

July 24, 2022
La Jolla Christian Fellowship
**“The Great Clarification:
Eavesdropping on John & Peter with Jesus”**
Pastor Jim Smith

John 21:15-25

15 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.” 16 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.”

17 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. 18 Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”

19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!” 20 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?”) 21 When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” 22 Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”

23 Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?” 24 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. 25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

Next Steps: For seven weeks we’ve focused on *Revelation* essentials: God’s person (F,S,HS), Kingdom plan and purpose for our lives. Next week we begin studies in Acts of the Apostles. Many tie this story to a Great Commission concluding Matthew’s gospel (28:16-20). Good! But how does John’s gospel close? With **life clarification** from Jesus to Peter, John... and now us!

“This scene between Jesus & Peter is one of the most spectacular interchanges in the Bible... Most remarkable is that, by way of forgiveness, Jesus gives Peter a job to do.” – N.T. Wright

***What's the Core Question: "Do you love me?" (v. 15-17)**

For the Jewish Peter, this recalls the OT divine decrees in Deut. 6:1-8. For John, love is the essence of **God's character** (I John 4:16), revealed in *agape* (John 3:16) and *phileo* (John 16:27), expressed in his "new commandment" (John 13:34) to disciples. Love brings obedience (14:15).

***What's the Lord's Direction: "Feed my sheep!" (v. 15-17)**

Here Peter is reminded that *character is revealed in action*: "The Lord is my Shepherd" (Ps. 23). Jesus, the human face of God, is cited in John 10 as the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep – those close by and others – with a goal: One Flock & One Shepherd (10:14-18).

Playing off a 1992 presidential campaign slogan, Dr. Josh Rice (Dean at Richmond Graduate U In Atlanta) has a sign above his desk: "It's about the students, stupid." If Peter had a desk, Jesus' sign may have been, "It's about the sheep, Rocky. Lovingly offer my Word to build on"

***What's the Familiar Objection: "But how about this one?" (v. 20-22)**

On the spot, Peter changes the subject: "What about John?" Jesus responds: "What's that to you? **Follow me!**" Years later, Paul said to his most annoying church, "Those who compare themselves with themselves are not wise" (2 Corin. 10:12). Peter gets the message (I Pet. 4:10).

***What's our Ultimate Mission: "Witness to God's Glory!" (v. 18-19; 23:25; 1:14)**

Peter & John, shaped by this "grace & truth" charge, team up (Acts 4:1, 8:14) - but paths vary. Each **witnessed** Jesus' ministry, was **activist** in mission and **visionary** with hope in God's future. **Peter** 'feeds' Jew & Gentile (Acts 10). I Peter 1 anticipates Christ "revealed." Martyred in AD60s. **John**, last of the 12, passes in AD90s, after teaching/writing in Ephesus & in Patmos Island exile.

Small Group / Warm Heart Questions:

- 1) Which of Jesus' 4 reminders do you most "need to heed" (purpose+prayer) to live faithfully?
- 2) Opening *Revelation*: John hears The Almighty: "Who is, was, is to come." Made In his image, we imitate (Eph. 5:1-2) God's embrace of present, past and future. Which most challenges you?
- 3) Peter was martyred (crucified upside down?) John did Exile Island. What's your Heb. 5:7-10?
- 4) We're sheep & shepherds, sprouting seeds & sowers. What role's on your screen these days?
- 5) Love languages: affirmation words, quality time, gifts, acts of service, touch (Gary Chapman)