



FIRST LIGHT CHURCH

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Date: 4/17/22

Series: Easter

Text: John 21:15-19

BIG IDEA: Because of the resurrection, restoration is possible.

ICEBREAKER: Share about a moment that had a positive impact on your life.

CONTEXT: This final chapter in John's Gospel is vitally important for His followers. Jesus has fulfilled His earthly ministry of healing, teaching, and dying on the cross for the sins of His people. He has risen from death and now will begin to provide the assurance His disciples will need if they truly believe that restoration is possible.

PASSAGE: Have a volunteer read John 21:15-19.

DISCUSSION:

1. What is Jesus asking Peter in verse 15?
2. How does Jesus want Peter to show that he loves Him?
3. How can we show Jesus that we love Him?
4. What does it mean that Jesus is Lord?
5. Why is love so important to Jesus?
6. What can we learn from Jesus instructing Peter to feed and shepherd His sheep?
7. What's the significance of Jesus asking Peter three times if he loved Him?
8. Why would Jesus' statement to follow Him both encourage and embolden Peter?

APPLICATION:

9. How has Jesus' resurrection affected your life?
10. How does this passage encourage you to follow Jesus?

K4 CONNECTION:

We all mess up. If we all looked into our past, we will no doubt have some regrets and even moments where we feel shame over the things we've said and done. However, the resurrection of Jesus gives us hope! Hope that the past doesn't have to define us or make us. It's because of the resurrection that restoration is possible. As followers of Jesus, we have the privilege to go into the world to share the good news that the tomb is empty, Jesus is alive!

CARE AND PRAY:

- Confess to the Lord any areas where you have fallen short of God's standards.
- Thank God for the resurrection of Jesus!
- Share any prayer requests and needs within the group.

COMMENTARY

[v.15] After the enormous catch of fish in Luke 5:6–7, Peter fell at the feet of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (5:8). Jesus then replied, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men” (5:10). Luke relates that when they (Peter and his partners, the sons of Zebedee; 5:10) got ashore, “they left everything and followed him” (5:11). The sequence is similar in John 21: a great catch of fish is followed by an interaction between Jesus and Peter, with John making an appearance, concluding with Jesus’ calling Peter to follow him.

Jesus seeks to reverse at this charcoal fire (John 21:9) what happened at the other one (18:18). There Peter denied Jesus three times (18:17, 25, 27), and here Jesus will have him affirm his love three times. The question that Jesus puts to Peter at first seems odd: Jesus asks Peter if Peter loves Him more than the other disciples do (21:15). The comparison seems out of place until we consider the way that Jesus calls Peter to express that love. Jesus is not asking Peter to boast that he is more devoted than others. Rather, Jesus affords him the opportunity to affirm his surpassing love and then tells Peter how that love must be shown: by feeding the lambs that belong to Jesus. If Peter loves Jesus as much as he claims, he will see that the lambs that belong to Jesus are fed.

[v.16-17] Jesus then asks Peter again if he loves Him, and when Peter answers in the affirmative and states that the Lord knows he does, Jesus tells him, “Shepherd my sheep” (v. 16 AT). A third question grieves Peter, and Peter confesses that Jesus knows everything, including Peter’s love. In His reply Jesus mixes terms from the first two replies, saying, “Feed my sheep” (v. 17).

The “lambs” and “sheep” that belong to Jesus are the people whom the Lord Jesus will call to Himself (cf. 10:3, 11, 16). The “feeding” and “shepherding” that Jesus calls Peter to do is the work of pastoral ministry, the work of teaching the Bible, leading the flock, and caring for the sick or wounded. What Peter later writes in 1 Peter 5:1–4 indicates that he gladly embraced and discharged the duties of a pastor.

Some have drawn attention to the fact that Jesus asks the first two questions using the verb *agapaō* for “love,” with Peter answering that he loves Jesus using the verb *phileō*. The third time Jesus switches to the verb *phileō*, Peter again answers that he loves Jesus using *phileō*. Nothing, however, should be made of this interchange of synonyms. John typically varies the terms he uses, and the Father is said to love the Son using both verbs (e.g., John 3:35; 5:20), just as the love Jesus has for the beloved disciple is described with both verbs (e.g., 20:2; 21:7). The idea that *agapaō* is used for God’s special love does not stand up to analysis. After all, Amnon’s rapacious love for Tamar is described using *agapaō* in the Greek OT (2 Sam. 13:1, 4, 15).

Peter had denied Jesus three times, and Jesus now gives him the opportunity to confess his love three times. That this was grievous to Peter (John 21:17) does not mean it was not good for him. The opportunity to match his denials with professions of love grants to Peter an experience that matches and neutralizes the poisonous effects of his betrayal of the Lord Jesus.

[v.18-19] Jesus makes plain to Peter that his love of Jesus is to be exercised in love for the people who belong to Jesus. Jesus also tells Peter that Peter’s love for Him will result in Peter’s giving his life for Him (vv. 18–19). Having told Peter that his destiny is to follow Jesus’ example by expending

himself in the service of the people of God, then explaining that the self-giving lifestyle Peter is called to as a pastor of God's flock will culminate in his own martyrdom, Jesus says, "Follow me" (v. 19). Such a direct statement from Jesus would have no doubt made a profound impression on Peter, precisely the kind of impression that would result in Peter's writing what we find in 1 Peter 2:20-21.

Commentary used from the ESV Expository Commentary - John 21:15-19

WHERE'S THE GOSPEL

Jesus didn't hurry the process of Peter's restoration. The Savior asked three times for affirmation of the apostle's love, reflecting Peter's three denials during Christ's passion. Gospel surgery is free, but not always easy. Grace produces redemptive pain, not punitive pain. But pain is still painful. Indeed, the gospel brings an end to all deadening worldly grief. But the gospel is the beginning of enlivening godly grief (2 Cor. 7:10-11). The law condemns, the gospel convicts; the law creates self-centered tears, the gospel creates God-centered tears.

"Do you love me more than these?" It would have been easier on Peter had Jesus asked him, "Do you promise not to fail me again?" But Jesus knew better than to ask that question, because, of course, Peter would fail again (e.g., Gal. 2:11-21). Jesus is more jealous for our love than zealous for our works. If He has our hearts, He'll have everything else.

Commentary used from the ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible - John 21:15-19