

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## John 21: Peter Reinstated



## What is your favorite food on a cookout?

### Into the Word

- In fishing all night, using nets, do you think Peter just wanted something to do, or did he return to his old business?
- How does Jesus' preparation of breakfast relate to what he did for them in 13:1-17?
- Why do you think Jesus repeated the same question and charge to Peter three times?
- How is Peter supposed to demonstrate his love and loyalty to Jesus now? In light of 10:15, what would Jesus' shepherd image mean to Peter?

### Into the Heart

- Where do you go to get away from it all? How does God meet you there?
- Have you ever blown it so badly that you thought your relationship with God was over? If you can talk about it, please share...
- When have you compared yourself with someone else and wondered why his or her life was the way it was?

*What is your greatest takeaway from this passage?  
What specific life changes do you need to make?  
How will you hold yourself accountable?*

# PETER REINSTATED (JOHN 21)

John ends his gospel by going back to the beginning. He wants his readers to understand how Jesus is the LIGHT and LIFE. And he does it through two inconvenient stories: one about fish and the other about a fisherman.

## AN INCONVENIENT MOMENT

John was no stranger to fishing (that was his profession) nor to the sea of Galilee (his home). After the ascension, Peter went back to what he knew best: fishing. It's where he felt comfortable, safe and appreciated. Nighttime was the right time to fish Galilee. Using torches to draw fish to the surface, the fishermen flung a net or threw a spear to secure their catch. These fishermen were likely not more than a hundred yards from shore. The seven disciples fished all night long and caught nothing. They are tired, discouraged and, likely, grumpy. The disciples heard a voice from the shore. This is no apparition or hallucination. It's giving instructions for how to catch some fish (which they followed and found success). Later they gathered around a fire (with fish cooking) for a breakfast meal. John includes this story to prove Jesus is ALIVE. John knew his master's voice. He experienced Jesus in his most intimate moments, from mountain top experiences to upper room last meals.

## AN INCONVENIENT CONVERSATION

Jesus literally brought Peter back to the scene of his crime: a coal fire. The Greek word for "burning coals" (that described the breakfast fire Jesus had kindled) appears also in John 18:18: *It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire (of burning coals) they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.* The smell of the fire, the heat of the flame and the light of the blaze throwing shadows at dawn, would've kickstarted Peter's guilt and shame. It's important to know that a rabbinical relationship—like any covenantal relationship—could be broken through denunciation. It's how a divorce in the first century was executed. A man could divorce his wife simply by stating "I divorce you" three times. And now you know the gravity of Peter's denial. By denying Jesus three times he had essentially denounced following Jesus. Jesus was no longer his rabbi. Perhaps that's why Peter went fishing. His discipleship program was over. Peter thought his career with Jesus was over. He had broken the relationship by his own volition. So don't miss what's happening. Peter is disciple number one. And he had called it quits on Jesus. So he's gone back to fishing because that's the only other thing he knew. But he soon learned fishing still stinks. It's hard, tiring work. It's discouraging. And Peter felt completely lost. So when he recognized Jesus from a hundred yards out, Peter jumped into the Galilee and swam to shore...only to find Jesus sitting by a fire that took Peter immediately back to an early Friday morning final DENIAL of his rabbi. Peter is all excited and then...immediately...depressed and discouraged again.

And that's when this inconvenient conversation happens. Jesus asked Peter three times a simple question "Do you love me?" And Peter answered three times that he "loved" Jesus. The word we translate "love" in the Greek can have several meanings. There's romantic love (*eros*). There's family love (*storge*). There's brotherly love or friendship (*philo*). But Jesus now introduced new love known as "*agape*" or Divine Love.

Essentially, what Jesus is doing is RE-COMMISSIONING Simon Peter. He was called initially to be a "fisher of men," to evangelize and tell people about Jesus. But now he was commissioned to be a SHEPHERD, to feed the weakest lambs, to shepherd the flock, to provide and protect the sheep. His Calling to "follow" had not changed but GOD'S PURPOSE for his life sure had.