

THE GREAT QUESTION ABOUT A DISCIPLE'S LOVE AND DEVOTION

JOHN 21:15–17

Introduction

This is a critical passage for the church and its ministers. It has one great lesson: love is the one basic essential for ministry. Without love, ministry counts for nothing in God's eyes. This passage concerns three questions asked by our Lord.

- I. After the meal, Jesus focused on Peter (v. 15).
- II. Do you love me more than these (v. 15)?
- III. Do you love me with God's love — love me enough to feed my people (v. 16)?
- IV. Do you love me as a loyal brother — love me with agape love or phileo love (v. 17)?

(Note: this passage is best studied as a whole, comparing each question with the other two questions. Because of this, all three points are studied together and not by separate points. It is also helpful to see *Love*, Jn. 13:35-35; 14:15.)

JOHN 13:34–35 LOVE AS JESUS CHRIST LOVED

“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35

The new commandment is to love *as Christ loved*. Note several points.

1. This is not the old commandment, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” It is not a human, neighbourly love that is being commanded. This *new commandment* was given to *disciples only*. It is the spiritual love that is to exist between believers as brothers and sisters and as servants of God who minister together.
2. The love being commanded is the love of Jesus Himself which is the love of God Himself, the love that can be shed abroad in our hearts only by the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 5:5). It is not the normal physical love among human neighbours which is being commanded by God. It is a spiritual love that is wrought only by the Spirit of God.

Note: the distinctiveness of this love is that it is the love of Jesus Himself that dwells in the heart of the believer. Only the Spirit of God can put the love of Jesus there within the heart of the believer. The Holy Spirit can create within the believer the love of Jesus Himself, the very same love which Jesus had while here on earth. The love of Jesus is...

- the love of *spiritual being*: the love that causes one to hunger after union with God and God's people.
- the love of *spiritual life*: the love that shares the same life with all believers, both abundant and eternal life.
- the love of *spiritual union*: the love that binds and ties believers together in life and purpose.
- the love of *spiritual attachment or fellowship*: the love that shares needs and blessings and joys and sorrows and gifts together.

The Holy Spirit can create within the believer a love that can melt and mould his heart to the hearts of other believers. But note: it is a commandment; therefore, it is conditional. The Holy Spirit *can* create such a love, but believers *have to receive it*. When the love of Jesus dwells in the heart of a believer, several things happen. The believer has a love that *causes* him...

- to bind his life to the lives of other believers
 - to tie his life to the same purpose as other believers
 - to surrender his will and to be of the same mind as other believers
 - to understand and feel with other believers
 - to forgive other believers — always
 - to sacrifice himself for other believers — always
 - to seek the welfare of other believers before his own
 - to deny self completely
3. The new commandment is the mark of a true disciple. The distinguishing mark of a true believer is not the normal human love of neighbours, not even the love of brothers and sisters or of husband and wife. It is the spiritual and supernatural love of Jesus Himself that dwells within the life of the believer. By this love shall all men know that a person is a *true* disciple of the Lord.

John 15:12 “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

1 Pet 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

1 John 4:7-8 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. □

I. *John 21:15 Ministry of Peter*

The meal was finished. Jesus and the disciples were sitting around talking and sharing together after the meal. Remember four things.

- => Jesus had already met Peter all alone in a private session to discuss Peter's denial and to make sure he was fully restored (see 1 Cor. 15:4-5).
- => Peter's leadership needed to be reinforced publicly among all the disciples. They all knew about Peter's denial.
- => Jesus had to make sure Peter would never deny Him nor fall back from his mission again.
- => Jesus needed to teach the disciples the one basic essential for ministry. None of them, not even a charismatic leader such as Peter, could ever minister and bear godly fruit unless he *loved* the flock of God. A man may be the most gifted person in the world, but he is nothing and can do nothing of value *in God's eyes* unless he first loves (see 1 Cor. 13:1-3). Abilities, talents, gifts, commitments, good deeds and works just do not qualify a man before God nor make a man acceptable to God. The one great thing — in fact the only thing — that makes a man acceptable and that qualifies him to serve God is *love*.

These are the reasons for what Jesus now did. He turned to focus upon Peter. Note: He called Peter by his full name, Simon Peter, and reminded him that he was the son of Jonas (see Jn. 1:42). This did two things.

- => It attracted everyone's attention, stressing that what was to follow was important — more important than usual.
- => It reminded Peter where he had come from. He was of humble beginnings, from a lowly father. All that Peter had become and would become was of God. Peter was *nothing apart from Christ* and *nothing apart from the mission he was about to receive*.

Thought 1. A man must know that he is nothing apart from Christ. How many persons would have more in life — more purpose, more meaning, more significance — if they would only surrender to Christ? How many have actually been called by Christ and rejected His call; therefore, they have missed out on their purpose in life and on making their contribution to society and to the world?

II. *John 21:15 Love and Commitment*

There is a difference between the three questions Jesus asked of Peter. Question one asked Peter who he loved the most, the Lord Himself or "these." Just what is meant by "these" is not clear. Jesus could have been pointing to the disciples sitting around. If so, He meant, do you love me more than you love these men or your family? Or, Jesus could have been pointing to the fish, the nets, and the boat. If so, He was asking, do you love me more than your profession and career (see Jn. 21:3)? Perhaps Scripture is unclear at this point in order to make "these" apply to anything and everything in our lives.

Question two asked Peter if he loved with God's love. This is seen in the Greek word for love. Jesus used one word, but Peter used another. Jesus used the word *agape*, the highest form of love, the love of God Himself. But Peter did not reply, "Yes, Lord, I *agape* you." He said, "Yes, Lord, I *phileo* you." That is, I love you just like a brother; I love you with a brotherly love." *Phileo* means brotherly love, the love between two brothers.

Question three probed the genuineness and loyalty of Peter's love. Here Jesus descended to the human level of love. He used *phileo*. He simply asked Peter, "Peter, do you really love, *phileo* me — even as a brother?" And questioning the loyalty of his love grieved Peter. But Jesus assured Peter that his love would one day reach the ultimate height (Jn. 21:18). Peter would be called upon to demonstrate *agape* love, the sacrificial love of God. Peter would be called upon to die for Christ, to give his life for preaching the love of God to those who do not care for it and who react violently against it.

Jesus was preparing His disciples for a new kind of love that was yet to come. Up to the time of Christ's death and ascension, the greatest love known to man was *phileo love*, the willingness of a man to die for a friend. But in Christ, God was showing the world a new kind of love — *agape love*. *Agape love* is a love so new that a new meaning had to be given to the Greek word "*agape*." *Agape* became the love that was willing to give and die even for an enemy. The early Christian leaders recognized this new dimension of love, so they lifted the meaning of *agape love* up to God's love for the world. *Agape love* is the highest level of love possible; it is the love of God: "God [who] so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16).

Agape love is Christ's dying...

- for people who have no power (Rom. 5:6)
- for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6)
- for sinners (Rom. 5:8)
- for the enemies of God (Rom. 5:10)

Peter and the disciples did not yet understand this. They could not because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, and *agape love* is poured out in the heart only by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

III. *John 21:16 Ministry in the Church*

Three times Peter was charged to feed and tend the flock of God. If Peter really loved the Lord, then he would carry out the commission to shepherd God's people. Note three things.

1. Scripture identifies the lambs and sheep as the flock of God, that is, as the church of God. Jesus was talking about feeding His church. His disciples within the church.

Acts 20:28 *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

Note: in this verse (Acts 20:28) the charge is to guard oneself as well as the flock of God. This is similar to what Jesus was saying to Peter: if you love me, guard yourself and be faithful; feed my lambs and sheep, my church.

2. The flock of God is made up of both *lambs* (arnia, v. 15) and *sheep* (probatia, v. 16-17).

=> Lambs: children, young converts, the handicapped or special cases, believers who need special attention.

=> Sheep: mature believers, believers who have walked and grown in the Lord for a long time.

When He comes, He is coming to separate the nations (Mt. 25:31-33). Throughout history, there has been a mixture of sheep and goats, of good and evil. The tares and the wheat have grown together. The sinner and the godly have lived together...

- in the same world
- in the same cities
- in the same churches
- in the same nations
- in the same employments
- in the same families

When Christ comes, however, there is going to be a separation — a separation of the good from the bad, of the sheep from the goats (Mt. 13:49; Eze. 34:17).

3. The ministry to the flock or church is twofold.

a. The first ministry is to feed (boske, v. 15, 17).

=> To give food, teaching both the milk and meat of the Word.

1 Pet 2:2-3 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

Heb 5:12-14 *In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

=> To guide into the study of the Word — presenting oneself approved to God.

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

Note that the word used for feeding (boske) is the word used for both the lambs (v. 15) and the sheep (v. 17). Both the lambs and sheep are to be fed on the same Word and fed in the same way.

Jer 15:16 *When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.*

Job 23:12 *I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.*

Deu 8:3 *He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. (see Mt. 4:4)*

Psa 119:103 *How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

- b. The second ministry is to shepherd (poimaine, v.16). Shepherding involves all the works of the ministry.

1 Pet 5:2-3 *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*

The Shepherd leads and shepherds the sheep. He loves them as His own; therefore He must lead them to the green pastures and still waters. He must see that they are nourished and protected and given the very best care possible. (John 10:2-3)

- 1) He feeds the sheep even if He has to gather them in His arms and carry them to the feasting pasture.

Isa 40:11 *He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.*

- 2) He guides the sheep to the pasture and away from the rough places and precipices.

Psa 23:1-4 *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

- 3) He seeks and saves the sheep who get lost.

Mat 18:12 *“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?”*

- 4) He protects the sheep. He even sacrifices His life for the sheep.

John 10:11 *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”*

- 5) He restores the sheep who go astray and returns them to the sheep pen.

1 Pet 2:25 *For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

6) He rewards the sheep for obedience and faithfulness.

1 Pet 5:4 *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

7) He shall keep the sheep separate from the goats.

Mat 25:32-33 *All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.*

IV. John 21:17 Agape Love and Phileo Love

Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him with *agape* love or *phileo* love. The difference between *agape* love and *phileo* love is as follows.

Phileo love is the love of tender affection, of warm and deep feelings within the heart. It is the deep and precious love of those near and dear to one's heart. It is brotherly love, a love between family members, a love that would die for its brother.

Agape love is the love of the mind, of the reason, and of the will. It is a love that is born of choice; one simply chooses to love regardless of feelings. A person may insult, injure, or humiliate; but *agape* love chooses to seek only the highest good for that person. It is sacrificial love, a love that is willing to die even for its enemies.

Agape love means...

- sacrificial giving
- free acceptance (one freely accepts without any expectation of return)
- cherished attachment
- personal commitment
- strong loyalty
- unselfish devotion
- genuine concern
- precious tenderness

Agape love was so new and so unusual that it can be said that after Christ a new word for love had to be created. Jesus' primary interest with Peter was, of course, that he possess *agape* love: the love that comes from reason and will, that controls the corruptible lusts and wandering thoughts of life, that puts a willingness within a man to serve and to die for all men — even for a person's enemies. Even the enemies of God must hear the gospel and have an opportunity for salvation. However, the fact that Jesus also used *phileo* love with Peter shows that God wants the love of man's warm instinctive feelings as well.

Agape love means at least eight things.

1. *Agape* love is not only a love of emotions. It is a matter of the mind as well as of the heart, of the will as well as of the emotions.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Rom 5:6-8 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:9-10 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

2. Agape love is God's love — His very nature. It is the love that God extended toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Rom 5:8, 10 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

1 John 4:7-10, 16 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

3. Agape love is a seed that can be planted in the heart only by Christ. It is a fruit of the Spirit of God.

Rom 5:5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

4. Agape love is the great love that God holds for His own dear Son.

John 15:10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

John 17:26 “I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

5. Agape love was perfectly expressed when God gave up His own Son to die for man.

2 Cor 5:14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

Eph 2:4 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy.*

Eph 3:19 *And to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

Eph 5:2 *And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

6. Agape love is the love which holds believers together. For three years Jesus Himself had held the apostles together. Now that He was about to leave them, what was going to keep them together and keep them at the task? One thing: the new commandment — agape love. Agape love is the love believers are to have for one another.

John 13:33-35 *“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

1 John 3:17-18 *If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

7. Agape love is the love which believers are to have for all men.

1 Cor 16:14 *Do everything in love.*

1 Th 3:12 *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

2 Pet 1:7 *And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.*

- a. Agape love seeks the welfare of all.

Rom 15:2 *Each of us should please his neighbour for his good, to build him up.*

- b. Agape love works no ill to its neighbour.

Rom 13:8-10 *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.*

- c. Agape love seeks opportunities to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith.

Gal 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

Col 3:12-14 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (see 1 Cor.13:1f)*

8. *Agape love is proven by obedience to Christ. Doing as one wishes instead of doing as God wills shows that one does not have agape love.*

John 14:15, 21, 23 *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” Jesus replied. “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”*

John 15:10 *If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.*

1 John 2:5 *But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him.*

1 John 5:3 *This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.*

2 John 1:6 *And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love. ■*

EVENT 8: THE GREAT CALL TO TOTAL COMMITMENT

JOHN 21: 18–25

Introduction

This is the final passage of John’s gospel. It is the great call to total commitment.

- I. Total commitment demands following the leadership of another (the Holy Spirit) (v. 18).
- II. Total commitment demands the cross — death to self: “Follow me” (v. 19).
- III. Total commitment demands undivided attention to one’s own task (vv. 20-23).
- IV. Total commitment demands bearing witness to Jesus Christ (vv. 24-25).

I. *John 21:18 Commitment and Following the Holy Spirit*

Total commitment requires the leadership of another (the Holy Spirit). Who is meant by “another”? In this context it can mean either who were to carry Peter to death, the Romans; or the Holy Spirit, who was to carry Peter through a life of suffering and martyrdom for the cause of Christ. Jesus seem to be referring to the whole of Peter’s life, ranging from his earlier years when he did what he wished over to his older years when he would be doing what God wished. Because of this, it seems best to interpret “another” as the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was challenging Peter to serve Him, to “feed my sheep” (vv. 15-17). He was calling Peter to total commitment, and total commitment requires following the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Note two points.

1. When Peter was young he girded himself, dressed and walked where he willed. Before he knew Christ, he...
 - ran his life as he willed
 - went where he wished
 - chose the pleasures he desired
 - did what he wanted
 - talked as he willed
 - chose the profession he wanted

When he was younger, before he ever came to know Christ, Peter was able to live and do what he wanted when he wanted. But no more. Peter could no longer live as he wished. Jesus Christ, his Saviour and Lord, was now to control his life.

2. When Peter was old and mature, the Holy Spirit would dress him and carry him places he would not choose or will to go. This, of course, refers to the suffering and martyrdom Peter was to undergo for the sake of Christ.

Since Peter was accepting the call of Christ to *feed His sheep*, Peter would have to...

- live his life as the Spirit willed
 - choose the profession the Spirit willed
 - do what the Spirit wanted
 - go where the Spirit wished
-

Note: Jesus was saying that Peter was to be led “where he did not want to go.”

=> He was to live a life of suffering (see his imprisonments, Acts 4:3; 5:18; 12:4).

=> He was to die the death of a martyr. His death was to be for the cause of Christ and the glory of God.

Remember that Peter had a wife (see *Peter*; Mt. 8:14). At the time of this event, Peter was to live some forty or more years, so he was probably a newlywed. Tradition says that Peter’s wife served with him in the ministry for many years. A touching picture is given by Clement of Alexandria who says that Peter’s wife was martyred with him:

“On seeing his wife led to death, Peter rejoiced on account of her call and her conveyance home, and called very encouragingly and comfortingly, addressing her by name, ‘Remember thou the LORD’” (Stromateis 7:6. Quoted by William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mathew*, Vol. 1, p. 313.)

There is strong evidence that Peter was crucified in Rome. Tradition says he felt so unworthy to die in the same manner as His Lord that he begged to be crucified upside down.

Thought 1. The call of Christ is to *total commitment*, not just to commitment. Total commitment demands that we follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

- 1) We can no longer dress and walk as we will.
- 2) We are to dress and walk as the Holy Spirit wills. (See notes, *Holy Spirit*, Jn. 14:15-26; 16:7-15.)

Thought 2. The call of Christ involves persecution. The true believer lives a sacrificial and godly life, bearing a strong testimony and a strong witness. Such a life is rejected and opposed by most in the world.

2 Tim 3:12 *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

Phil 1:28 *Without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved – and that by God.*

1 Pet 4:12-14 *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

1 Pet 2:21 *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.*

The world persecutes the person who lives godly; it persecutes him at work, at play, at home – wherever and whenever it pleases. The world...

- reproaches
- ridicules
- mocks
- by-passes
- shuns
- ignores
- attacks
- curses
- abuses
- murders

Christ was calling Peter to such a life, telling him that the Holy Spirit would carry him to places he would not choose. Christ tells us the same thing. Total commitment requires following the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and all who follow the Holy Spirit shall suffer persecution.

Thought 3. We shall die, everyone of us. How we die should concern us...

- whether we die in self; having lived in comfort, ease, plenty, pleasure, wealth, extravagance, pride, unbelief.
- whether we die for Christ: having lived a godly life, bearing testimony, witnessing, helping, giving, ministering and meeting the desperate needs of a world reeling in sin and death.

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

2 Cor 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

MATHEW 08:14 PETER

*When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. **Mathew 08:14***

Note these facts about Peter's home life and family tree.

1. Peter had a wife. He was to live some forty or more years, so he and his wife were probably newlyweds when Christ called him. Interestingly, tradition says that Peter's wife served with him in the ministry. William Barclay quotes a touching picture by Clement of Alexandria who said that she was martyred with Peter: "On seeing his wife led to death, Peter rejoiced on account of her call and her conveyance home, and called very encouragingly and comfortingly, addressing her by name, 'Remember thou the Lord'" (Stromateis 7:6. Quoted by Barclay. *The Gospel of Mathew*, Vol. 1, p. 313). There is strong evidence that Peter was martyred by crucifixion in Rome. Tradition says he felt so unworthy to be crucified like his Lord that he begged to be crucified upside down.
2. Peter had a house. He was formerly from Bethsaida (Jn. 1:44). Here he is seen in Capernaum. After Jesus called him to be an apostle, he probably moved to Capernaum where the headquarters of Jesus was located.
3. Peter looked after his mother-in-law. Apparently she was old and widowed, needing to be cared for by her children. Peter demonstrated real compassion and a tenderness of heart in allowing her to live with his family.

4. Peter opened his home to guests. Mark says that the home was that of Peter and Andrew; however, it was probably owned by Peter, since his wife and mother-in-law are mentioned. Note that Jesus, James and John were being entertained by Peter as guests (Mk. 1:29f). It is possible that Jesus stayed at Peter's home when in Capernaum and that Peter's home was Jesus' head-quarters.
5. Peter's father was Jona or Jonah (Jn. 21:15-17). He had at least one brother, Andrew (Jn. 1:41). □

II. *John 21:19 Commitment and Death to Self*

Total commitment requires the cross, death to self. One must *follow* Christ (see *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23).

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

Luke 14:26 *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple."*

Luke 14:33 *"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."*

John 8:12 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

John 12:26 *"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me."*

III. *John 21:20–23 Commitment and Undivided Attention*

Total commitment requires undivided attention to one's own task. Peter asked Jesus what John would be doing in his ministry. Peter and John were very close. John was younger than Peter, probably still a teenager. Apparently, Peter had taken a very close liking to John and had taken him into his care even before Christ had come along. Peter's interest in John's task and future was therefore natural. Note three things.

1. Jesus rebuked Peter. He told Peter that John's task was not his concern. His own task was to be his concern. Peter was not to look at another man's call and ministry and...
 - be distracted
 - desire another ministry
 - copy or conform to that ministry
 - wish he had that ministry
 - compare their calls and ministries
 - meddle

1 Cor 10:32-33 *Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God — even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.*

1 Cor 10:24 *Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

2. Jesus challenged and called Peter again: “Follow me” (v. 22).

=> Concentrate on your own call and task.

=> Focus your attention, will, energy and efforts upon your own call and task.

=> Realize that God knows where you can best serve and that He calls you to that task.

Acts 20:28 *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

1 Pet 5:2 *Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.*

1 Cor 9:22-23 *To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

1 Tim 1:12 *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.*

Jer 3:15 *Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.*

Jer 23:4 *“I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD.*

Ezek 3:17 *“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me.”*

3. John corrected a rumour, an error spreading throughout the church. Some had taken the words of Jesus and misconstrued them, saying that Jesus meant that John would never die. Some were saying that John would survive until Jesus’ return to earth. John very simply said this was not what Jesus was saying.

Thought 1. Note how easily the Lord’s words are misunderstood unless they are taken at face value, exactly as He spoke them.

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

IV. *John 21:24–25 Commitment Demands Witnessing*

Total commitment demands bearing witness to Jesus Christ and fulfilling one's task on earth, just as John bore witness and fulfilled his task. John bore witness: the Gospel of John is his testimony to the world. And note: John emphasized that his testimony was true; he had not lied.

John 20:31 *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Thought 1. The primary task of every believer is to bear witness to the truth: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who has come to give life to man — both abundant and eternal life. (See *Works of Jesus*, John 20:30)

John 10:10 *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

2 Tim 2:2 *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

1 Pet 3:15 *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. ■*

JOHN 21: 24

DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST; HOPE FOR MAN

*This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. **John 21:24***

The great witness of John (and of the other gospel writers) is:

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Very simply stated, the great witness is the glorious news of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ changes the fate of world history and the whole attitude of man. If the death and resurrection of Christ had never taken place...

- then of all creatures, man would be the most miserable and hopeless
- then the life of Jesus Christ would have been the most tragic and despairing event in all history

Why? Because the most merciful and compassionate, the most giving and helpful human being in all the world was treated and killed in the most savage way. However, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ did happen, and because it did, it has changed the whole perspective and truth of world history. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, life and history have become purposeful. Since Christ has died and risen from the dead, men look at the cross and get a sense, a feeling...

- that the punishment for sin has been paid (atonement)
- that sin can now be forgiven (forgiveness)
- that a perfect life has been sacrificed for man (propitiation)
- that man can now be reconciled and made one with God (reconciliation)
- that man can now be reconciled to man, both personally and worldwide (peace, unity, community, fellowship)
- that man can now be declared righteous (justification)
- that man can be made into a *new creation* before God (regeneration)
- that man can be redeemed (redemption)
- that man can be set apart unto God (sanctification) □

JOHN 20:30 THE SIGNS OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. **John 20: 30***

The great fact, Jesus did many other signs that are not recorded in this gospel by John. He did many wonderful things. He was busy every day, actively involved either in worshipping God alone or in teaching and ministering to people. For about three years, Jesus was constantly demonstrating that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. He gave all the evidence in the world:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| => acts of love and purity | => acts of righteousness and justice |
| => works of mercy and compassion | => works of miracles and power |
| => works of godliness and sovereignty | => words of truth and salvation |
| => words of peace and faith | => words of hope and joy |
| => words of morality and discipline | => words of commitment and self-denial |

The point is that Jesus' life — His character and behaviour, His preaching and teaching, His miracles and power — proves that He is the Messiah, the Son of God. No man could do the things He did unless He were the Son of God. Who He was and what He did prove it.

Note that Jesus did not do the signs in secret, that is, out in a desert or off in a corner of the world. He did them out in the open, publicly. John said He did the signs in the presence of His disciples. They witnessed the signs, for Jesus saw to it that there was adequate witness and testimony. Note what John says in his epistle:

***1 John 1:1-4** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.*

***1 Cor 15:44** It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

***1 Cor 15:50** I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

***Acts 13:36** “For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed.”*

***Acts 13:37** “But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.”*

***1 Cor 15:42** So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable.*

***2 Cor 5:1** Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.*

***2 Cor 5:2** Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.*

Note one other fact: John says that he has been highly selective in the signs he has chosen to record in his gospel. There were “many” signs which Jesus gave; so many in fact, “I suppose that even the whole world itself would not have room for the books that would be written” (Jn. 21:25). John selected only a few signs to record. He had a specific purpose in mind, so he chose a few signs that would help meet that purpose. □

LUKE 09:23 CROSS AND DISCIPLESHIP

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 09:23

People in Jesus' day knew what it meant to "take up" a cross. They saw scores of criminals bear the cross to the place where they were to be executed, and they witnessed scores of crucifixions, some even by the side of the roads that led in and out of the cities.

The cross does not mean merely bearing one's particular hardship in life, such as poor health, abuse, unemployment, invalid parents, an unsaved spouse, a wayward child. The cross is always an instrument of death, not just an object to carry or bear. The Christian is to die mentally and actively. He is to deny himself daily. He is to let the mind of Christ, the mind of humbling himself to the point of death, be in him and fill his thoughts every day (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). He is to put his will, his desires, his wants, his ambitions to death. In their stead, he is to follow Jesus and to do His will all day long. Note this is not negative, passive behaviour. It takes positive, active behaviour to *will*, to *deny self*, to *take up* one's *cross*, to *follow* Christ. A person has to act, work, get to it, be diligent, consistent, and enduring in order to die to self.

There are several ways the believer dies to self. Romans 6:11-13 spells out the ways as clearly as they can be.

Rom 6:11-13 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. (see Rom. 6:2-10)*

1. The believer reckons or counts himself crucified with Christ.

Rom 6:11a *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin.*

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

2. The believer reckons or counts himself dead to sin, but alive to God.

Rom 6:11 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

1 Pet 4:2 *As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

3. The believer does not let sin reign in his body.

Rom 6:12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

4. The believer does not yield the parts of his body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.

Rom 6:13a *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

5. The believer yields himself to God — as much as those who are alive from the dead are yielded to God.

Rom 6:13b *But rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life.*

Rom 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

6. The believer yields his body members as instruments of righteousness.

Rom 6:13c *And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

Gal 5:16 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

It should be noted that one's hardship or burden can bring a person to the place where the Lord can deal with him. It is then that the hardship becomes the cross and denial of self that Jesus is talking about. With an act of self-denial, the Christian can then count or reckon himself alive to God (Rom. 6:13). He can then follow Jesus. This is an act which can be described as committing all that one is and has to Christ. It is an act that needs to be repeated every day (see Mt. 10:38). □