



Week 15: John 19-21

Study Guide for the week of April 6-12

Personal reflection / journaling exercise

Spend some extra time with John 21:15-19 this week.

Peter denied Jesus three times; at the end of John's Gospel, Jesus asks Peter the same question three times in an attempt to restore Peter. In this exchange, Jesus was getting to the heart of the matter and asking Peter to confront his deepest feelings, motives, and fears.

What is Jesus' consistent response to Peter's assertion he loves Jesus? What does this say about the relationship between love and action? Is the real test of love words or actions?

How would you respond if Jesus asked you, "Do you love me?" Are you acting on your answer by not just talking the talk but also walking the walk? How? What areas in your life need a boost in walking more than talking? Can you identify the feelings, motives, or fears that are a barrier to acting on your faith and living a life of obedience to Jesus' commands? With God's grace, what could you do to begin to remove those barriers? Find a trusted friend with whom you can share your barriers and help you brainstorm ideas to begin to remove them. Ask them to hold you up in prayer and help you be accountable to walking the way of Jesus.

Discussion starters

1. Pilate tried to deal with the "problem" of Jesus in four ways. Reread John 18:31; 18:39; 19:1-3; 19:15 to discover what those attempts were. Have you ever tried similar strategies when you faced a difficult situation? In dealing with Jesus? How successful were you?
2. Think through the events that spanned the time from Jesus' arrest to his crucifixion. How did Jesus conduct himself? The religious leaders? Pilate? The disciples? Why was Jesus able to remain calm and in control during these events? How is your composure during stressful times? What can you learn from Jesus about facing stress?
3. Trace the story of Nicodemus through John's Gospel – see John 3:1-21; 7:37-53; 19:38-42. What surprises you about Nicodemus' journey from secret admirer to bold follower? Did Nicodemus experience instant perfection of his faith? Are there echoes of Nicodemus' journey of faith in your own? What are they?
4. Because the story of the resurrection of Jesus is so amazing, many people need time to process and wrestle before they come to an understanding of this life-changing message. See if you can discover the stages of growing belief (John 20:2; 20:6; 20:16; 20:28). Do you know people in the various stages of belief? Are they moving along the stages or are they stuck in one stage? Where on the spectrum do you find yourself? Are you moving through the stages?
5. Reread John 20:24-29. Jesus wasn't tough on Thomas because of his doubts, possibly because Thomas had proved faithful in spite of his doubts. Do you know people whose doubts lead to questions that then lead to answers they accepted? Do you know others whose doubts led to stubbornness that led to self-pride? Is faith the opposite of doubt or the opposite of cynicism? Can one be faithful in the midst of doubts? Are doubts a sufficient reason not to have faith?

Bible verse to memorize: John 20:21