

Bi123 The Gospels 2

Lesson Bi123-28 Jesus at the Sea of Galilee

When people experience a great loss in their life, like the death of a family member, they often feel helpless. They don't know where to go or what to do. Where do they turn for comfort? What they need is assurance that life is still worth living. Some find comfort by returning to the familiar duties and places of their past. They hope to forget the recent events which brought such sorrow. Some of the disciples thought that after the death of Jesus the answer for them was to go fishing. They may have just needed to earn some money to feed themselves. But Jesus had greater plans for their futures. He wanted them to fish for people.

Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael from Cana, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Nighttime was favored by fishermen in those days.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered. It hurts a fisherman to admit that he has caught nothing.

He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. The position of the boat remained the same. The nets were the same. The men and their skills were the same. But, their empty nets became full because of the word of Christ. Then John said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

They had seen Jesus on this same beach before, the last time they had taken a miraculous catch of fish. It had happened more than three years earlier, when they had first responded to his call (Luke 5:4-7). After that catch they decided to leave their nets and follow Jesus completely. Now Jesus was calling them again to a far greater work.

As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."

None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to a group of his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus already had breakfast cooking. They didn't know what to say to him, but they knew they were hungry. After a long night of hard work, with no results, hot fish and bread sounded

really good. They counted every fish, which was customary. They knew it was a miracle. The time was probably spent eating and not talking. Jesus finally breaks the silence by asking Peter a question. “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

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

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

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

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

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep” (John 21:1-17).

The conversation with Peter was difficult. Jesus had already forgiven him. The reason he probed Peter’s love in the presence of his brethren suggests they were involved. Peter had boasted in front of them that he would remain loyal even if the others did not. They needed to be able to respect and accept him in the future. Peter himself had to regain his confidence. So Jesus felt this questioning in front of them was needed. He wanted to reinstate Peter as an apostle and witness.

The threefold questioning may well have suggested Peter’s threefold denial, though the Bible doesn’t say that. Three times Jesus asked about his love and loyalty. Each time Peter affirms his love. In each case Jesus told Peter to shepherd his sheep. Jesus had given his life for those sheep. He did not want to entrust his followers to one who did not truly love him. Peter’s actions would prove his love. His care for Christ’s followers would demonstrate his threefold declaration.

Jesus concluded his conversation with Peter, “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.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Peter turned and saw that the disciple John was following them. When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” 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?”

Jesus predicted that Peter, like himself, would die by crucifixion. His acceptance of this commission would prove costly. He was called to serve faithfully as a shepherd of people, even though he would suffer. Tradition tells us that about 30 years later, he was crucified upside down by

the Roman ruler Nero. Concerning John, Jesus was saying “if” I want him to remain alive. The point is that Peter had to follow Christ’s direction for his life. John would follow Christ’s leading for him. We should not compare ourselves to others who have life easier or harder than we do. We must be concerned only about doing God’s will for us.

The Apostle John finished with these words: “This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. . . . 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” (John 21:18-25).

This story is **important** because it demonstrates God’s concern for believers when they have suffered loss or when they have disappointed him. He wants to restore such people.

The **main truth** of this story is that even if believers deny Jesus, he will draw them to a place of repentance, forgive them, and continue to use their lives and witness.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What did Peter and the disciples do when they returned to Galilee?
A. [Pause] If you said that he disciples decided to go fishing, you are correct.
2. What did Peter and the disciples remember when they saw Jesus on the shore and their nets full of fish?
A. [Pause] If you said they remembered when they had first responded to his call on their lives, you are correct.
3. What question did Jesus ask Peter three times and how did Peter respond to the question?
A. [Pause] If you answered that Jesus asked Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” and Peter responded, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can tell it from memory. After you tell it to someone, ask them this question, “Why do you think Jesus confronted Peter in front of his brethren?” The simple answer is that Peter had boasted in front of them. He needed reinstatement by Christ for their future together.