

Do You Love Me?
John 21:15-25
Pastor John Miller

In John 21:15, "So when they had dined," again, the word is breakfast, "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 thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him," that is, Peter, "Feed my sheep. 17 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? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

The miraculous catch of fish was a parable to the disciples of the kind of work in which they were to undertake. When Jesus first called the disciples, they were fishing. Now, when Jesus commissions them a second time, He knows that they have been fishing and caught that great miracle catch of fish. The first time they caught the fish, the same kind of miracle took place and He actually said, "You will become fishers of men," so they would go out with the gospel and seek to win people to Christ fishing for men. Now, this story of the great catch of fish was a parable that they needed to go out and serve the Lord becoming fishers of men, and they would also be shepherds feeding God's sheep.

There were there among them the seven, mentioned back earlier in verse 2, Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples who were unnamed. They weren't all there, but there were seven of them. Again, we're going to see Jesus meeting with them and commissioning Peter especially to feed His sheep. Peter, no doubt, might have felt that he was out of the picture, that he couldn't serve the Lord. Jesus had met with him after His resurrection, both the gospels and 1 Corinthians 15 make reference to it, but he had not been recommissioned to go out and to serve the Lord. Peter had repented, he was forgiven, but Jesus had not yet restored him to active ministry. Peter was now restored back into service, so there was a place for Peter to serve the Lord.

Peter failed the Lord, but he was forgiven. He did not lose his sonship, his relationship to the Lord. He was back in fellowship with the Lord, but now he's to be commissioned to go out and serve the Lord. I love this three times repeated statement, "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep, feed My sheep."

Go back with me to verses 12-14. I want to set the stage for this encounter with the Lord. It says, "Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine." In John 21, which technically the entire chapter is an epilogue, the book ends in John 20:30-31, he wraps up his book. John 21 is technically an epilogue and certainly verses 24-25, so you have the prologue, John 1:1-18, and now you have the epilogue. These are kind of like the bookends of the gospel of John. Remember Jesus said, "Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord," so I call this the silent breakfast. They were just eating in absolute

silence. You could hear the waves lapping on the shore. You could hear them smacking their lips when they ate their fish. You know, when men eat, they don't worry about manners, they just grab their food and start eating. I kind of laugh at this, too; when men eat, they don't talk.

My wife, for as many years as we've been married, always says, "Hey, when we eat, we should talk," and I'm thinking, Why, we're eating. We're supposed to eat. She wants to take a bite and talk, take a bite and talk. I just look down and eat, you know. It's time to eat. For 40+ years of marriage and she still can't get me to talk while we eat because I'm a guy, what can I say, it's time to eat.

All these guys are around the fire eating with Jesus, and no one dared ask Him, "Are You the Lord," because they knew for sure that it was. There was tension in the air because Peter was there, and Peter had failed the Lord. They were commissioned to go into all the world and preach the gospel, but just perhaps (and this is preaching with a little imagination) maybe Peter himself and the others were thinking that Peter was disqualified. You know, sometimes people will sin and fall in their ministries and they are disqualified from holding an office in the church, but God certainly does forgive our sins and still wants to use us for His glory. I want you to be encouraged tonight that if you've stumbled, if you've fallen, if you failed the Lord like Peter, there's not only forgiveness for you, but there's ministry for you. God can use you. God can take the broken pieces of your life and put them back together and use you for His glory.

Jesus actually, "...taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise," served them. Again, in verse 14, "This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead." Here they are eating on the Lake Galilee, Sea of Tiberias, and no one is talking. Peter is sitting there kind of uncomfortable, and the first thing I want you to note in verse 15 is that Jesus breaks the silence with a searching question. It was an intentional, purposeful question aimed at Peter. Now, I want you to note that Peter is actually restored and recommissioned, and Jesus does it publicly. Peter's sin was public, and his restoration and recommission was public as well. Here's the question. "So when they had dined," they ate their breakfast. It's time for the after dinner conversation, they had already eaten. "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 thee." Here's the question: Do you love Me more than these? Wow. Can you imagine Jesus asking you that question?

Jesus asks Peter almost the same question three times. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me," the first one was a little different than the other two, "more than these?" and we'll come back to what that means. The second question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" I want you to note that He asked him three times. How many times did Peter deny his Lord? Three times. Where did Peter deny his Lord? Around a campfire right outside Caiaphas' court, so what a flashback Peter and the others must have had. They're around a fire, three times Peter says, "I don't know the Man," and began to curse and swear, taking oath, "I know not this Man," and then he heard the rooster crow and went out and wept bitterly. Now, three times Jesus asks Simon Peter, "...lovest thou me?" and He started with, "...more than these?"

Notice also in this searching question that Jesus used his old name, Simon. He didn't just say, "Peter," He used his old name, Simon. Could it be because He was pointing out to Peter and wanted him to see, "You're not the rock you thought you were." The word Peter means rock, and Peter thought he was a solid rock. The Bible says, "...let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Remember, we chronicled the steps of Peter's denial, and it started with self-confidence where Peter said, "Though every one of these others forsake You, yet will not I," they may forsake You, but I will not forsake You. I'm willing to even die for You. Jesus said, "Are you willing to die for Me, Peter? Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

Why would Jesus ask Peter, "Do you love Me more than these?" not, "Peter, will you obey Me? Peter, do you believe in Me?" Jesus wants first to know, "Peter, do you love Me?" I believe that this is the primary lesson in our entire text tonight, that what God wants number one from our lives is for us to love Him. God doesn't want our service, He wants our love. You can serve the Lord and not really be loving the Lord. It's very, very common for people that are in ministry and for Christians who serve the Lord to get so busy and so focused on what they're doing for God, that they forget to love God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind. The lesson we learn from this episode with Jesus and Peter is that our ministry is to be an outflow of our love relationship to Jesus Christ. Christianity is a love relationship with Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 13, it tells us there's faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love. Jesus said it's the greatest of all the commandments that we love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our strength, and with all of our minds. I really believe that the number one priority of everyone's life should be loving God. Now, Jesus did say, "...more than these?" What did Jesus mean? Well, Jesus might have meant, and some would say that He was talking about the boat, the fish, the nets, and the fishing business that Peter had been in because remember Jesus told Peter and the others to, "Go to Galilee and wait for Me." He didn't say, "Go to Galilee and fish, and I'll show up sometime." He said, "Wait for Me," tarry for Me. Peter was the one that impetuously said, "I'm going fishing." Some feel that maybe he thought, I'm not going to get to serve the Lord anymore. I failed Him. I've been forgiven, but I'm going to have to go back to my old life of fishing. Jesus actually calls him and says, "Do you love Me more than these?"

I think a better way to interpret that is that He was talking about the other disciples, that He was talking about those other disciples that were sitting there with him because that was exactly what Peter had boasted about. He boasted that the others would fail and deny Him but that he would stay true. Peter started with self-confidence and put down the other guys and said, "They may forsake You, but not me," so my guess is, and it's probably the most common interpretation, that "these" are referring to the other disciples, "Do you love Me even more than these?" and Peter saw his sin of self-confidence and pride and is now humbled and broken, indeed.

Notice, secondly, after the searching question comes Peter's humble reply. Peter no longer boasts or brags because he's now a broken man. Do you know that before God can use us wonderfully, He has to break us completely, and that's difficult. I honestly believe, and I've

experienced it myself and trust will continue, that God goes on breaking us and breaking us and breaking us because He wants to use us. Remember when Gideon's mighty men had to break the pitcher for the light to shine through? It's kind of a parable or a picture of how God has to break us for the light to shine through. Many times He has to cripple us. I think of when Jacob wrestled with the Lord. It was an Angel, but it was actually an appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament. What did He do to Jacob when Jacob cried, "Bless me. I won't let You go lest You bless me," which, you know, when you're wrestling with the Lord and say, "I won't let You go," it's kind of like, who's fooling who here? "I can go anytime I want, Buckaroo." The Angel of the Lord, which was Christ, crippled him. F.B. Meyer calls it the crippling that crowns; and from that day forward, Jacob became Israel, who was governed now and controlled by God. He was a different man.

Many times before God can use us, He has to break us. Peter was humbled, broken, and he is no longer boasting at all. Peter answered with a different word for love than Jesus used. Those of you that are Bible students and have studied this passage for years, you know exactly what I'm talking about. For others that don't, let me make it really clear that every time Peter answers the Lord, "You know that I love You," in this passage, he uses the Greek word *phileo*. We know that in the Greek language there are multiple words for love. They have the word *eros*, which is not in the Bible, which is erotic or sensual love or sometimes lust. Then, there's the word *storge*, which is family love; and the word *phileo*, where we get the word Philadelphia from which means brotherly love. It means a fondness or an affection as some translations have. Then, we have the word *agape*, "For God so loved the world," or *agape* the world, *agape*.

Every time in the passage, Peter says, "You know that I love you," he said, "I *phileo* You." When Jesus said, "Peter, do you love Me?" He used a different word. When Jesus said, "Peter, do you love Me?" the first two times He used the word *agape*. He said, "Peter, do you *agape* Me?" Peter, so broken (and man, I can so identify with Peter at this point), is not going to boast, brag, or try to exert himself. He just says, "Lord, I like You, I'm fond of You." Jesus said, "Do you *agape* Me?" Do you love Me fervently and sacrificially and devotedly? Do you have that strong *agape* love? Peter just said, "Lord, I'm affectionate of You," or "I'm fond of You," I *phileo* You. Jesus said, "Peter, do you *agape* Me?" Peter said, "Lord, I *phileo* You." The third time, this is why it says Peter was grieved that the Lord would ask him the third time, Jesus changed His words and actually said, "Peter, do you really even *phileo* Me?" Are you fond of Me? Are you really affectionate toward Me? This is when it all just came out. Peter said, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I," again, "*phileo* You." Peter was using a word which did not boast of his love, yet it was a love. Peter loved the Lord, but he was not self-confident any longer. "Peter, do you believe in Me? Do you want to obey Me?" No, it's, "Peter do you love Me," *agape* Me. Peter's reply was humble but also confident.

I want to note something that is very rarely pointed out. Peter actually said, "Lord, You know all things." Earlier he said, "You know that I love You. You know that I love You." The third time when Jesus asked, "Do you *phileo* Me?" He said, "You know all things. You know that I *phileo* You." Peter was confident and sure of the fact that Jesus knew him. I believe that this is a reference to his omniscience—Jesus knew all things. Yes, He had set aside the use of His

divine attributes when He was on earth, but He could use them still as being God. At this point, He's in His glorified body, and it's clear from the life of Jesus and from the resurrection that He's God, and Peter says, "You know all things," so Peter is confident of Christ's omniscience. Before his fall, Peter might have answered and said, "Jesus, you don't know me. You don't know my heart. I swear I love You, I won't forsake You. The others might, but I will not." Isn't it interesting that Jesus said, "You're going to deny Me three times," and he actually said, "No, no, no, no. You don't know me. I'm Peter the rock." See how broken Peter is now, and he realizes, "Lord, You know all things."

The idea that Jesus knows us or that God knows all things can be a great comfort to the believer. I believe that we can find great comfort in the same truth that God knows all things. How glorious that is. There's a joy in resting in God's omniscience. Let me give you two reasons. First, God knows the worst about us and loves us anyway. Isn't that the truth? Have you ever had a friendship developing and you're real excited about this new person you met. You become good friends, but there's this haunting fear in the back of your mind that sooner or later your flaws, your weaknesses, are going to manifest themselves and that person is not going to like you anymore? We could carry that same concept over to God. Somehow we get this idea that sooner or later God is going to see how really bad I am, and He's going to kick me out of His family. I like what James Montgomery Boice said. He said, "If God did not know all things, we might fear that someday something evil in us would spring up and startle God and turn his affection from us." How true that is. But even though God knows everything about you right now, yet He loves you anyway. That's amazing to me.

Have you ever seen those bumper stickers, which I don't know why anyone would put them on their car, that says, "To know me is to love me." Why would you put that on your car? Every time I see one of those I think, I doubt that. So often the better we get to know somebody, the more we really know them, the harder it becomes to love them. God knows us from the beginning to the end. He knows us inside out. He knows all things, so nothing is going to change His opinion of you or His love for you. Rest in that.

Here's the second thought; that is, God knows the best about us though others do not. Others may criticize, others may fault find, others may falsely accuse you. There's nothing more difficult than being accused of wrong motives when your heart is sincere and pure in your motives. Maybe you've been misunderstood or attacked or maligned or lied about or put down; but I believe that God knows, and we can rest in the fact that God knows our hearts. The idea is that the disciples might have looked down on Peter and misunderstood him. You know, I don't know why it is, but we can be so cruel in the body of Christ. We like to shoot the wounded. We like to attack one another. We like to just go after each other in the body of Christ, and it could be that the disciples were thinking, Well, now that Peter fell, Peter denied the Lord, I can be the lead disciple. I can be the one in the limelight. Maybe they were assuming that Jesus was finished with Peter; but Peter did love the Lord, was forgiven, and could be used again. If you are being lied about or falsely accused or attacked, rest in the fact God knows your heart. You don't have to fight your own case or defend yourself, you can rest in God.

Thirdly, notice the gracious command in this story. There's three times, as I've already mentioned, verse 15, Jesus tells Peter to, "Feed my lambs." In verse 16, "Feed my sheep," and in verse 17, "Feed my sheep." Why was this gracious command given? Because it's not what you'd expect. Jesus commissioned Peter to feed the lambs and sheep, and it's a gracious command because it's not what you would expect. You would expect Jesus to rebuke Peter, to say, "Peter, you're done. I can't use you," but He actually recommissions him. This is a command and a commissioning by God's grace.

What is Jesus commissioning and commanding Peter to do? He's telling him to feed the lambs and the sheep. He's actually saying, "I told you to become a 'fishers of men.'" I believe that would be evangelism—throwing out the nets, sharing the gospel, winning people to Christ, going into all the world and preach the gospel. When people get saved and come to Christ, what do they need? They need to be shepherded, they need to be pastored. What He says to Peter, "Feed My sheep," He's actually telling Peter, "Pastor My sheep," and I love the fact that Jesus says, "They're My lambs," and "They're My sheep." The lambs are most likely conveying the idea of the tender young believer, some say children, which could include that as well. More likely He's talking about the new believers. They are lambs. They need to be shepherded. Then, the older saints or believers need to be shepherded as well, so He's commissioning Peter to not only fish for men but actually telling him, "Feed My sheep."

What exactly does that involve? How does one feed the sheep? Well, primarily the word "pastor" is the same as the word shepherd, and both convey the idea of feeding. The word "feed" means to pastor or to shepherd, so how do you pastor or shepherd or feed the sheep? The answer is: with the Word of God. Turn in your Bibles real quick (hold your place here in John, but turn there rather than me read it) to 1 Peter 5:1-4. Remember Jesus told Peter that Satan desires to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, and Jesus told Peter, "You're going to stumble, you're going to fall, but I prayed for you," and says, "When you are converted, strengthen the brethren." That's what he does in 1 and 2 Peter.

I want you to notice in chapter five, Peter writing, says, "The elders which are among you I exhort," the elders are synonymous with pastors. The word "elders" and pastors, bishops, overseers are all interchangeable words used for the shepherds or the pastors of the church. He says, "The elders," or pastors, "which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder," or a pastor or shepherd, "and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed," note what he says in verse 2, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint," you don't have to be forced or coerced to do it, you do it willingly, "but willingly; not for filthy lucre," you don't do it for money, "but of a ready mind," motive or attitude that's ready to serve the Lord because you love Him.

Notice verse 3, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." Notice in verse 2 when he says, "Feed the flock," it's "of God," and again, in verse 3, "...over God's heritage," so they are God's flock, God's sheep, God's people; and out of love to God, you're to feed them. In verse 4 he says, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Pastors are shepherds, but Jesus is the Chief

Shepherd. They are actually undershepherds; so Jesus is the Shepherd, God's people are the sheep, and the pastors are the undershepherds. They need to realize that. They're not the Chief Shepherd, Jesus is; and the people don't belong to him, they belong to Christ.

One of the most important things to learn for a pastor, and for all of us serving the Lord here at Revival in any kind of sphere of service, is that they are God's people. Don't ever forget that. If you're teaching Sunday school, they're God's little lambs. If you're ushering or working in the sanctuary, they're God's sheep. We need to understand that. When you're discipling someone, mentoring or encouraging someone, you should have a shepherd's heart. You should want to protect, encourage, instruct and lead them, and be an example to them. The primary responsibility of a shepherd is to feed the flock of God—he is to lead the flock of God, protect the flock of God, but he's also to feed the flock of God. The primary way that he does that is by teaching them, instructing them, feeding them, and preaching to them the Bible, the Word of God.

When Paul wrote to Timothy, his protege in ministry, he actually said, "Timothy, preach the Word. Your number one responsibility is to preach the Word." The way in which Peter, and pastors today, feed the sheep is to give them God's Word—nothing more, nothing less. They are not to entertain or get them all motivated and pumped up. A lot of preaching is motivational speaking, not expositional preaching, so you're not learning the Bible. You're getting all pumped up but don't know why or what or anything. You're just all excited about Jesus but not built up and instructed in the Word of God. The pastor's job is to feed the flock of God which is among him.

Go back with me now to John 21. My commitment to my calling is to feed the flock of God that belongs to Him. They're His sheep, His people, and we're to do that faithfully. I believe we all have a secondary sense of responsibility to be shepherds over others that God entrusts to our care, to minister to them. But know the very important lesson is that in our service to God in dealing with Peter, commissioning him to feed the sheep, Jesus wanted him to understand that it must come out of and flow out of his love for Christ. It doesn't do us any good to be ushering, teaching Sunday school, serving the Lord, reaching out in missions, leading worship, whatever it might be, witnessing, if we don't love God. It should all flow out of our love relationship to God.

The great missionary Hudson Taylor was once introduced by a pastor in a church that he was to speak at. He was introduced as the man who went to China because he loved the Chinese. When Hudson Taylor got up to speak he said, "No, Hudson Taylor went to China to share the gospel because he loves God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind." The thing that really motivates us to service, and let me give you a little secret about Christian service, it's not the need in front of you, it's the call of God behind you. What motivates you to serve the Lord will be your love for God because sheep can be messy, sheep can be dumb, sheep can be a problem sometimes. I better stop right there.

When I was in high school, I don't know why, but I took future farmer class, you know, FFA or whatever it was called at that time. We had sheep, and I thought, I've never seen dumber

animals in all my life. Then, God calls me to be a pastor of sheep. I tell you, the only thing that keeps me going is that I know God has called me and I'm doing it because I love God. It doesn't mean I don't love you, but it can be very difficult sometimes as I'm sure it can be difficult for you to love me. By the way, too, a little footnote, a pastor who is a shepherd is also a sheep and has sheep needs. Those sheep needs are for love and fellowship and acceptance in the body of Christ as well. I have sheep needs even though I'm a shepherd, so it's important to see them as God's people and that we do it out of love for God. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14, and I love it, "For the love of Christ constraineth us," and that should be the motive that constrains us as well.

Write down Deuteronomy 6:4-5. It's called the Shime'i, the statement that Jews would pray every morning and evening, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Remember when Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" That's what Jesus said. He said, "To love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind." I think of Martha when Jesus went to the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus to have dinner. Martha was busy serving and getting dinner ready. She was getting flustered, and Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet. Martha came out and was angry with her sister, "Tell her to come help me in the kitchen," and Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you are careful and cumbered about with much serving, but Mary has chosen the better part." That doesn't mean we shouldn't serve, but it does mean the priority must be our love for God. That's what should motivate us in all areas.

Now, when we take this charge to serve the Lord, we're going to wrap up this chapter here, we see that it's going to be with great difficulty, verses 18-19. In verse 18, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," Jesus is still talking to Peter in front of all the other disciples, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not," where you don't want to go. "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me." Peter has just been recommissioned. He's been forgiven and restored to fellowship, and now he's recommissioned back to service. But if you're going to go out and serve the Lord in any way or any fashion, it's going to mean opposition. There's going to be a cross to bear.

Jesus actually told Peter, "When you were young," He uses almost parabolic language, "you went wherever you wanted to." Now, it's kind of cool, when you're young, you dress yourself and jump in your car and go where you want, get on your bike, or run. You're able to go and do what you want. Then, when you get older, you need help to get dressed, you need help to get to the store, you need someone to bring you home; and then when you get even older than that, people take you where you don't want to go. It's a progression there. When you're young, you go where you want to go, do what you want to do. Then, you get old and call people, "Can you help me get dressed? Can you take me to the store?" When you get even older, then people lead you by the hand, maybe in places that you don't even want to go. Jesus was actually predicting Peter's death. Peter said, "I'm willing to die for You." Jesus is actually saying, "That will happen, but it's going to happen in God's time and in God's way."

I want you to notice in verse 19 when John points out, "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." When we love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and serve God out of love and serve and minister to others, then when we die, it glorifies and honors God. Tradition tells us, we can't be absolutely sure, that Peter was crucified like Jesus but upside down in the city of Rome. He would be taken, his hands stretched forth, and they will gird and carry thee where thou dost not want to go; and he was to follow the Lord, so he would glorify God in his death. Then, He said, "Follow me," verse 19, so Jesus and Peter start to walk away from the crowd there around the fire.

Verse 20, "Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved," that's John the Apostle, "following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. 23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" so it's going to be difficult to serve the Lord, you're going to be crucified, perhaps, and then it's also going to be that you have to keep your eyes on Me, keep your focus on Me. You have to picture the scene. They get up from the fire. Jesus starts to walk away, and Peter is following Him, turns around and sees John following him. Now, Jesus just told Peter when he's old they're going to take his hands, some say that's maybe the arresting of Peter, stretch them out, maybe that's the crucifying of Peter, and they're going to take you where you don't want to go, signifying how he would die. He looks back and sees John and says, "Well, what about him?"

So many times when we're following Jesus, we get our eyes off of Jesus and on other people, "Well, what about them, Lord? Well, what about them? What about them? Why do they have bigger ministries? Why are they more prominent than I? Why did they get to go there?" We get our eyes off of Jesus and start looking at others, and Jesus says to Peter, "If I want him to stay alive until I come, what is that to thee? You follow Me."

The rumor began to spread that Jesus had said that John would not die until He came again, but John makes it clear, "No, that isn't what He was saying. He's just saying, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?'" It does indicate though that God has an appointed time for us to die, that if we live the way we should, our deaths will glorify God; and that when we do live, we should live lives in service to Him.

Notice this closing, clearly the epilogue, verses 24-25. "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." John closes with this epilogue wrap-up statement that, "I wrote them. I know they're true, and I testify to them."

Some have tried to argue that John the Apostle did not write verses 24-25 because of the plural there, "we know that his testimony is true," but when you get to verse 25, John says, "I suppose

that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written,” even grammatically, there’s no reason to believe that John didn’t write this little closing statement in verses 24-25. His words in his gospel were true, and I do believe that in verse 25 that he’s speaking in hyperbole—he’s using it as a figure of speech. He was so impressed with all of the splendor and glory and wonder of who Jesus is, and John’s gospel is the profound gospel. I mean he starts in John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made,” I mean, you talk about a profound gospel, “...and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” He was just overwhelmed and picked out the seven miracles. Some say that the miraculous catch of fish in John 21 is an eighth sign or miracle that Jesus performed, but John is so overwhelmed and says, “If everything that could be written was written about Jesus, the world could not contain the books of what could be written about Jesus Christ because He’s so marvelous.”

Let me take this whole chapter that we spent two weeks going through and give you what I believe to be the five prominent lessons for us by way of application. First, Jesus is saying to us, “Love Me with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.” You know, it really makes what to do in life and what to focus on life pretty easy, doesn’t it? C.S. Lewis was said to have received a letter from a young girl one time in his correspondence. He wrote back to this young girl, “That was a beautiful letter you wrote me. Thank you for your letter,” and in one of his statements in the letter he said to this little girl, “If you love God with all your heart, soul, strength, nothing can go wrong with you.” This great intellectual giant put it so profoundly, simply yet profoundly, “If you love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, what can happen? Nothing can go wrong with you.” It’s when we love other things than God. It’s when we get our eyes off of God and start loving the world or the flesh or the devil or other things: so, first, love God, and that our ministry should flow out of that.

Secondly, serve God out of love; and thirdly, follow Jesus. Don’t focus on others. Follow Jesus Christ, not man. Fourthly, be willing to suffer as you serve others out of love to God and you suffer for Him. Fifthly, keep your eyes on Jesus Christ. Amen? Keep your eyes on Jesus; fix your eyes on Jesus. I love that old song, Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace. Amen?

When you look at yourself, when you look at others, when you look at your own resources, when you look at your own strength, when you look at all your own talents, it’s easy to get discouraged and depressed when you look at your own failures; but turn your eyes upon Jesus, follow Him, love Him, and serve Him. Let’s pray.