

LIFE EVERYDAY WITH THE LORD JESUS

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By the Book™ A Chapter by
Chapter Bible Study Series
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Let's Begin

The closing verses of John's gospel form an epilogue to the main body of the book. The purpose as stated in 20:30-31 has been accomplished. Now this chapter is added to teach additional lessons concerning the relationship of the living Lord to His disciples each and every day.

Christians face no greater concern than how their life is to connect with the living Lord on a 24/7 basis. What is my life supposed to look like if Jesus is my Lord every moment of every day? Is such a life even possible?

We think it is and believe that one of the purposes of chapter 21 is to teach us that very truth.

As we move through our final chapter in the Gospel of John, let's examine two practical principles that will assist us as believers to live life everyday with the Lord Jesus:

- I. We Must Examine our Daily Routine (vv. 1-14)**
- II. We Must Evaluate our Devotional Reflections (vv. 15-25)**

I. We Must Examine our Daily Routine (vv. 1-14)

The chapter begins with Jesus appearing to His disciples yet another time (vv. 1-3). However, let's back up for just a moment. Matthew records for us what John omits here. Christ had given them specific instructions about what to do: "Then said Jesus unto them, 'Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me...' Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them" (Matt 28:10, 16). They were to go back to the familiar places, where so much of His ministry was conducted. There they were to wait on Him.

It wasn't long, however, until they grew impatient, or perhaps bored waiting on Jesus. There is a lesson for us in this. God makes us wait on Him many times as a way to advance us in faith. It is not that He is tardy or does not care for us. Instead those moments are designed to build our faith. Another purpose demonstrates His Lordship. In other words, God's time clock always takes precedence over ours.

Observe that Jesus gave the disciples no command to go back to their fishing vocations. Let's listen in on John: "There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, 'I go a fishing.' They say unto him, 'We also go with thee.' They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing" (vv. 2-3).

These fishermen were not used to fishing all night without catching fish. That was their trade. They knew the business. But something was definitely missing on this night. What was it? A call! Peter and the others had no call to be fishermen any longer. If they were to be fishers, they would fish for men, not fish: "And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, 'Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.' And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him" (Luke 5:10-11).

Now would be a good time to consider your personal vocation. Do you feel successful in it? Whether you are a housewife or a banker, a CEO or a mailman, there is little hope of being successful apart from the call of Jesus

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Reflection Connection

Reflection Connection: What would you say your calling in life is? Does the presence and power of Jesus sustain you in it? Be prepared to share your calling to the group.

Reflection Connection

Think of a time in your life when you learned a valuable lesson in failure. Was it a lasting lesson? Share it with the group and allow time for others to share their experiences.

Christ. Without His call, like Peter, your current life and profession might be summed up with, “they caught nothing.”

So there is a definite reason for failure in your daily routine. Yet, there is another truth we must keep in mind. Even in our failures, we can learn some valuable lessons.

First, we learn that the Lord is with us in our failure. Jesus was there observing the disciples as they fished and caught nothing: “But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus” (v. 4). They didn’t know He was there. That’s the way it is so many times; we forget God is never far from us. In fact, that’s the miracle of the resurrected Christ!

Even more, as mysterious as it sounds, sometimes our Lord arranges failures to teach us His sweetest and deepest lessons. Amidst your failures, look for Jesus.

Second, we learn that we are utterly helpless without Him. The disciples strutted out on the pier, hopped in the boat, and took off, thinking they’d catch fish just as before. Yet, unless Jesus has called us to the task, it just doesn’t work that way. In fact, we’ll end up making a mess out of things.

Third, we learn the things that really matter in life. Peter thought fishing was everything. And it was... in his old life. But Jesus called him to a higher purpose. Understand: God does not call every person in the same way. All men are not called to preach or pastor a church. But all men are called by Jesus to do what they’re doing or they are in the wrong profession. Jesus determines what matters in life. That’s a valuable lesson that sometimes only failure can teach us.

Just as there are lessons to learn from failure, there are lessons to learn from fishing. Fishing was Peter’s former profession. Therefore, whatever profession or vocation you find yourself in, these lessons will assist you.

First, Jesus must be involved in the fishing. All night long the boats were out but not a fish was caught in their nets. Notice what happened when Jesus got involved: “And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes” (v. 6). Unbelievably, the net was so full, it almost broke under the weight. Just a few minutes with Jesus in control accomplished more than a whole night of their own efforts. No matter what you do for a livelihood, Jesus wants to be a daily, moment-by-moment part of your life. Perhaps you’re only in college and not in the work force. The very same principle applies to you—*Jesus must be involved in your studies.* You’ll never have real, lasting success until He takes over in your life.

Second, He must direct the operations. Jesus gave them explicit instructions to cast the net in a certain place. There is a right way and a wrong way and Jesus always knows the difference. For Peter, he would have to learn the right way and the wrong way of fishing for men. The same goes for us. No matter our calling in life, a part of every Christian’s calling is to use his vocation as a means to share his faith. This poses vigorous challenges for some. However, make no mistake: wherever Jesus calls you, He equips you for the task at hand.

Third, Jesus must give the success. It wasn’t until Peter and the disciples got to shore that the fish were counted. We are not in the counting business; that’s



heaven's job. We do not keep a tally of our good deeds. Our job is to look to Him, listen to His instructions, and leave the results to Him. Even more, all credit goes to Him. He deserves the glory for it all.

II. We Must Evaluate our Devotional Reflections (vv. 15-25)

Peter quickly put two and two together. The net being so miraculously filled with fish, the familiar voice, and a second glance at the figure on the shore; it all made perfect sense: "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, 'It is the Lord.' Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea" (v. 7). Jesus was back again! Imagine the excitement when he discovered Jesus was there. In fact, He was there all the time. Perhaps our own problem many times is, we cannot accept by faith that Jesus is with us. Instead we look for visible signs, miraculous events, or audible voices. The promise Jesus gives will never fail the believer: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

Peter got to shore before the others who stayed with the ship. Safely landing, they dragged the net ashore and the abundance of fish was overwhelming (vv.7-8). Jesus greeted them and invited them to dine with Him for breakfast. No picture could better describe the believer's necessary communion with Jesus than the personal invitation from Jesus Himself: "Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord" (v. 12). Also, notice that none of the disciples failed to know Who Jesus was. At this level of spiritual intimacy, it remains virtually certain that a child of God can accurately discern the voice of God. Yet, this level of discernment is not possible apart from this level of intimate communion.

Jesus and the disciples sat around the morning fire in wonderful communion together. This was the third appearance Jesus made to them (v. 14).

All genuine relationships with Jesus Christ originate in the heart. It's not too much to say, you can walk next to Jesus your entire life and never have a personal relationship with Him if your heart never drives the relationship. One needs only to think of Judas, who walked with Jesus, ate with Jesus, was taught directly by Jesus for three long years. Yet, Judas' heart never once connected with Christ.

Given such, let's look at the final conversation Jesus had with Peter. Here we will discover three ingredients which are indispensable in successfully evaluating our devotional reflections, our communion with Jesus.

The first ingredient which is necessary is examination. Listen to Jesus: "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

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Reflection Connection

Do you find it difficult to discern the voice of Jesus amid your daily routine? If so, why do you think this is? Explain. If you do not find it difficult,, what do you feel is the key to your success? Share this with the group.



thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs” (v. 15). Jesus often asked His disciples questions, but never for information alone. Rather questions were a teaching tool of Jesus, the Master-teacher. Most of us would do well to listen and ask questions instead of talk and tell.

Interestingly, most of us think devotionals are a time for us to talk to God and tell Him what’s on our heart. And, while that’s one slice of the pie, it’s not even close to the whole pie. Nor even the best piece of pie! Do you ever allow God to ask you questions? Recall Isaiah when in the temple worship during his vision experience (Isa. 6:1-13). When God spoke, God began asking questions! Isaiah writes: “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then said I, ‘Here am I; send me’” (v. 8).

Reflection Connection

Does your devotional time include a time for God to search your heart and ask you questions? Why or why not? Suppose God were to ask you a question, what do you think He might first ask?

What a strange question Peter must have thought Jesus asked. On second glance, however, we can readily see the question should not have seemed strange to Peter. First, when Jesus queried, “Lovest thou me more than these?” He was posing an *essential* question, basic to Christianity itself. Why? Because the Christian faith is not essentially a set of principles about a person, but a loving relationship with a Person, Jesus Christ. Not that doctrine is not essential. Rather, it is that one may have every doctrinal “i” dotted and theological “t” crossed but fail miserably as a Christian. How can this be? Because the relationship with Jesus lacked the essential ingredient—*love*.

The question Jesus posed was also an *extensive* question. Note the qualifier Jesus added, “more than these.” To what could Jesus be referring? He could be referring to any number of things. For example, did Peter love Jesus more than the other disciples? Or, did Peter love Jesus more than the boats? If so, why was Peter on the lake when Jesus instructed him to be elsewhere? The point the Lord Jesus was making with Peter is precisely the point He makes with us: do we love Him more than anything or anyone else? Do you love Him more than pleasure (cp. 2 Tim. 3:4)? Do we love Him more than the world (cp. 2 Tim. 4:10)? Until this extensive question is considered, our devotional reflections will remain void in assuring the full presence of Jesus in our everyday lives.

Reflection Connection

How deep are you willing to allow Jesus to probe into your life? Do you think there are any areas of your life that are off-limits? Allow time for reflection on this during the group time.

Next, the question that Jesus asked was an *embarrassing* question. It grieved Peter that the Lord would continue to ask him if he loved Him. Yet, recall, Peter is the one who so boldly pronounced that even if all the other disciples abandoned Him, he would never do so. Peter needed to be probed deeply and pointedly. So do we. Sometimes our devotions can be piercing moments when the Lord deeply convicts us of our failures. Once again, recall Isaiah. He was so broken in God’s presence that he could hardly stand. Yet, God cleansed him from his deep conviction and then commissioned him for His work!

The second ingredient that is necessary is exclamation. Peter’s response to Jesus was revealing: “Thou knowest I love thee” (v. 15; cp. vv. 16-17). Peter appealed to the Lord’s knowledge of his heart. And he was perfectly right to do so. The Bible is clear that Jesus knows our hearts (cp. Acts 1:24; John 2:24-25; Heb. 4:13). Yet, God’s knowledge of us is not to be a threat to us. Instead it should comfort us. After all, Jesus knew Peter’s failures even before Peter knew! Moreover, He was dining with Peter after he had thrice denied Him. What a comfort to know a holy, righteous, perfect God knows we are sinners but nonetheless desires fellowship with us!



In addition, Peter's response is a tacit appeal to his basic sincerity. In essence Peter was saying, "I know my actions have not shown it, but deep in my heart, I have an unshakable love for you." Can your love pass that kind of test?

Finally, Peter's response was an appeal to his human frailty. Though not brought out in the English versions, Jesus and Peter used different words for love. The word for love Jesus used the first two times is a word that means the highest expression love can have—"agape" love. In Peter's first two responses, Peter replied with a much more "human" response. That is, the love that Peter expressed was linked more to emotional affection. When Jesus spoke a third time (v. 17), Jesus dropped His word and picked up Peter's. What a God we serve! He meets us where we are and begins to work in our lives, taking us where He wants us to be.

Reflection Connection

If someone asked you what is required for one to give up in order to follow Jesus, what do think you would say? Explain.

Golden Greek Nugget

John records a detail easily missed in the English versions of Scripture: "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?'..." (v. 17). The term translated "grieved" means literally "to grieve," "to make one uneasy." Why was Peter uneasy? Was it because Jesus continued asking him the same question? While that could be the answer, a better explanation is the number of times Jesus actually asked him: "He saith unto him the third time..." The three times Jesus asked if Peter loved Him correspond precisely with the three denials Peter had at Jesus' arrest. No doubt, the uneasiness Peter felt was the wounded pride—or even shame—he recalled having denied the Lord Jesus whom he now says he loves.

The third ingredient necessary is exhortation. Jesus' instruction to Peter was simple but profound: "Feed my lambs...feed my sheep" (vv. 15-17). If love is real, love really acts. Love is more than theory and goes beyond abstract propositions. That's why we mentioned earlier that the essence of the Christian faith cannot be defined strictly by doctrine alone. Instead, love—action—becomes essential to meaningful relationships, especially when we're speaking of a relationship with Jesus Christ. Love, then, demands loving service, equips you for that service, and produces results from that service.

Peter began to get the point. Thus, Jesus offered His prediction about Peter's future. His youth behind him and old age ahead of him, Peter would become a rock upon which others depended. In fact, Peter's faith would lead him to a death similar to that of Jesus (vv. 18-19). Peter then turned and inquired what would become of John and perhaps even of the other disciples (vv. 20-21). Consequently, Jesus gently reminded Peter to focus upon what the Lord had for him and not concern himself with what or where He led others in the Kingdom work that lay ahead.

Wrap Up

The gospel of Jesus Christ permeates every single thread in our life's fabric. Nothing remains untouched. God's design for us is to seek the presence of Jesus day in, day out. He is Lord every moment. Each of us has daily routines which must be examined. Are we where God has called us? Are we doing what God has called us to do? But even more, without a commitment to evaluate our devotional reflections—that is, our personal communion with Jesus—our calling will remain empty and our hearts completely unfulfilled.

