

Peter Restored

Lesson 23

John 21:15-23

Opener

Ask: At some time have you had a relationship that was broken? Have you experienced restoration with this person? How did it feel when the relationship was restored?

A few weeks ago we read about Peter's fall when he denied Jesus three times during the night before His death. The relationship between Peter and Jesus was broken in that moment. As we said before, though, Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. And the love that Jesus had for Peter didn't change. His love remained. Jesus was not ready to leave Peter. Today we are going to read about when Jesus restored his relationship with Peter.

Scripture

Read John 21:15-17

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Discussion

Ask: How would you feel if Jesus told someone to love Him more than you do?

It seems cruel that Jesus is asking Peter if he loves Him more than the other disciples. But Jesus is only using Peter's own words. (See Matthew 26:33 and Mark 14:29.) In these two verses Peter told Jesus that if everyone turned away from Him, that he would remain. Peter thought that he was better than the other disciples. Peter looked at his companions and decided that he was more faithful and stronger in the faith than the others. He compared himself to the other disciples and decided that he was better than them.

Here Jesus is teaching Peter that he should not compare himself to others, nor should he think that he better or more faithful than the other disciples. Our only responsibility is to follow Jesus with all our heart. Peter was full of pride over his own faithfulness and love for Jesus. And that same pride is what kept him from seeing his own weakness.

Ask: How many of you come to church Sunday after Sunday?

Ask: How many of you try to live lives that please God?

Sometimes we can also look at our own lives and compare ourselves to others and decide that our lives are better than theirs. Consequently, we can decide that because our lives are better than theirs, we are better than them. It is easy to think that we are always going to be faithful to God and that we will never fail Him. And hopefully we will not distance ourselves from Him, but our focus should be on Him and not our own lives nor our abilities.

Ask: Why did Jesus ask Peter three times if he loved Him?

Peter denied Jesus three times. Jesus wanted to restore Peter completely. Every time Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, it gave Peter the opportunity to receive forgiveness of his denials and restoration with his Lord.

Ask: Each time that Peter answers Jesus, what instructions does he receive?

Feed and take care of His sheep. Jesus in John 10 speaks of himself as the Shepherd and His disciples as the sheep. Peter, then, has the responsibility to take care of the church - the people who have trusted in Jesus.

Many times when we really mess up and sin, we think that God can never forgive us nor use us in His service. But God wants to forgive and restore us to His service. He wants us to be faithful to Him so that others can see his goodness and love through our lives.

Read John 21:20-22

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”

After Peter was restored and his calling to serve and follow Jesus was renewed, Peter begins again to compare himself with another disciple. Jesus had just told Peter what He wants for him and Peter looks at the other and asks Jesus what will happen with him. Instead of focusing on Jesus and his own responsibility to Him, Peter focused on others. And Jesus answers him firmly telling Peter that he doesn't need to worry himself with the lives of others. His only responsibility is to follow Jesus. He doesn't need to concentrate on anything else.

There are many distractions in this life. And many times following Jesus takes a lot of concentration. At the end of the day, we do not need to ask ourselves if we have followed Jesus better than anyone else. We only need to ask ourselves if we have followed Jesus the best WE can.

Application

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Sometimes we also have a broken relationship with our Creator who is God and with our Savior who is His Son, Jesus Christ. Maybe there has been a moment in your life when you moved away from the Lord. And instead of His love, your life was full of guilt and

frustration. God does not want you to stay that way. He wants you to receive the restoration that only He can provide.

Think about your life right now. In what area of your life have you distanced yourself from God?

In what area of your life do you need the restoration of God?

During the week take a few moments to confess to God where you have failed and receive His forgiveness and restoration.