



**JOHN - SMALL GROUP SERIES
LESSON 4**

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Created by Ministry to Youth
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Lesson 4

Bible: John 21

Topics: Jesus appears to his followers.

Read John 21:1-3:

1 Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee.

This is how it happened. 2 Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

3 Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

"We'll come, too," they all said. So, they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

Say: This chapter almost seems like the epilogue to the book—something written to add a little closure after you finish a book.

First, even though Peter has seen the empty tomb and at least two appearances of Jesus, he still seems to be dealing with the guilt of denying Jesus three times on the night of his arrest.

We see this because he is back fishing on the Sea of Galilee, where he was and doing what he used to do before he followed Jesus.

It was probably a potentially relaxing way to process the crazy number of different thoughts and feelings he was having at this time.

James and John had been partners in fishing with Peter on this sea back then, so it makes sense that they would be up for a little night fishing.

I sometimes wonder what they talked about all night.

Other times, I think that these were guys and they probably just focused on fishing and didn't have much conversation the whole night.

There's not really evidence either way.

We will soon find out that it wasn't a good fishing experience.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Discussion Questions

1. If you were feeling guilty or stressed, what would you do to just chill out and experience a little "normal" for a bit? (like Peter choosing to fish)
2. We're not sure why this group of disciples are the ones who were fishing, but we could guess that if Peter wanted anyone with him, then his old fishing friends, James and John, and maybe his brother Andrew would be his top picks. When you were feeling low, who are the people that you want closest to you? Why do you pick those specific people?

Read John 21:4-14:

4 At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was. **5** He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?"

"No," they replied.

6 Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So, they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

7 Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore.

8 The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore.

9 When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire and some bread.

10 "Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said.

11 So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn.

12 "Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

13 Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. **14** This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

Say: So, after fishing all night, some random guy onshore asks what they caught.

It could have been totally normal for someone to see them fishing and ask how good the catch had been.

Then it gets anything but normal.

He tells them to toss the net on the opposite side of the boat.

In case you missed it, they were fishing commercial style with nets, not with rods and reels.

These guys used to do this for a living.

After hours of fishing unsuccessfully, some random guy sarcastically tells them to throw the net on the other side of the boat.

Yeah, like the fish in the water have been hiding over there the whole night and just laughing at the fishermen.

We're not sure why they follow this strange request.

Maybe they were just physically and emotionally exhausted and did it just to humor the man instead of arguing with him.

But then they catch an amazing number of fish!!!

John is the first to recognize Jesus—maybe because the whole situation reminded him of when they first were introduced to Jesus in this same area.

Peter hears and jumps out of the boat and swims the length of a football field to get to shore and see Jesus.

He was always a bit impulsive.

So, even if he's still wrestling with his guilt, he's so excited to see Jesus that he leaves the others behind in the boats—with the huge catch of fish—and gets to Jesus as quickly as he can.

Jesus has breakfast cooking and ready for them onshore.

After a long night of fishing and not catching anything, they most definitely would have been hungry.

And after this time of trying to figure out what was going on with Jesus, they most definitely would have been happy to see their Rabbi/Teacher and friend.

Peter helps bring in the huge catch of fish, which they counted.

Then they all join Jesus for breakfast, and they all recognize that it is him.

Discussion Questions

1. Has there been a time when you saw someone that you hadn't seen for a long time like a friend or family member and had the same kind of excited response to seeing them as Peter did with Jesus? Describe that to us.
2. Although John doesn't tell us, I can almost picture a grin on Jesus' face as He talks to the guys—while they don't recognize Him—then gives them the strange instructions to catch the fish. In your relationship with Jesus, are there moments where you can look back and say that He might have been grinning while He waited for you to figure something out?
3. Meanwhile, Jesus is getting breakfast ready for them when they make it to shore. Are there moments where He answered a prayer or showed you some small amount of kindness like fixing breakfast for the disciples?
4. Do you remember how excited you were when you first started following Jesus? Describe what you were like?
5. Have you seen that kind of excitement in a friend? If so, describe. If not, imagine what that might be like for one of your friends as motivation to help them get to know Jesus!

Read John 21:15-19:

15 *After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"*

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

16 *Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"*

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

17 *A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"*

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep.

18 *"I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go."*

19 *Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God.*

Then Jesus told him, "Follow me."

Say: When Jesus addresses Peter, He calls him by his former name, Simon.

That might have hurt Peter as a reminder that he was supposed to be a "rock" but that he hadn't acted like it recently.

Three times, Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him.

Anyone listening—especially Peter—would have made the connection with the three times Peter had denied Him, just as Jesus had predicted would happen.

Each time Peter responds by saying that Jesus knows he loves Him.

Jesus knows that Peter loves him, even if his triple-denial didn't represent his core beliefs.

And each time, as he did in **John 10**, Jesus goes back to shepherding language to show Peter that he has a responsibility to act on that love and shepherd His followers.

No one needs to bring up his denial anymore as Jesus has just addressed it plainly and restored Peter back to being a shepherd in His Kingdom, as well as His follower.

Jesus also points out a reference to how He will die.

From what we know from church tradition, Peter ended up being crucified like Jesus.

Some even say he was crucified upside down because he didn't feel worthy of the same death as Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe a time where you, like Peter, felt like you disappointed someone. How was that for you emotionally?
2. Sometimes we might question if Jesus can forgive us for a certain sin. Here we have Peter being forgiven and restored to his position of ministry and leadership after denying that he even knew Jesus! Peter is a good reminder that everyone makes mistakes and Jesus' forgiveness more than covers them. What should you stop giving yourself a hard time about so you can accept Jesus' forgiveness and move forward?
3. The other disciples needed to see Jesus restore Peter so that they, too, would have confidence in him. In our lives, we need to remember that our example in forgiving people and healing/restoring relationships can speak volumes to those around us. What are some ways you can model forgiveness and healing in relationships with your friends? Your family?

Read John 21:20-25:

20 Peter turned around and saw behind them the disciple Jesus loved—the one who had leaned over to Jesus during supper and asked, “Lord, who will betray you?”

21 Peter asked Jesus, “What about him, Lord?”

22 Jesus replied, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me.”

23 So the rumor spread among the community of believers that this disciple wouldn't die. But that isn't what Jesus said at all. He only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

24 This disciple is the one who testifies to these events and has recorded them here. And we know that his account of these things is accurate.

25 Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.

Say: There's a moment where Peter looks back at John and asks Jesus about him.

Because of Jesus' response, a rumor had spread that John wouldn't die.

John includes this little incident to clarify that this is not what Jesus was saying.

As far as we know, John was the only disciple to die a natural death because he was imprisoned instead of killed for his faith.

John wraps things up by noting that it is he who wrote this book and declares that he gave an accurate account of what he experienced with Jesus.

(And there would have been people around who remembered these events and could have spoken up and objected if what he wrote was false.)

Once again, he reminds us that so much more happened than what he was able to write.

But we are pointed once again back to **John 20:31** that what he included in this book was to help us believe in Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. From what you know in the rest of the New Testament, how did Peter's life change after this? (Look at Acts, chapters 2, 3, and 4!)
2. We asked this earlier, but now that we are finishing our study, is there anything else about Jesus that you would like to know that probably isn't included in the four biographies or Gospels?
3. If you were to write a blog post about Jesus, what would be the main things you would want to include to share with people today? Or if you were going to do a social media post, which is a bit challenging without photos or video of Jesus, what would you want to share?
4. Now that we have finished these four lessons, what is your plan to get to know Jesus better? How are you going to spend time with Him this week? What kind of habit will you develop to help you get to know and follow Jesus?
5. As we wrap up this study, how can you use your influence, friendships, and platforms to share the true story of Jesus, His life and ministry, death, resurrection, and hope for us today with your peers and family?