

Do You Love Me Pt 1 – Feed My Lambs

Description

15 When they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you
16 Again He said to him the second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me [w
17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me [with a d
18 I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, when you were young you girded your
19 He said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. And

John 21:15-19 AMPC

Jesus asks Peter three questions in the passage above which we will take an in depth look at over 3 posts. Each question involves a different request from Jesus, which will require different things of Peter that he must rely on the Holy Spirit for, because as he has demonstrated up to this point, he is incapable of serving Jesus on his own strength. The first question from Jesus that we will be reviewing in this post has two very important parts: “Do you love me more than these,” and “feed my lambs.”

To set the stage for this mini-series we must understand what has occurred leading up to this moment. In John chapter 13, Jesus prepares his disciples for upcoming death and resurrection. During that conversation Peter declares

Lord, why cannot I follow You now? I will lay down my life for You.

john 13:37 AMPC

Jesus’ response to Peter is this, “before this night is over, you will deny me three times (a paraphrase).” Later that same evening, on three separate occasions when Peter is confronted with questions about his association with Jesus, he in fact denies knowing him. It is with this guilt that Peter observes Jesus die on the cross, and 3 days later visit an empty tomb, unable to pay any last respects to Jesus. Can you imagine the emotional, mental, and spiritual turmoil that Peter possesses when we arrive at the scene in the scriptures above? Like Peter, I’d imagine that I’d be willing to say or do whatever it would take to erase the guilt, shame, and regret associated with my actions. Jesus able to see the bigger picture, and aware of Peter’s inner struggle provides him directions not on how to get back in good standing with God, but rather on what obedience, which is an expression of love would look like for Peter.

Jesus first challenges Peter on his love for him, but not according to Peter’s lip service, but rather according to Peter’s obedience. It would have been clear that Peter likely had the respect and admiration of other disciples and followers of Christ based off of his positioning as part of the “Big 3,” or plainly as a member of Christ’s inner circle of disciples. It’s likely Peter would have been vaulted to an elevated position amongst Christ’s followers, but instead Jesus is reminding Peter of his own example of leadership through service/servanthood. “Do you love me more than these?” This is a gut punching question from Jesus, because it goes straight to heart of Peter who as recently as the evening when

Jesus was betrayed, had professed his unwavering love and support for Jesus to the point that he was willing to die for him. Though we and Peter know how that turned out, Jesus is subtly reminding him of his earlier profession before the other apostles. Rather than condemning Peter for his earlier actions, he directs Peter's attention to a way for him to express his love. Jesus is challenging Peter to show his love for him through his serving of those who are pursuing Christ. Love me through loving and serving others, specifically by feeding my lambs. Now what is a lamb? A lamb is a sheep under the age of one. A lamb is vulnerable, very susceptible to attack, and they tend to be more shy and reserved compared to sheep. Why would Jesus ask Peter to feed his lambs first? I believe Jesus was challenging Peter in an area that he may not have been naturally gifted in. Feeding lambs would require Peter to be patient, understanding, develop long-suffering, and be consistent in word and action. Feeding the lambs 1st as opposed to sheep would require more work because of their age and abilities, or lack thereof. Peter would be required to labor more intensely to seek food that was accessible and safe for the developing lambs, he may have to do the work of preparing the food for them in a way that was consumable for them, but most importantly he'd have more responsibility when it came to protecting lambs from predators. What could this look like? Peter from this point forward as reflected in the rest of scripture in the New Testament would be confronted with unbelievers, Jews, and new converts who had no understanding or reference for Christ and faith. He would be required to lean on the Holy Spirit to obtain direction and guidance to best serve the lambs, and honor Christ. Peter, like us would be regularly confronted with the difference between his vision for how things should look, and God's purpose and plan for him and others. Jesus' first question/request of Peter is consistent with a promise that Jesus gave his followers, and a directive for us/them:

The Promise

Jesus answered, If a person [really] loves Me, he will keep My word [obey My teaching]; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home (abode, special dwelling place) with him.

john 14:23 AMPC

The Directive

19Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

matthew 28:19-20 nlt

Reflection Time

How do you consistently show your love for Christ in your life? Have you found yourself making declarations to Jesus that he didn't ask for, and if you did/do, then how do you respond when you fall short of them. In my transparency, I haven't been faithful with following Jesus' most basic commands,

to include feeding his lambs. I challenge you and myself to feed and care for the lambs better, regardless of their age or current position in their journey with Christ. We must be cognizant that we each started as a lamb, and will have lamb moments in life that we will need not only Christ, but a fellow believer to properly care for us in those moments.

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