

Small Group & Personal Bible Study

Pastor Dennis Hadley

Memory Verse: 1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Daily Reading: (This Week - Book of 1 Peter)

- Day 1 – 1 Peter 1:1-12
- Day 2 – 1 Peter 1:13-25
- Day 3 – 1 Peter 2:1-12
- Day 4 – 1 Peter 2:13-25
- Day 5 – 1 Peter 3:1-22
- Day 6 – 1 Peter 4:1-19
- Day 7 – 1 Peter 5:1-14

Small Group Lesson: From Failure to Serving

1. Read John 21:15-17. What is Jesus doing with Peter?

I have always found the dialog between Jesus and Peter very interesting and encouraging in John 21:15-17. We know Jesus is restoring him and commissioning him. I also think it sheds light into how God uses us in our weakness to serve Him just where we are. In verse 15 Jesus asks, do you truly love me (using the Greek word *agapaō*) and Peter replies you know I love you (using the Greek word *phileō*). The second time Jesus again asks do you truly love me (*agapaō*) and Peter replies you know that I love you (*phileō*). Then the third time Jesus asks do you love me and He uses the word (*phileō*). Simon is hurt because Jesus asked a third time and he used a different word that changed the expectation. And He answers, you know all things and you know I love you (*phileō*). Jesus doesn't get mad, He is not disappointed, He doesn't change His mind about using Peter, He still commissions Peter to feed His sheep in his limited weakness. I am so glad that God doesn't expect more out of me than I can give but choose to use me just as I am and He molds me and changes me to match the assignment He has.

The distinction between these two words could be interpreted this way; *agapaō* (interpreted "Truly Love") refers to love in which involves everything about you including your will. It would indicate an unconditional love. On the other hand, *phileō* implies a natural affection, a fondness, an emotional response. More like a brotherly love and it is often as a reciprocal response to a relationship that is built.

Jesus is reminding us by asking, do you love me and then commissioning him that love is the foundation of serving! Service to God and His Kingdom should always be done out of an overflow of our love relationship with Jesus Christ. When it is not, we experience burnout. So before you prepare to serve, connect into a love relationship with Jesus and build and strengthen that. Never let your serving get in the way of your love relationship. Jesus said, "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

2. Why do you think Jesus asked Peter the question three times? How important was it for Jesus to reinstate Peter and commission him?

I think Jesus went through the questions three times because Peter had denied Jesus three times and now Jesus reinstates and commissions him three times. No matter how many times we mess up, the grace of Christ is enough to cover it and make us whole again.

Peter had messed up in a major way (see John 18:15-18, 25-27) and only through the unconditional love and encouragement of our Savior could he be used by God. God had a plan for Peter's life and He has a plan for yours. We see God's plan for Peter unfold in the book of Acts and he was used by God to write 1 & 2 Peter as instructions to the Church.

- ❖ Read 1 Peter 4:10-11. Write down in your own words what God is saying to you specifically through this passage of scripture.
3. Peter received the gift or calling of teaching and shepherding the flock and Jesus commanded him feed and care for His sheep. What gift have you received from the Lord? How are you serving Him with that gift?

Let everyone in your group share their own response to this question.

4. Finally, according to verse 11 what is the exclusive purpose of us faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms?

Everything we do is for the exclusive purpose "so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be glory and the power forever and ever."

Special quote from Pastor Tim's notes: "Not only will Jesus forgive us of our failures, he will use us to bring Him glory. Jesus will not let us use failure as an excuse to not serve Him."