

THE RELATIONSHIP CONTINUES

BIBLE PASSAGES: John 21:1-19; Acts 1:4,8

THE POINT: Even though I mess up, God still loves me and will never leave me.

TODAY'S PURPOSE: To lead adults to recognize that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be with them in order to continue the relationship that God had planned from the beginning.

VBS SCRIPTURE: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by Him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. *Colossians 1:15-16*

BONUS VERSE: But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you. *John 14:26*

NOTES

BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

All of us have messed up. Maybe we messed up on a sports team, at work, or in one of our relationships. One area in which we've all messed up is in our relationship with God. Regardless of how hard we try, sometimes we still mess up and sin. (1 John 1:8) That's the bad news. The good news is that God's love never changes. Not only does He still love us, He wants to forgive us and enable us to keep growing and serving.

JESUS STRENGTHENS HIS DISCIPLES' FAITH (JOHN 21:1-14)

After God raised Jesus to life on the first day of the week, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene and then to several others. (John 20:11-18) That evening He came to the room where ten of His apostles (without Judas and Thomas) were meeting. (John 20:19-25) The following week He again joined the apostles, including Thomas. (John 20:26-29)

Some time later Jesus met seven of His apostles "by the Sea of Tiberias" (21:1) (also known as the Sea of Galilee). John identified five of the seven; Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, and Zebedee's sons, who were James and John. John mentioned that two others were also there. Luke noted that Jesus came to His followers after His resurrection to offer "many convincing proofs" that He was truly alive and to teach them "about the kingdom of God" from the point of view of His resurrection. (Acts 1:3)

Peter, one of the leaders of the Twelve and the most outspoken and spontaneous, told the other six that he was "going fishing." (21:3) Perhaps Peter, the impatient one, simply needed something to do while they were waiting for Jesus to come. (Mark 16:7) Following Peter's

lead, the other six got into the boat (21:3) and headed out onto the lake. It was probably early evening when they started since nighttime was the best time to fish. Though they worked throughout the night, they never found any fish.

As the sun was coming up, a man from the shore yelled to ask if they had caught anything. The man was Jesus, but they didn't recognize Him. Interestingly, He asked in a way that expects a negative answer, "You don't have any fish, do you?" When they answered "No," He told them to cast their net on the other side of the boat and assured them they would find some fish (21:6). They caught so many "large fish—153 of them" (21:11)—that they were afraid of tearing their net or overloading their boat if they tried to pull the net up.

At that moment John "the disciple, the one Jesus loved" (21:7), recognized Jesus. He immediately told Peter, "It is the Lord." (21:7) As usual, Peter acted on impulse, "tied his outer garment around him ... and plunged into the sea." (21:7) The other six men stayed in the boat and steered toward the shore, which was only about 100 yards away, dragging the net with all the fish.

Jesus asked them to bring some of their fish (21:10) to the spot where He had already cooked some fish and bread. (21:9) Peter ran to grab the net. John's report noted that to their surprise the overloaded net "was not torn." (21:11) Jesus made His identity and authority clear by providing the miraculous catch and by keeping the net from tearing, both impressive to a group of fishermen. A few years earlier Jesus had exercised His power before Peter, James, and John in a similar way. (Luke 5:4-11) Surely that event came to their minds as they counted the huge catch.

After fishing all night, the men were probably hungry. Jesus invited them to come and have breakfast. (21:12). Jesus took the bread and the fish and distributed the food to them. After what they had seen, none of the men needed to ask who He was. John pointed out that "This was now the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after He was raised from the dead," (21:14) meaning the third time He had appeared to most or all of the eleven.

JESUS CHALLENGES PETER'S FAITH (JOHN 21:5-19)

After the men had finished their breakfast, Jesus turned to Peter and three times asked him essentially the same question. Not many days before this meeting, others had asked Peter three times if he was one of Jesus' disciples. (John 18:15-18,25-27) Each time Peter had denied any relationship with Jesus.

Jesus began by asking Peter if he loved Him "more than these." (21:15) Once Peter had claimed that no matter what others did, he would always be faithful to Jesus. (Mark 14:29) In light of all that had happened, Jesus asked if he would still make that claim. This time Peter refused to be so bold. Instead, he replied simply, "Yes, Lord, ... You know that I love You." (21:15) Jesus then

commanded Peter to “feed My lambs.” (21:15) Jesus used the word “lambs” and later the word “sheep” to refer to His followers in light of His role as “the good shepherd.” (John 10:11)

When Jesus asked Peter again, “Do you love me,” Peter answered exactly as before: “Yes, Lord, ... You know that I love You.” (21:16) This time Jesus instructed Peter to “shepherd my sheep.” While the terms feed and shepherd are different, they also have the same connotation—take care of my lambs and my sheep.

When Jesus asked Peter the third time, “‘Do you love Me?’ ... Peter was grieved.” (21:17) Did Jesus ask three times because Peter had denied Him three times? The Bible doesn’t say. We can only imagine the thoughts racing through Peter’s head. Peter could only appeal to Jesus’ perfect insight into his heart: “You know everything! You know that I love you.” (21:17) Jesus’ reply was almost identical to the first two responses, “Feed My sheep.”

Why did Jesus put Peter through this interrogation in front of his friends, especially if He already knew what was in Peter’s heart? It is possible that He wanted Peter to openly confirm His commitment as he had done in Caesarea Philippi when he had told Jesus that “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!” (Matt. 16:16) It is also probable that He wanted to affirm Peter’s restoration to his place of leadership among Jesus’ disciples. By telling Peter to take care of His lambs and sheep, Jesus was letting both Peter and the other disciples know that He had forgiven and restored Peter to a place of usefulness and leadership.

To reinforce Peter’s role as a leader of His church, Jesus contrasted Peter’s younger days with his future. As a young man Peter had been a bold leader. Jesus foretold that in Peter’s later days others would take charge of his life. They would stretch out his hands, tie him, and carry him against his will. (21:18) John explained for his readers that Jesus was pointing to the kind of death Peter would die—by crucifixion—as a way to “glorify God.” (21:19) Tradition says Peter was crucified in Rome during the reign of Nero. Jesus concluded His challenge to Peter by repeating the words He had used when He had first called Peter to be His disciple—“Follow Me!” (Mark 1:16-18)

JESUS ASSURES OF HIS CONTINUED PRESENCE

(ACTS 14,8)

Jesus had been physically present with Peter and the others for about three years. He had taught them, encouraged them, rebuked them, and shown them God’s truth and God’s plan. Soon He would be returning to heaven, but Jesus had assured His followers that He would send Someone else—the Holy Spirit—to be with them. (John 14:16-18) Now, after His resurrection, Jesus reminded them of His promise and instructed them to stay in Jerusalem and “to wait for the Father’s promise.” (1:4) Jesus told them that when the Holy Spirit came,

He would empower them so they could be His effective and bold witnesses starting where they were (“in Jerusalem”) and throughout the world. (1:8)

APPLICATION

What a great example Peter is for us. Look at how he messed up—denying Jesus three times. Yet on the day of His resurrection Jesus went to Peter. Before He returned to heaven Jesus restored and challenged Peter to be the leader—the rock—He had called him to be. If there was hope for Peter to be restored, there is always hope for us and for everyone we meet. With the Spirit’s power and direction, that should be our message to a lost and dying world.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Do you feel you mess up to the point that God cannot use you?
- What hope does this study give you that you are still valued and loved by God?
- How do you know that you still have purpose?