

Do You Love Me Pt 3 – Feed My Sheep

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

We've reviewed Jesus' previous two questions and directives to Peter in the previous two parts. Here we evaluate Jesus' third and final request of Peter, which was to feed his sheep. Now it may appear to be out of order to some that feeding is the last step, but I beg to differ. Each request by Jesus was an increase of responsibility, and a further development of Peter's faith and character. In addition to that it was a advancement in the development of Jesus' followers, or a different stage of life for those that would come to discover him. Lambs start off as innocent and ignorant, and need their basic needs met, with food being primary. Sheep have a multitude of needs to be addressed as they have developed from an infant into an adult capable of making decisions on their own. Sheep have an added layer of responsibility and needs that have to be addressed because they have come into the age of understanding which involves accountability. Sheep may need to be reasoned with, and definitely their concerns have to be addressed before they may be willing to accept food, or more clearly teaching and guidance from someone. Lastly, sheep need food, but not just any food, they need healthy food that is rich with nutritional content, and uncontaminated. I believe that eating with or from someone is one of the most intimate activities that one can participate in because it involves trust. To eat someone's food you are trusting their cleanliness, their quality of cooking, and depending upon the location, you trust their security because you're in a relaxed mood. Like feeding lambs, in order for Peter to feed the sheep, he would be required to develop their trust in order for them to follow him to good pastureland, and fresh water. The trust developed in caring for their needs may not be sufficient for the sheep to allow him to feed them, but its a good foundation. Some sheep who are sick may have to eat from his hand, or be physically moved to a position of advantage to obtain their portion. Peter would have to be led by the Holy Spirit to receive from the source of living water and bread, and additionally he'd have to be led by the Spirit to serve the food in a palatable form while retaining its nutritional density. Peter would be required to do it Jesus' way in order to feed his sheep, because like the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 during Jesus' earthly ministry, it would require the supernatural. As I write and think about this, this final question and directive from Jesus is actually a higher level of discipleship which we are all called to do. Feeding the sheep isn't just providing them food, but teaching them how to discern between good and bad food. We aren't just called to spoon feed people, but we are to lead people back to the source which is Jesus. Feeding sheep involves discipling or walking people through how to read God's word, where to find his commands, how to pray and seek God's voice for themselves. Comparing lambs and sheep to children that become adults, we first feed them milk, then spoon feed them, before showing them how to use utensils to feed themselves, and eventually showing them how to prepare food for themselves. That is a very oversimplified process for the sake of time, but as a

believer we should be viewing Jesus' great commission through these lens. Spoon feeding, talking at people, and self righteousness isn't sufficient. We must reflect and live out Christ's commission for us as he modeled during his ministry. Feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, and feed my sheep. I want to leave you with some tangible examples of each phase of this process that Jesus modeled for Peter and us

- Feed my lambs – Matthew chapter 5-6. Jesus resets the spiritual standard for new and old believers. Break down God's word to its most simplest, yet purest form. Jesus brought everything back to the heart of the individual and reminded us that God looks on the heart. Help the immature, inexperienced, and recovering see what it looks like to believe in and reflect God at the most basic level.
- Take care of my sheep – Matthew 15:32. The parable of the 4000 being fed involves food so one may feel that it should be included with feeding the sheep, but more important than providing the fish and bread for the hungry crowd, Christ recognized that they had needs that must be met in the present, or the word would have no value. Do you stop to consider the current mental, emotional, spiritual, or mental state of a person and address that BEFORE you feed them scripture that may not be able to take root with the other stressors present?
- Feed my sheep – Matthew 6:5-18. The Lord's Prayer. This is the greatest meal that Jesus could have given his apostles and us. This is an example of teaching someone to fish rather than giving them a fish. Christ gave them what we call the Lord's prayer which is a timeless meal and sustenance that they/we could return to and eat from regardless of where we are. It's the meal that keeps on giving and outlasted his physical presence with them/us. True feeding is not what you eat from in someone's presence, but what can sustain you for time to come.

Reflection Time

What are you eating, and who served or fed it to you? What have or are you feeding others. We serve a savior that asked of us to eat of his "flesh," which is symbolic of feeding on his word. Is what you're feeding on hurting or helping you. Take some time to reflect on your "diet," and ask God to adjust your palate so that you can eat that which he has prepared for you.

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