

# Jesus Talk with Peter

John 21:15-25

## Read John 21:15-17

v.15-17 - What question did Jesus ask Peter, and how did Peter answer? What is the necessary prerequisite for effective Christian service? Look up: 1 Corinthians 13:8, John 13:34-35

“*Feed*”: refers to providing nourishment as a herdsman does for his flock, and an elder for his church (1 Peter 2:2).

“*Tend*”: means to act as a shepherd, and is the word elsewhere used for elders. It includes not just providing nourishment but also providing oversight, discipline and guidance (1 Peter 5:2).

“*Sheep*”: a term of endearment for those under the shepherd’s care (John 10:11).

Peter does not claim to love Jesus more than the others do, especially after his shameful denials. This response is typical of true discipleship; it is humble and focuses on the Lord's own knowledge (“*you know that I love you.*”).

In this passage there is a pattern, with Jesus asking Peter twice whether he loves him (*agapao/divine love*) and each time Peter responds, yes, he does love him (*phileo/brotherly love*). Then the third time Jesus switches to using Peter's word (*phileo*), or in other words: “*Peter, are you even my friend?*”

Numerous commentators have argued the difference, often seeing *agapao* as representing a higher and purer form of love. However, many modern commentators are not persuaded that there is any clearly intended difference of meaning here because the two words are often used interchangeably in similar contexts and because John frequently uses different words where little discernible difference in meaning can be determined, perhaps for stylistic reasons. While there may be no difference in the meanings of the two verbs, Peter is nonetheless grieved because Jesus kept asking him if he loved him.

Jesus' asking three times recalls the three denials. Peter is deeply grieved (*elypethē*), and any pride and thoughts of self are dealt with. Without such brokenness we are full of self and unable to hear and receive the guidance of the true Shepherd. After three denials, note the gracious opportunity Peter has been given to declare his love for Christ.

Peter learned his lesson, as is clear from his first letter where he shows authority exercised in humility. This is the mark of a true shepherd. Look up: 1 Peter 5:1-4

## Read John 21:18-19

v.18-19 - What is said regarding Simon Peter’s past, present, and future?

Here is the moment of contrast for all believers between our life of self will and our coming under the will of Jesus Christ. Jesus says to Peter that such submission is going to include being taken where he does not want to go. Look up: 2 Peter 1:12-15

“*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*” - Luke 22:42

## Read John 21:20-23

v.20 - Peter has had his attention fixed on Jesus ever since the Beloved Disciple (John) told him the person on the beach was Jesus (21:7), but now he takes his eyes off Jesus and looks at John. Look up: Matthew 14:28-30

v.21-22 – Describe the exchange that takes place in these verses. How ought we apply this instruction, and in what situations? Look up: Jonah 4:7-9, Matthew 20:13-15

v.23 – Despite the rebuke in v.22, what happened here even among those who walked with Jesus? Look up: Proverbs 26:22

The NIV translates (*menein*) to mean *remain alive*, and certainly this is how the later disciples, took it. But it is also the word used for “*indwelling Christ*”, as in the image of the vine and the branches (John 15:4-7). John distinguishes carefully between what Jesus actually said and how it was interpreted. Such lack of attention to the precise words of God has been a source of difficulty ever since the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:16-17; 3:1-5). This misunderstanding highlights the need for the instruction of the Holy Spirit. Look up: 14:26

## Read John 21:24-25

v.24-25 - These verses book-end this Gospel, with John 1:6-7 at the beginning. John the disciple begins this book with the eyewitness account of John the Baptist. Here John closes the book with the declaration that the events recorded have been eye-witnessed him personally, and he is now testifying to their absolute truth. Note the emphatic language in John 19:35.

There is no limit to the riches that are in Christ Jesus. Jesus is the very presence of God come into our midst. All authority has been given to him, and judgment is in his hands. He is just, and requires obedience, but he is full of mercy. He has revealed the Father, overcome the prince of this world and taken away the sin of the world; to all these things, John bears witness.