

Marching Orders from our Commander-in-Chief: "Follow Me!"

Why do you think the disciples go fishing? Told by Jesus — who is seldom seen or heard from during this time — to wait, there is little else for them to do. They return to their comfort zone of fishing, having spent most of their lives doing that by trade. But Jesus won't let them stay there very long though (12 hours), especially with Pentecost coming — when they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to go out into all the world with the message of the Gospel. He does the same to us, moving us out of our comfort zones.

The disciples initially don't recognize Jesus when He calls from the shore. How does John recognize Jesus? This is the second time John has seen an unbelievable amount of fish caught in their nets. The first time, the nets begin to break under the weight (Luke 5:6). But this time the nets do not tear. Now that John realizes it is Jesus on the shore, he tells Peter. That is all it takes for Peter to tuck in his outer garment, plunge into the sea, and swim towards Jesus on the shore.

It has been observed that what we find here is typical of both John and Peter: while John is the first to understand, Peter is the first to act.

What does Jesus do for the disciples? Prepares and serves them breakfast. **Significance?** He Who came not to be served but to serve is showing His care of them and for their daily personal needs.

John tells us it was 153 large fish. Why so specific? These professional fishermen, laboring in the area of their expertise, are unable to catch anything on their own. Jesus is teaching them that He is the source of their success, able to provide much more. Beyond merely meeting their needs, He is also supplying for their future needs, *I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10)*. Jesus is the One who makes men fruitful fishermen.

Let's examine the relationship between Jesus and Pete. What happens before Jesus is crucified? Peter denies Christ three times, as the Lord predicted he would do.

What has happened between them since crucifixion? The Lord has appeared twice, saying nothing about Peter's failure.

What is going on in Peter's heart now as he encounters Jesus on the shore? No doubt Peter is living with a tremendous sense of failure. He is deeply grieved from the sin weighing heavily on his heart.

What is significant about the exchange between Jesus and Peter on the shore? First of all, Jesus never shames Peter for his denial. He instead restores Peter to a right relationship with Him and reaffirms His call upon Peter's life after initially asking, "...do you love Me more than these do?" The Lord's words zero in on the heart of the matter with Peter, whose boasting before the crucifixion, that he would not deny Jesus even if all the others did, was a claim to having a higher devotion level.

What kind of experience is this encounter with Jesus for Peter? Humbling but necessary. Peter has come to realize his level of devotion to The Lord isn't any greater than anyone else's. His bold assertion that he would not deny Jesus proved to be only empty arrogance.

Why does Jesus question Peter three times? It is best understood in relationship to Peter's denial of Him three times.

Agapao and *phileo*: different Greek words for "love"— The first two times Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him, Jesus uses *agapao*. When Jesus asks him again for the third time, instead of *agapao* He uses *phileo*, the same word Peter uses in response to Jesus' question. We should be careful not to make too much out of these two different Greek words. When Jesus spoke to Peter, He spoke in Aramaic, the language spoken by the Jews of that day, and not in Greek, the language that the Gospel of John is written. The differing words may have some significance, but are not key to understanding the passage.

Why is it important that Jesus restore Peter publically? To reestablish credibility with his colleagues — that they would see the change in the now humbled Peter, whom the Lord has just reaffirmed with His original call upon Peter's life.

What are the lessons we can learn from this encounter between Jesus and Peter? God's grace and forgiveness will restore any repentant heart. It is easy to be critical of Peter, but look at Peter after Pentecost, with what God does in a man who has the right heart.

Application: Put yourselves in Peter's shoes as Jesus asks, "Do you love me, _____ (fill in your name)?" What then is our commission? Same as Peter's: be a shepherd of the flock. He doesn't say be one of the sheep or go join the flock.

What are some practical examples of how to be a shepherd? Chapels and churches need servants—youth group, teachers, nursery, etc. Start a ship/squadron Bible study. Start an OCF group. Build relationships and mentor young Christians. Do something in your neighborhood. The proof of one's love for God is *sacrificial service*—feeding our Lord's sheep.

What's with Peter's questioning about John? Peter is unnecessarily concerned about John. But Jesus tells Peter: *the issue is with you. Don't worry about others.*

Why doesn't Jesus appear more often during this 40-day period of time? Soon He will no longer dwell among them as He once had, so Jesus is weaning them in preparation for the day He returns to heaven.

What does it mean when Christ says, "follow me" to Peter—and to each of us? Following Christ means to walk in His steps—living, serving others, and laying down our lives for the sheep as He did. As Paul says in Philippians 1:27, we should conduct our lives "in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

How does Peter die and why? Tradition says he was crucified upside down because he felt unworthy of dying in the same manner as his Master.

Peter really does love Jesus. But Peter needs to understand that his love for the Savior is not as great as he thinks, just as his ability to catch fish is not as great as he seems to think. In all things, Jesus is supreme. Even in fishing, the thing Peter does best, he cannot hold a candle to Jesus' prowess. Peter tries errantly to prove his love for Jesus by:

- Boasting about it
- Being a part of the disciples' argument about who was the greatest (see Luke 22:24), and by
- Being the first to draw his sword and lop off an ear
- Perhaps even by being the first man into the water and onto the shore

These are not the benchmarks the Lord has established for testing one's love for Him. The proof of love for God is *sacrificial service*—feeding His sheep.