



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

15 When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said to him, "you know that I love you." "Feed my lambs," he told him. 16 A second time he asked him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord," he said to him, "you know that I love you." "Shepherd my sheep," he told him. 17 He asked him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved that he asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." "Feed my sheep," Jesus said. 18 "Truly I tell you, when you were younger, you would tie your belt & walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands & someone else will tie you & carry you where you don't want to go." 19 He said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. After saying this, he told him, "Follow me." 20 So Peter turned around & saw the disciple Jesus loved following them, the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper & asked, "Lord, who is the one that's going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" 22 "If I want him to remain until I come," Jesus answered, "what is that to you? As for you, follow me." 23 So this rumor spread to the brothers & sisters that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not tell him that he would not die, but, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" 24 This is the disciple who testifies to these things & who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which, if every one of them were written down, I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written. (Jn. 21:15-25)

John 21:15-25 – Overview

"Concerns about the faith community's future...are an integral part of his understanding of who Jesus is...Almost one fifth of the Fourth Gospel narrative (chap. 13-17) is devoted exclusively to Jesus' words about the future of the faith community after his glorification. How will the community live in his absence? What shape will their lives take? How will they endure persecution & the world's hatred? How will they experience Jesus' presence? What will be their identity as a people of faith? Jesus

addresses these & other questions with words of hope & promise of his presence. The stories in John 21...show the reading community what the promises of the Farewell Discourse mean for them by illustrating the disciples' lives 'after' Jesus' hour...This chapter invites the reader to envision how the community of disciples can continue to experience Jesus' post-glorification presence & carry his work forward." (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: John*, pp. 740-1)

"These verses narrate a conversation between the risen Jesus & Peter; vv. 15-19 focus on Peter himself, & vv. 20-24 focus on the beloved disciple. Peter has been a prominent figure since the opening call narrative of John 1 (1:40-42; 6:66-71; 13:6-10, 24, 36-38; 18:10-11, 15-27; 20:3-10, the beloved disciple since the farewell meal (13:21-27; 19:26-27; 20:3-10). This final scene of the Fourth Gospel concludes the stories of these two disciples by depicting the shape of their lives after Jesus' glorification. They stand as two specific examples of the continuation of Jesus' work in the work of the community." (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: John*, p. 737)

"The third appearance of Jesus to his disciples after his resurrection (Jn 21), may well be read as a missionary commission, as symbolized in the miraculous catch of fish in 21:1-14. That is the hermeneutical frame into which the story of the rehabilitation of Peter (21:15-19) is integrated. In the earlier Gospel narrative, Peter failed by denying Jesus three times (18:17, 25-27), & he is not mentioned among those who stand beneath the cross (19:25). Yet, as if the Johannine narrative does not care about his denial any longer, Jn 20 portrays Peter as one of the first witnesses to the empty tomb, arriving there just after the Beloved Disciple (20:1-6). In view of this gap, any reader of Jn 20 may ask for more information about Peter's sin." (Michael Labhan, *Peter's Rehabilitation & the Adoption of Sinners*, in *John, Jesus, & History Vol. 2*, p. 339)

1. Jesus Restores Peter (21:15-19)

a. Peter's previous failure

a. Boasted that he'd never abandon Jesus (Matt. 26:31, 33; Jn. 13:37-38)

a. "...as Peter had boasted of his reliability in the presence of his fellow disciples (13:8, 37-38; cf. 18:10-11), so this restoration to public ministry is effected in a similarly public environment...The public nature of Peter's reinstatement is suggested by Jesus' initial question, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?'" (D.A. Carson, *Pillar Commentary: John*, p. 531)

b. Denied Jesus three times (Jn. 18:15-18, 25-27)

b. The three-fold question & answer (vv. 15-17)

a. "The threefold pattern of the conversation between Jesus & Peter in these verses seems intended to counterbalance Peter's three denials of Jesus..." (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: John*, p. 737)

b. Jesus questions Peter three times (vv. 15a, 16a, 17a)

a. "Do you love me?" (v. 15a, 16a, 17a)

a. "Two different verbs for 'to love' are used in vv. 15-17: *agapao* (vv. 15a, 16a), & *phileo* (vv. 15b, 16b, 17)...There is no reason...to ascribe gradations of meaning to their usage here." (Gail O'Day, *Op Cit*, p. 737)

b. "Some expositions of these verses turn on the distribution of the two different verbs for 'love' that appear. When Jesus asks the question the first two times, 'Do you love me?', the verb is *agapao*?; Peter responds with 'I love you' (*phileo*?). The third time, however, Jesus himself uses *phileo*?; & still Peter cannot bring himself to use more than the same. Commonly it is argued that *agapao*? is the stronger form of 'to love', but so powerfully has Peter had his old self-confidence expunged from him that the most he will claim is the weaker form – even when Jesus draws attention to the point, using the weaker form himself when he asks the question for the third time. This accounts for the distinction the NIV maintains between 'truly love' and 'love'. This will not do, for at least the following reasons: (1) ...The two verbs are used interchangeably in this Gospel. The expression 'beloved disciple', more literally 'disciple whom Jesus loved', can be based on either verb. The Father loves the Son – & both verbs serve (3:35; 5:20). Jesus loved Lazarus – & again both verbs serve (11:5, 36). (2) No reliable distinction can be based on the LXX (Septuagint). For instance, Jacob's preferential love for Joseph is expressed with both verbs (Gn. 37:3, 4). When Amnon incestuously rapes his sister Tamar, both verbs can be used to refer to his 'love' (2 Sam. 13). Despite one verb for 'love' in the Hebrew text of Proverbs 8:17, the LXX uses both *agapao*? and *phileo*?." (D.A. Carson, *Op Cit*, p. 531)

c. "The words translated 'love' have...two different terms: *agapao*...& *phileo*...*Agapao*...is used of divine love & usually carries the connotation of will or purpose as well as that of affection. *Phileo* implies affinity, friendship, & fondness. Both words represent a high aspect of love. Since they are used of both God (3:16; 5:20) & men (14:21; 16:27) in this Gospel, they seem to be interchangeable with no great difference in meaning." (Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John*, p. 201)

b. "More than these?" (v. 15a)

- a. “[...]hat is meant by ‘these’ in Jesus’ question to Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ (v. 15). Does Jesus mean ‘these men,’ pointing to the other disciples? Does he refer to ‘these fish,’ implying that Peter must love Jesus more than his natural profession? Or does Jesus ask Peter if he loves him more than these men do? Recourse to the original language does not solve the difficulty here. We are left to infer the answer from the surrounding context. Perhaps it is not necessary to choose. In the end, all three requirements apply. Jesus wants Peter to love him more than he loves other people (Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26); he wants Peter to love him more than he loves his natural profession (Mark 1:16–18; Luke 5:1–11); & he wants Peter to love him more than these other men do, excelling in loyalty and willingness to sacrifice for his master (John 6:67–69; 13:36–38).” (Andreas Kostenberger, *Encountering Jesus*, p. 203)
- b. “By itself, ‘more than these’ could be interpreted in three ways: (1) ‘Do you love me more than you love these disciples?’ But this question does not cohere with any theme in the book. (2) ‘Do you love me more than you love this fishing gear?’ That is possible; the boat & the nets have been mentioned, & doubtless other gear was lying around. But in John 1 Peter is not called from his fishing, & the fishing of 21:3 has fewer negative overtones than some suppose. In any case all seven disciples went fishing: why then focus on Peter? (3) ‘Do you love me more than these other disciples do?’. This makes sense. Peter has always been able to advance the strongest personal boast. On the night Jesus was betrayed, while others were growing quiet, Peter could insist, ‘I will lay down my life for you [not ‘We’ & ‘our’!] (13:37).” (D.A. Carson, *Op Cit*, p. 531)
- c. Is this John’s Greek rendering of a conversation conducted in Aramaic?
 - a. “In Jn. 21:15-17 a conversation takes place between Jesus & Peter, which involves the interplay of...near-synonymous Greek terms: *agapao?* and *phileo?*...[This] pair cannot be reproduced in Aramaic or Hebrew.” (Aaron Tresham, “Languages Spoken by Jesus,” *TMSJ*, Vol. 20/1, p. 84)
 - b. “The reality of the distinction between these 2 words [*agapao?* and *phileo?*] has been disputed on [the] grounds... [that] the conversation between Jesus & Peter, though recorded in Greek, probably was carried on in Aramaic. The contention is that in Aramaic no such differentiation occurs, for there is only one word for ‘love,’ & in the Syriac (Aramaic) version [of John’s Gospel] the same word is used to render both Greek words.” (Merrill C. Tenney, *John*, p.)
 - c. “The popular view among Johannine scholars [is] that the 2 love verbs don’t have significance [as they] carry the same meaning & are interchangeable...Further, if the conversation took place in Aramaic, such a differentiation...might not be possible, since these categories belong to Greek semiotics & are not clearly present in Aramaic. The case is the same in Hebrew...The question remains: Is the Evangelist using [these 2 verbs] just for stylistic reasons or for the [interpretive] key?” (Riku P. Tuppurainen, *Prologue to Studies in the 4th Gospel*, p.)
- c. Peter’s answer (vv. 15b, 16b, 17b)
 - a. “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” (vv. 15b, 16b)
 - b. “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” (v. 17b)

2. Jesus Re-Commissions Peter (vv. 15c, 16c, 17c)

- a. “John goes out of his way to show [Peter] reinstated, when none of the other Gospels do so.” (D Moody Smith, *Theology of the Gospel of John*, p. 46)
- b. “Only John gives such careful narrative space to Peter’s restoration to Jesus & to his subsequent calling to pastoral leadership.” (Andrew J. Byers, *Ecclesiology...in... John*, p. 218)
- c. Restoration deals with the past
- d. Re-commissioning deals with the future
 - a. “Feed my lambs.” (v. 15c)
 - b. “Shepherd my sheep.” (v. 16c)
 - c. “Feed my sheep.” (v. 17c)
- e. Not as ‘the’ shepherd of the flock
 - a. “Scripture teaches the primacy of Peter on a number of occasions. In the Gospels, the two key texts are Matt. 16:16-19 & Jn. 21:15-17...Peter’s headship over the church was confirmed in John 21:15-17.” (Scott Hahn (ed.) *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, p. 671)
 - b. “Jesus’ charge to Peter in vv. 15-17 is regularly interpreted as Peter’s pastoral & apostolic commission. That is, in these verses Jesus appoints Peter to be the shepherd of his flock...The charge to ‘feed my sheep’ should be interpreted in the light of Jesus’ commandments to his disciples in the Farewell Discourse, not Matt. 16:18-19.” (Gail O’Day, *Op Cit*, p. 738)
 - c. “Strangely, some Roman Catholic scholars have used this passage [Jn. 21:15–17] to establish the primacy of Peter as the first pontiff [Pope], with rights of governance & authority...Jn. 21:15–17 [has] neither founding pre-eminence nor comparative authority is in view...” (D.A. Carson, *Op Cit*, p. 533)
 - d. “Peter is not charged with the care of the entire flock as Jesus’ earthly vicar, & he is not the chief shepherd to whom all the other shepherds are subordinate. Peter’s commissioning here is not different from that of all the disciples in 20:21-23.” (Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, p. 476)
 - a. Jesus’ charge to ‘shepherd’, is conditioned by ‘Do you love me?’
 - a. “The well-known Petrine & presbyteral image of the shepherd is not introduced without the conditioning question, ‘Do you love me?’ (21:15-17).” (Raymond E. Brown, “Other Sheep Not of this Fold,” *HW. Attridge* (ed.) *Presidential Voices*, p. 203)
 - b. “Shepherd my (Jesus’) sheep” – the ‘sheep’ remain Jesus’ ‘sheep’

- a. "The sheep are Christ's sheep, not Peter's. Not 'Tend your flock,' but 'Tend my sheep.'" – CK. Barrett
- b. "Even though Peter is charged with caring for the sheep, Jesus continues to speak of... 'my lambs, my sheep.' The flock never passes into the proprietorship of the human shepherd, no one can ever take the place of Jesus... Jesus claimed 'I know mine, & my own know me' (Jn. 10:14). His was a voice that the sheep would recognize... (10:3, 5, 16). The priority of a personal relationship to Jesus... is not neglected now that a human structure of authority is being established. Only Jesus can use the word 'mine' even though Peter feeds the sheep. The... Johannine Jesus [speaks]... against all tendencies... of those in authority to speak of 'my people, my parishioners.'" (RD. Witherup (ed.) *Christ in the Gospels*... Raymond E. Brown, p. 264)
- c. 'Shepherd' does not imply ruling
 - a. "Jesus' "threefold command to feed the sheep... seems to imply an authority over the sheep, especially if we recall that in the OT the king was described as a shepherd [e.g. king David]. But what kind of authority is the Johannine Jesus giving to Simon? There's little in John 21 to suggest that it is the authority of the secular king. It is a pastoral authority that's rooted in Simon Peter's love for Jesus; for before Jesus commissions Simon to feed the sheep, he asks whether Simon loves him. It is a pastoral authority that does not make the sheep belong to Simon – he is instructed to feed Jesus' sheep. It is a pastoral authority that... puts the primary obligation on Simon; he has to lead them to pasture... he has to lay down his life for them." (Raymond E. Brown, et. al., (eds.) *Peter in the NT: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant & R. Catholic Scholars*, pp. 142-3)
 - b. "The king in OT imagery was described as a 'shepherd,' [so shepherding] was often understood to involve ruling. Yet the notion of ruling authority has, at most, a minor place in Jesus' commission to Simon Peter. In John 10... Jesus never talks about 'ruling' [the sheep]... The last words spoken to [Peter] by Jesus [are] 'follow me.' [That's] far more important... than the issue of how much power Peter had over the sheep." (RD. Witherup (ed.), *Op Cit*, pp. 264-5)
- d. Loving Jesus has a practical side
 - a. "The heart of vv 15-17 lies in the relationship between Peter's love for Jesus & the charge to feed Jesus' sheep. When Jesus translates Peter's love for him into the charge 'feed my sheep', he is reminding Peter of his words in 13:34-35; 'Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' In his charge to Peter, Jesus is reminding him... to put his love for Jesus into practice by feeding Jesus' sheep. Jesus does not hand his sheep over to Peter's singular care, but instead reminds Peter of what it means to love Jesus. Jesus is calling Peter to love Jesus' sheep as he has loved them (10:11-18 – [4 times Jesus says 'I lay down my life for the sheep'])." (Gail O'Day, *Op Cit*, p. 738)
- f. Jesus tells Peter his discipleship will end in martyrdom (vv. 18-19a)
 - a. Martyrdom
 - a. "The expression 'Truly I tell you' marks the introduction of a new teaching. This teaching, as verse 19a makes explicit, is a prediction of Peter's martyrdom..." (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: John*, p. 738)
 - b. "In this context, the younger Peter carries the positive connotations of freedom, while old signals... restriction & martyrdom." (D.A. Carson, *Op Cit*, p. 533)
 - c. "What Jesus now adds with great prophetic power ('Truly, truly, I say to you') in a sense explains all that precedes. Jesus has sought not so much Peter's triple retraction of his denial, & even less to embarrass him again before the other disciples; it is rather what awaits Peter in the future that prompts Jesus to reinforce his ties with him as never before. To that end Jesus now applies to Peter the image of one who in the strength of youth can walk and stand where he pleases but in the weakness of old age must depend not only on the help of others (so that he need only 'stretch out his hands') but also on their will, even if they take him where he does not want to go. In Peter's case this will... be... the need to submit to powers that will take him 'where you did not wish to go,' & that in a highly charged sense, further explained by the Evangelist: 'The kind of death by which he would glorify God,' namely as a martyr in the service of his Lord (cf. 1 Pt. 4:16)." (Herman Ridderbos, *Op Cit*, p. 477)
 - b. Peter & Jesus' deaths linked
 - a. "The wording of... v. 19a is identical to the commentary on the manner of Jesus' death at 12:33 & 18:32. The link between Peter's death & Jesus' death is made even more explicit by the phrase by which he would glorify God. Jesus glorified God through his death (7:39; 12:16; 13:31-32; 14:13; 17:1-5), & now Peter will share in that work." (Gail O'Day, *Op Cit*, p. 738)
 - b. "The Evangelist's explanation (v. 19) of Jesus' prediction (v. 18), therefore, aligns with the prediction itself: Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. And thus he imitates Christ, not only in the kind of death he suffers (12:33; 18:32), but also, though to a lesser extent, in bringing glory to God by his death (12:27-28; 13:31-32; 17:1). Peter himself came to recognize the principle: whenever any Christian follows Christ to suffering & death, it is a means of bringing praise to God (1 Pet. 4:14-16). What is remarkable is that Peter lived and served three decades with this prediction hanging over him. By the time the Fourth Gospel was written, the prediction had been fulfilled, & Peter had glorified God by his martyrdom, probably in Rome, under the emperor Nero." (D.A. Carson, *Op Cit*, p. 534)
 - c. Following Jesus means suffering of some kind
 - a. "Where did Jesus go? He went to the cross. It should come as no surprise to us that following a crucified Savior may mean there is a cross for us. That's what Jesus was telling Peter (vv. 18-19). A time was coming when he would be bound, taken against his wishes, & killed. We need to be prepared to suffer for the sake of the gospel. Not all of us will suffer in the same way, but if we are faithful to follow Christ, there will be suffering of some type. The only way we can prepare for suffering is by learning to view it from God's perspective." (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Christ-Centered Exposition: John*, p. 466)
- g. "Follow me"
 - a. "The command 'Follow me' is a present imperative, which literally means 'Keep on following me.' Jesus showed Peter that if he were to fulfill his promise of loyalty, he would have to follow him to his own cross." (Frank E. Gaebelien, *Op Cit*, p. 202)
 - b. Peter's discipleship took the form of feeding & shepherding
 - a. "The principal command Jesus gives Peter is 'Follow me,'... The commands to feed & tend the sheep are the specific forms that his discipleship will take, yet Peter does not become the center of the community. The flock belongs to Jesus, who calls them 'my lambs' & 'my sheep' (15-19)." (Craig Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*, p. 203)

- c. Peter’s desire to die for Jesus was now possible (v. 19b)
 - a. “Follow me’ is a general invitation to discipleship... This command is also a more specific invitation to martyrdom & death. At the Farewell meal, Jesus predicted that Peter could not follow him now, but would follow afterward (13:36); the invitation in v. 19b marks the arrival of that moment. At 13:37, Peter expressed his willingness to lay down his life for Jesus, a boast that Jesus rejected (13:38). Vv. 18-19 show that now Peter is able to do what he could not do before....” (Gail O’Day, Op Cit, pp. 738-9)
 - b. “He [Peter] is now asked to follow Jesus on a road that Jesus has traveled first & alone & on which he... has given his life. Now the time has come for Peter to tend the sheep. The risks of following have not diminished. But the way Peter must go has been pioneered.” (Herman Ridderbos, Op Cit, p. 477)

3. The Beloved Disciple Will Bear Witness to Jesus (Jn. 21:20-24)

- a. The beloved disciple followed Peter & Jesus (v. 20)
- b. Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, what about him?” (v. 21)
- c. Jesus adjusts Peter (v. 22)
 - a. “Verse 22 records a saying of Jesus about the future of the beloved disciple... The most obvious meaning of the saying in v. 22 is labeled a rumor & misinterpretation in v. 23.” (Gail O’Day, Op Cit, p. 739)
 - a. “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?”
 - b. “As for you, follow me.”
 - a. “The burden of Jesus’ reply is tart: in brief, Peter is told it is none of his business. Peter has been informed what will befall him: let him therefore obey, regardless of the specific forms of obedience others must pursue (1 Cor. 4:2–7). You must follow me (the pronoun You [sing.] is emphatic). John may be asked to remain until Jesus returns: what is that to you? Clearly in this context the verb ‘remain’ means ‘remain alive on earth’...” (D.A. Carson, Op Cit, p. 535)
- d. John corrects a rumor (v. 23)
 - a. “John proceeds to deal with an error that had arisen. A report had gone out... that the disciple would never die. He would live right through until the day when Jesus would return again. We can see how such an interpretation would arise. But John wants his readers to be clear that it was an interpretation. It was not what Jesus had said. He did not say, ‘He will not die.’ He only asked what it mattered to Peter if in fact this man were to remain alive until the return of Christ. John wants us to be clear on what Jesus said & what he did not say.” (Leon Morris, NICNT: John, p. 771)
 - b. “First, v. 23 indicates that the saying of v. 22 was misinterpreted as a prediction that the beloved disciple would not die. Although v. 23 does not say so explicitly, the narrator’s comments seem to be occasioned by the death of the beloved disciple, which necessitated the narrator’s direct address of the false rumors that had spread about the disciple. The tradition recorded in v. 22 does not use language of life or death, but, in distinctly Johannine vocabulary, says that the beloved disciple will ‘remain’. In v. 24, the narrator will address how the beloved disciple does indeed remain in the community even after he has died.” (Gail O’Day, The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary: John, p. 739)
- e. John bears witness to Jesus in all that he wrote (v. 24)
 - a. “In v. 24, the narrator makes sure that the reader recognizes that even though the beloved disciple does not die a martyr’s death, he nonetheless bears witness to Jesus. His witness is the foundation of the very Gospel through which the readers experience Jesus. The beloved disciples’ death does not diminish his standing in the community, because his witness remains. Peter’s ministry is marked by his death; the beloved disciple’s is marked by this Gospel.” (Gail O’Day, Op Cit, p. 739)

4. Love Without Limits – Words of Love Must Be Matched by a Life of Love

- a. “There is no belittling of either disciple [Peter or John]. One... may be called to strategic pastoral ministry (vv. 15–17) & a martyr’s crown (vv. 18–19), & the other to a long life (v. 22) & to strategic historical-theological witness, in written form (v. 24). It is this that ties v. 24 so closely to the preceding verses. And if the beloved disciple’s commission is not cast in terms as explicit as those of Peter, it is the historical record that constrains the Evangelist: at this point Peter needed a fresh commission, since that was part of his restoration, while the beloved disciple did not.” (D.A. Carson, Op Cit, p. 535)
 - a. The gift of our physical lives for others – That means putting NO limits on our love for others
 - a. “The threefold question, answer & commission in vv. 15-17 underscore that words of love must be matched by a life of love. Peter’s love of Jesus will be evidenced when he cares for Jesus’ sheep, not apart from that care. The life to which Jesus summons Peter... requires of him an act of love that matches Jesus’ act: the gift of his life... When Peter three times answers, ‘Yes, I love you’, he is not simply giving lip service to his love for Jesus, but is in essence pledging his life. Peter is who Jesus calls his followers to be, a disciple who puts no limits on his love, who will, like Jesus, love ‘to the end’ (13:1).” (Gail O’Day, Op Cit, p. 741)
 - b. “John 21:15-25... surfaces a genuine ecclesial dilemma. That Jesus repeatedly calls his disciples to a life of love shaped by his own gift of his life is incontestable; yet not all discipleship will be marked by the disciple’s laying down his or her [physical] life... It is critical that both sides of the dilemma be acknowledged. On the one hand, it is very easy in the contemporary North American church to soften Jesus’ call to lay down one’s life in love, to see it as a figure of speech or an ideal far removed from the day-to-day realities & struggles of the life of faith. But the history of the church is full of people who knew that Jesus’ words were real, who answered the call to love Jesus & one another fully with their lives. Nor is such love a relic of the church’s past. Love that knows no limits, including the limit of one’s own life, also shapes the discipleship of the contemporary church. Martin

Luther King Jr, & Bishop Oscar Romero are the most obvious & well-known examples of love that knew no limits, but when one pays careful attention, one regularly notices stories of Christian disciples who give their lives in love: nuns & priests who have stayed at their ministries in Central America & war-torn Eastern Europe, knowing that it will cost their lives; doctors & nurses in hospitals & healthcare facilities in impoverished & embattled countries around the world who will not leave those for whom they care; martyrs of religious persecution across the globe. It is crucial that contemporary Christians remember this form of discipleship." (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, p. 742)

b. Love others as you are called by Jesus – don't compare or judge other disciples

- a. "If Peter is the model, if a life that is willing to embrace martyrdom fulfills Jesus' commandments to his disciples, then what about those believers who do not lay down their lives in love, who are not martyrs for the faith? ... Is the beloved disciples witness & discipleship invalidated because his life ended without his laying down his life In love? As noted, Jesus' combination rebuke/recommission to Peter in v. 22 suggests that such questions & comparisons are beside the point. Peter is to be about the business of his discipleship, & the beloved disciple is to be about his." (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, pp. 741-2)
- b. "On the other hand, it is easy to minimize all forms of discipleship that do not involve laying down one's [physical] life. What... is the significance of my struggle to live the love of Jesus in my small ways when compared to those who laid their lives on the line daily? What is the worth of my witness when weighed against the witness of someone's death?... The beloved disciple's love for Jesus was not to be devalued because his witness took the form of reporting traditions about Jesus & not martyrdom." (Gail O'Day, Op Cit, pp. 742)
- c. "What applies to both disciples is the call to follow Jesus, each with his own destiny. For Peter it means that he will complete his life like the "good Shepherd" in self-offering for Jesus' flock. For the beloved disciple this means his continuing witness until the coming of his Lord in glory." (Herman Ridderbos, Op Cit, p. 478)

c. "You, follow me."

- a. "Jesus' concluding words to Peter, Follow me... challenge Peter to consistent discipleship until [his] martyrdom... & implicitly invite every waverer, every reader, to the same steadfast pursuit of the risen Lord." (D.A. Carson, Op Cit, p. 534)