

Daily Discipleship

John 21:1-19

Prayers of Discipleship *To Love Jesus*

Focus Question: *Jesus asks you, "Do you love me?"*

word of life

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" John 21:15 (NRSV)

Read John 21:1-19

After Jesus rose from the dead, life for those disciples would never be the same. His appearances and conversations following his resurrection answered some questions but opened the door to many others. The disciples were walking on uncharted territory, living in a post-Easter world. Sometimes when life is turned upside down, people resort to doing what they know. In the case of Simon Peter, that meant fishing. Some of the other disciples joined him, but on that night no one caught anything.

1. *Does it seem strange to you for Peter to go fishing? Why or why not?*
2. *When the fishermen caught nothing, what story about Jesus did you recall?*

Jesus appeared to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee) where he first called Simon Peter to be his disciple. In a parallel story, Jesus advised the fisherman about where to cast their nets. Consequently, they caught many fish. (Luke 5:1-11) This time, Peter did not realize the fishing advisor was Jesus himself. It took the beloved disciple of Jesus to figure it out. Peter was naked, so he put on clothes and jumped into the sea. Meanwhile, the other disciples got into the boat.

3. *How do you explain the behavior of Peter?*
4. *How might Peter have been feeling as he encountered Jesus? (Remember Peter denied knowing Jesus.)*

Jesus proceeded to share a breakfast of fish and bread with his hard-working disciples. This was only the third time for Jesus to appear to the disciples, but nobody asked who he was. His identity was clear.

5. *Imagine that breakfast conversation. If you had been at that meal, what would you have asked Jesus?*
6. *How might that conversation been similar or different than previous breakfast conversations with Jesus?*

After breakfast, Jesus gave Simon Peter a pop quiz of three questions. The questions are brief and direct. After all, Simon Peter had been fishing all night. No doubt he was tired and perhaps frustrated from a night of catching no fish. In reality, Jesus didn't ask three different questions, but asked the same question three times. Jesus wanted to know, "Do you love me?" It is the type of question deserving a yes or no answer.

7. *Why ask the same question of Simon Peter three times?*
8. *What connection is there between this series of questions and Simon Peter denying Jesus three times?*

Peter affirmed his love for Jesus after each question. Jesus responded to Peter by giving him the following tasks, "feed my lambs", "tend my sheep", and "feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17). Jesus also foretold the type of martyr's death of Peter. It is not an easy call to follow Jesus.

9. *What does it mean to feed and tend to lambs and sheep?*
10. *If you and Jesus had this exchange, what would you be thinking or feeling?*

word among us

Eric had studied hard for his final examination of the year. He felt pressure because he had to pass this test. His future life and dreams were at stake. Slowly, he opened the booklet and discovered the same question on each of the three pages of the exam.

1. *What would you think if you had a test with the same question asked three times?*
2. *What would you tend to remember about that experience?*

Simon Peter denied Jesus three times just as Jesus had predicted. After the pain of the crucifixion and the joy of the resurrection, Jesus gives Simon Peter three opportunities to affirm his love. There are ministry and mission opportunities ahead for the disciples. Jesus has forgiven Simon Peter and wants him to move on with the tasks of feeding and tending to sheep. Simon Peter's three-time affirmation of love offsets his three-time denial of Jesus.

3. *How might the memory of Simon Peter's denial have hindered him in his serving Christ?*
4. *Does Simon Peter need to let go of guilt associated with his denial of Jesus? Why or why not?*
5. *What makes it difficult to forgive ourselves?*

There is a level of intensity with this exchange between Jesus and Peter. Rightly so. Jesus is asking Simon Peter directly to confess his love and his loyalty. The first question is broadest, "Do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15) Imagine to what "these" refers. Is Jesus pointing to the fish, the fishing boats, the disciples, or something else? Jesus knows Simon Peter well. He knows what would draw Simon Peter's loyalty and love.

6. *If Jesus would stand beside you and ask the same question, what would "these" mean?*
7. *What takes your time, energy, and your attention from Jesus?*

In the play and movie, *My Fair Lady*, Liza Dolittle sings to the man courting her to not speak or sing of his love, but to show it. Words come easy, but is this suitor willing to back up those words with actions? She is tired of words, words, and words.

8. *How are we expected to show our love toward Jesus?*
9. *When it comes to love, which comes first – our words or actions?*
10. *How can we be consistent with our words and actions of love toward Jesus?*

This passage of love followed by the request to feed and tend to the flock is often read when a pastor is ordained and/or installed at a congregation. A pastor is asked to follow in the footsteps of Simon Peter and tenderly care for a flock.

11. *What are your expectations for a pastor to feed and tend to a congregation?*
12. *What happens if a congregation does not want to be fed or tended to?*
13. *How might a congregation take on some of the responsibilities to feed and tend to others?*
14. *What do you want to remember from this story?*

Prayer

Jesus, we hear your question about loving you. We hear it three times. Please, hear our answer. Yes. Yes. Yes. We love you, now and forever. Amen

Dig Deeper: Psalm 30

last word

Ponder this question by Jesus,
"Do you love me?"

Be sure to ask yourself the question three times.



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Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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