



Living the Life

John 21:1-25

Fishing?

- ❑ Read John 21:1-13. After Jesus' resurrection, Peter and other disciples had traveled back to Galilee. Peter decided to go fishing, and the other disciples¹ joined him. So they got into a boat and went out on the Sea of Galilee,² "but that night they caught nothing." (21:3)
 1. In Jerusalem, the risen Jesus had told the disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you...Receive the Holy Spirit" (20:21-22). Considering this, some people think it is strange that Peter and the others went fishing in Galilee. What do you think?³
- ❑ Jesus appeared on the shore and called out to the disciples, but they did not recognize him. Anyway, they followed his suggestion and caught a large amount of fish (21:6). When this happened, John realized it was Jesus.⁴ So they quickly headed for shore.
- ❑ When they arrived at the shore, they found Jesus cooking breakfast. Jesus said, "Come and have breakfast" (21:12). Jesus, the ultimate servant, served them breakfast.⁵

Following

- ❑ Read John 21:15-25. After they ate breakfast, Jesus asked Peter, "...do you love⁶ me more than these"⁷ Peter responded, "Yes, Lord...you know that I love you". (21:15)
 2. Why do you think Jesus asked Peter the same question ("do you love me?") three times?



¹ Seven disciples are listed: Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James and John (the sons of Zebedee), and two unnamed.

² "Sea of Tiberius" (21:1) is another name for the Sea of Galilee. The coastal city of Tiberius was built in AD 18-22.

³ First of all, it is not strange that the disciples went back to Galilee. Jesus had told them, "...after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee" (Mark 14:28; also see Mark 16:7). However, some may wonder if Peter, James and John were returning to their fishing occupation instead of obeying Jesus' commission (Luke 5:1-11; John 20:21-22). However, even missionaries and apostles need to eat! While Peter and the others seemed to lack the sense of mission they would later gain at Pentecost (Acts 2), fishing could be a worthwhile activity in the meantime.

⁴ This would remind them of an earlier occasion when Jesus told Peter, James, and John to "put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch" (Luke 5:1-11). Though they had caught nothing all night, they followed Jesus' instructions, and "caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break". Then Jesus told Peter, "...from now on you will catch men". So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him".

⁵ We would not expect to find the risen Lord serving breakfast on the seashore. This must have been surprising to the disciples as well. Though the disciples knew it was Jesus, they felt like asking, "Is it really you?" (21:12). This was "the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples" (21:14). The others are recorded in 20:19-23 and 20:26-29.

⁶ When Jesus asked, "Do you love me?" the first two times, he used the verb *agapaō*, while Peter's response used the verb *philō*. (Actually, Jesus and Peter likely spoke in Aramaic, so the choice of Greek verbs was John's.) The third time, both Jesus and Peter used *philō*. Many have supposed that *agapaō* was the stronger verb, thus the NIV translates *agapaō* "truly love". However, most modern scholars agree that John used the verbs interchangeably (as he did with other words, even in this passage), so there is no significant difference in Jesus' three questions.

⁷ "more than these" what? More than the other disciples? More than his fishing gear (and occupation)? Or did Jesus mean, "Do you love me more than these other disciples do?" This last sense is likely. Before his arrest, Jesus told the disciples they would abandon him. But Peter proclaimed, "Even if all fall away, I never will" (Matt. 26:33; John 13:37). However, after Jesus was arrested, Peter denied his association with Jesus, three times (18:15-18, 25-27).

- ❑ Each time Jesus asked the question, Peter responded, "...you know that I love you" (21:15, 16, 17). Each time Peter responded, Jesus gave him a command.
3. What did Jesus tell Peter to do? What did he mean by this?⁸

📖 Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (10:14).

- ❑ After Jesus told Peter, "Feed my sheep", he let Peter know that he would eventually die because he was a follower of Jesus.⁹ Then Jesus said, "Follow me!" (21:19).¹⁰ As Peter turned and saw John following them, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" (21:21)
4. How did Jesus answer Peter's question? Why do you think he answered this way? How can this apply to us today?



Finally

- ❑ John's gospel concludes with another affirmation of the reliability and truthfulness of his gospel. "We know that his testimony is true" (21:24).

The Life in Review

- ❑ "The Life" is Jesus Christ (11:25; 14:6; 6:35).
 - 📖 Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (14:6).
- ❑ Jesus Christ is the giver of eternal life (17:2; 1:4; 4:13-14; 5:21; 6:33, 51; 10:10, 28). Eternal life is the ultimate quality of life (10:10). It is to know God in personal relationship (17:3). Eternal life is union with "the Life" – Jesus Christ (15:5-6).
- ❑ The pathway of "the Life" is through death (12:23-24). Jesus gave his life for our sin (18:4-5; 19:28-30; 10:11, 14-15). Jesus died, but he was raised from the dead, thus defeating sin and death (20:1-14). Because he was raised to life, we can have eternal life (14:19).
- ❑ We receive and experience eternal life through believing in Jesus Christ (11:25-26; 20:31; 3:14-16, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47) and by giving our life to God (12:25).
 - 📖 "The man who loves his life in this world will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (12:25).
- ❑ We "live the life" by following Jesus (12:26; 8:12), listening to him (6:68; 10:3-5, 14-16), trusting & obeying him (15:5-7), asking God (15:7), loving him & one another (15:9-12, 17), serving one another (13:14), continuing Jesus' mission (17:18; 20:21), and bearing "fruit" for God's glory (15:8, 16). We "live the life" in the power of the Holy Spirit (14:15-17).

The Life & You

- Have you received "the Life"? Are you "living the life" as God wants you to live? Read all of the verses listed above (under "The Life in Review") and respond as you should.

⁸ It is evident that Peter took his responsibility seriously. See 1 Peter 5:1-4 where he instructs other "shepherds".

⁹ The words "you will stretch out your hands" (21:18) may refer to stretching out of his hands on the crossbar of crucifixion. According to tradition, Peter was crucified because he was a follower of Jesus.

¹⁰ Before his arrest, Jesus said he was going away (13:33). Peter wanted to go with him, but Jesus said, "...you cannot follow now, but you will follow later". Peter asked, 'Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you'." (13:36-37). What Peter had wanted to do, and said he would do, would now be fulfilled. He would follow Jesus, and eventually, he would lay down his life for him.