhere else. Lift up your eyes and see this risen Christ, a fisherman upon the shore, busy in no loftier task than to have a meal prepared for hungry fishermen. Unlock your church doors, let Christ go out among common people; nay, go yourselves, for it is here that He would have you be. Remember that wherever there is toil, there is the Christ who toiled; and there you should be, with the kind glance, the warm hand-grasp, and the loving warmth of brotherhood.

Christ stands amid the common things of life; where the fire is lit, there is He; where the bread is broken, there is He; where the net of business gain is drawn, there is He; and only as we learn to see Him everywhere shall we understand the dignity and the divinity of human life.

**III. "And Jesus said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."**

Here is another strange thing. Christ knows more about the management of their own business than they do. They had toiled all night and caught nothing; is not that a significant description of many human lives? "Children, have ye any meat?" asks that quiet Voice from the shore, and they answer "No." Is not that yet more pathetically significant? All the heartbreak and disappointment of the world cry aloud in that confession. Oh, I could fill an hour with the mere recital of the names of great and famous people who have toiled through a long life, and as the last gray hour came over their dim sea of life, "brackish with the salt of human tears," have acknowledged with infinite bitterness that they have caught nothing. Listen to the voice of Goethe, "In all my seventy-five years I have not had four weeks of genuine well-being;" to the confession of our own famous poet,

My life is in the yellow leaf,  
The flowers, the fruits of love are gone;  
The worm, the canker, and the grief

Are mine alone.

to the ambitious and successful statesman who says, "Youth is folly, manhood is struggle, old age regret"; to one of our most brilliant women of genius in our own generation, wife of a still more brilliant husband, who cries, "I married for ambition, and I am miserable." Surely there is some tragic mismanagement of the great business of living here. Oh, brother, is it true of you, that after all the painful years happiness is not yours? You have no meat, no food on which the heart feeds, no green pasture in the soul, no table in the wilderness, and the last gray day draws near and will find you still hungering for what life Has never given you.

Learn, then, that Christ knows more about the proper management of your life than you do. "Cast your net on the right side of the ship," speaks that quiet Voice from the shore. And you know what happened. And it is so still. Just because Christ stands among the common things of life, He knows most about life, and, above all, He knows where the golden fruit of happiness is found and where the secret wells of peace.

And to some of us whom God has called to be fishers of men the issue is yet more solemn. We have the boat and the nets, all this elaborate organization of the Church, but have we caught anything this year? Where is the draft of fishes? Where are the men and women saved by our triumphant effort? I will make my humble confession this morning, that for five-and-twenty years I have cast the net, but only lately have I found the right side of the ship; only lately have I discovered how easy it is to get the great draft of fishes by simply going to work in Christ's way. I do not believe in the indifference of the masses in religion; the indifference is not in the masses, but in the churches. You will never catch many fish if you stand upon the shore of cold respectability and wait for them to come; launch out into the deep and you will find them. Go for them -- that is Christ's method. Compel them to come in, for remember Christ's ideal was, as Bishop Lightfoot so nobly put it, "the universal compulsion of the souls of men." And if your experience is like mine, you will find that there is strangely little compulsion needed to bring men and women to Christ. I stood but lately in a house where fifty fallen women lived; I went there to rescue three of its unhappy inmates. When the moment came to take these three women from their life of sin, their comrades lined the passage to shake my hand; there were tears and prayers, and messages like these, "Be good. You'll be a good woman," "We wish we had your chance"; and these poor souls in their inferno wished me "a happy New-year." Compulsion! There was small need for compulsion there! I believe I could have rescued all of these fifty women at one stroke had I known where to take them. But to the shame of the Free Churches in London I confess that, with the exception of the Wesleyans and the Salvation Army, I do not know a single Free Church Rescue Home in London. And I put it to you this morning whether you can any longer tolerate that omission? I ask you whether you really want a great draft of fishes, for you can have them if you want them. Christ knows the business better than you do; and if you will come out of the cloister of the church and seek the people in His spirit, I promise you that very soon you will not be able to drag the net for the multitude of fishes.

#### **IV. "And Jesus said unto them, Come and dine."**

Dine on what? Not the fish which they had caught. They had caught one hundred and fifty-three great fishes; but notice Christ's fire was kindled before they came. Christ's fish was already laid thereon, and all they had to do was to come and dine. It is all you have to do, all the churches have to do. Did not Christ so put it in the parable of the Great Supper? -- "Come, for all things are ready." Is not the last word of Scripture the great invitation? -- "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." Many a church can not say to a hungry world, "Come and dine," because it will not let Christ prepare the meal. It will not live in His spirit, it has no real faith in His gospel, it does not understand that its true strength is not in elaborate organization or worship, but in simple reliance on His grace. And so there is the table covered with elaborate confections, which are not bread, and when it says, "Come and dine," men will not come, for they know that there is nothing there for them. Let Christ prepare the meal and all is different then. When He says, "Come and dine," there is "enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore." And as Jesus spoke, I think there flashed upon the memory of these men the scene when Jesus fed the five thousand, and by that memory they knew their Jesus. No one else ever spoke like that, with such certainty and such authority. And the same Voice speaks even now to your hunger-bitten soul, to your famished heart, "Come and dine."

#### **V. "Then Jesus taketh bread and giveth them, and fish likewise."**

There is no mistaking the act; it was a sacramental act. Here, upon the lake shore, without a church, without an altar, the true feast of the Lord was observed. For what does the Holy Supper, which is the bond and seal of the Church's fellowship, stand for, if it is not for this, the sanctification of the common life? Bread and wine, the commonest of all foods to an Oriental, are elements indeed, because they are necessary to the most elementary form of physical life, things used daily in the humblest home. By linking Himself imperishably with these commonest elements of life, Christ makes it impossible to forget Him. Once more the thought shines clear, Jesus among the common things of life.

And then there comes one last touch in the beautiful story. While these things happened, the day was breaking. Is there one of us long tossed on sunless seas of doubt, long conscious of failure and disappointment in life? Are there those of us whose sorrow lies deeper than that which is personal -- sorrow over our failure in Christ's work, pain over a life's ministry for Christ that has known no victorious evangel? Turn your eyes from that barren sea to Him who stands upon the shore; He shall yet make you a fisher of men.

Turn your eyes from that bleak, dark sea of wasted effort where you have fared so ill; it is always dark till Jesus comes, it is always light when He has come. There is a new day breaking for the churches -- a day of widespread evangelistic triumphs that shall eclipse all the greatest triumphs of the past, if we will but go back to Christ's school and learn of Him how to save the people. And to each of us He says to-day: "I am the living bread; I am the bread of life come down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." "Come and dine." Will you come?

**John 21:13 Jesus came and \*took the bread and \*gave it to them, and the fish likewise.**

- Lu 24:42,43 Ac 10:41

#### Related Passages:

Luke 24:41-43 While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it before them.

### THE RISEN CHRIST CONTINUES TO BE A SERVANT!

**Jesus ([lesous](#)) came and \*took the bread and \*gave it to them, and the fish likewise** - In Mark 10:45 Jesus declared that "even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." And here we see the Son of Man, even after giving His life as a ransom, He continues to be the Servant!

**THOUGHT** - This is an amazing passage to me, for it serves as a preview for what our risen, glorified Lord will do for each of us, His disciples, His bondservants (slaves), when He returns at His Second Coming. Here are our Lord's own words "Blessed are those slaves whom the Master will find on the alert when He comes; truly (AMEN) I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them." (Lk 12:37+) This is condescending, amazing grace indeed! Jesus will serve His servants! What a glorious future awaits all who have called upon the Name of the Lord! (Someone has called this the greatest promise in the Bible.)

**Spurgeon** - Jesus here showed Himself to be what He still is the Provider, the Host, the Husband of his Church. (The Interpreter)

**John 21:14 This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.**

- **the third time:** John 20:19,26

### THE THIRD TIME AFTER RISING THE THIRD DAY

**This is now the third time that Jesus ([lesous](#)) was manifested ([phaneroo](#)) to the disciples ([mathetes](#)), after He was raised from the dead**

**Treasury of Scripture** - Or, as some read, the third day. On the day the Saviour rose he appeared five times; the second day was that day se'nnight; and this was the third day--or this was his third appearance to any considerable number of his disciples together. Though he had appeared to Mary, to the women, to the two disciples, to Cephas--yet he had but twice appeared to a company of them together.

**John 21:15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus \*said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He \*said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He \*said to him, "Tend My lambs."**

- **son of:** Jn 21:16,17 1:42, Jona, Mt 16:17, Bar-jona
- **Do you love:** Jn 8:42 14:15-24 16:27 Mt 10:37 25:34-45 1Co 16:21,22 2Co 5:14,15 Ga 5:6 Eph 6:24 1Pe 1:8 1Jn 4:19 5:1
- **more:** Jn 21:7 Mt 26:33,35 Mk 14:29

- **You know:** Jn 21:17 2Sa 7:20 2Ki 20:3 Heb 4:13 Rev 2:23
- **Feed:** Ps 78:70-72 Jer 3:15 23:4 Eze 34:2-10,23 Ac 20:28 1Ti 4:15,16 Heb 13:20 1Pe 2:25 5:1-4
- **lambs:** Ge 33:13 Isa 40:11 Mt 18:10,11 Lk 22:32 Ro 14:1 15:1 1Co 3:1-3 8:11 Eph 4:14 Heb 12:12,13 1Pe 2:2
- John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Brian Bell's Outline** of this John 21:15-25...

### 3 Lessons on the Beach!

Past Failure can be Forgiven in Love (Jn 21:15-17)

Present Lifestyle is no guarantee of the Same Future (Jn 21:18,19)

Personal Obedience is an Individual Matter (Jn 21:20-23)

Wrap up: There is so much More! (Jn 21:24,25) ([John 21:15-15 Three Lessons on the Beach](#))

## PETER'S RESTORATION

**John MacArthur** gives us the context for the following dialogue between Jesus and Peter writing that "since his denials were public knowledge, he needed to be publicly restored. The other disciples needed to hear Peter's reaffirmation of his love for Christ and Christ's recommissioning of him, so they would be willing to loyally support his leadership. As soon as they had finished breakfast (cf. Jn 21:12,13), Jesus initiated the restoration by confronting Peter. (See [The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#) scroll up and down for full pages)

**Spurgeon Study Bible** - "Feed my lambs ... Shepherd my sheep ... Feed my sheep." Fishing is not all, as many seem to think. It is a great part of our service, and would God, it were more attended to. But after it has been attended to, shepherding comes in and is a work of equal weight. Our Lord Jesus Christ would have his servants attend to this second task with all their hearts. If souls are converted, they have been brought up from the depths of sin, and the scene changes. We see a flock, "the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood" (Ac 20:28). This flock needs as much care as any other. Yes, it needs to be tended with the utmost labor and watchfulness. The Lord Jesus himself is the good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11), the great Shepherd who is brought again from the dead (Heb 13:20), and the chief Shepherd under whom he has appointed shepherds to watch for the souls of men (1Pt 5:4). He will have those of us whom he calls to his service to shepherd those who are converted—leading, protecting, feeding, comforting, and helping them. He will call us to account if we neglect this charge, for he will require his flock at our hands, saying, "Where is the flock that was given you, your beautiful flock?"

**John Montgomery Boice** (source of the "title" above) has a superb, practical introduction to this concluding section of John's Gospel - If each of us knew how sinful we really are, we would not be so shocked or subdued by our failures. But most of us do not know the depths of our own depravity. So we are shocked, particularly by a fall into serious moral sin or by our surprising ability to deny Jesus Christ. When we sin in such ways, it is a tactic of the devil to argue that, having sinned, we have forfeited our chance for a successful and happy Christian life and that we might as well go on sinning. Like most of the devil's statements this is untrue. Though we sin, we have nevertheless not forfeited our chances for a full Christian life, nor dare we go on sinning. Instead, the Christian way is that of repentance and restoration. This is the point of the story of Peter's restoration by Jesus in John 21. Peter had failed the Lord in his hour of apparent need. He had abandoned him and had compounded his cowardice by a threefold denial that he had ever known him. Yet Jesus loved Peter, and Peter knew that he loved Jesus. To understand the story of Peter's restoration we need to understand something about Peter's fall. Its cause was self-confidence... ([The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#)) (Ed: See Jesus' command to the 12 - Jn 13:34, prompting Peter to declare Jn 13:37 to which Jesus replied Jn 13:38, and on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane Peter's self-confidence again came through - Mt 26:33 rebutted by Jesus Mt 26:34 prompting Peter to respond Mt 26:35!)

*Jesus calls us to follow Him—  
and repeats His call when necessary!*

So ([oun](#)) is a [term of conclusion](#).

**When they had finished breakfast** - The time of sweet fellowship is ended. The time of the risen One serving His children is over. Now it is time for the Lord to address Peter directly regarding his love and devotion.

**Ron Teed comments...**Think about what was going on here. Here is the God of the universe serving breakfast to His apostles. It was kind of like a cookout with Jesus working the grill. (Lesson) Jesus never considered any kind of service to others to be humiliating. In fact, He thoroughly enjoyed serving. Anyone who claims to be a follower of Christ should also enjoy serving others.

[\(John 21 Commentary\)](#)

**Jesus (Iesous) \*said to Simon Peter,** Was this conversation in private or in the hearing of all the disciples? Also place yourself in Peter's position. What might Peter be expecting to hear from Jesus that he did not hear? How had Peter responded in the heat of the moment when His Lord was being falsely tried? Several have commented on Jesus' use of Peter's name before his call to follow Jesus. Several times Jesus referred to Peter as "Simon" when he did something that needed correction (see Mt 17:25, Mk 14:37, Lk 22:31). It is as if Jesus reverts to Peter's former name when he begins to act like his former self (self confident, impetuous, etc). Simon's old name meant something like "pebble" whereas his new name Peter meant "a rock." Using his old name would remind Peter of his weakness (see Jn 1:42KJV - Simon the "jellyfish" would be changed by Jesus into Peter the courageous rock. Little did Peter understand the fires of testing he must pass through to remove the old Simon and bring forth the new Peter! A similar rite of passage is seen in most of God's children. Message? Don't fight the fires of testing!)

**Plumptre** remarks...Our Lord's words would seem to address him as one who had fallen from the steadfastness of the "Rock-man" and had been true rather to his nature than to his apostolic name. (cp Jn 1:42 and Mt 16:17). ([A New Testament commentary for English readers](#))

**J Vernon McGee**...Note the significance of his name. To begin with He called him Simon. That is interesting - Simon son of Jonah - why did He call him Simon? You may recall that when the Lord Jesus first met this man, his brother Andrew had brought him to Jesus, and when Jesus looked at him, He said in effect, 'You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas.' Cephas is the Aramaic word for 'Rock Man.' In Greek it is Petros, and that name clung to him. We find that over in Caesarea Philippi, when he gave that marvelous testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,' the Lord Jesus said in effect, 'Blessed are you, Simon [He goes back to his old name] ... you will be called Peter because you are going to be a Rock Man from here on. You will be a man who will stand for something, but right now there is still a question.' And so the Lord reminds him of his old name.

If you and I today think that we are somebody important, perhaps He would like to tell us just who we really are! Perhaps we are like Simon, the wishy-washy, mollycoddle fellow who tried to please everybody, who attempted to boast and was filled with pride. Our Lord dealt with him and settled him quietly when He said, 'Simon [his old name], do you love Me more than these?' ([J. Vernon McGee - The Secret of Service](#))

**"Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?"** What or who is **these**? Fishing, fish breakfast (doubtful). More than you love **these** other disciples? Probably not. More than **these** (other disciples love Me)? That is probably the thrust of His intent.

**G V Wigram**...Our Lord searched the heart of Peter (in John 21:15-17) with three questions, which brought up to Peter's mind **the roots of his failure**, rather than the overt act of denial. And He graciously closed up each probing with a word of comfort: Feed my lambs (v. 15); Shepherd my sheep (v. 16); Feed my sheep (v. 17); thus **breaking the self-confidence of His servant, both in himself and man, ere He confided the sheep and lambs of Israel to his care.** ([John 21:15-17 The Assembly of God and the Table of the Lords](#))

**He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love(phileo) You."**

**He said to him, "Tend (bosko) My lambs (arnion)** - This call to service after his time of failure indicates that Jesus accepted Peter's affirmation of phileo love. Perhaps you have failed your Lord and feel you are no longer of any use to him (so like Peter you have returned to "fishing", doing what you did before He called you). This interchange between Jesus and Peter however teaches that although we might feel like we are useless failures, Jesus is willing and able to take broken hearts, and restore them to His vital service. He is the Potter and we are the clay. Sometimes the Potter has to break the first molding in order to remold the clay into a vessel of honor, sanctified, useful to the Master and prepared for every good work (2Ti 2:21+).

The present imperative calls for this to be the "shepherds" lifestyle, and is only possible by [depending on the Holy Spirit to obey](#). He is to continually be about the business of feeding the lambs. Earlier Jesus had called Peter to evangelism (Lk 5:10+), but now (even in the face of his triple denial) Jesus gives Peter an even greater responsibility of teaching those who have been caught. Why? What was the prerequisite? Moral perfection? Clearly not. An academic degree? No, none were available from the "University of the Sea of Galilee"! The answer is clear in triplicate - Peter loved Jesus. Peter's love issued forth in a desire to serve His Master, even as John described in his first epistle "Little children, let us not love ([agapao](#)) with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." (1Jn 3:18+)

Notice that Jesus thrice states that the **lambs and sheep** are **"my"** possession (doubly) first by creation (Col 1:16+, Heb 1:2+) and then by redemption (1Pe 1:18+, cp His purchase Acts 20:28+, Rev 5:9+, Titus 2:14+, 1Pe 2:9+). And so those of us who have any shepherding role in the lives of other believers are simply stewards who are to faithfully represent their Master and we will be held accountable (cp Heb 13:17+)



Son of the living God! Oh, call us  
Once and again to follow Thee;  
And give us strength, whate'er befall us,  
Thy true disciples still to be.  
—Martin

Clearly Peter got the message that he was merely an undershepherd of Christ's sheep writing years later...

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd** (aorist imperative = command to do this effectively; ποιμαίνω) the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1Pe 5:1, 2, 3+, 1Pe 5:4+)

**W A Criswell** explains the changing of the verbs for **love** this way - Important wordplay seems to have been introduced by John into his narrative at this point. Perhaps the exchange between Jesus and Peter can best be illustrated by examining the different Greek words used. **Philos** may be defined as "esteem" or "high regard," and in that sense, even "love." It contemplates a value in the object loved. **Agape**, however, is a self-giving, concerned commitment. The object of love need not yield pleasure to the lover... Peter's caution about his avowals has been bitterly learned from his promise never to deny the Lord, followed immediately by a succession of three repudiations. The point of the entire dialogue is to question not the extent of Peter's love for the Master, but the nature of his love. The Lord seeks to impress upon Peter the diverse responsibilities ("feed" and "tend") and the tenderness (for "sheep" and "lambs") demanded by his love for Jesus.

**Plumptre** explains "Peter uses a less strong expression for love than that which had been used by our Lord. The question seems to ask, "Dost thou in the full determination of the will, in profound reverence and devotion, love Me?" The answer seems to say, "Thou knowest me; I dare not now declare this fixed determination of the will, but in the fulness of personal affection I dare answer, and Thou knowest that even in my denials it was true, 'I love Thee.'" ([A New Testament commentary for English readers](#))

**G Campbell Morgan**...Feed My Lambs... Tend My sheep... Feed My sheep. John 21:15, 16, 17 - These words constitute our Lord's final commission to Peter, and as Peter stands ever before us as the representative man, the words were spoken through him to the Church. We need to rescue these words from an altogether too narrow interpretation. It has been said that, on the shores of the lake in the flush of the early morning, Jesus handed Peter the crozier, the staff of the pastoral office, and thus entrusted to him the oversight of the saints of God. This is undoubtedly true, but the whole truth is more than this. That narrow view of our Lord's meaning is due largely to the fact that our minds are obsessed almost by one particular utterance of our Lord, in which He drew a clear and sharp distinction between sheep and goats. It is well to remember that Christ only once made such distinction. ([G. Campbell Morgan - My Lambs-My Sheep](#))

**J Vernon McGee**...Jesus must have looked across the dying embers of that fire upon which He had prepared their breakfast and straight into the eyes of Simon Peter as He said, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' ([J. Vernon McGee - The Secret of Service](#))

**NET NOTE** To whom (or what) does "these" (τούτων, toutōn) refer? Three possibilities are suggested: (1) τούτων should be understood as neuter, "these things," referring to the boats, nets, and fishing gear nearby. In light of Peter's statement in 21:3, "I am going fishing," some have understood Peter to have renounced his commission in light of his denials of Jesus. Jesus, as he restores Peter and forgives him for his denials, is asking Peter if he really loves his previous vocation more than he loves Jesus. Three things may be said in evaluation of this view: (a) it is not at all necessary to understand Peter's statement in 21:3 as a renouncement of his discipleship, as this view of the meaning of τούτων would imply; (b) it would probably be more likely that the verb would be repeated in such a construction (see 7:31 for an example where the verb is repeated); and (c) as R. E. Brown has observed (John [AB], 2:1103) by Johannine standards the choice being offered to Peter between material things and the risen Jesus would seem rather ridiculous, especially after the disciples had realized whom it was they were dealing with (the Lord, see v. 12). (2) τούτων refers to the other disciples, meaning "Do you love me more than you love these other disciples?" The same objection mentioned as (c) under (1) would apply here: Could the author, in light of the realization of who Jesus is which has come to the disciples after the resurrection, and which he has just mentioned in 21:12, seriously present Peter as being offered a choice between the other disciples and the risen Jesus? This leaves option (3), that τούτων refers to the other disciples, meaning "Do you love me more than these other disciples do?" It seems likely that there is some irony here: Peter had boasted in 13:37, "I will lay down my life for you," and the synoptics present Peter as boasting even more explicitly of his loyalty to Jesus ("Even if they all fall away, I will not," Matt 26:33; Mark 14:29). Thus the semantic force of what Jesus asks Peter here amounts to something like "Now, after you have denied me three times, as I told you you would, can you still affirm that you love me more than these other disciples do?" The addition of the

auxiliary verb “do” in the translation is used to suggest to the English reader the third interpretation, which is the preferred one.

**NET NOTE** - Is there a significant difference in meaning between the two words for love used in the passage, *γαπάω* and *φιλέω* (*agapaō* and *phileō*)? Aside from Origen, who saw a distinction in the meaning of the two words, most of the Greek Fathers like Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, saw no real difference of meaning. Neither did Augustine nor the translators of the Itala (Old Latin). This was also the view of the Reformation Greek scholars Erasmus and Grotius. The suggestion that a distinction in meaning should be seen comes primarily from a number of British scholars of the 19th century, especially Trench, Westcott, and Plummer. It has been picked up by others such as Spicq, Lenski, and Hendriksen. But most modern scholars decline to see a real difference in the meaning of the two words in this context, among them Bernard, Moffatt, Bonsirven, Bultmann, Barrett, Brown, Morris, Haenchen, and Beasley-Murray. There are three significant reasons for seeing no real difference in the meaning of *γαπάω* and *φιλέω* in these verses: (1) the author has a habit of introducing slight stylistic variations in repeated material without any significant difference in meaning (compare, for example, 3:3 with 3:5, and 7:34 with 13:33). An examination of the uses of *γαπάω* and *φιλέω* in the Fourth Gospel seems to indicate a general interchangeability between the two. Both terms are used of God’s love for man (3:16, 16:27); of the Father’s love for the Son (3:35, 5:20); of Jesus’ love for men (11:5, 11:3); of the love of men for men (13:34, 15:19); and of the love of men for Jesus (8:42, 16:27). (2) If (as seems probable) the original conversation took place in Aramaic (or possibly Hebrew), there would not have been any difference expressed because both Aramaic and Hebrew have only one basic word for love. In the LXX both *γαπάω* and *φιλέω* are used to translate the same Hebrew word for love, although *γαπάω* is more frequent. It is significant that in the Syriac version of the NT only one verb is used to translate vv. 15–17 (Syriac is very similar linguistically to Palestinian Aramaic). (3) Peter’s answers to the questions asked with *γαπάω* are ‘yes’ even though he answers using the verb *φιλέω*. If he is being asked to love Jesus on a higher or more spiritual level his answers give no indication of this, and one would be forced to say (in order to maintain a consistent distinction between the two verbs) that Jesus finally concedes defeat and accepts only the lower form of love which is all that Peter is capable of offering. Thus it seems best to regard the interchange between *γαπάω* and *φιλέω* in these verses as a minor stylistic variation of the author, consistent with his use of minor variations in repeated material elsewhere, and not indicative of any real difference in meaning. Thus no attempt has been made to distinguish between the two Greek words in the translation.

**F B Meyer** introduces this next section with these comments...

THAT miraculous catch of fish on which we have dwelt was a parable to the disciples of the kind of work in which they were thenceforward to be engaged. They were to catch men. But there was one amongst them who must have wondered much how he would fare, and what part he would take when that work was recommenced. Might he have a share in it? He would seem to have forfeited all right. With oaths and curses he had thrice denied that he belonged to Jesus. He had given grievous occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. He had failed in a most important part of an apostle's character.

True, he had repented with bitter tears, and had received a message from the empty tomb; on that Easter morn he had heard his forgiveness spoken by the lips of his Lord, and he would not have exchanged that forgiveness for an imperial crown: but he was not quite at ease. His uneasiness betrayed itself in his plunge into the water to swim to Christ's feet, and in his rush to drag the net to the shore. He wished to be restored to the position in the Apostolate which his sin had forfeited; not because of the honour which it would bring, but because nothing less would assure him of the undiminished confidence and the entire affection of Jesus.

The Lord read his heart; and when the morning meal was done, He singled him out from the rest of his disciples, and asked him three times if he loved Him, and then thrice gave him the injunction to feed his flock. In addressing him our Lord calls him by his old name, Simon Bar Jonas, not by his new name, Peter; as if to remind him that he had been living the life of nature rather than of grace. (John 21:15 Peter's Love and Work)

**THOUGHT** - We may have denied Jesus exactly like Peter, but we have all failed Him many times in our spiritual lives. Our tendency is to grow downcast and feel He can no longer use us for His redemptive work. To the contrary, Jesus is willing to forgive our failures and call us into His service. After all, if only perfect people qualified to serve Him, He wouldn't have anyone to choose from!

Although we are imperfect,  
The Lord can use us still,  
If we confess our sins to Him  
And seek to do His will.  
—Sper

Being imperfect doesn't disqualify us from serving God;  
it just emphasizes our dependence on His mercy.

---

**Love** (25)(**agapao** - see related study of noun **agape**) means to love unconditionally and sacrificially as God Himself loves sinful men (John 3:16), the way He loves the Son (John 3:35, 15:9, 17:23, 24). **Agapao** is a verb which by its nature calls for action. Agapao is the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship.

In short, **agapao** is the highest love of one's will and a love that implies total commitment (cp Paul's "definition" in 1Cor 13:4-8). Peter fully aware of his recent failure (denial), refused to claim this high quality of love. Peter was now a broken man, humbled by his denial after boasting so strongly that he would never deny His Lord. And so he uses **phileo** (see below), the less lofty term for love. He was willing to say he had at least that quality of love and he even appealed to Jesus' omniscience ("You know that I love You") to support his affirmation of love (**phileo** type).

**Vine** writes that "Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, 1John 4:9, 10. But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects, Ro 5:8 (note). It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself, cp. Deuteronomy 7:7, 8. Love had its perfect expression among men in the Lord Jesus Christ, 2Co 5:14-note; Ep 2:4 (note); Ep 3:19 (note); Ep 5:2 (note); Christian love is the fruit of His Spirit in the Christian, Galatians 5:22 (note). Christian love has God for its primary object, and expresses itself first of all in implicit obedience to His commandments, John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1Jn 2:5; 5:3; 2Jn 6. Self-will, that is, self-pleasing, is the negation of love to God. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Vine** goes on to offer a cogent explanation of why the two verbs **agapao** and **phileo** are used in this context "As to the change of verb in Peter's reply to the Lord's question (**See preceding table**), "Lovest thou Me?" Christ uses **agapao** in His first two questions; Peter uses **phileo** in all three answers. **Phileo** expresses a natural affection, and in this Peter is perfectly sure of himself and is keenly desirous of stating his affection, particularly after his denials. This the Lord fully appreciates; but He is thinking of the practical manifestations and effects as well, as is evident from His commands. And the verb **agapao** combines the two meanings: it expresses a real affection, but likewise raises it to the thought of an active and devoted exercise of it on behalf of others. Accordingly He first says "**Feed My lambs**" (showing that the love is the expression of mind in action). So again, when Peter adheres to **phileo**, Christ replies, "**Tend My sheep.**" Shepherd work (all that is involved in tending sheep) must exhibit the love. **The commands show how fully reinstated Peter was.** ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

While not all see a clear significance in the change of verbs for "**love**", **John MacArthur** feels the change is significant writing that "The word Jesus used for love is **agapao**, the highest love of the will, love that implies total commitment (cf. 1Co 13:4-8). Peter, painfully aware of his disobedience and failure, felt too guilty to claim that type of love. The brash pronouncements were a thing of the past; broken and humbled and fully aware that his action precluded him from a believable claim to the highest love, Peter answered by using the word **phileo**, a less lofty term that signifies affection. He also appealed to Jesus' omniscience, reminding Him, "You know that I love You." Accepting Peter's humble acknowledgement that his love was less than he had claimed and Christ deserved, Jesus still recommissioned him, graciously saying to him, "Tend My lambs.""

**Tend** (1006) (**bosko**) is used only in the Gospels and most often describe literal feeding of animals (especially the feeding of the swine) and twice is used figuratively where people are compared to lambs and sheep (Jn 21:15, 17). **Thayer** writes **bosko** in the figurative sense portrays "the duty of a Christian teacher to promote in every way the spiritual welfare of the members of the church." **Liddell-Scott** - "I. of the herdsman, to feed, tend, Lat. pasco, Od. 2. generally, to feed, nourish, support, of earth, lb.; of soldiers = to maintain (Hdt., Thuc). Metaphorically, to *feed* up troubles, i.e. children.II. Pass., of cattle, to feed, graze, to feed on. 2. metaphorically to be fed or nurtured."

**Bosko** - 9x in 9v - feed(1), feeding(3), herdsmen(3), tend(2).Mt 8:30 Mt 8:33 Mk 5:11 Mk 5:14 Lk 8:32 Lk 8:34  
Lk 15:15 Jn 21:15 Jn 21:17

**Lambs** (721)(**arnion** = diminutive form of **aren** = sheep, lamb, a word that speaks of the harmless nature of the animal) in simple terms means "a little lamb." Jesus describes believers as "little lambs" (Jn 21:15) but most often in Scripture, Jesus Himself is referred to as **arnion**! In is fascinating "paradox" that Jesus is called **arnion** most often in Revelation which chronicles His victorious return to defeat the devil and the forces of evil forever. In Revelation John records the picture of the risen, glorified Christ, who was slain as the sacrificial lamb on Calvary (cp Jn 1:29 which uses **amnos**), Who therefore is worthy to open the seals of the Revelation Scroll and worthy to be worshipped forever...

And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a **Lamb (arnion)** standing, as if slain (perfect tense = past completed slaying, with ongoing effect ~ permanence of Jesus' sacrifice), having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. (Rev 5:6+)

(Voices... Rev 5:11+) saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the **Lamb** that **was slain** (perfect tense speaks of permanent, efficacious effect of His slaying/crucifixion) to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

**NIDNTT** - In the ancient world sheep together with other small livestock were kept in herds, and for that reason are usually referred to in the plural. The word **probaton**, which is relatively frequent in the NT, was originally a generic term for all four-legged animals, especially tame domestic animals, only later was it restricted to sheep. **amnos** denoted from the outset a young sheep, frequently a one-year-old lamb, especially as used for sacrifice on numerous cultic occasions. In non-sacrificial contexts, the lamb as an animal for slaughter was called arēn. The diminutive form **arnion** originally meant lambkin, but later simply a lamb. In a figurative theological context (especially in Matt. and Jn.) Israel and the Christian church are often referred to as sheep (probata), and occasionally (in Jn. and 1 Pet.) Jesus is likened to a lamb, amnos (in Jn.), arnion (in Rev.). (See [NIDNTT for 3 page discussion on Lamb, Sheep](#))

**Love (5368)** (**phileo** from **phílos** = loved, dear, friend) has to do with the affection and the emotion in a human relationship at its best usage. We get our word **philanthropic** from it, and Philadelphia comes from it - Philadelphia, the 'city of brotherly love.' **Phileo** means to be a friend to another, to be fond of (have a liking for) an individual or an object, to have or show affection for. In some contexts it means to kiss another as a mark of tenderness for that person. **Phileo** denotes personal attachment and is more a matter of sentiment or feeling. It is devotion based in the emotions distinguished from agapao which represents devotion based in the will. Stated another way **phileo** is chiefly of the heart whereas agape is chiefly of the head. **Phileo** is a love which is the response of the human spirit to what appeals to it as pleasurable. **Phileo** is a love which consists of the glow of the heart kindled by the perception of that in the object which affords us pleasure.

**Phileo** is the response of the human spirit to what appeals to it as pleasurable. The Greeks made much of friendship. Phileo was used to speak of a friendly affection. Phileo is a love called out of one in response to a feeling of pleasure or delight which one experiences from an apprehension of qualities in another that furnish such pleasure or delight.

**Phileo** is friendship love, this "friendship factor" sadly often missing in marriages. In Scripture phileo is used to describe the love of God the Father and the Son, of Jesus and Peter, and of Jonathan and David. **Phileo** love is basically emotional. **Phileo** cannot be commanded but it can be developed in relationships. **Phileo** is based on the qualities in another person that you find admirable or attractive. **Phileo** is a fellowship type love manifested in a living and growing relationship between two friends. **Phileo** love does feed on response, and it cannot survive long without response from the other. Friendship love requires attention. **Phileo** describes a warm affection which exists between those who are near and dear. It describes a fondness, a responsive type love. One might picture phileo by the declarations "I love you because you love me" or "I love you because you are a joy", both of these showing the reciprocal nature of phileo love. **Phileo** love gives as long as it receives and thus is a conditional love.

<b>COMPARISON OF</b> <b>John 21:15-17</b> NASB			
	<b>Jesus' Question</b>	<b>Peter's Answer</b>	<b>Jesus' Response</b>
<b>John 21:15</b>	Love - agapao	Know - oida Love - phileo	Tend - bosko Lambs - arnion
<b>John 21:16</b>	Love - agapao	Know - oida Love - phileo	Shepherd - poimaino Sheep - probaton
<b>John 21:17</b>	Love - phileo	Know - oida Know - ginosko Love - phileo	Tend - bosko Sheep - probaton
<b>Note:</b> Verbs for "know" = <a href="#">oida</a> (know intellectually) and <a href="#">ginosko</a> (know experientially).			

**Summary of the two words for "love"** - Agapao is the word that describes God's love (Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:8), the highest love, what might be referred to as "100% love" (from Boice), so that Jesus was asking Peter "Do you love Me with a 100% love?". The other word for love is phileo, human love as expressed in friendship, love we are incapable of apart from the New Birth and the Spirit's energizing effect, what might be referred to as "60% love" (from Boice). In the first query, Jesus adds more than these, undoubtedly

referring to the disciples. Peter had once claimed he loved Jesus more than the others and would prove his love by his willingness to die for Him. So Peter answers saying that he loves Jesus with 60% love. This is the same Peter who had once boasted of a 100% love for Jesus. Peter has been greatly humbled by his denial which explains his refusal to claim 100% love. Jesus again asks if Peter loved Him with 100% love, mercifully leaving off the comparison with the other disciples. Again Peter answers that he loves Jesus with a 60% love. And then on the third query, Jesus drops down to Peter's level and asks him if he loves Him with a 60% love. Clearly this threefold repetition is a response to Peter's threefold denial. Boice comments on the threefold question, one which obviously grieved Peter...

Does it seem cruel to you that the Lord asked Peter three times in front of the others whether he loved Him, in clear reference to his earlier threefold denial? It seemed to be; it was certainly painful. Yet in the ultimate analysis it was not cruel. The truly cruel thing would have been to let the matter go on festering in Peter so that throughout his entire life both he and the others would think that he was somehow inferior and unworthy of office though he had undoubtedly repented of the sin with weeping, as the Bible tells us. The kind thing was the public restoration so that Peter and the others would henceforth know that **Peter's past was past** and that **the Lord had himself commissioned him to further service**. That is why the Bible calls for public confession of sin. God does not wish to be cruel to us, though the experience of confession is painful. It is to end the matter so that we can pick up and go on with Jesus. ([Boice, J. M. The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books](#))

**Brian Bell** explains it this way...

Peter had boasted of his love for Christ and had even contrasted it with that of the other men. "I will lay down my life for Your sake!" (Jn 13:37) "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." (Mt. 26:33)

1. There is more than a hint in these boastful statements that Peter believed that he loved the Lord more than did the other disciples. {as if to say, "I can see James/ John falling away; Thomas for sure; But not me! - I'm spiritually stronger & more devoted to you than they are. I can see their commitment won't hold up, but mine will."}

2. Beware of: spiritual self-confidence; self-righteous; believing you're spiritually stronger or more devoted. Or because you've been on a missions trip; because you go door to door and evangelize; because you don't own a TV set; because you drive a "humble mobile" Beware! ([John 21:15-15 Three Lessons on the Beach](#))

---

## THE PURIFICATION OF LOVE John 21:15-25. J H Jowett

LOVEST thou Me?" There was a day, only a little while back, when Simon Peter's love was not yet purified, and it indulged itself in loud and empty boasts. True love never blusters and brawls. It is like a stream of water flowing silently underground, and secretly bathing the roots of things, and keeping their heads fresh, and cool, and sweet. The boast has now dropped out of the love! It is now ashamed of words! "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

Yes, true love expresses itself, not in clamorous boastfulness, but in quiet services. It ministers to the Lord's sheep and the Lord's lambs. It spends its strength on the mountains, "seeking that which is lost," and it does this in the darkness, where there is no applauding crowd. The true lover does not ask for some dramatic scene where he can die for the beloved; he delights in obscure services, the feeding and tending of the sheep of the flock.

But the love that does the humbler thing will be ready for the greater sacrifice whenever the day shall demand it. Some day the once boastful denier shall lay down his life for his Saviour, and through martyrdom he shall pass to his crown.

---

**Longman** notes that...

**Sheep** ([See also several other Bible Dictionary discussions on Sheep](#)) are the most frequently mentioned animal in the Bible, with nearly 400 references if we include references to flocks. Additionally, the figure of the **shepherd** receives approximately 100 references. This prominence grows out of two phenomena—the importance of sheep to the nomadic and agricultural life of the Hebrews, and the qualities of sheep and shepherds that made them particularly apt sources of metaphor for spiritual realities...

A **lamb** is simply a young and therefore small sheep. Many of the nearly 200 biblical references to **lambs** are therefore synonymous with those for the broader category. **Lambs** are associated with **gentleness**, **innocence** and **dependence**...

The **helplessness of sheep** helps to explain the actions and qualities of a good shepherd, who in the Bible is



a case study in care and compassion. It was the task of a shepherd to lead sheep from nighttime protection in a [sheepfold](#) on safe paths to places of grazing and watering. After morning grazing and watering, sheep typically lie down for several hours at midday in a shady or cool place (Song 1:7), returning at night to the sheepfold, where the shepherd would attend to fevered or scratched sheep. To protect sheep against predators, shepherds would carry two pieces of equipment, the "rod and staff" of Psalm 23:4, one of them a club-like weapon and the other the familiar crook used for protection, rescue and placing across the backs of sheep to count them as they entered the sheepfold (a process known as "the rodding of the sheep"; see Lev 27:32). Psalm 23, built around a typical day in the life of a shepherd, is a virtual handbook of these shepherding practices...

The metaphor of people as sheep draws in specific ways on the traits of sheep, which may be negative or positive. As sheep often do, the people are said to have gone astray, each one wandering in the direction he or she chooses (Is 53:6; 1 Pet 2:25). The passivity of sheep and their use in sacrifice make them metaphors of persecution and martyrdom (Ps 44:22; cf. Rom 8:36). In a typical flock of sheep there are domineering sheep who push the weaker sheep away from water and food, who tread the pasture down and foul the water. All of this enters Ezekiel's picture of life in the religious community gone awry (Ezek 34:17-23)...

**Shepherds** were thus **providers, guides, protectors** and **constant companions of sheep**. They were also **figures of authority** and **leadership** to the animals under their care. So close is the connection between shepherd and sheep that to this day Middle Eastern shepherds can divide flocks that have mingled at a well or during the night simply by **calling their sheep**, who follow their shepherd's voice. **Shepherds are inseparable from their flocks**, and their **work is demanding, solitary** and **sometimes dangerous** (Gen 31:38-40; 1Sa 17:34, 35). Shepherds were aided by their sons or daughters (Ge 37:12; 1Sa 16:11) or hired help (Jn 10:12,13), again placing them in a position of authority and responsibility. (See [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#))

---

Alan Carr elaborates on Tend My lambs...

Supply The Saints - Peter is told to feed "my lambs", v. 15, these are the "little ones." Then, he is told to feed "my sheep.", v. 16. These would be those who are more mature. The point is clear. Jesus expected Peter to communicate the mind of God to all ages. Herein lies a problem that is ever growing in our churches. We have men who communicate their opinions. Men who communicate the course of politics and society. Men who communicate the mind of the Convention or denomination. There are those who communicate the mind of their favorite preacher. However, if we are going to feed the lambs and the sheep, then we must open the Word of God and communicate the mind of God to His people. When they receive a steady diet of "thus saith the Lord." They will grow! Some might say, "That is the preacher's job! What does that have to do with me?" I would answer, "Everything!" The duty of the child of God in this matter cannot be over stated. After all, there are many of you who teach in the church. When you stand before that Sunday School class or that Disciple Training class, have a word from God! For the rest, hold up the hands of those who are standing forth and communicating truth to the flock of God. Pray for God's men and for those who teach in our churches. May I remind you this evening that it takes every member of the body functioning in its appointed place to get the job done for Jesus? Let's do our duty! ([How to Change Your Church Forever](#))

---

John Bennett [Day by Day: Bible Commands](#) **FEED MY LAMBS ... FEED MY SHEEP**

Peter, with his great physical strength, had dragged the huge catch of fish ashore. The Stranger, now recognised by all the fishermen as the Lord, invited them to join Him for breakfast around a fire of coals on the beach. There He served them a simple meal of fish and bread.

Not too long before, Peter had sat at another charcoal fire. There he had thrice denied his Lord, 18:16–18, 25, 27. Now, beside this fire, the Lord was going to rehabilitate him completely and reinstate him to public ministry. Peter had already been privately restored to fellowship with Christ. Now, under close questioning by the Lord Jesus, Peter affirmed three times his sincere love for the Saviour, paralleling his threefold denial.

In response to these reaffirmations of affection, the Lord gives Peter a new ministry. He is charged with shepherding the flock of Christ. The evangelist, Luke 5:10, is now also given the pastor's task. The 'chief Shepherd', 1 Peter 5:4, delegates to Peter a ministry of tending the sheep and feeding the lambs. How grateful we all should be that for Peter and for us God is the God of the second chance.



Shepherding God's people is one of today's great challenges. Christ still seeks men like Peter to serve as under-shepherds. These men will have a deep affection for the Lord and a real consciousness of their own inner weakness. They will be men who have learned to put no confidence in the flesh. Men like these will have known personally the restoring touch of the Good Shepherd Himself. Such men will be able to tend the straying sheep of Christ and to take care of His lambs as they take their early faltering steps.

In his epistles, Peter, describing himself as a fellow elder with the elders among his readers, 1 Peter 5:1, carries out his commission from the 'chief Shepherd'. He feeds us with sound teaching, exhorts us in everyday duties, encourages us to persevere in trial and protects us against false teaching.

May God raise up men who will hear the call and accept the charge and challenge to shepherd the flock of God whatever the personal cost.

---

**Oswald Chambers** - Service Of Passionate Devotion - 'Lovest thou Me? ... Feed My sheep.' John 21:16

Jesus did not say - Make converts to your way of thinking, but look after **My** sheep, see that they get nourished in **the knowledge of Me**.

**We count as service what we do in the way of Christian work;  
Jesus Christ calls service what we are to Him, not what we do for Him.**

Discipleship is based on devotion to Jesus Christ, not on adherence to a belief or a creed. "If any man come to Me and hate not... , he cannot be My disciple." (Lk 14:26) There is no argument and no compulsion, but simply -

**If you would be My disciple,  
you must be devoted to Me.**

A man touched by the Spirit of God suddenly says - "Now I see Who Jesus is," and that is the source of devotion.

Today we have substituted creedal belief for personal belief, and that is why so many are devoted to causes and so few devoted to Jesus Christ. People do not want to be devoted to Jesus, but only to the cause He started. Jesus Christ is a source of deep offence to the educated mind of today that does not want Him in any other way than as a Comrade. Our Lord's first obedience was to the will of His Father, not to the needs of men; the saving of men was the natural outcome of His obedience to the Father. If I am devoted to the cause of humanity only, I will soon be exhausted and come to the place where my love will falter; but if I love Jesus Christ personally and passionately, I can serve humanity though men treat me as a door-mat.

**The secret of a disciple's life is devotion to Jesus Christ,  
and the characteristic of the life is its unobtrusiveness.**

It is like a corn of wheat, which falls into the ground and dies, but presently it will spring up and alter the whole landscape (John 12:24). ([Oswald Chambers - Service Of Passionate Devotion](#))

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS RELATED TO JOHN 21:15-25

Note: These application points are not in order (they don't necessarily go from verse 15 to verse 25). Some of the points of application overlap.

- Peter was grieved by the Lord's third question - Have you ever felt grief and pain like Peter felt, a pain directed by the Lord to the very core of your being, deep down in the most sensitive area of your life?
- How does Jesus speak to our heart today? The Word of God ("reproof, correction," etc)
- The probable meaning of what Jesus meant by "more than these" is discussed below. We could apply this question by personalizing it and asking "Who (what) do I love more than Jesus?"
- One lesson which our Lord teaches us here by His own example is, that we ought to take great pains in rebuking a friend for his fault (referring to Peter's denial). (Broadus)

- Jesus' piercing questions to Peter's surely are applicable to each of us today -- Jesus might ask this same question of each of us. Simply put, do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love Him? How do you know? Jesus said "if you love (agapao) Me, you will (not "might") keep My commandments" (Jn 14:15) Those who claim assurance yet have no desire to go on in obedience to the command of Christ are still dead in their sins. "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose (emphanizo = manifest openly, allowing Himself to be intimately known and understood) Myself to him." (Jn 14:21 cp Jn 14:23, 24, Jn 15:10)
- Have you like Peter "failed to stand by your Lord" at some moment of crisis? Perhaps you think you have sinned against Him so horribly that He would never forgive you. Are you in need of restoration of fellowship with Jesus? Then Peter's story in John 21 is your story. Observe the Master's restoring touch in this section. Note especially the absence of harsh censure (Words like "I told you so!", "How could you do that to Me Peter?", etc).
- Beware of spiritual self-confidence; self-righteous; believing you're spiritually stronger or more devoted. Or because you've been on a missions trip; because you go door to door and evangelize; because you don't own a TV set; because you drive a "humble mobile" Beware! (Brian Bell)
- Before we are sent for service, the Lord Jesus wants to ask us one question "Do you love Me?" When we can answer this question affirmatively without hesitation or equivocation, we are ready to hear His call to service.
- Are you motivated by love for Christ? What will keep you serving the Lord when the going gets tough? Although you may be sensitive to the needs of others, that alone isn't enough. Nor should we be driven by a need that we have—a desire to be appreciated or loved by others. Our needs are deep, and only God can satisfy them. The more we try to satisfy them with anything else—even God's work—the more dissatisfied we will become. In short, even love for God's people, His sheep, won't keep us going, because "sheep" can often be unlovable and insufferable and we may come to resent them. Oswald Chambers wrote "If we are devoted to the cause of humanity, we shall soon be crushed and brokenhearted,... but if our motive is to love of Christ, no ingratitude can hinder us from serving our fellowmen." (Cp Paul's great motive for service - 2Co 5:14-note )
- Do you have John's way of viewing your Christian life? John 21:20 gives us one of the deepest truths of Christian life, one of the great secrets of Christian peace, an essential quality of faith: that our hope does not rest in our love for Christ--but in His love for us. People are often discouraged when they find in themselves so little that is good and beautiful. They cannot see that they love Christ any more this year, than they did last. They do not find in themselves the beautiful fruits of the Spirit which they wish they could find. But there is another way to look at our lives, which gives us more hope. It is John's way--not our love for Christ--but Christ's love for us! (J. R. Miller)
- We too like the early disciples are to be fishers of men - Are you engaged in winsome evangelism with friends, family, co-workers? If some have become believers (little lambs), are you seeking to shepherd them - feeding, guiding, protecting, as they take their first steps on yet slightly wobbly spiritual legs? While doubtless this charge speaks primarily to pastors, there is surely personal application for all followers of Christ, because Jesus' last command was to make disciples (learners) (Mt 28:18, 19, 20). Are you heeding our Chief Shepherd's call?
- Does your spiritual service proceed from your love and devotion to Christ? Love of Christ should always be the primary motivation for our service. Or are you placing service to Christ ahead of love to Christ? (See Oswald Chambers Devotional)
- Aren't we all a lot like Peter in Jn 21:21 asking "What about this man?" It is so easy to let our relationship with the Lord be overly influenced by the behavior and experiences of others. But we must not be concerned with what God has planned for anyone else. Through the conflicting voices that surround us, we must keep hearing the Savior's clear command: "You follow Me." Are you fixing your eyes on Jesus or on His work in and through other saints? The former focus will assure a race well done, while the latter focus often leads to frustration, envy, jealousy and failure to finish your (own, not someone else's) race.
- Take a moment to express your love to Jesus by playing (and singing) the beautiful old Maranatha chorus I Love You Lord
- Lesson from Jn 21:21, 22 - Resentment comes from looking at others. Contentment comes from looking to Jesus.
- What is the word for the church from Jn 21:15-17? Love Christ! We, as a church, must move beyond the

phileo love that says, "I am fond of you, I live you like a brother", and must come to the place where we love the Lord with a genuine agape love. That is, we need a self-sacrificing, self-denying, unconditional, unchanging, unending love for Christ that pervades every area of our lives. When we come to this point, Mt 22:39 will pose no problems for us. Then we will be in a place to demonstrate to the lost world around us that Jesus is all that He claims to be - John 13:35 (Alan Carr)

- When you read the Words of Jesus and hear Him asking "Do you love Me?" how do you answer? 'Jesus, I admire You. Jesus, I think you are fascinating. Jesus, I have a great respect for You'? Or can you say with Peter, 'Lord, you know what is in my heart, You know that I love You'?
- Many can identify with Peter over their own sense of spiritual faltering and falling. How many have made good confessions, committed to firm resolutions of faithfulness, then have fallen into sin, spiritual coldness, and barrenness? How often have we done the very thing we said that we would not do in terms of spiritual commitment? The encouragement for all of us in this passage is that there is mercy with the Lord! He alone can restore the fallen to usefulness... The most striking element of this whole scene is that we see Jesus Christ pursuing the fallen. You make think "He would never pursue me." Then you don't understand the loving heart of Jesus to continually seek those who deny Him with their thoughts, words and actions... people just like Peter! (Phil Newton - The Fallen Restored)
- To follow (akoloutheo Jn 21:19, 20) is intimately linked to the life and ministry of Jesus. Indeed, He is the only One we should follow. Who are you following? A pastor, a sports hero, a famous writer, a successful relative, etc? May God grant us wisdom and grace that by His Spirit we may follow Jesus all the days of our life and unto a death that glorifies His Holy Name. Amen
- Have you heard and heeded Jesus' command "Follow Me?" Do you understand what it means to follow Jesus? Jesus' call to follow Him is in essence His call to be His disciple. (Study the verb "follow" in the Gospels - Mt 4:19, Mk 1:17, Mt 8:19, 20, 21, Mt 9:9, Lk 5:27, 28, Mt 10:37, 38, 39; Mt 16:24, 25, 26; Mk 8:34, 35, 36, 37, 38; Mt 19:21, 22, 23, 24; Lk 9:23, 24, 25, 26; Lk 9:59, 60, 61, 62; Lk 18:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27; Jn 10:4, 5, 27; Jn 12:26
- "Follow Me" are not the last words of Jesus before His ascension (see Acts 1:7, 8) but they are Jesus' last words in the Gospel of John (Jn 21:22). It is interesting that Jesus issued the same command (Follow Me) at the beginning of this Gospel (Jn 1:43). Clearly Jesus wants us to remember that being a Christian is not just believing in Him in an abstract sense, but that it constitutes believing in the Person of Jesus to the point that we turn our back on all else and choose to follow Him all the days of our life!

---

**Illustration of Jesus Restoring Peter to Useful Service** - There was a certain man who had been faithful in worshiping with other believers for many years. Then he became lax and stopped coming to the services. The pastor was burdened for his spiritual welfare, so one day he called in his home. The man invited him in and offered him a chair by the fire. The Pastor mentioned to the man how much missed seeing him in the worship services. The man replied that he was saved and saw no need to go to church. He felt that he could worship just fine at home. For several long moments they sat in silence and watched the burning embers. Then, taking the tongs, the pastor removed a hot coal and laid it by itself on the hearthstone. As it began to cool, its red glow soon faded. The man, who had been expecting a verbal rebuke, quickly caught the message. He was at church for the next service! Its tough being out of the Lord's will, but it is possible to make things right again!

---

**Illustration of Restoring the Fire** (As Jesus Was Doing with Peter) - A pastor decided to visit a member who had stopped attending services. It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a big chair near the fireplace and waited. The pastor made himself comfortable but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone. Then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and "dead as a doornail." Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. Just before the pastor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I shall be back in church next Sunday." - Jesus is ready to rekindle Peters ember!

“When they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs” (John 21:15).

Our text records part of a conversation that took place between Christ and Peter shortly after the resurrection. Christ had just worked a miracle fish catch and after Peter and his fellow-fisherman had dined with Christ over some fish and bread, Christ asked Peter this all important question as to whether Peter loved the Lord or not. We note three important matters in this question which instructs us all in our devotion to the Lord.

### **FIRST—THE EMPHASIS ON LOVE**

“Lovest thou me?”

This question is asked Peter two more times, so in this passage of Scripture is a question about love three times. This shows the emphasis of Christ upon the matter of loving Him. It is important to love Him. The Apostle Paul said that if any man did not love Christ he would be cursed (1 Corinthians 16:22). Loving Christ is the difference between dwelling in eternal heaven or eternal hell. Loving Christ also has much to do with our service as we will note later. Our love for Christ is extremely important, so important that the church at Ephesus was strongly indicted for leaving their “first love” (Revelation 2:4). Diminishing love for Christ caused the church to go bad. Lack of love for Christ will lead to serious backsliding.

### **SECOND—THE EARNESTNESS OF LOVE**

“Lovest thou me more than these?”

This is the question that asks how much did Peter loved the Lord. “These” can refer to two things.

- It can refer to people. Peter was quite outspoken at times about performing better than the other disciples. He had boasted the night before the crucifixion that his loyalty would be stronger than any of the other disciples, in fact than anyone else (Matthew 26:33). But after Peter’s threefold denial of the Lord he was no longer ready to brag that his love for Christ was more than others (“these” his fellow disciples) loved Christ.
- It can refer to possessions. Peter life’s experiences were in fishing. He would love a good catch of fish. Christ gave him the greatest catch he had ever gotten. Did Peter love his possessions more than Christ. We often fail here and love the gifts more than the Giver.

### **THIRD—THE EVIDENCE OF LOVE**

“Feed my lambs”.

If you love the Lord you will show it by your service. Love will promote fervent and faithful service for Christ. Apostle Paul said “The love of Christ constraineth [compels] us” (2 Corinthians 5:14) in regards to his service. Poor service says there is a lack of love for Christ. Love is more than mere words; it is also deeds. “If ye love me keep my commandments” (John 14:15) is another indicator of true love for the Savior. - [Sermon Starters](#)

---

**Pour It Out!** - The first youth group I attended was led by a woman who loved every one of us. She prayed for us by name every day. She tracked us down if we started to miss meetings. She advised us when our behavior became inappropriate and confronted us when we sinned. She was our advocate and confidante, and more than once she spoke up for us at church business meetings.

To me, she put into practice the principle taught in John 21:15-17. Three times the Lord asked Peter if he loved Him, and three times Peter answered that he did. Then Jesus said, “Feed My sheep.” This suggests that as we are filled with love for Christ, that love will pour out to others. It will be demonstrated in acts of compassion.

It does little good to tell the Savior we love Him if we never show any love for His sheep. It means little to say we have a burden for Christian prisoners, for example, if we never have any contact with them.

If we truly love Jesus, we will show it in deeds of compassion for His people. If we say that we love Christ and do nothing to serve other believers, the reality of our love must be called into question. Do you love Him? Then pour it out!— by David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Love demands a loving deed  
When you see someone in need;  
Don't just say you love him true,  
Prove it by the deeds you do.  
—Anon.

They truly love who show their love.

---

**Turkish Delight** - In C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the White Witch needed to know only one thing about Edmund to get him to betray his siblings. By asking a few simple questions, the witch learned that Edmund's weakness was his love for a candy called Turkish Delight. The piece she gave to Edmund was more delicious than anything he had ever tasted. Soon Edmund could think only about "trying to shovel down as much Turkish Delight as he could, and the more he ate the more he wanted."

Each of us has a vulnerability like Edmund's that Satan is eager to exploit. It may be something addictive like drugs or alcohol, or it may be something seemingly harmless and perhaps even good like food, friendship, or work.

After His resurrection, Jesus asked Peter this personal and probing question: "Do you love Me more than these?" (John 21:15). Many have speculated as to what Jesus meant by the word "these," but it's probably better that we don't know. It allows each of us to personalize the question and ask ourselves, "What do I love more than Jesus?"

When Satan finds out what we love more than God, he knows how to manipulate us. But he loses his power over us when we delight in the Lord. — by Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God takes delight in us—  
how can we help but delight in Him?

---

JOHN 21:15-19

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (Acts 1:15).

Remorse deprives many Christians of the joy that should be theirs. A man in his middle years has withdrawn from the people in his church because he feels so bad about his past infidelity—a sin that broke up his home. An elderly woman needs counseling from time to time because she can't forget an affair she had more than fifty years ago. A young woman sees a psychiatrist because she can't forgive herself for having had an abortion. Each of these people is now a Christian, but each is paralyzed at times by remorse over the past.

If anyone ever had good reason for allowing the memory of a grievous sin to put him on the shelf, it was Peter. He had been such a coward. He had fled Gethsemane at Christ's arrest, and then denied three times that he knew the Lord Jesus. Later, he felt so bad that he wept bitterly. Yet he did not allow his remorse over past failures to make him ineffective in his service for Christ. He accepted the Lord's forgiveness, and he received new hope from Jesus' commission, "Feed my sheep." In Acts 1:15 we find him back in his role as the leader of the disciples. By taking Jesus' words of forgiveness to heart and by forgiving himself, he put the past under the blood of Christ.

As believers, when we confess our sin, we can leave it with Christ and forget it. Then we can move on to find a new way to serve Him. We need never let remorse remove our joy. —H.V.L. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Christians should seek to erase from their memory the sins God has erased from their record.

---

**Truth that Transforms** - Truth is truth even if it doesn't seem to affect our lives directly. But the truth that God gives us in the Bible not only opens heaven's door for us, it also changes our lives.

Ron Sider, a leading evangelical advocate for the poor, tells about a conversation he had with German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg. As they were discussing the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the theologian emphatically declared, "The evidence for Jesus' resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: It is a very unusual event, and second, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live."

That's a challenging statement. If we really believe Jesus rose again, that belief mandates a change of life. Peter's life was turned upside-down after he saw the resurrected Christ. Once an impetuous fisherman-disciple who denied even knowing Christ after His arrest, he became a bold witness for Him (John 18:17,25,27; Acts 2:14-36).

Has belief in Jesus' resurrection changed your life? Are your goals and priorities different than they were? Are you kinder, more

patient, more forgiving? Ask God what He wants to do in you, and then cooperate with Him in that change. — by Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We want to do great things, O Lord,  
To glorify Your name;  
When You transform us by Your power,  
We'll never be the same.  
—Sper

The power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead  
is the same power at work in you. (Eph 1:18,19)

---

### **Lovest Thou Me'**

Hark, my soul! it is the Lord;  
'Tis thy Saviour, hear His word;  
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee,  
"Say, poor sinner, lovest thou me'

"I deliver'd thee when bound,  
And when bleeding, heal'd thy wound;  
Sought thee wandering, set thee right,  
Turn'd thy darkness into light.

"Can a woman's tender care  
Cease towards the child she bare'  
Yes, she may forgetful be,  
Yet will I remember thee.

"Mine is an unchanging love,  
Higher than the heights above.  
Deeper than the depths beneath,  
Free and faithful, strong as death.

"Thou shalt see my glory soon,  
When the work of grace is done;  
Partner of my throne shalt be;—  
Say, poor sinner, lovest thou me?"

Lord, it is my chief complaint,  
That my love is weak and faint;  
Yet I love Thee and adore,—  
Oh! for grace to love Thee more!  
---Olney Hymns, by William Cowper

**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."**

- **second:** John 18:17,25 Mt 26:72
- **My sheep:** Jn 10:11-16,26,27 Ps 95:7 100:3 Zec 13:7 Mt 25:32 Lk 15:3-7 19:10 Ac 20:28 Heb 13:20 1Pe 2:25
- John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love([agapao](#)) Me?"** - Now Jesus drops the comparison "more than these" but otherwise the question is identical to the first. Jesus is asking "Do you love with an unconditional commitment, "higher" kind of love?"

**He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love([phileo](#)) You."** Peter again responds with the weaker type of love using [phileo](#) and not [agapao](#) which Jesus had used.



He said to him, "**Shepherd** ([poimaino](#)) **My sheep.**" Note that the verb changes from [bosko](#) as in Jn 21:15, 17 (which emphasizes the feeding aspect of shepherding) to [poimaino](#). It is notable that some writers feel the change is significant, while others do not.

**W E Vine** writes that "In John 21:15, 16, 17, the Lord, addressing Peter, first uses **bosko** (Jn 21:15) then **poimaino** (Jn 21:16), and then returns to **bosko** (Jn 21:17). These are not simply interchangeable (nor are other variations in His remarks); a study of the above notes will show this. Nor, again, is there a progression of ideas. The lesson to be learnt, as Trench points out (Syn. Sec.xxv), is that, in the spiritual care of God's children, the "feeding" of the flock from the Word of God is the constant and regular necessity; it is to have the foremost place. The tending (which includes this) consists of other acts, of discipline, authority, restoration, material assistance of individuals, but they are incidental in comparison with the "feeding." (Collected Writings)

**John MacArthur** comments that Jesus' use of **poimaino** "is likely a synonym for the previous verb (bosko), both of which are suitable to express the full scope of responsibility that pastoral oversight entails (cf. Acts 20:28; 1Pe 5:2+)."

**Alan Carr** notes that in Jesus' use of the verb **poimaino**, He is saying "Peter, the sheep need more than food. They are to be looked after and all their needs are to be supplied. Again, there is a message to Pastors here, but there is also an application to all the saints of God. This thought reminds us that Gal 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." needs to become a reality in the modern church. When people enter the church they should know that they are part of a group that cares for them and that they are loved. We need to take every possible step to ensure that Mt 22:39 is fully realized. Illustration - A Zulu proverb says that when a thorn pierces the foot, the whole body must bend over to pull it out. This kind of interdependence is a basic characteristic of the church. That may mean putting aside petty differences and pointless squabbles, but when we genuinely love one another, the world will notice and God Himself will manifest His power and presence among His people once again. ([How to Change Your Church Forever](#))

**J Vernon McGee...**

The third interrogation reveals an interesting dealing of the Lord with Simon Peter. Our Lord dropped down and used the same word that Simon had been obliged to use and said, 'simon, son of Jonah, do you have a human affection for Me?' It grieved Peter because the Lord asked him this for the third time, and with a burst of emotion he said in effect, 'You know that I love You. I wish with all my heart I could say that I have a divine love for You, and I think I do. But I have found out that I cannot trust myself anymore, for I make such big statements but do so little. Lord, I am sorry that it is necessary for You to come down to my plane of phileo love, but it is the best I can do. You know my heart. You know all things. You know I love You.' Then the Lord Jesus gives him the third imperative: 'Be grazing My sheep.'

There is much church activity today, but why is there so little Bible study in the pulpit? Do not misunderstand me when I say this, but my conviction is that there is little study of the Word of God because we must first answer Christ's question, 'Do you love Me?' Until that is answered in the affirmative, the commission 'Feed My sheep' will not be given to us. We must remember that the Lord Jesus commissioned Simon Peter on one basis alone - 'Do you love Me?' This is the badge of Christianity. The Roman officials sent men to spy out the Christians, and Tertullian writes that when the spies returned, their report was that the Christians were strange folk; they had no idols, but they spoke of One who was absent by the name of Jesus, and how they loved Him! And how they loved one another! That is the report made of the Christians of that day. I wonder how a report made of the people in your church and my church would compare.

Listen to Paul writing to the Corinthians: 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema. I can have all knowledge, but if I have not love, I am nothing' (1 Corinthians 16:22 and 13:2 KJV). You and I are under this acid test: Do we love Him?

The greatest drives in the world are not intellectual. Rather, they are drives of the heart. Christianity is a matter of the heart. And we must start right --'with the heart one believes unto righteousness.' The church today needs a baptism of emotion; it needs real and genuine tears coming from the heart that can say, 'Lord Jesus, You know that I love You.' Christianity is a love affair. Peter wrote, 'Whom having not seen, you love.'...

My friend, loving Him is a wonderful experience. It is, as Peter wrote in his first epistle, 'joy inexpressible and full of glory!' And it is the secret of having a ministry that God can and will use. ([J. Vernon McGee - The Secret of Service](#))

**G Campbell Morgan** comments on Jesus' uses of the term **sheep**...

The note that first impresses the heart is that of infinite and tender compassion: "My lambs... My sheep." Let me illuminate this by reference again to the passage in Matthew. When He saw the multitudes, what effect did the vision produce upon Him? As God is my witness, I hardly know how to cite these words to you. I am afraid

of harshness of tone. Yet I am also afraid that if I attempt to do other than recite them with the natural harshness of tone, I may but libel the exquisite tenderness that ought to be heard in them. "He was moved with compassion for them." (Mt 9:36KJV) How familiar we are with the words. Would that in the quiet hush of this moment, they might come to us with all their infinite meaning. "He was moved with compassion." The final outcome of that compassion was the cross.

Why was He moved with compassion? Because He saw them "distressed and scattered." Take the words and let them be pictures, as they really are, and in a moment we discover their true significance. I do no violence to them if I say that our Lord saw the sheep harried by wolves, bruised, wounded, flung to the ground, faint and weary; and it was that vision of humanity in its degradation, spoiled and ruined, that moved His heart with compassion. "My lambs... My sheep." We cannot hear these words, interpreted by the declaration of the Gospel of Matthew, without discovering in them the note of infinite tenderness and compassion.

Yet, there is infinitely more in them than the note of compassion. There is that of supremacy. It was Homer who once said that kings are the shepherds of the people. Perhaps it would have been more correct to have said kings ought to be the shepherds of the people. It is at least perfectly true that the master figure of kingship in the Old Testament is that of the Shepherd. All God's chosen, ordained kings and leaders were of the shepherd heart. If Moses was to lead the people, he had to learn the art of leading them by being a shepherd for long years. If David was to come to the throne, he had to discover the secrets of victory by slaying the lion and the bear that came against the sheep of his father's flock. The idea of kingship in the economy of God is always that of the shepherd, who feeds rather than is fed, who guards rather than seeks to be guarded. It is the true ideal of kingship.

'Twas a sheep, not a lamb, that strayed away,  
In the parable Jesus told;  
A grown-up sheep, that had gone astray,  
From the ninety and nine in the fold.

Out on the hillside, out in the cold,  
'Twas a sheep the Good Shepherd sought;  
And back to the flock, safe into the fold,  
'Twas a sheep the Good Shepherd brought.

Why for the sheep should we earnestly long,  
And as earnestly hope and pray?  
Because there is danger, if they go wrong,  
They will lead the lambs astray.

For the lambs will follow the sheep, you know,  
Wherever the sheep may stray;  
When the sheep go wrong, it will not be long  
Till the lambs are as wrong as they.

And so with the sheep we earnestly plead,  
For the sake of the lambs today;  
If the sheep are lost, what terrible cost  
Some lambs will have to pay.

- Author unknown

---

**Shepherd** (4165) (**poimaino** from **poimen** = take care of sheep) means to tend flocks like a shepherd - oversight, protecting, leading, guiding, feeding. I like to sum up the meaning of this verb as a call to "Graze, Guide, Guard". **Poimaino** is a comprehensive term encompassing the entire task of a shepherd. **Poimaino** describes literal tending of sheep in Lk 17:7 and 1Co 9:7 but most of the NT uses are figurative.

**Poimaino** - 11v - **caring(1), rule(3), shepherd(5), tending sheep(1), tends(1)**. Matt. 2:6; Lk. 17:7; Jn. 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Co. 9:7; 1 Pet. 5:2; Jude 1:12; Rev. 2:27; Rev. 7:17; Rev. 12:5; Rev. 19:15

**MacArthur** comments that...the primary task of an undershepherd of the Lord's flock is to feed the sheep. Sadly, many undershepherds today fail to do that, seemingly content to lead their sheep from one barren wasteland to another. The tragic result

is a spiritually weak flock, ready to eat the poisonous weeds of false doctrine, or to follow false shepherds who deceitfully promise them greener pastures, while leading them to barren desert. Since sheep are followers, the shepherds' task also involves leading the flock. They must set the direction for the sheep to follow. The New Testament knows nothing of congregational rule; instead it commands believers to "obey your leaders, and submit to them" (Heb. 13:17). ([MacArthur, J: Acts 1-12; Acts 13-28 Moody Press](#))....The shepherd's task is not to tell people only what they want to hear (2 Tim. 4:3-4), but to edify and strengthen them with the deep truths of solid spiritual food that produces discernment, conviction, consistency, power, and effective testimony to the greatness of the saving work of Christ. No matter what New Testament terminology identifies the shepherd and his task, underneath it all is the primacy of biblical truth. He is to feed the sheep. ([MacArthur, J. 1 Peter. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

---

## LEADING THE LAMBS

In his book, \*The Appearances of Jesus After His Resurrection, J. Vernon McGee wrote an excellent commentary on Jesus' words, "feed my sheep," which our Lord addressed to Peter (John 21:16). Dr. McGee comments, "Today we have it all mixed up—we try to discipline the young Christians and feed the old ones. The Lord said, 'Feed the young ones and discipline the old ones.' An anxious father asked, 'How can I bring up my boy in the way he should go?' and the answer was, 'By going in that way yourself.'

You will find great worth in these verses by Charlene Fuller:

'Twas a sheep, not a lamb, that strayed away,  
In the parable Jesus told;  
A grown-up sheep that had gone astray  
From the ninety and nine in the fold.  
Out on the hillside, out in the cold,  
'Twas a sheep the Good Shepherd sought;  
And hack to the flock, safe into the fold,  
'Twas a sheep the Good Shepherd brought.  
And why for the sheep should we earnestly long,  
And as fervently hope and pray?  
Because there is danger, if they go wrong,  
They will lead the lambs astray.  
And so with the sheep we tenderly plead,  
For the sake of the lambs today;  
If the sheep are lost, what terrible price  
Some lambs will have to pay!

It's not junior, it's his father, who needs the discipline." Say, are you bringing your children up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord"?

There's a wide-eyed little youngster  
Who believes you're always right;  
And his ears are always open,  
And he watches day and night;  
You are setting an example  
Every day in all you do,  
For the little one who's watching  
To grow up and be like you! —Anon.

A close look at the "chips" may reveal flaws in the "block"!

**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.**

- **third** (KJV): Jn 13:38 18:27 Mt 26:73,74 Rev 3:19
- **grieved**: 1Ki 17:18 La 3:33 Mt 26:75 Mk 14:72 Lk 22:61,62 2Co 2:4-7 2Co 7:8-11 Eph 4:30 1Pe 1:6
- **Lord**: Jn 2:24,25 16:30 18:4 Jer 17:10 Ac 1:24 15:8 Rev 2:23
- **You know**: Jn 21:15 Jos 22:22 1Ch 29:17 Job 31:4-6 Ps 7:8,9 17:3 2Co 1:12

- **Feed:** Jn 21:15,16 12:8 14:15 15:10 Mt 25:40 2Co 8:8,9 2Pe 1:12-15 3:1 1Jn 3:16-24 3Jn 1:7,8
- John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love (phileo) Me?”** Instead of [agapao](#) Jesus now uses Peter's own word [phileo](#) which **Plumptre** paraphrases as "Dost thou, in personal affection and devotion, really love Me?" and adds that "this time the love which Peter knows has ever filled his soul (phileo) seems to be doubted. The question cuts to the very quick, and in the agony of the heart smarting beneath the wound, he appeals in more emphatic words to the all-seeing eye that could read the very inmost secrets of his life, "Lord, Thou knowest all thing; Thou knowest that I love Thee." ([A New Testament commentary for English readers](#))

**Spurgeon** - The Greek word means in this third question more than before, and might be rendered, "Lovest thou me dearly?" He had three times denied, and he must three times avow his Lord. (The Interpreter)

**David Roper** asks "Was Jesus unaware of Peter's love? Of course not. His threefold question was not for Himself, but for Peter. He asked His questions to underscore the essential truth that only love for Christ would sustain Peter in the work that lay ahead—that arduous, demanding work of caring for people's souls—perhaps the hardest work of all. Jesus did not ask Peter if he loved His sheep, but if he loved Him. Affection for God's people in itself will not sustain us. His sheep can be unresponsive, unappreciative, and harshly critical of our efforts to love and to serve them. In the end, we will find ourselves defeated and discouraged. The "love of Christ"—our love for Him—is the only sufficient motivation that will enable us to stay the course, to continue to feed the flock of God. Thus Jesus asks you and me, "Do you love Me? Feed My sheep." ([Feed My Sheep](#))

**Peter was grieved (lupeo) because He said to him the third time, “Do you love (phileo) Me?”**

**John MacArthur** explains that. "The reason for Peter's grief was a change in the Lord's vocabulary. Unlike His two previous questions, this third time Jesus used Peter's word for love, **phileo**. He called into question even the less than total devotion Peter thought he was safe in claiming. The implication that his life did not support even that level of love broke Peter's heart. All he could do was appeal even more strongly to Jesus' omniscience, saying to Him, "**Lord, You know all things** (cf. Jn 2:24, 25; 16:30); **You know that I love You.**" For the third time Jesus accepted the apostle's recognized failure and imperfection (cf. Isa. 6:1-8-notes) and graciously charged Peter to care for His flock, saying to him, "Tend My sheep." **Peter's restoration was thus complete.**" ([MacArthur, J: John 12-21. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**And he said to Him, “Lord, You know (eido) all things;** Peter fully acknowledges Jesus' divine omniscience with this statement (see below for more on the verb he used - eido/oida).

**You know (ginosko) that I love (phileo) You.”**

**Jesus said to him, “Tend (bosko) My sheep**

We're thankful, Lord, that when we fall  
 We can begin anew  
 If humbly we confess our sin,  
 Then turn and follow You.  
 —Sper

---

**Grieved (3076) (lupeo** from **lupe** = sorrow) signifies pain, of body or mind and means to cause one to experience severe mental or emotional distress or physical pain which may be accompanied by sadness, to feel or cause to feel great sorrow or distress. To grieve means to feel pain of mind or heart; to be in pain on account of an evil; to sorrow; to mourn. The King James' sometimes translates **lupeo** as **heaviness** which parallels our colloquial sayings such as "*It weighs heavy on my soul*" or "*My soul is weighed down with affliction.*" or "*My soul is so burdened.*" **Lupeo** is the verb Matthew used to describe the disciples' **grief** when Jesus told them about His coming death and resurrection (Mt 17:22, 23). The rich young ruler was "grieved" (Mt 19:21) when Jesus explained what it would "cost" to truly follow Him (Mt 19:22, Mk 10:22 -- **note** that Jesus was [is] not teaching salvation is achieved by divesting oneself of his possessions [nothing can ever substitute for the precious blood of the Lamb], but he was teaching that if the ruler desired earthly riches over eternal life, he had not yet come to a point of genuine repentance and faith in Jesus.) At the last supper when Jesus prophesied that one of the 12 disciples would betray Him (Mt 26:21), they became grieved (Mt 26:22, Mk 14:19 -- If Judas Iscariot "grieved", his grief was doubtless a sham, a charade and not indicative of a broken heart.) **Lupeo** describes the grief of our Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to His arrest, mock trial and crucifixion (Mt 26:37). Jesus predicted His disciples would be sorrowful (**lupeo**) after His crucifixion. (Jn 16:20). **Lupeo** is a component of genuine repentance (2Co 7:9, 10). **Lupeo** is the effect sinning believers can have on the Holy Spirit of God (Eph 4:30-note). The sure truth of a future **Rapture** was Paul's "antidote" for the Thessalonian believers who were grieving (**lupeo**) over their fellow believers who had already "fallen asleep"

(died) (1Th 4:13-note). Peter used *lupeo* in his first epistle to describe the effect of trials on believers (1Pe 1:6-note).

---

I would imagine Peter would have loved the words of the old favorite hymn by Elizabeth P Prentiss...

### [More Love to Thee, O Christ](#)

More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to Thee!  
Hear Thou the prayer I make on bended knee;  
This is my earnest plea: More love, O Christ, to Thee,  
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!

Once earthly joy I craved, sought peace and rest;  
Now Thee alone I seek, give what is best.  
This all my prayer shall be: More love, O Christ to Thee;  
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!

Let sorrow do its work, come grief or pain;  
Sweet are Thy messengers, sweet their refrain,  
When they can sing with me: More love, O Christ, to Thee;  
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!

Then shall my latest breath whisper Thy praise;  
This be the parting cry my heart shall raise;  
This still its prayer shall be: More love, O Christ to Thee;  
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!

---

### **Oswald Chambers - The Undeviating Question - John 21:17 "Do you love Me?"**

Peter's response to this piercing question is considerably different from the bold defiance he exhibited only a few days before when he declared, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" (Mt 26:35 ; also see Mt 26:33, 34). Our natural individuality, or our natural self, boldly speaks out and declares its feelings. But the true love within our inner spiritual self can be discovered only by experiencing the hurt of this question of Jesus Christ. Peter loved Jesus in the way any natural man loves a good person. Yet that is nothing but emotional love. It may reach deeply into our natural self, but it never penetrates to the spirit of a person. True love never simply declares itself. Jesus said, "Whoever confesses Me before men [that is, confesses his love by everything he does, not merely by his words], him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God" (Lk 12:8).

Unless we are experiencing the hurt of facing every deception about ourselves, we have hindered the work of the Word of God in our lives. The Word of God inflicts hurt on us more than sin ever could, because sin dulls our senses. But this question of the Lord intensifies our sensitivities to the point that this hurt produced by Jesus is the most exquisite pain conceivable. It hurts not only on the natural level, but also on the deeper spiritual level. "For the Word of God is living and powerful ... , piercing even to the division of soul and spirit ... "— to the point that no deception can remain (Hebrews 4:12). When the Lord asks us this question, it is impossible to think and respond properly, because when the Lord speaks directly to us, the pain is too intense. It causes such a tremendous hurt that any part of our life which may be out of line with His will can feel the pain. There is never any mistaking the pain of the Lord's Word by His children, but the moment that pain is felt is the very moment at which God reveals His truth to us. ([The Undeviating Question](#))

---

### [My Jesus, I Love Thee](#)

by William R Featherston

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;  
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.  
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love Thee because Thou has first loved me,  
And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree.  
I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow;

If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death,  
And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;  
And say when the death dew lies cold on my brow,  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight,  
I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright;  
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow;  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

---

**Feed My Sheep** - Just before Jesus left this earth, He instructed Simon Peter to care for the dearest object of His love—His sheep. How could anyone care for them as Jesus cares? Only out of love for Him. There is no other way.

Three times Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love Me?” Peter answered, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” Each time, Jesus answered, “Feed My sheep.”

**Was Jesus unaware of Peter's love?** Of course not. His threefold question was not for Himself, but for Peter. He asked His questions to underscore the essential truth that **only love for Christ** would sustain Peter in the work that lay ahead—that arduous, demanding work of caring for people's souls—perhaps the hardest work of all.

Jesus did not ask Peter if he loved His sheep, but if he loved Him. Affection for God's people in itself will not sustain us. His sheep can be unresponsive, unappreciative, and harshly critical of our efforts to love and to serve them. In the end, we will find ourselves defeated and discouraged.

The “love of Christ”—our love for Him—is the only sufficient motivation that will enable us to stay the course, to continue to feed the flock of God. Thus Jesus asks you and me, “Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.” — by David H. Roper (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

More about Jesus would I know,  
More of His grace to others show,  
More of His saving fullness see,  
More of His love who died for me.  
—Hewitt

**It is love for Christ  
that will enable us to love His children.**

---

**Oswald Chambers "Have You Felt The Hurt Of The Lord?"...**

'Jesus said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me?' John 21:17 Have you felt the hurt of the Lord to the uncovered quick, the place where the real sensitiveness of your life is lodged? The devil never hurts there, neither sin nor human affection hurts there, nothing goes through to that place but the word of God. "Peter was grieved because Jesus said unto him the third time... " He was awakening to the fact that in the real true centre of his personal life he was devoted to Jesus, and he began to see what the patient questioning meant. There was not the slightest strand of delusion (or doubt) left in Peter's mind, he never could be deluded again. There was no room for passionate utterance, no room for exhilaration or sentiment. It was a revelation to Peter to realize how much he did love the Lord, and with amazement he simply said - "Lord, You know all things." Peter had begun to understand how much he did love Jesus; but he did not say - "Look at this or that to confirm it or as proof of my love." Peter was beginning to discover within himself how much he did love the Lord, and that there was no one in heaven above or upon earth beneath beside Jesus Christ. But he did not know it until the probing, hurting questions of the Lord were asked. The Lord's questions always reveal the true me to myself.

Oh, the wonder of the patient directness and skill of Jesus Christ with Peter! Our Lord never asks questions until the right time. Rarely, but probably once in each of our lives, He will get us into a corner where He will hurt us with His piercing questions. Then we will realize that we do love Him far more deeply than any profession can ever show.



---

## JOHN 21:17

READ: Matthew 26:69-75

IN the last day of the 1979 spring training season, Steve Kemp, left fielder for the Detroit Tigers, was hit in the head with a pitched ball and taken to the hospital. But on opening day of the regular season he stepped up to the plate with confidence and socked a single. The next time at bat he hit a home run. During a postgame interview he said,

"After I was hit, I just told myself, 'I can't let it bother me. . . . If you let it bother you, you're not going to be any good to yourself or your team.'"

The apostle Peter responded to a bitter experience in much the same way. He had been hit hard by a pitch from the enemy. Peter had promised that he would follow Christ even if it meant death. But just a short time later he did the unthinkable—he denied his Lord.

That miserable failure could have caused him to quit. But Peter didn't give up—because Jesus didn't give up on him. After the Lord encouraged him (John 21:15-19), Peter got up and went to bat for the Gospel. And with God's help, he brought a lot of people "home."

There is comfort in knowing that even after we have been sidelined by personal failure, God wants to restore us and get us back into the game.—M R DII (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, thank You for Your kind and gracious response to Peter's tragic failure. You didn't even make him beg for forgiveness; You simply asked him to feed Your sheep. How unlike my response to failure. I think people should be removed from service and put in an accountability group. But You seem to imply that service is accountability.

**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."**

- **but:** Jn 13:36 Ac 12:3,4
- **another:** Ac 21:11
- **You do not wish:** Jn 12:27,28 2Co 5:4
- John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Truly, truly** ([amen](#), [amen](#)) This introduction is only used by John and always introduces an important truth - John 1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24f; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20f, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21:18

**I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird** ([zonnumi](#)) **yourself and walk wherever you wished** ([thelo](#)) - You were in control of what happened (or at least that is what you thought).

**but when** - Always stop and ask what is being contrasted (see **contrasts**)?

**you grow old, you will stretch out** ([ekteino](#)) **your hands and someone else will gird** ([zonnumi](#)) **you**, A prophecy of Peter's death by crucifixion. When Jesus commanded Peter "Follow Me", it was literally to follow Jesus unto the death. Tradition (Eusebius) states that Peter was eventually put to death by being crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to die like his Lord. If you return to the Lord, make a renewed commitment and be recommissioned, you need to realize that this is a serious decision! Peter is told that obedience to Jesus carries a price. God expects us to be serious about our decision and He expects us to follow Him in a sacrificial lifestyle that places His will above our own. That is the only formula for true success in the Christian life.

**Bring you where you do not wish** ([thelo](#)) **to go** - This should not be interpreted as an implication of Peter's unwillingness to die, but the natural shrinking anyone would have from a cruel death, especially death by agonizing crucifixion. If you knew you were to be crucified, how would it affect your actions. Peter was focused and for the next 3 decades faithfully served the Lord he loved, feeding the sheep, some of that food including two epistles that had exhortations such as...

If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone

suffers as a Christian (the very thing that would happen to Peter), he is not to be ashamed (what a contrast to when he denied Jesus three times), but is to glorify God in this name (as Jn 21:19 says Peter's death would glorify God). (1Pet 4:14, 15, 16-note).

**MacArthur** comments "Jesus' prophecy of Peter's martyrdom underscores the truth that commitment to Him may require paying the ultimate price. "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me," Jesus had told the disciples when He commissioned them. Then He warned, "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it" (Mt. 10:38, 39; cf. Mt 16:24, 25, 26; Ro 14:8; Php 1:21).

---

**Gird** (2224) **zonnumi** means to bind with something round or circular. It describes the act of putting on a girdle (belt, sash) or to gird around the loins for either conflict or service. During the night the long-flowing undergarment was loosened, then fastened up by day, so as not to impede movements

There are only 2 uses of **zonnumi** in the NT - (1) In the active voice it means to gird on, put on, as a belt or piece of armor - Jesus uses **zonnumi** twice in prophesying of Peter's death declaring "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." (Jn 21.18). (2) In the middle voice **zonnumi** speaks of fastening up a loose garment for working or walking and is the sense here in Acts 12:8. The angel is preparing Peter to walk out of the prison! How interesting that this verb **zonnumi** on one hand describes Peter's certain future martyrdom and on the other hand speaks in this context of Peter being set free from almost certain martyrdom at the hands of Herod.

**Stretch out** ((1614)**ekteino** from **ek** = out + **teino** = to stretch) means stretch out literally, as a gesture with one's hand stretched out. Jesus' stretched His hands out "toward His disciples" (Mt 12:49), to Peter drowning (Mt 14:31), to the leper (Mk 1:41, Mt 8:3, Lk 5:13, cf healing in Acts 4:30). **Ekteino** is used of the stretching out of Paul's hand as he prepared to offer his verbal defense (Acts 26:1). **Ekteino** refers to Jesus telling the lame man to stretch out his hand (Mt 12:13, Mk 3:5, Lk 6:10). **Ekteino** can mean stretching out one's hands with a hostile intent to lay hands on or arrest (Lk 22:53). As a euphemistic figure of speech referring to one's hands stretched out in crucifixion (Jn 21.18).

**Wish** (2309)**(thelo)** refers to a desire that comes from one's emotions. It describes an active decision of the will, implying volition and purpose; conscious willing and denotes a more active resolution urging on to action.

---

**Oswald Chambers** - After Surrender - What? -

'I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.' John 17:4

**Surrender** is not the surrender of the external life, but of the will; when that is done, all is done. There are very few crises in life; the great crisis is the surrender of the will. God never crushes a man's will into surrender, He never beseeches him, He waits until the man yields up his will to Him. That battle never needs to be re-fought.

**Surrender for Deliverance.** "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." It is after we have begun to experience what salvation means that we surrender our wills to Jesus for rest. Whatever is perplexing heart or mind is a call to the will - "Come unto Me." It is a voluntary coming.

**Surrender for Devotion.** "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." The surrender here is of my self to Jesus, my self with His rest at the heart of it. "If you would be My disciple, give up your right to yourself to Me." Then the remainder of the life is nothing but the manifestation of this surrender. When once the surrender has taken place we never need "suppose" anything. We do not need to care what our circumstances are, Jesus is amply sufficient.

**Surrender for Death.** John 21:18-19. "... another shall gird thee." Have you learned what it means to be bound for death? Beware of a surrender which you make to God in an ecstasy; you are apt to take it back again. It is a question of being united with Jesus in His death until nothing ever appeals to you that did not appeal to Him.

**After surrender - what?** The whole of the life after surrender is an aspiration for unbroken communion with God. ([Oswald Chambers - After Surrender - What](#))

**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!**"

- 
- **by:** Php 1:20 1Pe 4:11-14 2Pe 1:14
  - **Follow:** Jn 21:22 12:26 13:36,37 Nu 14:24 1Sa 12:20 Mt 10:38 16:21-25 19:28 Mk 8:33-38 Lk 9:22-26
  - John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JESUS PREDICTS PETER'S CRUCIFIXION

**Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.**- Peter ran from a violent death at his first confrontation, but now would be willing to face it again for the glory of God. The purpose of Peter's life was to bring glory to God. The idea of "**glorify**" is to give a proper opinion of someone, in this case Peter's visible actions and choices would serve to give a proper opinion to others of the great invisible God.

**Phil Newton** writes that "Throughout the ages, we have had recorded for us the testimony of men, women, and even children who faced violent deaths for their faith in Jesus Christ. Some were burned to death, others were drowned, still others faced the executioner's axe. In our own day there are multiplied thousands who face torture, imprisonment, and violent deaths because of their faith in Christ. This is our lot as God's people. The death of a Christian is never in vain but to glorify God. For in each death the believer is ushered from this life into the glories of eternity with Jesus Christ. He triumphs because Christ triumphed for him. His death is a testimony of Christ's triumph. The message to Peter and to all of us who know the Lord Jesus is be faithful unto death. ([The Fallen Restored](#))

**And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow ([akoloutho](#)) Me," - Follow ([akoloutho](#))** is in the [present imperative](#) which called for Peter [to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#). This command would surely remind Peter of the words he first heard some 3 years earlier on the same Galilean shore (Mt 4:19, 20+)

**John MacArthur** writes that...Following Jesus Christ is the sine qua non of the Christian life. In John 12:26 Jesus put it simply: "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me." It is the mark of His sheep that they follow Him (Jn 10:27; cf. Jn 8:12), no matter what the cost (Mt. 16:24; 19:27; Lk 5:11, 27,28; 9:23, 24, 25; 18:28). To follow Jesus means not only to be willing to sacrifice everything in submission to His will, but also to obey His commands (Mt. 7:21; Lk 6:46) and to imitate Him (1Th. 1:6; 1 John 2:6; cf. 1Co 11:1). ([MacArthur, J: John 12-21. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Spurgeon** - Thus was erring Peter fully restored. How mightily would that word "follow me" ring in his ears and influence his whole future. Follow me in doctrine, follow me in practice, follow me in sufferings, follow me in death, follow me to glory. May the Lord say to each one of us with power, FOLLOW ME. (The Interpreter)

**Yogi Berra** is known for his oft-repeated quips like, "It ain't over till it's over" and "It's like déjà vu all over again!" That's what Peter may have thought when he heard those words "**Follow Me**." Here we see Jesus repeat the call He first made to Peter in Mt 4:19. This should encourage all of us that Jesus calls us to follow Him and repeats His call when necessary.

**Alan Carr** comments on Jesus' call "Follow Me"...When Jesus found Peter and called him the first time, this was His command, Mt 4:19. When he re-commissions Peter, He issues the same call. This tells us that the Lord hasn't changed His mind about Peter or about Peter's duty before the Lord. Regardless of how deep you may have fallen into sin, please know today that the Lord hasn't changed His mind about you! You might want to repent and come home to Him, but feel that if you do you will be some kind of second class saint. That is just not true! God gives the same command to you today that He gave to Peter then, "Follow me!" All Jesus wants from you is a surrendered life; one that is lived for the glory of God; one that exalts Him and one that is lived in His will and service. He simply wants you to follow Him! (Remember Jonah – God is the God is the second-chance! ([Tender Moment](#)))

**John Broadus** comments on the significance of Jesus' prophecy of Peter's crucifixion...

Dimly and yet plainly it meant that he should be crucified. And was that all that the loving Lord had to promise as a reward for a man who professed that he did love him? You loves Me, then serve Me faithfully, and for so doing, when thou are old you shall be crucified. It sounds somewhat strange. But Jesus added "This he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God." Ah! that sheds light on it; a man that loves the Lord Jesus Christ is a man that means to live so as to **glorify God**. He promised Simon Peter a death of suffering and outward shame, but in that death he should **glorify God**.

My brethren, we live in a world of failures. How many businessmen in this city fail sometime or other. We live in a time of failures.

**Everything in this world is in danger of failing except one thing: a man who is really living to glorify God-that man will not fail, that end will be accomplished.**

It may not be in the way you had fancied or preferred, but in the way which He sees to be more for your good and more for His glory. You wanted to **glorify Him** in a long life crowded with useful deeds. He may appoint that you shall **glorify Him** by an early death. You wanted to **glorify Him** with ample means, which you would scatter far abroad with holy love; He may want you to bear poverty with dignity. You thought you would **glorify Him** in a life of health and strength, doing good in the world; and He may have thought to try you amid the sufferings of a sickbed.

**It is not for a laborer in the vineyard to choose himself where he will work, but only to work where he is placed. We know not what awaits us, but if in simplicity and godly sincerity, in such calling and circumstances as providence assigns us, we do make it our aim to glorify God, then whatever crashes and falls around us, life will not be failure, but will show our love and glorify our Saviour!** ([John A. Broadus - Loving Jesus Christ](#))

**NET NOTE** - This is a parenthetical note by the author. The phrase by what kind of death Peter was going to glorify God almost certainly indicates martyrdom (cf. 1 Pet 4:16), and it may not predict anything more than that. But the parallelism of this phrase to similar phrases in John 12:33 and 18:32 which describe Jesus' own death by crucifixion have led many to suggest that the picture Jesus is portraying for Peter looks not just at martyrdom but at death by crucifixion. This seems to be confirmed by the phrase you will stretch out your hands in the preceding verse. There is some evidence that the early church understood this and similar phrases (one of them in Isa 65:2) to refer to crucifixion (for a detailed discussion of the evidence see L. Morris, John [NICNT], 876, n. 52). Some have objected that if this phrase does indeed refer to crucifixion, the order within v. 18 is wrong, because the stretching out of the hands in crucifixion precedes the binding and leading where one does not wish to go. R. E. Brown (John [AB], 2:1108) sees this as a deliberate reversal of the normal order (hysteron proteron) intended to emphasize the stretching out of the hands. Another possible explanation for the unusual order is the Roman practice in crucifixions of tying the condemned prisoner's arms to the crossbeam (patibulum) and forcing him to carry it to the place of execution (W. Bauer as cited by O. Cullmann in Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr [LHD], 88).

**Oswald Chambers** comments that...

Between these times (**follow Me** - Mt 4:19 and Jn 21:19) Peter had denied Jesus with oaths and curses, he had come to the end of himself and all his self-sufficiency, there was not one strand of himself he would ever rely upon again, and in his destitution he was in a fit condition to receive an impartation from the risen Lord. "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." No matter what changes God has wrought in you, never rely upon them, build only on a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, and on the Spirit He gives.

All our vows and resolutions end in denial because we have no power to carry them out. When we have come to the end of ourselves, not in imagination but really, we are able to receive the Holy Spirit. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" - the idea is that of invasion. There is only one lodestar in the life now, the Lord Jesus Christ. ([The Afterwards Of The Life Of Power](#))

---

**Follow** (190) **akoloutheo** from **a** = expresses union with, likeness + **keleuthos** = way, road ~ on going in the same way = walk the same road) literally means to go or walk after or along behind someone (Mt 9:19, 27, 20:29, Mk 10:52, Peter at Jesus' "trial" Mt 26:58, Mk 14:54) and can describe a crowd that goes along with (Mt 4:25, 8:1, 21:9). Take the same road as another does. **Akoloutheo** can also mean to accompany someone who takes the lead (Mt 4:25, 8:1, 12:15, 14:13, Mk 5:24, Lk 7:9, 9:11, Jn 6:2). Figuratively, **akoloutheo** means to follow someone as a disciple and thus it describes a commitment to discipleship (Mt 4:20, 22, 9:9, 8:19, 23, 9:9 (Matthew's call to follow), Mt 19:21, 27, Mk 1:18, 2:14, 8:34, Jn 8:12, 10:4, 5, 27).

In classic Greek usage, the figurative sense of **akoloutheo** conveyed the idea of imitating or following someone's example ("follow someone's opinion... adapt oneself" NIDNTT). This same sense was adopted by the NT writers especially when they used **akoloutheo** in the context of discipleship. A number of passages emphasize that some said they would follow Jesus, but the price put them off -- the man who had family responsibilities (Mt 8:18, 19, 20, 21, 22); the rich young ruler (Mk 10:17, 18, 19, 20, 21; Lk 18:22, 23). Throughout the Gospels we see that the true disciples obeyed Christ's command to **follow** Him (without reservation, hesitation or rationalization). Matthew gave up his tax business (Mt. 9:9; Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27). Peter packed in his fishing and followed Jesus (Mt 4:18, 19, 20; Mk 1:16, 17, 18, 19, 20). This principal of wholeheartedly, fully following Jesus is the cornerstone of true discipleship (Lk 9:23).

It follows that discipleship is much more than simply strolling with the Saviour. It means following His lifestyle. Following the Lord means alignment with His kingdom (Mt 9:61, 62). Eternal life is defined as following Jesus (Mk 10:17, 21; Jn 8:12).

**Wayne Detzler** writes...Jesus placed a high priority on following. Those who do not take up the cross and follow Him are not

worthy of Him (Mt. 10:38). This involves counting the cost of discipleship before jumping in at the deep end (Lk 14:27-33). For the disciples of Jesus' day, following Him meant identification with Him in His entire life. Those who followed Jesus had no secure home; they were "transients" as He was (Mt 8:19, 20). Those who followed Jesus were committed to go forward and never look back (Luke 9:61, 62). Following Jesus meant taking the daily risk of losing one's life, or at least losing control over one's life (Mk 8:34). On the verge of His passion Jesus again underlined the total commitment involved in following Him (John 12:25, 26). In writing on the subject of following, the German theologian **Gerhard Kittel** said: [Following Jesus] is not in any sense an imitation of the example of Jesus... but exclusively a fellowship of life and suffering with the Messiah which arises only in the fellowship of His salvation (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, I, p. 214). ([New Testament Words in Today's Language](#))

**Akoloutheo** - Matt. 4:20; Matt. 4:22; Matt. 4:25; Matt. 8:1; Matt. 8:10; Matt. 8:19; Matt. 8:22; Matt. 8:23; Matt. 9:9; Matt. 9:19; Matt. 9:27; Matt. 10:38; Matt. 12:15; Matt. 14:13; Matt. 16:24; Matt. 19:2; Matt. 19:21; Matt. 19:27; Matt. 19:28; Matt. 20:29; Matt. 20:34; Matt. 21:9; Matt. 26:58; Matt. 27:55; Mk. 1:18; Mk. 2:14; Mk. 2:15; Mk. 3:7; Mk. 5:24; Mk. 6:1; Mk. 8:34; Mk. 9:38; Mk. 10:21; Mk. 10:28; Mk. 10:32; Mk. 10:52; Mk. 11:9; Mk. 14:13; Mk. 14:54; Mk. 15:41; Lk. 5:11; Lk. 5:27; Lk. 5:28; Lk. 7:9; Lk. 9:11; Lk. 9:23; Lk. 9:49; Lk. 9:57; Lk. 9:59; Lk. 9:61; Lk. 18:22; Lk. 18:28; Lk. 18:43; Lk. 22:10; Lk. 22:39; Lk. 22:54; Lk. 23:27; Jn. 1:37; Jn. 1:38; Jn. 1:40; Jn. 1:43; Jn. 6:2; Jn. 8:12; Jn. 10:4; Jn. 10:5; Jn. 10:27; Jn. 11:31; Jn. 12:26; Jn. 13:36; Jn. 13:37; Jn. 18:15; Jn. 20:6; Jn. 21:19; Jn. 21:20; Jn. 21:22; Acts 12:8; Acts 12:9; Acts 13:43; Acts 21:36; 1 Co. 10:4; Rev. 6:8; Rev. 14:4; Rev. 14:8; Rev. 14:9; Rev. 14:13; Rev. 19:14

---

### John Bennett [Day by Day: Bible Commands](#) FOLLOW THOU ME

After the Lord had commissioned Peter for his shepherding task, He outlined to Him the future course of his life and work. His ministry would end in martyrdom. Peter's hands would be stretched out on a cross. In dying for the sake of the Lord Jesus, he would glorify God. Peter's declaration that he would lay down his life for the Saviour would come to pass, Jn 13:37. He would drink the cup of sorrow and share the baptism of suffering with his Lord, Mark 10:38.

After these predictions the Lord told Peter, 'follow ... me'. The way of discipleship is the way of the cross. For the follower of Christ, dying to self is the pathway to life. As the shadow of the cross loomed before Him, the Lord had declared that if anyone sought to serve Him, He must follow Him, 12:26.

With understandable concern for one of his closest friends, Peter then enquired about John, 'Lord, what about this man?', ESV. After all, no prediction of his future ministry had been given. The Lord responded 'if it is my will, that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me', ESV.

Peter was being taught that 'the Lord had His own plans for the beloved disciple', BRUCE.

It was not necessary for him to know them. Basically, the Lord said to Peter, albeit lovingly, 'mind your own business', MILNE.

John and Peter each had their own ministry to fulfil from the Lord. We can be over-interested in the service of others. Each Christian's responsibility is to the Lord Himself, Rom. 14:7-12. He assesses our faithfulness and judges our contribution to His work.

Peter's task was to carry out the commission that he had received and not to concern himself with the service John might be given. Above all, his eye had to be fixed on the Master alone. His focus had to be on Christ. He had to avoid being distracted from his chief concern of following Him. The Lord, for the third time, commands Peter to follow Him, v. 19; cf. Matt. 4:19. The path of discipleship is one of personal commitment of the individual believer. It is to the Lord Himself that each belongs. To Him each of us will eventually give account. It is Christ that we must daily seek to follow.

---

**Our Lord's Command** - Jesus asked Simon Peter a heart-searching question long ago on the seashore in Galilee: "Do you love Me?" (John 21:15-17). Then the risen Lord told His disciple Peter that his future would lead to martyrdom. And Peter accepted that destiny without complaint.

But then Peter asked about the apostle John's future (Jn 21:21). We can only guess what motivated his question. Was it brotherly concern? Was it fleshly curiosity? Was it resentment because he thought that John might be spared a martyr's death?

Whatever Peter's motive, Jesus responded with a counter-question that applied not just to Peter but to every follower of His: "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me" (Jn 21:22). In that question, Jesus was saying in essence, "Don't worry about what happens in the life of anybody else. Your task is to keep following Me steadfastly."

**It is so easy to let our relationship with the Lord be overly influenced by the behavior and experiences of others.** But we must not be concerned with what God has planned for anyone else. Through the conflicting voices that surround us, we must keep

hearing the Savior's clear command: "You follow Me." — by Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult  
Of our life's wild, restless sea,  
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,  
Saying, "Christian, follow Me." —Alexander

**To find your way through life,  
follow Jesus.**

---

**Feeding Jesus' Sheep** - What will keep us serving the Lord in our church and community when the going gets tough? Although we may be sensitive to the needs of others, that alone isn't enough. Nor should we be driven by a need that we have—a desire to be appreciated or loved by others. Our needs are deep, and only God can satisfy them. The more we try to satisfy them with anything else—even God's work—the more dissatisfied we will become.

Even love for God's people, His sheep, won't keep us going. People can be unlovable and insufferable. We may come to resent them.

No, the only sufficient incentive for service is our love for the Lord, and it's the love of Christ that compels us (2Corinthians 5:14-note). No other motivation will do. In *My Utmost For His Highest*, Oswald Chambers wrote,

"If we are devoted to the cause of humanity, we shall soon be crushed and brokenhearted,... but if our motive is to love God, no ingratitude can hinder us from serving our fellowmen."

In one of His last conversations with Peter, Jesus asked him, **'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?'** Peter answered, **'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.'** Jesus then said, **"Feed My sheep"** (John 21:17).

Are you motivated by love for Christ?— by David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to Thee!  
Hear Thou the prayer I make on bended knee;  
This is my earnest plea: More love, O Christ, to Thee,  
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!  
—Prentiss

**To love Christ is to serve Christ.**

---

**John Broadus**

Let me close as the Lord himself closed the conversation. After telling Simon Peter what he must do out of love for him, he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee; When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Dimly, and yet plainly, it meant that he should be crucified. And was that all that the loving Lord had to promise as a reward for a man who professed that he did love him? Thou lovest me, then serve me faithfully, and for so doing, When thou art old thou shalt be crucified. It looks strange. "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." Ah! that sheds light on it; a man that loves the Lord Jesus Christ is a man that means to live so as to glorify God. He promised Simon Peter a death of suffering and outward shame, but in that death he should glorify God.

My brethren, we live in a world of failures. How many businessmen in this city fail sometime or other. We live in a time of failures. Everything in this world is in danger of failing except one thing: a man who is really living to glorify God—that man will not fail, that end will be accomplished. It may not be in the way you had fancied or preferred, but in the way which he sees to be more for your good and more for his glory. You wanted to glorify him in a long life crowded with useful deeds; he may appoint that you shall glorify him by an early death. You wanted to glorify him with ample means, which you would scatter far abroad with holy love; he may want you to bear poverty with dignity. You thought you would glorify him in a life of health and strength, doing good in the world; and he may have thought to try you amid the sufferings of a sickbed. It is not for a laborer in the



vineyard to choose himself where he will work, but only to work where he is placed. We know not what awaits us, but if in simplicity and godly sincerity, in such calling and circumstances as providence assigns us, we do make it our aim to glorify God, then whatever crashes and falls around us, life will not be failure, but will show our love and glorify our Saviour!

---

**James Smith on "Follow Me"...**

Jesus says, "Follow Me!" and for all who follow, he provides everything necessary for the journey. He will feed with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock--all who cleave unto him with full purpose of heart. His promises are marrow and fatness; his presence is a delightful feast, which those often taste who live near him in the exercise of faith and fellowship.

He who follows Jesus may safely trust all his concerns in his hands--he will order, arrange, and manage all for him with infinite wisdom and unparalleled prudence. None walk so safely, so consistently, or so prosperously, as those who step, or endeavor to step in all the Savior's foot-marks. He will warn them of danger, protect them from harm, comfort them with tokens of his love, and bless them with the Spirit in their hearts. He will compass them with favor as with a shield, feed them with the heritage of Jacob their father, give them more grace--nor will he withhold one good thing from them.

But there can be no following Jesus to purpose, unless we are brought to resign ourselves and all that belongs to us, into his hands. Until we can bring all we have, and all we are--and lay it down at the Savior's feet, and write upon it with our own hand, guided by a willing heart, "This is the Lord's!" --we shall make but poor work of following Jesus. If we have many interests, each will call to us, have a claim on us, and a demand from us; but if our interests are all merged in the interests of Jesus, our interest being his, and his ours--then we shall proceed with pleasure, satisfaction and willingness.

Most men are willing to follow their treasures--but few are willing to leave them. Just so, unless Jesus becomes our treasure, our portion, our all--we shall not follow him heartily, cheerfully, or universally.

Reader, have you anything you have not resigned to Jesus? have you anything which you cannot deliberately and heartily give up into his hands? If so, you will find it a burden on the mind, a plague to the soul, a disease at the heart! You will make but sorry progress at any time, and no progress at all in stripping times: for he can never cheerfully give up for Jesus, who has not first given up to Jesus.

There will be no following Jesus to purpose, unless we believe in his revealed character. Unless we can believe he is wise, merciful, and faithful--we shall never follow him far or freely. How can I trust myself with an unwise, unmerciful, or treacherous person? It is impossible. One great reason why we do not follow Jesus fully, is founded in our ignorance of, or lack of faith in, what Jesus is. He who believes heartily that Christ is what the gospel says he is, and what saints in every age have proved him to be--can trust Jesus with all, and leave himself and all his concerns in his hands.

My brother, are you afraid to trust Jesus--to follow Jesus, or afraid you shall be a loser by Jesus? If so, you do not know him, or you do not fully believe the testimony God has given of his Son. O what comparatively happy lives we would live, if we practically believed Jesus to be what he really is--the kind, tender-hearted, gracious, faithful, and ever-loving Friend of sinners.

We shall never fully accept this invitation, until we are fully persuaded that our happiness, holiness, and safety are involved in it.

What can make me truly happy? The presence of Jesus and the light he graciously communicates. But how is this to be enjoyed? He tells me, "He who follows me, shall not walk in darkness--but shall have the light of life."

What can make me holy? Only the gracious work, teaching, and communications of the Holy Spirit. But what is the design of his work, teaching, and communications? To glorify Jesus; and herein is Jesus glorified, that his disciples forsake all and follow him wherever he goes. The holy flock always follow the sanctifying Shepherd.

In what consists my safety? In my Savior's watchful eye, potent arm, and loving heart. But when are the evidences of these being employed for us, enjoyed? Only when we are found following in his sacred footsteps.

But WHERE are we to follow Jesus? Wherever he goes, through evil report and good report. He is to be constantly set before us as our one grand object, and we are to run our race looking unto him. Follow him in all his holy institutions, and soul-feeding ordinances, in every self-denying path, in every arduous duty, and in every gracious privilege. Endeavor to imbibe his spirit. He was meek and lowly in heart. Prize and search his

word--for there his footprints are to be discovered. Look to his fullness for wisdom, strength, and all necessary provision. Rely on his faithful promise, in the most unfavorable circumstances. Trust his veracity in the dark uncomfortable night of trial and trouble. Follow him in sighs, cries, groans, and prayers, when you feel unable to follow him in any other way, and remember that he is always at your right hand, that you may not be greatly moved.

Expect much opposition from Satan, self, the world, and many professors of religion; but always bear in mind Jesus, who bought you with his blood, quickened you by his grace, and has promised you glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life--your Jesus says, "follow Me--not them." ([James Smith - Follow Me](#))

**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?"**

- **Saw:** Jn 21:7,24 20:2
- **Who:** Jn 13:23-26 20:2
- John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PETER SPOTS JOHN FOLLOWING**

**Peter, turning around** ([epistrepho](#)), **saw** the disciple ([mathetes](#)) whom Jesus loved ([agapao](#)) following ([akoloutheo](#)) them - Presumably Jesus and Peter were walking along the shore and Peter turned to look behind them.

**The one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays([paradidomi](#)) You"** - John identifies himself with a complete description.

**NET NOTE - the disciple whom Jesus loved,** This individual also is mentioned in Jn 19:26, Jn 20:2, Jn 21:7, and Jn 21:20. Some have suggested that this disciple is to be identified with Lazarus, since the Fourth Gospel specifically states that Jesus loved him (Jn 11:3, 5, 36). From the terminology alone this is a possibility; the author is certainly capable of using language in this way to indicate connections. But there is nothing else to indicate that Lazarus was present at the last supper; Mark 14:17 seems to indicate it was only the twelve who were with Jesus at this time, and there is no indication in the Fourth Gospel to the contrary. Nor does it appear that Lazarus ever stood so close to Jesus as the later references in John 19, 20 and 21 seem to indicate. When this is coupled with the omission of all references to John son of Zebedee from the Fourth Gospel, it seems far more likely that the references to the beloved disciple should be understood as references to him.

---

**Turning around** ([1994](#))([epistrepho](#) from [epí](#) = motion toward + [strepho](#) = twist, turn quite around or reverse) means to revert, to turn about, to turn around, to turn toward, to return and figuratively to convert. Apparently Jesus and Peter were walking along side by side when the preceding dialogue took place, but John (and possibly the other disciples) were following them.

**Betrays** ([3860](#))([paradidomi](#)) conveys the basic meaning of to give over from one's hand to someone or something, especially to give over to the power of another (to give over Jesus to the authorities).

---

**J R Miller** has a devotional on the phrase "the Disciple whom Jesus loved"...

The name of John is not once mentioned in all his gospel. Again and again the writer refers to himself as **the disciple whom Jesus loved.**" He has been criticized for this, as if he had been vain and self-conceited in thus speaking of his own distinction among the disciples. But no grace is more marked in John, than humility. He does not speak of himself as the disciple who loved Jesus. This would have been to claim preeminence among the disciples and would have shown a boastful and self-confident spirit. He said he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He glorified the grace of Christ. He was what he was--only because Christ loved him.

**Right here we have one of the deepest truths of Christian life, one of the great secrets of Christian peace, an essential quality of faith: that our hope does not rest in our love for Christ--but in His love for us.** People are often discouraged when they find in themselves so little that is good and beautiful. They cannot see that they love Christ any more this year, than they did last. They do not find in themselves the beautiful fruits of the Spirit which they wish they could find. But there is another way to look at our lives, which gives us more hope. **It is John's way--not our love for Christ--but Christ's love for us!**

At the best our love is variable in its moods and experiences. Today it glows with warmth and affection for Jesus, and we say that we could die for our Master. We know we love Him. Tomorrow, in some depression, we question whether we really love Him at all, our feelings respond so feebly to His name. A peace which depends on our loving Christ--is as variable as our own moods. But when it is Christ's love for us that is our dependence, our peace is undisturbed by any earthly changes.

**John 21:21 So Peter seeing him \*said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?"**

- **Lord:** Mt 24:3,4 Lk 13:23,24 Acts 1:6,7
- John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PETER QUERIES JESUS ABOUT JOHN'S FATE**

So ([oun](#)) is a [term of conclusion](#). After Peter turns around and sees John.

**Peter seeing him \*said to Jesus ([lesous](#)), "Lord ([kurios](#)), and what about this man** - - Literally, "but this man, what?" We cannot be certain of Peter's motive for this question - brotherly concern? fleshly curiosity? resentment (that John would not be martyred)?, etc. Some favor that since Peter had just learned his future fate, he now wanted to know what was the lot for John. The verse does begin with "so" or "therefore" ([oun](#)) which adds some support to this interpretation.

---

**Lord** ([2962](#)) ([kurios](#) from [kuros](#) = might or power) is that of a supreme one, one who is sovereign and possesses absolute authority, absolute ownership and uncontested power. **Kurios** is not merely a name that composes a title, but signifies a call to action so that every saint should willingly, reverently bow down to Jesus Christ. If Christ is our **Lord**, we are to live under Him, consciously, continually submitting our wills to him as His loyal, loving bondservants ("love slaves"), always seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness (Mt 6:33+).

---

**James Butler NOSEY John 21:21 [Sermon Starters](#)**

"Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?" (John 21:21).

Our text is part of the visit of Christ to some of the disciples who went fishing while waiting for Christ to come to Galilee after His resurrection. When Christ came on the scene, He worked a miracle in regards to the fishing and the disciples experienced a tremendous catch of fish. After the catch was brought to shore, Jesus and these disciples dined on fish and bread and then Christ asked three times if Peter loved him. After each answer Christ responded with a charge to feed his sheep. Duty and devotion were the theme of this conversation. At the conclusion of this conversation with Christ, Peter asked the question in our text. It was about the Apostle John. Peter wanted to know what his duties were.

### **FIRST—THE CARNALITY OF THE QUESTION**

"What shall this man do?"

This was a carnal question not a spiritual question. The answer would not help Peter spiritually. Christ had been dealing with Peter's devotion to Him and duty for Him. That was spiritual. But Peter's question was about John's duty. That was carnal. Peter was not so interested in growing spiritually as he was in satisfying his carnal interests.

### **SECOND—THE CURIOSITY OF THE QUESTION**

"What shall this man do."

It was not a question of conscience but of curiosity. Many read the Bible out of curiosity not out of conscience. They read the Bible to find where Cain got his wife, or if Moses married a black women, or if Adam and Eve ate an apple or other like non-important question. There are better reasons for studying the Bible than trying to learn the answer to these questions. Read the Bible to know how to live.

### **THIRD—THE CONCERN OF THE QUESTION**

"What shall this man do?"

Peter's question said he was more concerned about another's man duty than his own. That is a problem in every age. It is the

concern of gossips and busybodies (2 Thessalonians 3:11). We are often more concerned about what others are suppose to be doing than we are about what we are to be doing. Christ had just told Peter his duty. If Peter had been wise, he would have inquired into more details about his duty as did Samson's parents (Judges 13:8). Of course, Peter's question did not go over well with Christ and in the next verse Christ bluntly said to him, "What is that to thee, follow thou me.?" How instructive was Christ's answer. What did it matter to Peter what John's Divine duties were. Our main concern needs to be our own duty not someone else's duty. We are not doing out duty so well that we can be concerned carnally about how others are doing. Sometimes this concern shows our interest in our rights more than our responsibilities. But we need to be primarily concerned about how we treat others (our duty), not about how others treat us (their duty). [Sermon Starters](#)

---

**Father Knows Best** - You know you've been at this parenting thing a while when your children are old enough to compare notes about how you've raised them.

Lisa and Julie take this sport to new heights as they match quips about the differences in how we've treated them with such things as driving the car and how late they can stay out. Of course Lisa, who is older, remembers that we were much, much harder on her. Naturally Julie disagrees.

We handle each of our children differently for a very good reason. They are different! What's good for one may not be good for another.

In John 21, Jesus gave Peter a clue about some terrible things that would happen to him (Jn 21:18,19). Peter's reaction was to ask what was going to happen to John. But Jesus said that even if John were to escape death entirely, "What is that to you? You follow Me" (Jn 21:22). Christ has very different yet equally perfect plans for His servants.

Sometimes we look at others and wonder, "Why has God done good things for that person but not for me? Why do I suffer when others don't? Why are things hard for me?"

God places us in different situations for His perfect reasons. Instead of comparing ourselves to other believers, let's acknowledge that our Father knows best.— by Dave Branon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

God's way is the best way, though I may not see  
Why sorrows and trials oft gather 'round me;  
He ever is seeking my gold to refine,  
So humbly I trust Him, my Savior divine.  
—Leech

**God gives His best  
to those who leave the choice with Him.**

---

**The Cure for Resentment** - We may readily agree with the statement that "all men are created equal." But we don't have to live long before discovering that life treats some people better than others. This is something we must learn to accept without resentment.

Life's inequities show up on many levels. Cancer ravages the body of a child, while a hard-drinking chain-smoker lives to a ripe old age. Some people enjoy good health, others don't. Some have no physical disabilities, others have severe limitations. Some work hard and remain poor, while others are born to wealth or seem to get all the breaks.

When Jesus informed the apostle Peter that he was going to die as a martyr for his faith, Peter asked what would happen to his fellow disciple John. He seemed to think that it wouldn't be fair if John didn't die the same way. But Jesus told him that what would happen to John was not to be Peter's concern—that was God's decision. Peter's responsibility was simple: He was to follow Christ.

When looking at others makes you resent the unfairness of life, change your focus. Look to Jesus and follow Him. Life's injustices are only for a little while. Perfect fairness will be ours to enjoy forever in heaven. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

At times our path is rough and steep,  
Our way is hard to see;  
We ask God, "Why is life unfair?"  
He answers, "**Follow Me.**"

**John 21:22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"**

- If: Mt 16:27,28 24:3,27,44 25:31 Mk 9:1 1Co 4:5 11:26 Rev 1:7 2:25 Rev 3:11 22:7,20
- **Follow:** Jn 21:19
- John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**JESUS' LAST WORDS**  
**FOLLOW ME!**

Jesus as so often answers a question with a question of His own. In essence He is saying that Peter (and applicable to all believers) is not to worry about what happens in the life of another believer, but instead is to persevere in following Jesus!

**Jesus (Iesous) said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"** - Jesus clearly predicts His **Second Coming** and with the phrase "if I want him to remain", He leaves open the possibility of returning in their lifetime. The early church lived in the light of eager expectancy of Christ's return. It is also notable that approximately one in every twenty verses in the NT alludes directly or indirectly to the return of Christ. This is the believer's blessed hope and serves as a strong motivation to live each day for His glory, for we know not what day He may choose to return. The apostle John puts it this way...

And now, little children, **abide** (present imperative = command to make this your lifestyle, your daily practice - tarry with Jesus, walk with Him as your best Friend, immerse yourself in His Word Jn 8:31, yield to His Spirit, make it your ambition to live in a manner pleasing to Him) in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence (parrhesia = literally "all speech" = freedom to say all, openness that stems from lack of fear [sins are confessed, you're walking in the light], boldness) and not shrink away from Him in shame at **His coming** (parousia = in context signifies His Second Coming). (1Jn 2:28+, cp "love His appearing" in 2Ti 4:8+, "eagerly wait for Him" in Heb 9:28+)

**Vance Havner** on **what is that to you** - Our Lord was never sidetracked by the secondary. Whether questioned about tribute to Caesar, dividing an inheritance, or why a Jew should ask a drink of water from a Samaritan, He always stuck to the main issue. We must resist the intrusion of the irrelevant. **what is that to thee? follow thou me.**"

*Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might;  
for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom  
in Sheol where you are going.*  
-- Eccl 9:10

**Spurgeon Study Bible** - **What is that to you? As for you, follow me.**" The main thing we have to do in this world is to seek after Christ until we find him as our Savior; or, in other words, the first thing for us to do is to look to him, to trust in him. We live in vain if we do not live for God, and if we do not live by faith in Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior. It is better for us never to have been born than to live and die without faith in Jesus Christ. We must make our souls our first concern, for what will it profit us if we gain the whole world and lose our souls? After we are saved, the main business of our lives is still to follow Christ. When sin is pardoned and the eternal safety of the soul is ensured, the next thing is to seek the purity of the soul and to secure a character that will be worth having throughout eternity. There is no character worth having that is not fashioned according to the character of Christ. He is absolute perfection. In him is nothing redundant, and from him nothing is omitted that ought to be there. To be perfect, we must be like Jesus. "Keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2), we are to conquer sins and wrong desires and, in the power of God's Spirit, cultivate grace and virtue. If I am a Christian, I am to mold my doctrinal opinions, my thoughts, words, character, and acts after the model of Christ's.

**NET NOTE** - Grk "to stay" or "to remain"; but since longevity is the issue in the context, "to live" conveys the idea more clearly.

**You follow (akoloutheo) Me** - **Follow (akoloutheo)** is in the **present imperative** which called for Peter **to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey**. These are not the very last words of Jesus before His ascension (see Acts 1:7, 8) but they are the last words of the Gospel of John. It is interesting that Jesus issued the same command (Follow Me) at the beginning of this Gospel (Jn 1:43). Clearly Jesus wants us to remember that being a Christian is not just believing in a Person in an abstract sense, but that it constitutes believing in the Person of Jesus to the point that we turn our back on all else and seek to follow Him!

**James Montgomery Boice** comments on "**Follow Me**"...These... last words of Christ may be difficult to obey (**ED: THEY ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO OBEY AND ONLY POSSIBLE AS WE LEARN TO DEPEND ON THE HOLY SPIRIT TO OBEY**). But they are not

difficult to interpret if for no other reason than that Jesus himself supplies the interpretation in other places. The key passage is Luke 9:23, 24, 25+ (and the parallel, Mark 8:34, 35, 36, 37+). ([The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#))

**G Campbell Morgan**...**"Follow Me."** That is to say: When I first named My cross you shunned it; you must come back to it, but **"follow Me."** You saw Me go to it; you lost hope. You have seen Me alive again. **"Follow Me."** The man who comes to the cross with Me comes to resurrection with Me (**ED: BUT EVEN BEFORE THAT COMES TO DIE TO SELF!**). The man who comes along the pathway of suffering in fellowship for the doing of My work comes to the hour of absolute and assured victory with Me. The Lord challenges us still to follow Him to the cross, but to follow Him to the cross is to follow Him to resurrection and to triumph (cp Php 3:10, 11-note). ([G. Campbell Morgan - My Lambs-My Sheep](#))

**A C Gaebelein** - The last word John reports in His Gospel, coming from the lips of our Lord, is **"Follow thou me."** And thus He speaks to all of His people. Wonderful Gospel it is, this Gospel of the Son of God and the Eternal Life! How full and rich each portion of it! And oh! the Grace which has sought us, saved us, made us one with Him, keeps us and which will soon bring us home to the Father's house with its many mansions. (**ED: ENABLED BY AND DEPENDING CONTINUALLY ON [THE HOLY SPIRIT](#)**) May we follow Him in loving obedience, till He comes. (AMEN!)

In his first epistle **Peter** echoes **Jesus'** charge to follow Him writing...For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps**, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH (We of course cannot follow Him exactly in this manner, for He was sinless, but we can imitate Him [enabled by His Spirit] in the description that follows); and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously (1Pe 2:21, 22, 23+)

#### Related Resources:

- [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) (or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")
- [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)
- [Filled with His Spirit/Richly Indwelt with His Word](#) - Chart Comparing

---

#### GUARDED AND GUIDED BY THE FATHER'S LOVE (see [NIV, Once-A-Day: Walk with Jesus: 365 Days in the New Testament](#))

Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me". JOHN 21:22

Peter was unique among the 12 disciples. He had unique potential. Unique problems. Unique personality.

But in John 21, Peter compared himself with another disciple, wondering if the future course of their lives would be similar. The Lord's reply was simply, "Follow me."

Timothy Dwight offers this insight on the danger of comparing one Christian's lot in life with another's.

#### WALK WITH TIMOTHY DWIGHT

"How often we find that we never escape certain difficulties. We hope to escape them; we wonder why we do not.

"The Lord's reasoning is clear: We were made for the accomplishment of a special divine purpose—for the showing forth of a divinely formed character and life—and all allotments of experience are wisely fitted to that end.

"The work of Peter as a disciple of Jesus was intended to be different from that of John. He was to show the development of true life in a different way.

"Providential dealing takes all our living, and every part of our experience, into God's plan and purpose.

"It teaches us to trust that the natural movement of our lives is under a supernatural guidance, and that in all things we are guarded and guided by a Father's love."

#### WALK CLOSER TO GOD

Loving Father, you are the Lord over all, my Creator, my Savior. You know me better than I know myself.

Remind me often that my life is still under construction as you use my particular abilities for your glory.

Help me to see trials as opportunities to become more like the person you want me to be.

Thank you for the daily delight of following you. In the name of Jesus my Lord I pray. Amen.

---

**What is that to you? You follow Me. —John 21:22**



When you attend a children's choir concert, you're not surprised when the children look everywhere but at the director. They wiggle, squirm, and poke each other. They stand on tiptoes to search for parents in the audience. They raise their hands to wave when they see them. Oh, yes, and they occasionally sing. We smile at their antics. The behavior is cute in children. It's not so cute when adult choir members don't watch the conductor. Good music depends on singers who pay attention to the director so they can stay together as they sing.

Christians sometimes are like singers in a children's choir. Instead of looking at Jesus, the great Conductor of the symphony of life, we are busy squirming or looking at each other or watching the audience.

Jesus admonished Peter for such behavior. After He told him what would be required of him, Peter pointed to John and asked, "What about him?" Jesus answered with a question: "What is that to you? You follow Me" (John 21:22).

Sometimes we are distracted by what others are doing. We think God's plan for their life is better than His plan for ours. But God's plan for each of us is the same: Follow Jesus. When we watch Him intently, we'll not be distracted by God's plan for anyone else. — by Dennis Fisher (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

My times are in my Father's hand;  
How could I wish or ask for more?  
For He who has my pathway planned,  
Will guide me till my journey's o'er.  
—Fraser

Every child of God has a special place in His plan.

---

### **The Cure For Resentment**

Read: John 21:18-25

If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me. --John 21:22

We readily agree with the statement that "all men are created equal" and that we are endowed with certain "unalienable rights." But we can't live long without discovering that life doesn't treat everyone the same. This is a fact we must learn to accept without resentment.

Life's inequities show up on many levels. Cancer ravages the body of a child, while a hard-drinking chainsmoker lives to a ripe old age. Some people enjoy good health, others don't. Some have no handicaps, others have severe limitations. Some work hard and remain poor; some are born to wealth or seem to have a series of lucky breaks.

When Jesus informed the apostle Peter that he was going to die as a martyr for his faith, Peter asked what would happen to John. He seemed to think that it wouldn't be fair if John didn't die the same way. But Jesus told him that what happened to John was not his concern. That was God's prerogative. Peter's responsibility was simple: He was to follow Christ.

When looking at others makes you feel resentful about the unfairness of life, change your focus. Look to Jesus and follow Him. Life's inequities are only for a little while. Perfect fairness will be ours to enjoy forever in heaven. --HVL (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

We all have different loads to bear,  
Some heavy and some light;  
But those who give their lives to Christ  
Can trust He'll make things right.  
--Sper

Resentment comes from looking at others;  
contentment comes from looking to God

---

### **Bob Gass - It's Their Backyard**

"Lord, and what about this man?" "... what is that to you? You follow Me!" (John 21:21-22, NASB)

Learn to identify who owns what. That's what Jesus was trying to teach Peter and us! It's their backyard—let them mow it, or live

with the weeds. If they play the martyr or get what they want by guilt-tripping or manipulating others, that's their issue; don't make it yours! If they're living with consequences, it's their consequence—not yours!

If they deny their problems or can't think clearly on a particular issue, the confusion is theirs! It's not your job to change them. If they don't seem to be capable of loving, or showing appreciation, or even apologizing when they're wrong—that's their property. When you can admit you're wrong, it means you're wiser today than you were yesterday. Maybe tomorrow they'll be wiser, too, but for today—it's their backyard—stop trying to mow it!

If your hopes, your peace, and your joy are dependent on them, then you need to learn how to “detach.” You're not a joint tenant with them, you are a joint-heir with Christ! (See Romans 8:17.) Has it occurred to you that God could be waiting for you to get out of the way so that He can go to work in their situation? The truth is, you are powerless over them—but God's not!

HE MAY LET THEM FALL BEFORE HE LIFTS THEM, BUT HE'LL DO WHAT'S RIGHT AND WHAT'S BEST. SO JUST FOLLOW HIM AND LEARN TO MOW YOUR OWN BACKYARD. (BORROW [Fresh Word for Today: 365 Insights for Daily Living PAGE 20](#))

**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?”**

- **what:** Dt 29:29 Job 28:28 33:13 Da 4:35
- John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## REPORT SPREADS THAT JOHN WOULD NOT DIE

**Therefore** ([oun](#)) is a [term of conclusion](#). Based on Jesus' words "**If I want him to remain until I come.**"

**This saying went out among the brethren that that disciple**([mathetes](#)) **would not die** - This was a faulty conclusion based on a misinterpretation of Jesus' words.

**Yet** (term of contrast) **Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but**(term of contrast) **only, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?”** John was quick to counter the "saying" that he would not die. If he did not, Jesus could be accused of making a false prediction when John did die.

**Robert Wurtz** - The words of Christ are clear when it comes to concerning ourselves with God's business in other peoples lives; 'What is that to thee, follow thou me.' (John 21:23) Just because you see someone else doing things that are worse than what you may be doing does not justify your sin. This is obviously not repentance. It is a self-defense/self-preservation maneuver. ( [Seven Myths of Repentance](#))

**Raymond Brown** on **would not die**. Imaginative traditions grew up about John, identified as the Beloved Disciple, for instance, that he has been wandering through the world throughout the centuries, or that he sleeps in his grave at Ephesus and the movement of the earth's surface above it attests to his breathing ([Augustine In John 124:2](#); PL 35:1970 - **ED**: THIS "INTERPRETATION" BY AUGUSTINE IS ABSURD --- THIS GENRE OF SYMBOLIC OR SPIRITUALIZED INTERPRETATION IS ANOTHER REASON ONE MUST BE VERY CAUTIOUS READING AUGUSTINE AND ACCEPTING EVERYTHING HE SAID! SEE NOTE BELOW).

[Origen's](#) interpretive approach had great influence on those who would follow in the Middle Ages, as did Augustine (354-430) who, like Philo, saw allegorization as a solution to Old Testament problems.<sup>33</sup> The allegorical system of interpretation prevailed throughout most of the Middle Ages:

During the Middle Ages, the fourfold sense of Scripture was taught. Medieval scholars took Origen's threefold sense—the literal, the moral, and the spiritual—and subdivided the spiritual into the allegorical and the anagogical. As schoolman Thomas Aquinas affirmed, 'The literal sense is that which the author intends, but God being the Author, we may expect to find in Scripture a wealth of meaning.' An example of how the fourfold sense was worked out during the Middle Ages is Ge 1:3, 'Let there be light.' Medieval churchmen interpreted that sentence to mean (1) Historically and literally—An act of creation; (2) Morally—May we be mentally illumined by Christ; (3) Allegorically—Let Christ be love; and (4) Anagogically—May we be led by Christ to glory.<sup>34</sup>([CLICK FOR FULL NOTE ON DANGERS OF ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION](#))

**NET NOTE** Greek “the brothers,” but here the term refers to more than just the immediate disciples of Jesus (as it does in Jn 20:17). Here, as R. E. Brown notes (John [AB], 2:1110 = "*the brothers. In Jn 20:17 we saw this term applied to the immediate disciples of*

Jesus, because they would be begotten as God's children through the gift of the Spirit and thus become Jesus' brothers. Here it is applied to the Christians of the Johannine community (probably with the same theological understanding), a usage attested also in 3 John 5, and widely in the NT (some fifty-seven times in Acts; Matt 5:22–24, 18:15, etc.)."), it refers to Christians of the Johannine community (which would include both men and women).

**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.**

- **we know:** Jn 19:35 1Jn 1:1,2 5:6 3Jn 1:12
- John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**This is the disciple ([mathetes](#)) who is testifying ([martureo](#)) to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony ([marturia/martyria](#)) is true**

As **Chuck Swindoll** says "The account is selective, not exhaustive. The events are actual, not theoretical. The purpose is specific, not vague."

Earlier **John** had emphasized the truth of the gospel...

And he who has seen (John giving first person witness) has testified, and his **testimony is true**; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that (the purpose of speaking the truth about Jesus) you also may believe. (Jn 19:35, cp Jn 20:31)

**Testifying** (present tense = continually, indeed the written record fulfills this function) [3140](#) ([martureo](#)) means to be a witness, give evidence, bear record, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, to provide information about a person or an event concerning which the speaker has direct knowledge. In his first epistle John reiterated his first hand witness of Jesus...

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the **Word of Life** (Great Name for Jesus)--and the life was manifested ([phaneroo](#) = external manifestation to the senses which is thus open to all), and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1Jn 1:1, 2, 3+)

**Written** ([1125](#)) ([grapho](#) from root [graph-](#) = primarily means to scratch on or engrave as on an ornament, reports, letters, etc; **English** = graph, graphic, etc) means to engrave or inscribe with a pen or stylus characters or letters on a surface which can be wood, wax, metal, leather, stone, parchment, dirt (John ), paper, etc

**Testimony** ([3141](#)) ([marturia/martyria](#) gives us our English word *martyr*) is evidence given. An affirmation. Proof of some fact. In modern English testimony is a solemn declaration usually made orally by a witness under oath in response to interrogation by a lawyer or authorized public official.

**True** ([227](#)) ([alethes](#) - see [aletheia](#)) in simple terms is that which confirms to reality. Whatever God says is true. Whatever Scripture says is true.

**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.**

- **there:** Jn 20:30,31 Job 26:14 Ps 40:5 71:15 Ec 12:12 Mt 11:5 Ac 10:38 Ac 20:35 Heb 11:32
- **that even:** Nu 13:33; Dt 1:28; Da 4:11 Am 7:10 Mt 19:24
- John 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**JESUS' COUNTLESS  
MIRACULOUS WORKS**

In explaining the purpose of his Gospel John gave a similar caveat earlier...

Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30, 31)

**And there are also many other things which Jesus ([lesous](#)) did, which if they [were](#) written in detail, I suppose that even the world ([kosmos](#)) itself would not contain the books ([biblion](#)) that [would](#) be written - Many other things -** Some might consider this a hyperbole or exaggeration but Luke's statement suggests it is not unrealistic "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach." (Acts 1:1+)

Clearly the four Gospels contain only very limited and selected records of the events of Jesus. We can only imagine the plethora of holy teachings and miraculous demonstrations of His divinity which Jesus provided to His Chosen People and yet they still refused to receive Him as Savior and Lord (Jn 1:9, 10, 11). The upshot is that in view of their greater light, the people of Israel would be subject to far greater judgment than even such a wicked city as Sodom (see Jesus' declaration Mt 10:15, 11:20, 21, 22, 23, 24). What Jesus was teaching is that in hell there will be degrees of punishment, a thought that is difficult for me to fully comprehend.

I like **John MacArthur's** concluding statement to this great Gospel - Jesus had challenged Peter to love Him above all else. Faced with the prospect of sacrificing everything for Christ, from here on Peter did not back down. He learned the lesson that following Jesus was to be the singularly supreme objective of his love. Peter and his fellow apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, turned the world upside down through their fearless witness to Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 17:6) and in almost every case died as martyrs for the love of Christ and the truth of the gospel. ([MacArthur, J: John 12-21. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**NET NOTE** Although the majority of MSS (C2 Θ Ψ f13 lat) conclude this Gospel with  $\mu\eta\nu$  (amēn, "amen"), such a conclusion is routinely added by scribes to NT books because a few of these books originally had such an ending (cf. Rom 16:27; Gal 6:18; Jude 25). A majority of Greek witnesses have the concluding  $\mu\eta\nu$  in every NT book except Acts, James, and 3 John (and even in these books,  $\mu\eta\nu$  is found in some witnesses). It is thus a predictable variant. Further, excellent and early witnesses, as well as a few others ( $\kappa$  A B C\*, 3 D W 1 33 pc it), lack the particle, rendering no doubt as to how this Gospel originally ended. **The author concludes the Gospel with a note concerning his selectivity of material.** He makes it plain that he has not attempted to write an exhaustive account of the words and works of Jesus, for if one attempted to do so, "the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." This is clearly hyperbole, and as such bears some similarity to the conclusion of the Book of Ecclesiastes (12:9–12). As it turns out, the statement seems more true of the Fourth Gospel itself, which is the subject of an ever-lengthening bibliography. The statement in v. 25 serves as a final reminder that knowledge of Jesus, no matter how well-attested it may be, is still partial. Everything that Jesus did during his three and one-half years of earthly ministry is not known. This supports the major theme of the Fourth Gospel: Jesus is repeatedly identified as God, and although he may be truly known on the basis of his self-disclosure, he can never be known exhaustively. There is far more to know about Jesus than could ever be written down, or even known. On this appropriate note the Gospel of John ends.

---

**World** ([2889](#)) (**kosmos**) means essentially something that is well-arranged, that which has order or something arranged harmoniously. **Kosmos** refers to an ordered system or a system where order prevails. Many times in the NT, kosmos refers to the anti-God reaction of the world to Jesus. It follows that one must examine the context to determine the most accurate meaning.

**KOSMOS IN GOSPEL OF JOHN, EPISTLES OF JOHN AND THE REVELATION** - Jn. 1:9; Jn. 1:10; Jn. 1:29; Jn. 3:16; Jn. 3:17; Jn. 3:19; Jn. 4:42; Jn. 6:14; Jn. 6:33; Jn. 6:51; Jn. 7:4; Jn. 7:7; Jn. 8:12; Jn. 8:23; Jn. 8:26; Jn. 9:5; Jn. 9:39; Jn. 10:36; Jn. 11:9; Jn. 11:27; Jn. 12:19; Jn. 12:25; Jn. 12:31; Jn. 12:46; Jn. 12:47; Jn. 13:1; Jn. 14:17; Jn. 14:19; Jn. 14:22; Jn. 14:27; Jn. 14:30; Jn. 14:31; Jn. 15:18; Jn. 15:19; Jn. 16:8; Jn. 16:11; Jn. 16:20; Jn. 16:21; Jn. 16:28; Jn. 16:33; Jn. 17:5; Jn. 17:6; Jn. 17:9; Jn. 17:11; Jn. 17:13; Jn. 17:14; Jn. 17:15; Jn. 17:16; Jn. 17:18; Jn. 17:21; Jn. 17:23; Jn. 17:24; Jn. 17:25; Jn. 18:20; Jn. 18:36; Jn. 18:37; Jn. 21:25;

1 Jn. 2:2; 1 Jn. 2:15; 1 Jn. 2:16; 1 Jn. 2:17; 1 Jn. 3:1; 1 Jn. 3:13; 1 Jn. 3:17; 1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:3; 1 Jn. 4:4; 1 Jn. 4:5; 1 Jn. 4:9; 1 Jn. 4:14; 1 Jn. 4:17; 1 Jn. 5:4; 1 Jn. 5:5; 1 Jn. 5:19; 2 Jn. 1:7; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 17:8

**Books** ([975](#)) (**biblion**) is literally a little book and in the ancient world was usually a scroll made of parchment formed from papyrus. Pliny says that the pith of the papyrus plant was cut in slices and laid in rows, over which other rows were laid crosswise, and the whole was massed by pressure. The name for the blank papyrus sheets was charta paper.

**BIBLION - 29V - book(27), books(4), certificate(2), scroll(1).** Matt. 19:7; Mk. 10:4; Lk. 4:17; Lk. 4:20; Jn. 20:30; Jn. 21:25; Gal. 3:10; 2 Tim. 4:13; Heb. 9:19; Heb. 10:7; Rev. 1:11; Rev. 5:1; Rev. 5:2; Rev. 5:3; Rev. 5:4; Rev. 5:5; Rev. 5:8; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 6:14; Rev. 10:8; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 17:8; Rev. 20:12; Rev. 21:27; Rev. 22:7; Rev. 22:9; Rev. 22:10; Rev. 22:18; Rev. 22:19

