



Do You Really Love Me?

1. When in your life might you hear the phrase, “Do you love me?” What might be behind the question? Is it easy to answer?

John wrote, “*Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth*” (1 John 3:18). Saying it and living it—do they match? What does that mean for a follower of Jesus? After his resurrection and the tremendous catch of fish, Jesus asked “Peter, do you love me?” (John 21)

2. Imagine you were Peter after the resurrection and heard Jesus say the third time, “Do you really love me?” (Even after you already answered “yes” twice.) What would have been going through your mind?

[Watch scene: A New Future. Make note of comments on what life will be like after Jesus is gone.]

- *What struck home most as you watched?*
- *What questions emerge for you (to be considered later)?*

Not just an Improved Life, but a New Life

Peter would soon realize how big this was—the events surrounding Jesus. It would forever change the world. Prophets had searched to figure out what God was pointing to when the Spirit led them to predict the sufferings of Jesus and the glories that would follow. Even angels longed to look into these things (1 Peter 1:10-12). But now the followers of Jesus witnessed it and found new life ... eternal life.

3. Describe what the Scripture writers say about this new life and what it means for you. Write your discoveries in the right margin.

John 3:3-6 *Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again....⁵Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”*

1 Peter 1:23-25 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ...²⁵“the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.*

Jeremiah 31:33-34 *“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people....³⁴“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*

Colossians 3:1-4 *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.³For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

A Life that Produces Fruit

Christ-focused life is different from a self-focused or world-focused life. The Christian life is at its core a faith in what Christ did to rescue us. It realizes that we are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone ... but faith is never alone. True repentance bears fruit and so does the new life.

4. Discuss how important Jesus says bearing fruit is in the Christian life. Why?

Matthew 3:7-8, 21:43 *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them ...⁸"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ... every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" ... ⁴³"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."*

John 15:1-3, 8 *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.... If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.... ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

- What is the source of the fruit?

Following Christ is not just working on improving your old life but is receiving a radically different life from inside out—a life that comes from the Holy Spirit. It is life with a new motivation, a new power, a new focus.

5. Describe what the fruit of the new life looks like.

Galatians 5:16-23 *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.... ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control.*

Colossians 3:5-15 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. ¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

(cf. Ephesians 4:17-5:20)

- Identify the change of focus from the old life to new.
- Circle the areas you feel need special attention in your life. Pray for the Spirit to be your helper who comes alongside you to grow in Jesus.

Bear Fruit

John 15:1-17
Galatians 5:16-25
Matthew 25:14-30
(the Talents)

Divided Loyalties?

Peter and his brother Andrew left their boat and their nets to follow Jesus. Yet many who claim to be followers act as if they can just tack Jesus on to their previous lifestyle—trying to blend it with the ways of the world or have two parts to life: spiritual and worldly. Jesus likens it to trying to serve two different masters (Matthew 6:24-25) which ends up in conflicted loyalties and clashing priorities. You can only have one master. Which will it be?

6. What is involved in following Jesus (being his disciple)?

Matthew 16:24-27 *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” ...*

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

2 Corinthians 5:15-17 *And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again... ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

- Think through areas of life or situations where this is most tested.
- Talk about what this means for your life (and then pray about it).

A New Life of Faith and Power

At the last supper, Jesus said, “Satan wants to sift you all like wheat. Peter, I pray that your faith will not fail, so that you will be able to encourage the others” (Luke 22:31). Our daily struggle isn’t against “flesh and blood, but against the powers of the dark world and forces of evil” (Ephesians 6:12). Peter writes in his letters, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8-9). How do we resist? How do we win?

7. Describe this incomparably great power for those who believe. Where does it come from and what confidence does it give for your life?

Romans 8:31-32, 38-39 *If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ... ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Ephesians 1:18-23 *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

Cost of Discipleship

Luke 9:57-62
Matthew 19:16-30

Put on the Armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-20
2 Peter 1:3-10

1 John 4:4, 5:4-5 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them (deceiving spirits) because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world... ^{5:4}for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Mark 11:22-24 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. ²³"Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. ²⁴Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

A New Life of Anticipation and Hope

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). It has a totally different origin, a totally different nature, a totally different longing, a totally different outcome. Peter continued to realize how much he needed to grow in this. Jesus once made it possible for Peter to actually walk on water, but fear and doubt made him sink. He had taken his attention away from Jesus and instead focused on the waves (Matthew 14:22-32). Things were changing for Peter and the disciples—learning to live by faith and not by sight.

8. Paint the picture of the hope that Peter and countless others relied upon. Then circle the phrases that are especially meaningful encouragements for you as you go through your daily life.

1 Peter 1:3-5 In his great mercy he (God) has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

John 14:1-3 (Jesus said), "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ²My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 5:1,6-7 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal... ^{5:1}For 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.... ⁶Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷For we live by faith, not by sight.

[see pictures of heaven: Revelation 7:9-17; Revelation 21]

Put it into Practice

After Jesus returned to heaven, it was astonishingly obvious to people that Peter and the other disciples had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). They lived a radically different life—radically different from inside out.

- Make it a habit to view this world as temporary and readjust your perspectives and priorities with an eye toward eternity.
- List two specific changes you need to make to refocus your life.

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