

GROWTH GROUPS  
WEEK 3  
WEEK OF MAY 7TH

Spring  
2017

## GROWTH GROUP SPRING 2017

WEEK 3 – MAY 7, 2017 - JOHN 21:15-25

### GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

1) Describe a time in your life when you had a relationship that was broken and then restored.

### SETTING THE CONTEXT

John 21 fills us in on a couple of stories as they relate to Simon Peter and John, who is the author of the gospel of John. Peter had denied Jesus, and yet Jesus had made it clear that Peter would play a major role in the establishment of the church. The gospel of John lets us see how Jesus restored Peter and reminded him of his calling. There was also some uncertainty around John and whether or not he would die before Jesus returned and the gospel of John deals with that issue as well.

Earlier in John 21, Peter had been out fishing with six other apostles. Now the conversation zooms in on Peter and Jesus. As you may recall, Peter had been very certain that he would never deny Jesus, but as is made clear in the gospel of John, Peter did deny Jesus three times. He then sort of disappeared until after the resurrection.

Jesus knows how Peter is feeling as he watches him jump out of the boat and swim to shore. Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him. Peter had thought he was very loyal, but when things got tense and he was put on the spot, he denied knowing Jesus. What is interesting is that Jesus keeps pushing Peter in his line of questioning until Peter is hurt. He feels the pain. He knows he has let Jesus down. But this is important because it is only at this point that Jesus can now call Peter back to the mission that has been planned out for him.

Oftentimes preachers and teachers have focused on the different Greek words that are used for “love” in this passage and tried to find certain angles based on which Greek words for love are used. However, it is probably best not to focus much energy on this because the words *agape* and *phileo* were often used interchangeably.



What is important is to see what Peter learned from this conversation. Jesus told him to care for the flock and in 1 Peter 5:2 Peter tells the leaders of the church to “tend to their flock.” He was reminding them that the posture of leadership is about serving, not about gaining more power or control.

Peter’s calling was one that could not have happened before the resurrection. He had to fail and then encounter the risen Christ, and then be challenged to follow Jesus. Even after he is reinstated by Jesus he still struggles. When he notices John following them he asks Jesus about the future of John. Jesus reminds Peter that what really matters is not comparing stories, or wondering about someone else’s story, but instead, living out the calling that God has for you.

## EXPLORING THE TEXT

### Read John 21:15-25

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” <sup>16</sup> Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” <sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” <sup>18</sup> Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” <sup>19</sup> Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!” <sup>20</sup> Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) <sup>21</sup> When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” <sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” <sup>23</sup> Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?” <sup>24</sup> This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. <sup>25</sup> Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

- 2) Why does Jesus ask Peter three times if he loves Him?
- 3) What differences do you see between “feed my lambs” and “tend my sheep”?
- 4) Who are your “sheep”? Describe times in your life when you were entrusted with caring for others.
- 5) In verse 17 Peter’s third answer additionally recognizes God’s omniscience. Do you struggle with the idea that God knows all things?
  - a. Has your faith been strengthened or challenged in those times when God doesn’t reveal His plans to you?
- 6) It’s human nature to be concerned with each other. How do we keep our focus on our own personal relationship with God?

- 7) Gossip and rumor were present even in the early church, (vs. 23).
- a. How does the distraction of comparison affect our walk with Christ?
  - b. Where do we draw the line between tending our own sheep and worrying about what's going on in someone else's walk with Christ?

## BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) What is Jesus calling you to do? Can you think of someplace where you need to keep your eyes open for possible "lambs" or "sheep" that Jesus wants you to guide or nurture?