



THE AUTHENTIC JESUS | LIFE CHANGER (6)

April 16, 2023

John 21:15-25

PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

ICE BREAKER QUESTION

10 MIN

Do you have, or have you ever had a fall-back plan, if your present career or life path had to fail?

WORSHIP

10 MIN

OPENING PRAYER

Mighty God, pour out your Holy Spirit on all of us gathered here. Open our hearts, that we might be filled with your goodness and your love. Live in us, that we might bear the life of Christ for all to see. Overshadow us with your presence, that we might truly be blessed and offer your blessing for the sake of the world. Amen.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER—Psalm 63:1-8

¹O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

²**So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.**

³Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.

⁴**So I will bless you as long as I live;
in your name I will lift up my hands.**

⁵My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,
and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,

⁶**When I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;**

⁷For you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.

⁸**My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.**

SCRIPTURE READING

¹⁵When 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, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶He said to him 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, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷He 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 everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹(This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

²⁰Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?” ²¹When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” ²²Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” ²³So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?”

²⁴This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

²⁵Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

BIBLE STUDY Summary and Connection

40 MIN

For the past few weeks, we have been looking at the gospels to discover *the authentic Jesus*. This week we will discover Jesus as a “Life Changer” from John 21:15-25. In this passage we see Jesus reconcile, restore, and recommission Peter to ministry. We also read about the hallmark of the beloved disciple John’s ministry. This passage focuses on multiple themes such as reconciliation and recommission, leadership, discipleship, and ministry.

In John 21, we see Jesus revealing himself to his disciples for the third time since his bodily resurrection. This incident takes place by the Sea of Galilee (also known as the Sea of Tiberias). In verse 3 we see Peter declaring his intention to go fishing. Interestingly, the other disciples who were with Peter, decide to follow his lead. However, despite their vast expertise and best efforts, the disciples fail to catch any fish. Peter and the rest of the disciples learn a vital lesson from their unsuccessful expedition—apart from Jesus, even your expertise and best efforts amounts to nothing. Peter, who was already filled with shame as the disciple who failed Jesus, is now overwhelmed with disappointment as a failed leader and a fisherman. It is precisely at the moment when Peter is filled with shame and an overwhelming sense of failure, we see Jesus revealing himself to Peter and the other disciples.

The beach along the sea of Galilee sets the stage for one of the most moving scenes in the Bible. Jesus meets Peter by the sea of Galilee—the very place where he had commissioned Peter to follow him. Jesus, who is fully aware of the state of Peter’s heart, prepares him breakfast to eat. John specifically adds the detail about charcoal fire. If you remember, in John 18 we read about Peter denying Jesus as he warmed himself by the charcoal fire. Jesus masterfully uses charcoal fire—a symbol of Peter’s worst failure, to restore and reconcile Peter to himself. Jesus ministers to Peter at his point of need by redeeming the memory of Peter’s failure into forgiveness and reconciliation. The scene of Jesus and Peter by the charcoal fire provides a powerful image of what true and enduring forgiveness looks like.

Jesus not only forgives and reconciles Peter, but also restores Peter’s dignity by recommissioning him to leadership and ministry. In verses 15-17 we read about one of the most poignant exchanges recorded in the Bible. Jesus, the sympathetic savior, restores Peter’s dignity and self-esteem by asking him three questions. Jesus’ three questions to recommission Peter corresponds to Peter’s three denials of Jesus. Notice, Jesus doesn’t ask Peter to provide compelling evidence for his changed behavior. Jesus is not so much

concerned about the depth of Peter’s repentance, the intensity of Peter’s sorrow over his sin, or the seriousness of Peter’s prayer life. Jesus was aware that despite his terrible falling, Peter was a man of faith and commitment. Jesus asks three introspective questions to Peter: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Notice Peter’s response to Jesus. Peter rightly acknowledges Jesus’ sovereignty and wisdom, and responds with, “Lord, you know everything, and you know that I love you.” Peter’s response to Jesus gives us an insight into his transformed heart. Old impulsive Peter would have responded to Jesus’ questions with unbridled self-confidence. Remember, just days before, Peter had insisted emphatically that he’d remain loyal to Jesus till the end. He had even claimed to lay down his life for Jesus. However, when it mattered the most, Peter turned out to be a disloyal follower who valued his own life more than his master’s. We see the extent of God’s restorative grace towards sinners gloriously displayed as Jesus entrusts Peter with his flock. Jesus charges Peter to faithfully minister his beloved people. Notice, Peter’s call to ministry was not limited to tending the flock of Jesus, but also to laying down his life as a sacrifice that glorifies God.

Finally, the focus is shifted to John—the beloved disciple of Jesus. Throughout this gospel account, the beloved disciple is presented as an exemplar of faithfulness and commitment. He was the one who reclined at the table next to Jesus (21:20b). He was the one who stood by Jesus at the cross (19:26), and later he was the first to express faith at the empty tomb. Even in this passage when Jesus charges Peter to “follow” him, we see that John is already following Jesus (21:20). John fittingly ends his gospel with humility—the story of Jesus is larger than anything he can imagine. John’s work, as amazing as it is, yet pales in comparison to the glory of the person whom his story describes.

1. Looking at the Bible

What does the text say? What according to you is the theme of this passage?

- What is the significance of Jesus asking the same question to Peter three times? What do we learn about Peter from his responses to Jesus?
- What do we learn about Peter’s death from Jesus’ prediction in verse 18?
- In verse 22 we read about Jesus’ response to Peter’s probing question about John: “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?” How do you interpret Jesus’ statement here?

2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Every passage not only points to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- What can we learn about the heart of Jesus in forgiving, reconciling, and restoring sinners from this passage?

3. Looking at our Hearts

- Because of our past or ongoing sins, we are often prone to think, “God could never forgive me,” or “God could never use me for his purposes.” How does this passage guide us in rightly understanding God’s love for us?

- This passage helps us understand two important principles of Christian faith—what God wants you to be (being—healing and restoration of Peter), and what God wants you to do (doing—recommissioning of Peter). According to you, are these two principles related? If yes, how do you see it in your own life? If you think they are not related, why not?

4. Looking at our World

- How does this passage help you understand the role of pastors and leaders in church?
- How does this passage encourage you to engage with and invite non-believers to church?

SHARING 15 MIN Share your prayer requests, thoughts, hopes and fears for the coming week, and as you do consider how this passage might give light to what you are sharing.

KINGDOM PRAYER 15 MIN Pray that we would see ourselves called by God. Include other prayer requests.

SENDING 5 MIN God's word is a lamp to our feet. Christ's teachings are a light to our path. May God's word take root in our lives. May Christ's love nourish and sustain us. Amen.

