



JESUS' DEITY REVEALED • JESUS REINSTATES PETER •

JOHN 18:15-18, 25-27, JOHN 21:15-19 • 04/22/2018

MAIN POINT

Jesus' sacrificial love for us inspires and empowers us to love.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How do you think our culture would define love? How is this different than how you think Jesus defines it?

Why is having a firm understanding of the biblical definition of love important?

In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul identified and commended the nine characteristics that give evidence a person is following the Spirit's leadership. First on Paul's list is love (agape), probably because it is considered the foundation of all other Christian qualities (1 Cor. 13:13).

This love is the self-sacrificing, self-giving love that lay behind God's gift of His Son, Jesus Christ (John 3:16). God's Spirit in our lives enables us to love one another with the kind of love God has shown toward us.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 18:15-18,25-27.

The events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion also give us one of the clearest examples of what our love should look like through the failure and forgiveness of Peter, one of Jesus' disciples. During Jesus' trial, Peter denied knowing Him on three occasions. After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus lovingly confronted Peter and asked about his love for Him. Peter affirmed his love, and Jesus called him to serve. Jesus' demonstration of love for Peter enabled Peter to live a life of love.

How do you see Peter's impulsiveness influencing his denial of Jesus?

Why was denying Jesus unfathomable to Peter (see John 13:33-38)? What emotions might Peter have felt in that moment when he realized that Jesus' prophecy had come true?

Peter wouldn't have been in the courtyard outside Jesus' trial if he didn't love Jesus, but fear and self-preservation kicked in, and he allowed those emotions to control him. Although our love is supposed to be modeled after Jesus', the reality of our fallen world is that our love will never be perfect. Only Jesus perfectly demonstrates the fruit of love. Peter blatantly denied his relationship with Jesus, and if we're honest, we know that we've done the same thing. Maybe we've never come right out and said we don't know Jesus, but just because we've never said it out loud doesn't mean we haven't communicated the same thing with the choices we make.

List some ways we deny knowing Jesus in our speech, actions, or lack of either. How do you combat the temptation to deny your association with God?

Read 1 John 4:7-12. What is the biblical meaning of love? How did God show His love for us? What insight does this give us into how we show love to others?

John explained that not only is God the source and standard of love; He is love. Love originates with God, and He is consistent and perfect in expressing love and supplying to us the love we are to show others. Through the cross of Christ, we see God's passionate pursuit of us, His love on display.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 21:15-19.

When we pick back up with Peter's story in John 21, he has already seen the resurrected Jesus on three separate occasions: Easter morning (1 Corinthians 15:4-5), Easter evening (Matthew 20:19-23), and a week later (20:26-29). Three times Peter had denied Jesus, and at this meeting on the shoreline, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him three times, each canceling out a denial. Their dialogue makes it clear that in God's eyes, love far outweighs failure. That kind of love would propel Peter to spend the rest of his life spreading the good news of the gospel.

Look again at their dialogue in these verses. What did Jesus ask Peter to do? Based on what you know about Peter's life, how did he handle the task?

In what ways are you encouraged by Jesus' conversation with Peter?

Imagine that you were standing on the beach with Jesus that day. How would you answer His questions?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Why do you think love is such a defining mark of the Christian? Do we tend to think of love as the primary mark of the Christian life? If not, what do we think of as that mark? Why?

What most frequently stands in the way of you truly loving others?

What are some tangible expressions of this kind of love you might practice this week: At your workplace? In your home? With your friends?

PRAY

Close by asking God to perfect His love in you and help you better appreciate Jesus' sacrificial act of love on your behalf. Pray for the opportunity to put your Christ-like love into action this week, and pray for love to become the mark for which our church is known in our community.

COMMENTARY

| JOHN 18:15-18, 25-27

18:15-16. In John's narrative it becomes necessary to pick up two different segments of text to understand Peter's role on this fateful night. John first showed us how his friend was at the wrong place at the wrong time. The military and religious intruders had dismissed the eleven disciples, as Jesus asked. But Peter and another disciple followed their Lord and His captors. Almost every reputable scholar agrees this second disciple was John himself. His family had ties to the priesthood through Salome and Elizabeth. His influence allowed both men into the courtyard.

18:17-18. The girl at the door asked what appears to be a rhetorical question, calling for a simple negative response. Peter took the bait and joined the crowd around the fire, probably made of charcoal. John told the story straight: Peter also was standing with them. Having followed too far behind, he now joined a group of the Lord's enemies.

18:25-27. Once again we do a bit of juggling in the text to get the Peter segment all together. Notice how the first two questions were rhetorical, and the third got more personal. We have already seen this in verse 17, but here it is again. Warming himself at an alien fire, Peter heard the same kind of question and he gave the exact same answer. But the heat increased. This time a relative of the servant whom Peter had wounded got too specific for comfort. For the third time Peter denied Christ, and the prophetic rooster began to crow (13:38). Before the night was over, before the roosters began their morning announcements, Peter denied Jesus three times.

JOHN 21:15-19

21:15. Embarrassing as it must have been at the time, this tender exchange restored Peter to leadership—a role he exercised early in Acts. Throughout the history of the church, thousands have been scattered on the roadside of good intentions for ministry; they traded God's call for something else—like fishing. For the next nine verses, John brought his Gospel to a close with the clear enunciation of Peter's call to ministry. Jesus asked Peter almost the same question three times. This could reflect the three denials, but whether it did or not, the command was similar each time: "Feed My lambs ... Shepherd My sheep ... Feed My sheep." A quick glance at 1 Peter lets us know the disciple never forgot this moment.

21:16. The shepherding call continued a second time as Jesus used Peter's old name (Simon), reverting to "pebble" rather than "rock." The flow of the text emphasizes humility and service rather than primacy over the other apostles.

21:17. At this point in the text there is a change of verb in Jesus' question while the verb in Peter's answer stays the same. We also learn that Peter was hurt by the third question. In Jesus' first two questions He used the word "agapao;" hence the NIV translation "truly love." In the third we find the word "phileo" and the NIV drops "truly." Most interpreters find no significant difference in the words, particularly since the conversation took place in Aramaic. Nevertheless, John's record in Greek did, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, adopt a different word. It seems difficult from the grammar of the text to argue that Peter's hurt was brought about only by the connection of a third question with his three denials. We

might conclude that Peter was hurt because the question had been asked three times. But one should not dismiss the possibility that his discomfort lay in Jesus' use of a lesser word.

21:18-19. Having established the motivation for service, Jesus went on to describe the turns that Peter's life would take. This brash, independent, vocal fisherman would one day be dependent, presumably a prisoner, and, many believe, a martyr. Only the Son of God could tell someone that following Him would lead to death and then immediately say, Follow Me! Stretch out your hands refers to crucifixion, where a person's hands and arms are spread out and nailed to the crossbeam. Tradition says Peter chose to be crucified upside down because he felt himself unworthy of dying in the same exact manner as Jesus. The reference to signify by what kind of death he [Peter] would glorify God echoes the reference "to signify what kind of death He [Jesus] was about to die" in 12:33. This verse therefore establishes a connection between the deaths of Jesus and Peter. As God's Lamb, Jesus died for the sins of the world (1:29,36); Peter died a martyr's death, giving his life as a witness to his faith in Jesus.