

# SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

## WEEK FIFTY-ONE: JESUS LOVES PETER

### READING

15 After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.” “Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him. 16 Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.” “Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said. 17 A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep. 18 “I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don’t want to go.” 19 Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, “Follow me.” John 21:15-19 (NLT)

### TEACHING

Peter denied Jesus three times. Even Peter swore he never would do that after Jesus predicted it – he did. The guilt and shame of this was a heavy weight on Peter’s shoulders. In this beautiful story, we see how Jesus restores Peter to a position of leadership and we see how much Jesus loves Peter.

Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him. Three times – just like the three times that Peter had denied Jesus. The first time he asks Peter if he loves him “more than these.” Remember Peter went back to fishing – he thought the rest of his life would be like the start of his life – a simple fisherman. But Jesus knew there were greater plans for Peter. Jesus was asking Peter if he loved him more than the old familiar life he knew – the life of a fisherman.

If someone is called by God to be a fisherman then there’s nothing wrong with that of course – that is exactly what they should do. But Peter had already been told that he was called to be a “fisher of men.” God wanted Peter to share the story of Jesus, the gospel. God wanted Peter to make disciples and to lead the early church. When Jesus instructed Peter to care for and feed his sheep, this was a direct reference to pastoring and loving and serving the people Jesus gave his life for. Jesus was committed to seeing Peter walk free from the shame and guilt of his past mistakes. He reminded Peter of his original call to “Follow me” and he gave him a glimpse of the road before him – the call to love people and the cost of doing so. Through it all, Jesus loved Peter.

# SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

## OPENING QUESTION(S):

- Have you ever disappointed someone you love? How did you feel?

## TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- How many times did Peter deny Jesus?
- How many times did Jesus ask Peter if he loved him?
- Who was called to be a “fisher of men” and not a fisher of fish?

## CHILDREN:

- Why was Peter feeling guilty and ashamed?
- How many times did Jesus ask Peter if he loved him? Why?
- How did Jesus show Peter his love for him?

## TEENAGERS:

- How many times did Jesus ask Peter if he loved him? Why?
- How did Jesus show Peter his love for him?

## ADULTS:

- What guilt and shame are you carrying that God wants you to lay down?
- How do you regularly remind yourself of God’s love for you and plan for your life?

## PRAYER

*God, thank you that you don't give up on me. Thank you that you find me when I feel guilty about what I have done and ashamed of who I have become. Thank you that you come to me to love me and not to judge me. Help me to regularly consider if I love you and if I am doing what you have called me to do. Help me to love you “more than these” – whatever that may be in my life: being popular, having stuff, feeling smart, the perfect relationship. Let none of those things crowd you out of the center of my heart. Thank you God that you love me faithfully. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

Jesus said to Peter, “But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go.” We know that this was a reference to the way Peter would die. The early church fathers unanimously claimed that Peter was crucified in Rome during the evil reign of Nero – his hands were literally stretched out. Peter may have been crucified upside down, saying he was not worthy to die the same way Jesus had – this is less certain.