



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

PROPELLED BY LOVE • Courage

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 21

Introduction

Several of Jesus' followers watched his crucifixion from a distance. And several things started happening as soon as he died. The darkness covering the land began to lift. An earthquake shook Jerusalem and the curtain in the Temple was torn in two. Some graves cracked open due to the earthquake. Matthew even records that a number of dead people emerged from those graves alive again, like Lazarus (Matthew 27:55).

Two secret followers emerged as well. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both members of the Sanhedrin (the ruling party of the Jews) took possession of Jesus' body. They wrapped it in spices and linen cloths, and laid it in a tomb. They rolled a cut rock in place to close the tomb, and the Romans put a seal on that rock to make sure no-one disturbed it.

Jesus Rose from the Dead

Each gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) tells what happened next in its own way. All of them have three things in common. (1) The tomb was discovered empty, (2) angels told Mary Magdalene and other women that Jesus had risen from the dead, and (3) Jesus began meeting again with his disciples.

Due to their love for him, Mary Magdalene and some other women were "last at the cross and first at the tomb," and Jesus appeared to them first. Then He visited the disciples and ate with them. During this time, Jesus explained why he had to die and resurrect. He let the disciples feel his hands, feet, and side - the body parts that were formerly pierced by nails and a spear. He stayed around for 40 days, continuing to speak about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1). On one occasion spoke to a group of more than 500 people (1 Cor. 15:6). Then, before leaving them and ascending to Heaven, he commanded his followers to carry his message to the world. This famous message is called The Great Commission (see Matthew 28:16-20).

The Meeting with Peter and John - John 21

In order to understand John 21, be sure to read Luke 5:1-11, Peter was not just talking about a fun way to spend the afternoon when he said, "I am going fishing." He had a thriving fishing business before Jesus interrupted his life (See Luke 5), and, having denied Jesus, he went back to it. He probably assumed Jesus had no more use for him. And he had to eat.

What's the Big Idea?

Jesus offers forgiveness that motivates us to love him and pursue meaningful lives.

What's the Problem?

We often feel useless and devalued because of our failures.



But as soon as he got back on the water, Jesus interrupted his life again. Jesus actually repeated the exact miracle he did years earlier, on the day he initially called Peter to follow him. Then they enjoyed eating breakfast together. Eventually, Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to restate his love. Peter had boasted that he would die for Jesus, but then he denied him three times (See John 18: 15-27). By asking him "Do you love me" three times, he pierced Peter's heart. No longer did Peter boldly affirm his intentions. Instead, Peter simply said, "You know all things. You know that I love you."

Jesus repeatedly told Peter to "Feed and tend" his sheep. With these verbs, he called him to a pastoral ministry. He also told Peter how he was going to die. Keep in mind, just a few weeks earlier, Jesus had been dressed in a purple robe and some people led him to a hill where he was crucified. Jesus told Peter he would also glorify God by dying as a martyr. That news hit Peter hard at first, as you might expect, but it served him greatly later. Through the power of the Spirit, Peter eventually came to peace with his destiny. It even made him bold. He ministered thirty more years before his own arrest and crucifixion. The apostle John was careful to record exactly what the Lord said about him too. Jesus didn't say that he would live until He returned, he just told Peter to mind his own business. But, interestingly, John was one of the few disciples who didn't die a martyr's death. And his witness, through his writings, has served the church for 2000 years.

Peter and John were both propelled by the love of Jesus: one toward a strategic pastoral ministry and martyr's crown, and the other toward a strategic witness (The Book of John) in written form.

Propelled by the Love of God: Martin Luther

Martin Luther (1483-1546) served in a monastery in Wittenberg, Germany. He was a very enthusiastic monk. If the rules called him to fast two days he would often fast six. If they called him to sleep with only one blanket, he would sleep without any. At one point he said, "If it were possible to gain salvation by being a monk, I would have done it. I outdid them all." But he never felt acceptable to God. He felt he could never do enough to earn God's favor or purge himself of all his sin. He stated, "As a monk I lived an irreproachable life. Nevertheless I felt that I was a sinner before God."

But then he began to study the scriptures for himself. He was amazed to see that God the Father rejected Christ the Righteous One. Why, he asked, would God reject the Son He loved, who was the only truly righteous Person on Earth? If God's standard is perfection, and Jesus Christ is perfect, why did God reject Him? It just didn't make sense to Luther.

But then one day he came across Romans 1:17 which says, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, 'the righteous will live by faith.'" And for the first time he understood. God rejected Jesus in order to accept those who trust in Him by faith. God imputed Christ's righteousness to sinners and punished Christ for their sin, all because of His love! God rejected His perfect Son in order to extend His love for us. Luther said, "Now I felt as if I had been reborn altogether, and had entered paradise..."

Propelled by the love of God, Luther had the courage to challenge a corrupt Roman Catholic Empire. His writings began what is known today as the Protestant Reformation.

What's Our Response?

Jesus' forgiveness frees us up to live courageous, meaningful lives.

What Are the Questions?

John 21, 1Pet 5:1-4, Acts 4:1-13; 18-20

LAUNCH

If you knew how and when you were going to die, how might your life change?

EXPLORE

Read [John 21: 1-8](#).

1. Who was at this event? And why did they decide to go fishing?
2. How did John and Peter respond to the large catch of fish? Why?
3. What does Peter's response tell you about his relationship with Jesus?

Read [John 21:9-14](#)

4. What did the disciples find when they got to shore?
5. What was Jesus there for?

Read [John 21:15-19](#).

6. What did Jesus mean by "Do you love me more than these?"
7. How did Peter respond?
8. Why did Jesus ask him three times? And why was Peter grieved?

Checkout [Psalms 32 and 51](#).

9. Spend a couple minutes reading these Psalms. What do you learn about guilt? What do you learn about forgiveness?
10. What makes God's forgiveness so special?

Go back to [John 21:15-19](#).

11. What did Jesus command Peter to do three times? What does that mean?

Read [1 Peter 5:1-4](#)

12. Based on his counsel for younger pastors, do you think Peter got this message? Why?

Go back to [John 21:15-19](#).

13. What other news did Jesus have for Peter?
14. Why did Jesus tell him this?

Checkout [Acts 4:1-13; 18-20](#)

15. Peter denied Jesus three times on the night he was betrayed. But how did his character change later? Why?

Read [John 21:20-25](#)

16. Did Jesus tell Peter what was going to happen to John? What was his destiny?

APPLY

17. Have you experienced God's forgiveness? When? How? How has it affected your life?
18. Why is experiencing God's forgiveness better than earning His favor?

19. Knowing that God forgives all who come to Him through Christ, do you feel encouraged to sin more, or free to serve God more? What keeps us from taking advantage of God's grace?

20. Is there anything worth dying for?

What Are the Answers?

1. Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John, and two unnamed disciples were on the scene. Peter had failed Jesus. Perhaps he thought God would never use him again. Regardless, he had to eat. He did what he knew best. He was a fisherman.
2. Read Luke 5:4-11. This was Jesus re-enacting the most important moment of Peter's life.
3. Peter loved Jesus.
4. Jesus, after his resurrection, with a meal ready just for them.
5. Jesus came to have a final conversation with his closest disciples.
6. Jesus was probably referring to the other disciples. Peter had claimed that he would never leave Jesus, even if everyone else did (Matt. 26:33) But he failed to stick by Jesus when it counted.
7. Peter stopped comparing himself to others. He just said, "You know I love you."
8. Peter had denied Jesus three times. Jesus was restoring Peter by allowing him to affirm his love again three times. Jesus' point hit home when he asked Peter the third time.
9. Consider having a couple people look at Psalm 32 and others look at Psalm 51.
10. Discuss
11. The images of a shepherd, "Feed my sheep" and "Tend to my sheep" convey a pastoral responsibility. Jesus was calling Peter to be a leader.
12. Notice how Peter counsels leaders to care for people like a gentle shepherd.
13. Jesus told Peter he was going to die as a martyr. A few weeks earlier, Peter watched Jesus get dressed in a purple robe before he had to stretch his arms out and carry a crossbeam to his crucifixion.
14. Jesus didn't tell him this to depress him. He told him this to set him free. Instead of denying Christ, Peter would go on to give his life for him.
15. The Holy Spirit empowered Peter to be incredibly bold for Christ.
16. Jesus didn't say that John would live until he returned. He basically just said, "mind your own business." But it's interesting to note that Peter went on to be a great church leader and he died as a martyr 30 years after this conversation. But John was exiled, lived much longer, and wrote the book of John. This book has been a key witness of Christ for 2000 years, and it will continue to serve that purpose until He returns.
- 17-18. Discuss. Consider telling the story of Martin Luther.
19. Love for Jesus is one thing that keeps us from sin.
20. Discuss

Memorize

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17