

Do You Love Me More Than These

Text : **John 21: 1-17**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Learning how to love is part of the maturing process.

1. Children are instinctively selfish.
 - a. The infant or toddler's world is centered around himself.
 - b. He wants what HE wants without regards to others.
 - c. This is linked to the human survival instinct.
2. Immature people have not yet grown out of that primal instinct.
 - a. They have not learned to postpone gratification. (**Maturity involves self-control.**)
 - b. They tend to fixate on their desire with little or no regard for the consequences.
 - c. They will most often subjugate the desires of others to their own.
3. Love demands just the opposite response; it is subjugating one's self to another.
 - a. Maturing out of self-centeredness to be able to love others is a slow process.
 - b. Some **never** complete the transformation. (**different in each individual**)
 - c. As a rule, girls tend to mature faster than boys.

Note : This explains many teenage pregnancies and young unwed mothers.

- 1 }- Young people feel strong passions. (**The instinct to breed is strong.**)
- 2 }- Immature boys demand satisfaction of **their** desires.
- 3 }- Their girlfriends desire to please and fear rejection so they yield.

B. All through life the human animal struggles to overcome his obsession with self.

1. Some never develop the ability to totally give themselves to another.
2. We also let OUR things (*stuff*) get in the way of our being able to love another.
 - a. **Mark 10: 17-22** ... This was the problem confronting the rich young ruler.
 - b. **ill. -** When my sister had no children, she doted over mine, but when she had her own, she abruptly stopped doting over mine.

One has no difficulty understanding or accepting that her affections were stronger for her own than for anyone else's children.

This same principle is at work in our relationship with God. Very often one's Strong attachment for his own, supplants his feelings for God's interests.

This is exactly what Jesus pointed out to Peter in our text. Peter had supplanted his love for the things of Christ, with love for his own personal interests.

I. Discuss John 21: 15-17 ... Jesus asked for a demonstration of Peter's love.**A. Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me more than these?"**

1. Peter affirms his love.
2. Jesus responds, "**Tend My lambs.**" (**Love is directly connected to active tending.**)
3. This exchange is repeated twice more.
 - a. Peter answers "**yes**", and Jesus replies, "**Shepherd My sheep.**"
 - b. Peter answers "**yes**", and Jesus replies, "**Tend My sheep.**"

B. Often too much is made out of the difference in the Greek words.

1. Jesus asked, "Do you Agapao Me?" (Do you have a strong commitment to Me.)
2. Peter answered, "Yes, I Phileo you." (You're like a brother to me.)
3. When Peter got frustrated, it was not because Jesus used a different word, it was because repeating it three times was questioning his answer. (? **disbelief implied** ?)

C. Jesus was not trying to start a love contest; "Do you love Me more than these."

1. He was not asking if Peter loved Him more than John, James and the others.
2. He was asking Peter for a reaffirmation of his commitment to the ministry.
3. Peter had returned to his day job ... fishing.
 - a. When Peter said, "**I am going fishing.**" He was not suggesting a short vacation.
 - b. He was accepting that his work with Jesus was over.
 - c. After having been with Jesus day and night for three years, he was again on his own.
4. In effect, Jesus had asked Peter, "*Do you love fishing more than you love Me.*"

E. Do you remember when you first became a Christian ? (**Long time ago for some)**

1. Do you remember how excited you were about serving God ?
2. You couldn't wait to get involved in the Lord's work.
3. No matter what you were asked to do, you were at least going to try to do it.
4. When did you decide you were not going to be zealous any more ? (**Slowly drifted**)

II. Love demands that one sacrifice his own priorities for those of the one he loves.**A. When Jesus told Peter, "If you love Me tend my sheep," He said accept my priorities.**

1. Jesus is telling all who claim to love Him to be interested in that which interests Him.

2. **Remember :** **Matt. 9: 36-38** Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸ Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

3. **This** was and is the heart of Jesus.

- a. Compassion for the masses of lost people.
- b. For people who are enslaved by the snares of the devil.
- c. For people who need the liberating message of the Gospel of Christ.
- d. For church people who are struggling to overcome Satan's barrage of fiery darts.

B. If we really love Jesus, we will adopt His heart as our own.

1. Today, if Jesus were to ask us, "*Christian do you love Me?*"
 - a. As did Peter, so would we all answer, "*Yes Lord, I love you like my very own brother.*"
 - b. If Jesus asked us three time, we would grow increasingly strong in our affirmation.
2. Then Jesus would answer us exactly as He answered Peter.
 - a. "*Join with me. Focus your life on that which I am focused on.*"
 - b. Focus your **heart**, your **time**, your **talents**, your **resources**, your **passion** on that which I am focused on. **Focus your energies on seeking my lost sheep.**
 - c. Love for God causes one to love those that God loves. ... **I John 4: 20-21**

C. This is the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection.

1. They had given up and gone back to their old job.
2. The first day back on the job they got skunked; not one fish.
3. Jesus cries out, "*Hey fellas ; didn't catch any did ya ?*"
 - a. When Jesus asks a question it is not to get information.
 - b. It is to drive home a point.
 - c. God has the ability to give or to take away ANYTHING we have. (**fish**)

D. It was not coincidental that Jesus used this type of an occasion to ask this question.

1. **Remember :** **Luke 5: 1-11** (**Tell the story.**)
 2. When Jesus gave them a miraculous catch, they were impressed enough to follow Him.
 3. Jesus repeated the same miracle to remind them of their original commitment.
 4. They had let life get between them and the Lord.
- * **We must never let Satan take the heart of God from us.** (**Life gets in the way.**)

III.- Tell story of friend whose fiancée demanded he not go to mission field. Weeping he said goodbye to her and flew away. He loved God more.

3. Every single day we must answer the question, **“Do you love Me more than these?”**
 - a. Peter was distracted by his fishing business.
 - b. I must ask myself, *“What are the fish in my life ?”*
 - c. What are the fish in your life ? (**carrier / house / retirement / people / grandkids**)
- E. God won't take second place in your life and Satan will never stop his seductions.**
1. **Matt. 10: 37-38** **He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.**
³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.
 2. **Matt. 6: 24** **No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**
 3. Everyone freely chooses to come to Christ and then to stay in Christ.
 - a. Physically, one can't choose his family.
 - b. Spiritually, one **MUST** choose his family.
 - c. This choice has to be made every day, often repeatedly during the day.

*** Jesus is continually asking, “Christian, do you love Me more than these ?”**
 4. Our things softly, seductively, slowly allure us away from our love for God and for His Christ.
 - a. This was the problem with the one referred to as the *“rich young ruler.”* **Mark 10:21-22**
 - b. **Satan makes sure the “fish” in our lives are always calling out to us.**

III. Jesus still relates loving Him to loving the lost. (Remember .. **Matt. 9:36-37)**

- A. Love for the lost is characteristic of God.**
1. **John 3: 16-** **For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, ...**
 2. **I John 4: 20-21** ... God made sharing His love for the lost prerequisite to relationship.
- B. Jesus made care for the lost prerequisite to a loving relationship with Him.**
1. **Text :** **Do you love Me? ... Tend my sheep.**
 2. Jesus was concerned about reaching out to bring in sheep who were not yet in Him.
John 10: 16- **I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.**
 3. Jesus was deeply concerned about reaching out to the lost sheep.
 - a. **Luke 15** ... **Lost sheep, Lost coin, Lost child**
 - b. **Luke 19: 10-** **For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**

C. The lost are not sought because they are deserving, but out of love for Christ.

1. **Rom. 5: 4-11** ...**Christ died for the ungodly .. while we were yet sinner .. we were enemies**
2. **Luke 6: 27-36** ... We don't just love the loveable or those who are nice.
 - a. We must go into the allies and hedgerows to find the disenfranchised and the rejected.
 - b. We take the doctor to those who are really sick. (**Not look for well people**)
3. When we see the masses as sheep without a shepherd and we are touched with compassion it is because we love the Lord and HE was touched with compassion.
 - a. Sin is repulsive to us as well as to God.
 - b. That is why we must feel compelled to lead people out of
"the sin which so easily entangles us, .."
4. Because we love Jesus the Christ :
 - a. We cannot allow ourselves to become repulsed by the victims of sin.
 - b. We never allow ourselves to become hardened to the condition of the lost.

CONCLUSION :

A. Day by day Jesus is asking each of us, **"Do you love Me more than these fish?"**

B. When we affirm our love for Christ, His responses remain the same:

If you love Me, Tend My lambs
Shepherd My sheep
Tend My sheep

C. When we talk about adding souls to our fellowship,
 we're talking about **LOVING** Jesus.

1. Do we really love Jesus ?
2. If we do, we demonstrate it in our attitude toward the lost.

D. If one really loves God ... and ... His Christ, he will commit himself to God.

1. Have you turned from the world to commit yourself to Jesus ?
2. Have you established a relationship with Him by publicly confessing your love and being baptized into His family.
3. Are you living a life devoting to the things that Jesus values most ... **saving souls**

INVITATION :

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