



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



HG35: Living With Jesus (5/5) *A New Start*

John 21:15-19

Home Group Study Notes

25th July 2010 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and
other resources that might be helpful.*



Welcome/Ice Breaker (10 mins)

How easy is it for you to believe that God not only forgives your sins but forgets all about them? Share what effect this could have on your relationship with God and on your service for Him.



Looking Upwards (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise, or listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers; etc.





Looking Upwards (40 mins) *Bible Study*

Read through the text for this study, John 21:15-19, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss your answers with your Home Group.

1: Peter came to Christ knowing that he had let him down. This weighed heavily on him and he was truly repentant and full of sorrow for his sin. On receiving His forgiveness, Peter was set free to serve and was totally transformed. The Acts of the Apostles show him boldly preaching healing and leading the young church. Discuss why you came to Christ. Did you come to him as Peter did knowing that you were a sinner? How did your life change as a result of receiving Christ into your life?

2: The blood of Christ wiped out the record of our sin when we came to Him, for some of us this is basic knowledge but for others we find it hard to live with the realisation that we are totally forgiven. Always remembering the bad things we did, robs us of our freedom and dishonours God. Share among each other if you have problems seeing yourselves as loved, accepted and totally forgiven by God.

3: Peter went on to become Saint Peter, founder of the church and from fisherman to fisher of men. If our commission is the same as Peter's, what stops us from being as effective as him?

Jesus asks us "do you love me?" and if we answer yes, what does he say in reply. He says the same he said to Peter, he says "Follow me." The kind of following that he demands involves putting his priorities first, seeking his Kingdom first, loving and accepting the people that he died for and who we may not always find it easy to live alongside never mind love, and we can only do these things when we really love him.

Following Him means having the adventure of our lives serving His cause that is of the utmost importance, nothing matters more, nothing compares to the work of His Kingdom, and everything that we do in His service has eternal significance.

Jesus life was a model for what we can become if we are in a right relationship with God. He not only died for us, he showed us how to live and if we believe in him we have access to all of God's resources. Following Him means believing when he says in John 14.12, *"Most assuredly I say to you, He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to my Father."* When he left and announced His Holy Spirit, His biggest gift to us, he told us that we could do the same that he did *and more* because His Spirit not only is with us but lives in us. We have been commissioned by the Risen Christ to follow Him, to go out into the world and take His message. We don't have to go meekly and make apologies for the message but only for the times when we are ineffective at getting it over.

Peter's call was special but not unique to him, his story has been preserved not to show him up but because God wants us to learn from him and know how he deals with sinners, even His Son's friend who betrayed Him. Peter's story is typical of the way he deals with all of us, with love, forgiveness a fresh start and the chance to follow Him. How often are you just like Peter, confident on the outside but on the inside telling Jesus that we are not good enough?

The question Jesus asked of Peter was a personal question made publicly but it was also a very practical question which offered him a way back and a fresh start, "Do you love me?" Jesus asks us the same simple, profound question of you and me today and if we answer yes we then need to ask ourselves how we are showing him that love, what does His love demand of us, and although there are no ties or conditions to His love, he loves us because that's what He does, if we truly love Him then we will want to show him in acts and deeds. Jesus says to us, I have chosen you, just as you are, to bear fruit and if you will follow I will make you a fisher of men.

Restored For Service

Once forgiven the way is clear for Peter to serve Jesus, and he is recommissioned. However, Peter's love for Jesus brought with it responsibility because Jesus gave him a job to do, he was set to work. Although Jesus loved Peter and he was concerned that he knew he was accepted by him, Jesus was just as concerned for his young church. Words, saying sorry, expressing his love, wasn't enough because Jesus asked him to be shepherd to his sheep. Jesus needed his church to be fed, led and cared for and he decided that Peter was the man for the job, Jesus has to use who he has available to him and often there is little choice but we see with Peter what he can do with the weakest of us when we say yes to his call. Jesus asked him to feed his lambs and sheep and by this he was referring to the Scriptures. When He was in the wilderness being tempted by the devil to turn the stones into bread he rebuked him saying, *"People do not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."* (Matthew 4:4). On another occasion, shortly after Jesus had fed 5,000 people he warned his followers *"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."* (John 6:27).

Loving Jesus means loving the people he loves, it means loving his church nurturing the young in faith and leading them on into the deeper truths and giving them the *"solid food"* that the writer to the Hebrews talks about in Hebrews 5.12. Peter said that he loved Jesus, Jesus could see into Peter's heart and knew that it was true, Peter loved him, but it was by loving others and feeding them on his word that he proved his love for Him.

So Peter accepted Christ commission and was then immediately faced with its cost. Jesus prophetically told him of his eventual martyrdom. Peter's love for Jesus brought him a cross. Jesus said: *"When you are young you can choose where you will go; but the day will come when they will stretch out your hands on a cross, and you will be taken on a way where you did not choose."* *"With hands stretched out"* is a euphemism for crucifixion and although all the details are uncertain there is fairly reliable tradition that Peter too went to the cross, dying for Christ but as he said he was unworthy to die as his Lord had died he asked to be nailed to the cross upside down. For Peter love brought responsibility and it brought sacrifice and death. The Christian life brings responsibility and death to our own self will daily, we don't really love Christ unless we are prepared to be responsible for the tasks he gives us and take up our cross by following Him.

From Sinner To Saint

Peter wasn't as educated and well travelled as Paul, he wasn't the great thinker and writer that John was, he was a fisherman, he made mistakes, his foot was always in his mouth, he spoke first and thought later, but who doesn't have a soft spot for Peter who was given position of pastor and shepherd. Peter the fisherman gave up everything to follow Christ and became St Peter, first bishop of Rome ending up with a church in the Vatican city named after him which has the largest interior of any Christian church in the world, holding 60,000 people. Some fisherman!!! The opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles show Peter working miracles, preaching boldly in the streets and temple, standing up fearlessly to those who had condemned Jesus just days before. He leads with authority and wisdom as leader of the early church and a father of the faith. Its not about who we are, its not about where we come from, its not about how educated and how clever we are...its about who we follow and believe in that matters.

The Ultimate Question

The last question that Jesus asks us in the last of this home group series is so important, because how we answer it can bring great responsibility and sacrifice. He may have asked you before, you might have answered it before but the more we get to know Jesus the more we understand and how we may have answered that question last year or 10 years ago or 30 years ago may demand more of us today.

4: Has your education, background and career path, in any way, hindered you from serving God? If so how can Peter's story help you?

5: This study is about forgiveness, leading to restoration and commission, Peter had to face his sin and accept Christ's forgiveness before he could serve Him. Spend time in quiet reflection allowing God to search you for any un-repent sin. Allow God to speak to you about any failure to forgive yourself and let the truth that God loves you, and no longer remembers any confessed sin saturate your heart and understanding.

6: There's no doubt that our short series on Peter's experiences of 'Living With Jesus' has touched the hearts and minds of many with its message. What, for you, has been the most significant aspect of this study? What has encouraged you the most? What will you 'carry' with you into your future Christian life as a result of this study?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG35: Living With Jesus (5/5) A New Start

John 21:15-19

Home Group Sermon Notes

25th July 2010 - Pauline Woolnough

Introduction

The studies in this home group series have given us the opportunity to examine ourselves and our relationship with Jesus and none more so than in this last one as we see how Jesus restores Peter when he asks him the question, “Peter do you love me?” Of course the question is not reserved for Peter because Jesus puts the same question to all of us. In this study Jesus asks us the very personal question, “Do you love me?”

How Would You Answer It?

Jesus made many appearances after his resurrection and this one follows the incident where He told his disciples where to put down their nets leading them to catch a huge number of fish. After breakfast Jesus asks Peter, “*Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?*” There are different ways Peter could have interpreted the question. Did Jesus look around at the boat, at its equipment, the catch of fish and ask Peter if he loved him more than all that these things represented such as his career, possessions, his livelihood, is that how you would answer it? Did he mean did Peter love him more than he loved the other people listening to them, did he love Jesus more than he loved his family? Did Peter love him first and foremost? Was he asking Peter to prioritise and choose him above all others? Maybe this is how you would answer it, after all when asked what the greatest commandment was Jesus said it was to, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.*” (Luke 10:27). Or did Jesus look at the other disciples when he asked the question saying, “do you love me more than these other people do?” Its most likely that Jesus was referring back the time when Peter boasted “*Even if I have to die I will never disown you.*” Mark 14:31, then later on a dark night rather than standing alone alongside Jesus after his arrest, Peter fell into disgrace when his courage failed him. Instead of supporting Jesus he not only fell away, but he denied him when in response to being asked by a servant 3 times if he was a friend, Peter had said “*look I don’t even know the man, I’ve never met him before*”

Peter Restored

Peter had lived with the shame of those denials and Jesus knew that he needed an opportunity to acknowledge his guilt and repent. The denials had been very public and now again there was no hiding for Peter as he was questioned by Jesus and watched by his fellow disciples. In v 17 we are told that Peter was upset when Jesus asked him for a 3rd time whether he loved him. Its all right being honest with Jesus by admitting our failings and saying sorry in private but no one likes to have their failures and shortcomings dealt with in the presence of others. It must have been uncomfortable for Peter when Jesus asked him this intensely personal question in front his friends, “*Peter do you love me,*” but this was a redemptive act of love on Jesus part as he offered Peter a fresh new start.

He had denied Jesus 3 times so He gave Peter the opportunity to wipe the denials out and cover them with 3 affirmations and after Peter’s very public disgrace, Jesus publicly reinstates him. Peter needed to know he was loved and accepted despite his failure, so 3 denials needed 3 declarations of love and loyalty to Jesus. We imagine Peter to be a big outwardly confident man but he was flawed by insecurity and guilt and had no confidence in himself or his ability to serve God, and that probably describes many of us. The barrier of failure and sin had to be removed and until it was Peter couldn’t become a true follower. If he was to become the leader that Jesus had predicted and needed him to be then the disciples also needed to be present to hear Peter respond to Jesus.

The Saviour’s Heart

Doesn’t this show the real heart of Jesus here in this one act? He had been betrayed by Peter who swore he would stand by him no matter what and let down and disappointed by a close friend of 3 years. A word of reproof might have been expected, a bit of a telling off, an apology from Peter at least but Jesus already knew how sorry Peter was, in fact he knew that Peter’s courage had literally fled that night and that he had been paralysed with fear. So Peter was treated the same way that we are when we let Jesus down, with love and a way back so that he could start again.

No matter what we do to let Jesus down He always makes it possible for us to start over again with him. In fact its usually us who make things difficult. Its us who maintain a broken relationship, its us who fail to respond to His love believing that he couldn’t possibly put our mistakes behind Him, but what Jesus was interested in was, did Peter love him? What Jesus is always interested in above all is, do we love him? Sometimes following and serving and doing for Jesus can be relatively easy and depending on what we do or don’t do, it can cost us relatively little too, but Jesus asks of Peter nothing less than that which he had shown to him, and that was love. “*We love because he first loved us.*” (1 John 4:19).”.

A Sinner At Heart

In our first study Jesus asked us, “who do you say I am” and by asking if he loved Him, Peter, like us needed to recognise the Lordship of Jesus and to express his recommitment to the one who died to remove his guilt and sins. Like all of us, before Peter could follow and serve Jesus the sin in his life needed to be addressed.

Sometimes for some of us we never really experience that revelation that others have when they accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and who *know* that with that acceptance comes His forgiveness. One reason is because some of us have grown up in the Christian faith being fortunate enough to have godly parents and although we may have accepted Christ as Saviour we may have done so without the real understanding of our sin and its cost to Him. We may have come to Jesus as children or young people but not really as sinners. Those like Peter who come to Jesus as sinners knowing they *are sinners* with their need of forgiveness with a truly repentant hearts, deeply sorry for the sin and effect of it in their lives and wanting to be set free are then filled with gratitude when they receive his forgiveness and the new fresh start he gives. The effect of that forgiveness is life changing. You might find it helpful to look back on how you came to Christ and whether you came to Him consciously knowing your sin and your need of His forgiveness.

Thank God for Peter. Thank God for bold, impetuous, fallible, failed, disgraced, restored and loved by Jesus, Peter, he is a great source of help and encouragement to us at times. Peter found out just as Paul the persecutor did when Jesus called him and just as we can that no matter how much we mess up, no matter how deep our shame and sorrow and guilt is, Jesus can forgive, renew and restore us, give us a fresh start and use us again in his service. With God, failure is never final, failure never has the last word, his forgiveness is total his mercy never ending his love is forever.