



believe

THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE LIFE

STUDY WEEK 2018

section 5

SECTION 5: JOHN 21

fishing for fish

In **John 21** we find the disciples back up in Galilee. Why had they returned up here? See **Matthew 26:32**.

When we meet the disciples, they appear to be waiting for Jesus to re-appear. We don't know how much time has elapsed, however it would seem this was more than a handful of days. Who decides they've had enough of waiting, and what does this person set out to do?

Strangely, John uses the Greek name for Galilee: Tiberias. This word only appears in two other places in the Bible, both in **John 6 (verses 1 and 23)**. It would seem John is eager to remind us of events in that chapter. What is similar between the disciples' situation here, and **John 6:16-18**?

Peter leads the disciples back to their old way of life: catching fish. What is the result of their all-night endeavours?



THINKY-THING: The disciples have spoken with the risen Christ (**John 20**) yet here they seem to be sitting around half-heartedly fishing. How do you think we do the same thing today?

It may seem surprising to us that the disciples don't recognise him, but this is just one of numerous occasions in John's gospel (and others) where this happens. Look up the following quotes to understand how many people struggled to believe Jesus had actually been raised:

- **John 20:15-16** _____
- **John 20:19-20** _____
- **John 20:24-25** _____
- **Luke 24:13-31** _____

John is writing this record because he wants us to BELIEVE Jesus has been raised (look back at all the times you will have coloured in the word 'believe' in the previous section, **John 20:25-31**). It is comforting for us to know that even the disciples still struggled to comprehend that Jesus had actually been raised from the dead. This gives us great confidence that the resurrection of Jesus truly did take place, because the account is written about and through people who themselves initially doubted! However, after having "heard, seen, looked and handled" (**1 John 1:1**) Jesus Christ, they believed. This helps explain Jesus' marvellous words in the previous chapter: "Blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed" (**John 20:29**).

This also may help explain why John's gospel particularly highlights Mary, Peter and Thomas – in their own way, they all struggled to believe the amazing news of Jesus' resurrection. How does he emphasise this point in **John 21:14**?

Back on the shore, the still-unrecognised Jesus suggests the disciples to cast their nets out again. The result is a miraculous catch; one they can barely bring back into the ship. John immediately realises it is Jesus (**verse 7**) – but how? Because this is not the first time such an event has occurred...



ACTIVITY: Look up **Luke 5:1-11** and have a read through the story there. Then, complete the box below by filling in the relevant verses next to each phrase. This might make a good box to put in **John 21**.

INFORMATION	LUKE 5:1-11	JN 21:1-14, 19-22
Sea of Galilee (a.k.a. Gennesaret)		
Out all night	verse 5	
Two ships		Verse 3 & 8
They caught nothing		
Cast the net		
A great catch		
Others came to help		
Followed him / follow me		

a fire of coals

John gives us some unusual detail – Peter is naked in the boat! Remember, it had been Peter’s idea in the first place to go back to their old fishing ways. Look up **Revelation 16:15** and summarise it below:

(in your own words)

Immediately after this event, what new mission did Jesus give Peter in **Luke 5:10**?

What is Jesus trying to teach Peter by repeating this miracle again in **John 21**? (Think back to Peter’s declaration in **verse 3**)

Fish are by no means the only link between these two chapters; both also refer to bread. In fact, **John 6** mentions “**bread**” or “**loaves**” 21 times (you may wish to colour these in). It is the chapter which records the feeding of the five thousand. What was the key lesson Jesus wanted the multitude to understand on that occasion? See **John 6:26-27**.

In what way did Peter (and the disciples) need to learn that same lesson again, even after Jesus had been raised?

With the above quote in mind, what point is John perhaps making about Peter’s state of mind at this time?

John is careful to tell us that before Peter acts, he “**girt**” himself with his fisher’s coat. Look up the word “**girt**” in e-Sword (the word ‘diazōnnumi’). It appears on only two other occasions in the whole Bible. Where are those occasions, and what happened in that story?

Once John identifies it is Jesus on the shore, what does Peter do next? Where in the gospels has this happened before?

When Peter (and the disciples) arrived at the shore, they see “**a fire of coals**”. When was the last time Peter stood around “**a fire of coals**”, and what happened then?

Interestingly, given how vocal Peter had been on the last two occasions mentioned above, he seems to keep his silence here. He is, however, still the first person to act when Jesus asks for the fish to be brought to shore. John, as usual, gives us some very specific details in his gospel. We're told that there were 153 fish, and the net was not broken. What might this be a reference to? Look up **Matthew 13:47** for a suggestion.

On the shore, sharing a meal of bread and fish with Jesus, none of the disciples ask Jesus who he is – they all know in their hearts. They are beginning to believe. How many times had Jesus now appeared to them after his death and resurrection?

do you love me?

After the meal, Jesus separates Peter from the other disciples. We should never underestimate the bitterness that Peter felt about denying his Lord. Yet in the same way we should never underestimate the amazing love and absolute forgiveness of God. The gruff disciple must have been expecting some hard questions from Jesus, but nothing could prepare him for the exchange he was about to share with the Lord he had denied. To understand what happens here, we need to understand the language Jesus and Peter are using.



ACTIVITY: There are two different types of 'love' in this little exchange. Choose two separate colours (perhaps blue and red), and highlight the different words for 'love' in your margin, using the below as a guide:

- **John 21:15**
*So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, **lovest** thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest*

*that I **love** thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

- **John 21:16**
*He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, **lovest** thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I **love** thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*
- **John 21:17**
*He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, **lovest** thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, **Lovest** thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I **love** thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

Now, in your margin, note down the difference between the two words/colours:

Lovest: the Greek word 'agape'. Strongs: "to love, to breathe after"; Thayer: "to love dearly". Often used of love in a sacrificial sense (i.e. **John 3:16**).

Love: the Greek word 'phileo'. Strongs: "to be a friend of"; Thayer: "to be fond of".

When Jesus first asks Peter if he 'agapes' Jesus, why do you think Peter can only respond with "I 'phileo' you"?

Jesus tries the same approach the second time, and Peter responds in turn. What is different about Jesus' third question?

How does Peter respond, and why do you think he is so grieved Jesus changes his question?

Who are the sheep that Jesus speaks of, and what kind of characteristics do they show? Look up **John 10:14, 27-29** to help with your answer.

Jesus is asking Peter to cease being a fisher of men, and now to become a shepherd. What is the role of a shepherd, according to the following quotes?

- **Ezekiel 34:13-15** _____
- **Ezekiel 34:16** _____
- **Luke 15:4-6** _____
- **Acts 20:28-29** _____

Think back over Peter's past behaviour when faced with difficulty. How had he reacted in the garden of Gethsemane when faced with danger? (**John 18:10**)

How had he reacted in the courtyard when faced with accusations? (**Matthew 26:74**)

Now look up **John 21:18** in the ESV. How does Jesus say his behaviour will change in the future?

Jesus' threefold questioning of Peter is no coincidence. Peter had previously boasted three times of his love for his Lord. Look up the following passages and write out Peter's three impulsive declarations of love:

- **Matthew 26:33** _____
- **Luke 22:33** _____
- **John 13:37** _____

Jesus ends his exchange with Peter with two simple but powerful words: "**Follow me**" (**John 21:19**). When was the last time Jesus had said these words to Peter, and what had the context been? (See **John 13:36-38**)

There are many occasions in the gospels when Jesus says "**follow me**" to Peter (**Matthew 4:19, 16:22-24; John 13:36; 21:19, 22** are just a few). What encouraging lesson can you take away from this?

Each time Jesus' questions Peter, he calls him "**Simon, Son of Jonas**". Look up **Matthew 16:17** and **John 1:42** to see the only other times Jesus has called him this name. What is Jesus trying to remind him of?

Jesus is offering Peter the opportunity to start again. The key to this section is to understand the parallels between **John 18** and here in **John 21**. After Peter's boast, he denied the Lord THREE times before a fire of coals. Now Jesus has recreated that scene in order to restore Peter – to help him acknowledge the forgiveness of God and reconfirm his important calling. Jesus' questions are in front of all the disciples. As there was a public THREEFOLD denial of Jesus, so Christ was going to publicly restore Peter through a THREEFOLD affirmation of his love.

Peter, having had a glimpse into his own future, can't help but ask Jesus what is going to happen to John. Some confusion around Jesus' response led the disciples to spread abroad an incorrect teaching; what was it?

John sets the record straight himself – and in doing so, testifies that he is the

author of the account we are reading. It is his personal touch to attest to the truth of his record. These things are written “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name”. (John 20:31)



THINKY THING: Take some time to personally reflect on your own life. Write down what you want to change about yourself. Think about your failures and what you would like forgiveness for. Write down some goals of things you would like to do in service for ‘the sheep’. Say a prayer to God for his help and forgiveness. Then go away and put it into action!

What I would like to change about myself:

What I need forgiveness for:

My goals for serving Jesus’s sheep:
