

# Do You Love Me More Than These?

## John 21

ETS: Jesus challenged to choose between the familiar (Fishing) and an unknown future

ESS: Maturity in faith requires choosing between the familiar and the unfamiliar

OSS: I want people to grow in their faith by choose to follow God into the unfamiliar

PQ: What is your choice?

UW: Choice

### ME

What do you do when you don't know what to do?

- Go to the familiar

Have you ever wondered why we do things which are hurting us?

- They are familiar to us!

For example,

- A person knows that smoking is likely to cause lung cancer, COPD or Emphysema
  - Breathing smoke into your lungs CANNOT be a good thing!

## Why—armed with this knowledge—do many people keep smoking?

- Familiar feeling ....The nicotine effect...sense of ????

For example,

- A person with **Type 2 Diabetes** knows that eating cake and ice cream is NOT good for them!
  - Result: Increased thirst, Frequent urination, Fatigue, Nausea and vomiting, A rapid heartbeat, etc

Familiarity trumps unfamiliarity!

- We gravitate towards what we know! WHY?
  - Familiarity = comfort
  - Familiarity = security
  - Familiarity = being in control
  - Familiarity = ease (we don't have to learn anything new)

When you drive your car home, there are probably many routes you can take, but you probably take only one route the majority of the time!

- If you've ever tried another route going home – without a GPS—there was probably a sense of “Is

**this the right way” or “Did I miss a turn back there”  
or “I don’t think this was a good idea”**

### **Familiarity trumps unfamiliarity!**

There are MANY reasons this period of “Social distancing” is disconcerting!

- This is NOT familiar to us
- Staying in self-quarantine is NOT familiar
- Not being out with friends, family and co-workers is NOT familiar to us.

### **WE like familiarity**

- We tend to sit in the same places
- Eat at the same restuarants
- Eat the same foods
- Watch the same types of TV shows
- Listen to the same genre of music

### **WE like familiarity**

- The OLDER we get, the MORE we WANT familiarity!
  - Familiarity = comfort
  - Familiarity = security
  - Familiarity = being in control
  - Familiarity = ease (we don’t have to learn anything new)

## GOD

Turn to **John 21**

Simon **Peter** was the most outspoken of the disciples.

- Peter had **walked with Jesus** for the 3 ½ years of Jesus' ministry.
- Peter had **witnessed the miracles**—he had even participated in the miracles.
  - Peter had walked on water!
- Peter had been on **Jesus' inner circle**: he had seen what other disciples had not such as the **transfiguration**.
- Peter had heard **Jesus' teachings**.
- Peter had been given the **"Keys to the Kingdom"** by Jesus.
- Peter had heroically **defended** Jesus the night he was **arrested** by **attacking** the **high** priest's servant with a **sword**.
- Peter had been the **first** to go **into** the **tomb** the day Jesus rose from the dead.

**Problem:**

A few weeks *before John 21*, Jesus has started in with some **"Crazy"** talk!

- Jesus had been talking about being arrested and being killed.

Peter would have **NONE** of that kind of talk.

- Just a few hours before Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane, Peter told Him in Matthew 26:33 **“Even though all may fall away because of You, *I will never fall away.*”**
  - Peter had boldly proclaimed he would stick with Jesus to the end

Peter seemed to holding true to his word

- When the mob came to arrest Jesus, Peter took his sword and attacked the high priest’s slave and cut off his ear!
  - Peter was ready to die for Jesus—at least it seemed to appear that way
- When all the other disciples fled at Jesus’ arrest, Peter followed Jesus into the courtyard of the High Priest (Of course, he kept his distance from the mob!)

BUT THEN... Peter did the **unthinkable**—He **betrayed** Jesus

- Peter betrayed Jesus not **once**, or **twice** but **THREE** times!

- When Peter betrayed Jesus the **THIRD** time, the rooster crowed just as Jesus said would happen.
  - Luke tells us that when the **rooster crowed**, Jesus **“turned a looked at Peter.”**
    - Then, Peter ran out of the courtyard and **“Wept bitterly.”**

WITHIN 24 hours, Jesus was Dead!

- The familiarity of the past 2 ½ years was gone b/c Jesus was gone
- Peter felt lost, alone and like **a massive failure**.

Peter, who was in the **forefront** of the disciples prior to Jesus' arrest and death was now somewhat in the **background**.

- **Mark** hints of the **internal struggle** that Peter was enduring due to his denial of Christ, when he records the **angel** as saying in **Mark 16:7** **“But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.’ ”**
  - Peter is **singled out** perhaps as a **signal of encouragement** that God has **forgiven** him **when he repented** after his **denial** of Jesus.

**Luke 24:34** tells us that **Jesus appeared** to Peter **shortly** after His **resurrection**.

- It was probably at this point that **Jesus and Peter dealt with Peter's sin of denial.**
  - Jesus made it a point to **appear specifically to Peter** in **private** and deal with Peter's sin.

**Peter still remains somewhat in the background.**

- **John 20:30 (HCSB)** *“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book.”*
  - Over the last 30+ days since His resurrection Jesus has been miracles *“in the presence of His disciple.”*
    - BUT, we don't hear anything about Peter during that time
      - *Peter is present, but in the background.*

**Peter still remains somewhat in the background. Why?**

- No doubt Peter is still ashamed because his denial of Jesus was a matter of **public record.**
- Peter **no longer trusted himself** in the face of **adversity**

Although Jesus had resurrected from the dead, the disciples still DID NOT know what was going to happen next!

- They didn't conceive that Jesus was going to **ASCEND** into heaven!

- Because of Jewish **prophecy** of a **coming King** and
  - Because **Jesus** fit that **description**
  - Because **Jesus** had **proven** His **power** of nature, disease
  - Because **Jesus** had **proven** His ability to **feed thousands** out of practically nothing
  - Because **Jesus** had **proven** His **power** over **death**
- They most likely thought that Jesus was gearing up to make a **grand entrance** back into **Jerusalem** where He'd **overthrow** the **religious establishment** and then **lead a rebellion** against **Rome!**

However, as the days turned into weeks, there may have been growing concern about whether this was going to happen.

- Jesus **wasn't** talking about **war**
- Jesus **wasn't** setting up **military plans**
- Jesus **wasn't** organizing a **movement!**

Thinking he (PETER) was “**washed up**” and being **confused** by Jesus’ **seeming disinterest** in leading a **rebellion**, Peter decides to return to the **familiar: Fishing.**

**John 21:1–3 (HCSB)** “After this, Jesus revealed Himself again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed Himself in this way: <sup>2</sup> Simon Peter, Thomas (called

“Twin”), Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, Zebedee’s sons, and two others of His disciples were together.

<sup>3</sup> “I’m going fishing,” Simon Peter said to them. “We’re coming with you,” they told him. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.”

Peter was a fisherman & Zebedee’s sons (James and John) were fishermen

- Peter decides that he is going to do what he knows best: **Fishing**
  - **Fishing** is **familiar** to **Peter, James** and **John**

Even though Peter was doing the **familiar**, it was NOT **satisfying!**

- “They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.”
  - Even the FAMILIAR was FAILING Peter!
    - The FAMILIAR was FAILING to give Peter any satisfaction!

Peter probably felt really depressed at this point!

- He had failed Jesus
- He was now failing at what he knew best: Fishing!

**John 21:4–5 (HCSB)** “When daybreak came, Jesus stood on the shore. However, the disciples did not know it was

Jesus. “Men,” Jesus called to them, “you don’t have any fish, do you?” “No,” they answered.

- Talk about a stinging question to a bunch of fishermen!
- To Peter, the question probably sounded more like: “Men (literally “Children”), you failed at fishing didn’t you?”
  - Jesus’ question/statement led them to admit that they had **wasted** an entire **night**!

## **Peter was failing even at the familiar!**

It’s **stinks** when the **familiar** fails you!

- That familiar job is no more due to layoffs or business closing
- That familiar amount of money in the bank account is no more due to stock market drops
- That familiar way of life is now radically changed due to social distancing

When the familiar fails you, **FEAR** can easily set in!

- Failure of Familiarity = discomfort
- Failure of Familiarity = loss of security
- Failure of Familiarity = feeling out-of-control
- Failure of Familiarity = unsettling—you may have to do something different in the future!

WHEN the familiar fails you, you have an option:

- Stick to the familiar and hope things change
- Try something different

**John 21:6 (HCSB)** “Cast the net on the right side of the boat,” He told them, “and you’ll find some.”

- Challenge: Are they going to say “NO, we’ve already tried the right side of the boat and there are no fish there either”?
  - OR, Are they going to take the **advice** of some **seemingly random man** on the shore who is **NOT** even in the boat!
    - HE *may not even be a fisherman for all they know!*

Jesus is presenting them with a choice:

**LIVE BY FAITH OR FAMILIARITY?**

**Problem:** Living by faith means you don’t always have the all the answers

- REMEMBER, they **don’t recognize Jesus** as the One talking to them!
  - They just think this is a **man** on the **seashore** who is asking them a question about how the fishing has been going!

WHY would they even CONSIDER taking this man on the seashore's advice?

- Why not say “We’ve done that and it doesn’t matter”

WHY would they even CONSIDER taking this man on the seashore's advice?

WHEN familiarity fails you have to decide....

- Do I keep trying the familiar?
- Do I step out in faith?

“Stepping out in faith is NOT a BLIND LEAP in the dark!

- Faith is **built on evidence** not fantasy!

You have faith that if you turned on your computer it would work! Why?

- Evidence of design—it is a computer by design
- Evidence of **past experience**

Jesus is presenting them with a choice:

**LIVE BY FAITH OR FAMILIARITY?**

How do you “LIVE BY FAITH”?

**ACT in FAITH**

**John 21:6 (HCSB)** “Cast the net on the right side of the boat,” He told them, “and you’ll find some.” So they did, and they were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish.”

WHY did they cast their nets on the advice of a **supposed stranger?**

- Because the **advice sounded strangely familiar!**
- Because of past experience

This WASN'T the first time they'd “**worked all night and caught nothing**”

- In **Luke 5**, Jesus was becoming really popular
  - Huge crowds were following Jesus
    - Jesus was coming to where Peter was fishing and Jesus got into Peter's boat and began to teach the crowd.

(At this point, Peter already knew Jesus and had traveled with him for a few months, but had since returned home when Jesus went down to Jerusalem.)

**Luke 5:4–6 (HCSB)** <sup>4</sup> When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” <sup>5</sup> “Master,” Simon replied, “we’ve

worked hard all night long and caught nothing! But at Your word, I'll let down the nets." <sup>6</sup> When they did this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear.

- Sound Familiar!!
  - This was at the beginning of Jesus' ministry
    - This event **"sealed the deal"** and **Peter, James and John** (The sons of Zebedee) left the **familiar behind** to follow Jesus **full-time!**

WHY did they cast their nets on the advice of a **supposed stranger?**

- Because the **advice sounded strangely familiar!**
  - The last time they ACTED IN FAITH and followed the command to **"let down their nets"** the miraculous happened.

**John 21:6 (HCSB)** "Cast the net on the right side of the boat," He told them, "and you'll find some." So they did, (Result) and they were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish."

- Based on past experience
- Based on what they knew was possible,
  - They ACTED in FAITH

**John 21:7–15 (HCSB)** “Therefore the disciple, the one Jesus loved, said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tied his outer garment around him (for he was stripped) and plunged into the sea. <sup>8</sup> But since they were not far from land (about 100 yards away), the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish. <sup>9</sup> When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread.

As Peter came sloshing up to Jesus he smelled something—the **scent** of **food** cooking over **charcoal**.

- Why would Jesus be cooking breakfast? Remember, Jesus never did anything unintentionally.

There is only one other time that we read about charcoal in the New Testament—the time when Peter denied Jesus in **Jn 18:18!**

- Have you ever smelled something and it immediately brings back a memory to you?
  - Smells can trigger memories.

As Peter is walking up to Jesus, Jesus is cooking breakfast over a charcoal fire.

- What flashback do you think the smell of that charcoal fire brought to Peter’s mind?
  - The night he denied Jesus.

- The night he failed Jesus

BTW, where did Jesus get the fish for breakfast?

- The **fish** the **disciples caught** were **still in the boat!**

BTW, why is there **bread** with the **fish**? Remember, Jesus never did anything unintentionally.

There was another story involving fish with Jesus—that time when Jesus **fed 5,000** people with **2 small fish and 5 loaves of bread**.

- That time when it became abundantly clear that Jesus could supply any need!
- That time when Jesus used the feeding of the **5,000** to teach about the fact that He is the **Bread of Life!**
  - If one would feast upon Christ, He will never go spiritually hungry.

Peter is no doubt **struggling** with his **emotions**

- The call to fish for men still ringing in his ears
- The feeling of failure still pressing on his heart
- The knowledge that Jesus will take care of his needs
- The fear of not having Jesus with them all the time led to going back to the familiar.

<sup>10</sup> “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus told them. <sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter got up and hauled the net

ashore, full of large fish—153 of them. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.

<sup>12</sup> “Come and have breakfast,” Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?” because they knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish.

<sup>14</sup> This was now the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after He was raised from the dead.

### Series: “Questions Jesus asked”

- Here comes the question Jesus asked

<sup>15</sup> When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?”

Then Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me” but that is not the whole question!

- The whole question is “Do you love me more than these?”
  - What is Jesus refereeing to?
    - Is He referring to the disciples?
      - I don’t think so because Peter never put the interest of the disciples ahead of Jesus.
  - What is Jesus refereeing to?

- When Peter was coming up to see Jesus, Jesus told him to “Bring some of the fish which you have now caught.”
  - John writes “Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three...”
- What is Jesus refereeing to?
  - The **fish**—the very large fish!
    - This was an incredible catch!
    - These were big fish—153 big fish.

Peter is faced with a net full of big fish—a fisherman’s dream—and is asked by Jesus “Do you love me more than these?”

Peter had to make a choice

- Did he love Jesus more than the familiar?
- Did he love Jesus more than the familiar??

Was he going to allow his failure to drive him to spend the rest of his life fishing for fish instead of fishing for people?

In His compassion, **Jesus allowed Peter the opportunity to counter his three denials with three declarations**

I am sure that all of us would have answered Jesus like Peter did **“Yes Lord, you know that I love you.”**

- Even though he failed Jesus didn't mean he didn't love Jesus!
  - Peter **“wept bitterly”** after he realized what he had done!
    - He **“wept”** b/c he loved Jesus and had failed Him.

Jesus question, **“Do you love me”** **stung Peter** b/c Peter did love Jesus!

- In fact, we are **hurt** when our love for Jesus is questioned!
  - Of course, we love Jesus that is why we are here!

**Peter loved Jesus—that is why he jumped in the water to get to shore as fast as he could!**

- How could Jesus ask such a question?
  - Because although Peter loved Jesus, he was allowing his failure to stagnate his spiritual growth.

Jesus said to Peter, **“Tend my lambs”**

- Jesus did to Peter what He is doing to us—calling him to go back **“on mission.”**

Could Peter, who had failed Jesus, be useful to “tend” or “feed” Jesus’ sheep?

- Jesus was commanding Peter to feed Jesus’ sheep!
- Did Jesus still believe in Peter?
  - Did He really believe that this fisherman from Galilee could do what He did?

They ate for a few moments and then Jesus asked the same question: **Jn 21:16** “A second time He asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” “Yes, Lord,” he said to Him, “You know that I love You.” “Shepherd My sheep,” He told him.

- This time Jesus *doesn’t ask Jesus to choose* between Him and the fish, He just asks: “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”
  - Peter had already told Jesus once that he loved Him!

Jesus did to Peter what He is doing to us—calling him to go back “on mission.”

- Jesus said to Peter, “Shepherd my lambs”

Could Peter, who had failed Jesus, be useful to “shepherd” Jesus’ sheep?

- Could he actually lead Jesus’ sheep?
- Could he actually be used by Jesus?

Jesus is presenting them with a choice:

## LIVE BY FAITH OR FAMILIARITY?

They ate for a few moments and then Jesus asked the same question: **Jn 21:17** “He asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved that He asked him the third time, “Do you love Me?” He said, “Lord, You know everything! You know that I love You.” “Feed My sheep,” Jesus said.”

- This **third time** hurt Peter because it was if Jesus didn't believe it

Remember, Jesus never did anything unintentionally.

- Peter had **denied** him 3 times, now Jesus restores Peter 3 times by allow Peter to **declare** his love for him 3 times.

Jesus allowed Peter to say what he knew that Jesus “**knows all things.**”

- **Peter's Point:** Jesus you know that I love you because you see my heart.

Jesus did to Peter what He is doing to us—calling him to go back “**on mission.**”

- Jesus said to Peter, “**Tend my lambs**”

## LIVE BY FAITH OR FAMILIARITY?

# WE

## HOW do we LIVE BY FAITH?

- ACT on what you know!

## What do we KNOW from this passage?

- We KNOW Christ **physically rose** from the dead
  - They see a “**Man**” on the **seashore**
  - Jesus **eats** with them
  - Jesus **talks** to them
  - This was the **3<sup>rd</sup> time** they had been with Jesus after His resurrection
    - This is **not** a **hallucination**
- We KNOW Christ can still **USE** those who have **repented** of their PAST Failures
- WE KNOW GOD doesn't do anything **unintentionally**
- WE KNOW God uses **trials** (Like not catching any fish) to **TEST** our Faith
- WE KNOW God is able to **supply** our **needs** (Enabling them to catch fish; having breakfast for them)
- WE KNOW God is in **control** (directing the fish to swim to their nets)
- We KNOW that **retreating** to the **familiar** is **not** **walking by faith!**
  - That doesn't mean there can't be familiar things when we walk by faith, but we don't find our

comfort or mission in simply doing what is comfortable to us.

## **“DO I live by faith or familiarity?”**

EVERYONE lives by faith!

- Where are you placing your faith?