



# **SUNDAY SCHOOL MINISTRY**

## **Discipleship Plan**

**Gospel of John**  
Part 11

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## Lesson 41: Like Déjà Vu All Over Again Part 1: Remembering the Mission

**Primary Verses:** “Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered Him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.” (John 19:16-20 ESV)

**Teaching Text:** John 21:1-14

**Supporting Texts:** Luke 5:1-11, John 6:44 and 12:32 (watch the verbs), John 15:4-5

Matthew’s gospel ends with a priority on evangelism so clear and stirring it is referred to as, “The Great Commission.” Though disputed by many, Mark’s ending concludes with a command to “proclaim the gospel to all creation.” Luke is so enamored with the evangelistic energy that comes from Jesus’ victory over sin at the cross and death’s defeat through the resurrection that he spells out the imperative to proselytize both at the end of his gospel *and* the beginning of Acts! Have you ever wondered, given the overall unity of these three gospels, why John’s gospel ends, not with soul-stirring pleas to witness to the lost, but with a fish-fry?

John’s gospel is different. John gives us vastly different glimpses of Jesus. John’s gospel is more explicit than the Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) concerning claims of Jesus’ deity, too. John’s portrayal of Jesus’ opposition is uglier and starker than any other gospels. Nevertheless, the Jesus in John is the same Jesus found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The fact that John is more direct on Christ’s deity does not mean the other three gospels do not indicate that Jesus is God. Furthermore, even if John paints a darker picture of those who hated Jesus, neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke paints a rosy picture.

Yes, John’s gospel is different, but different does not mean “opposite.” If the summation of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection requires that we proclaim Him to others in the first three gospels, John’s gospel cannot help but say the same. We need to know how to read it in how John wrote it.

**Questions to Consider:** What is the geographical setting for this passage? Why might it matter? What activity are the disciples doing when Jesus finds them? Why is this significant? How might this action be interpreted? John details their failure in their venture as well as their sudden success. What is responsible for the change in “fortune?” Is this reminiscent of anything else you know about Jesus’ “revelation” of Himself to some of these men earlier? When the disciples came onshore with their bountiful catch, did they discover Jesus needed some of it? Given the particular “replay” that has taken place in this passage, explain how John 21:11b makes for a distinct difference.

**Challenging the Class:** Evaluate and discuss the accuracy of the following quotes on evangelism:

“We must neither *confuse* evangelism with doing justice, nor separate them from one another.” (Tim Keller)

“Today, evangelism is reduced to nothing more than raising one’s hand, walking an aisle, or praying a ‘sinner’s prayer.’ As a result, **millions** of Americans believe that they’ve been ‘born again’ even though their thoughts, words, and deeds are a *continual contradiction* to the nature and will of God.” (Paul Washer)

“The gospel is only good news **if** it gets there in time.” (Carl F. H. Henry)

## Lesson 42: Like Déjà Vu All Over Again Part 2: Re-Membering

**Primary Verses:** “When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My sheep.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, “Yes Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him a third time, “Do you love Me?” and he said to Him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.” (John 21:15-17 ESV)

**Teaching Text:** John 21:15-25

**Supporting Texts:** John 10:1-15, 18:15-27, 1 Peter 5:1-5

The smell of your favorite uncle’s tobacco pipe. The scent of your mom’s chicken soup on a cold winter’s night. The way your father smelled after a shave. An ex-boyfriend’s cologne or ex-girlfriend’s perfume. Why do smells linger even years after the whiff has expired?

According to Venkatesh Murthy, who chairs the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology at Harvard, smell and memory are linked because of the brain’s anatomy. When speaking with the Harvard Gazette, Dr. Murthy explained, “Smells are handled by the olfactory bulb, the structure in the front of the brain, so that odors take a direct route to the limbic system. The amygdala and hippocampus are the regions related to emotion and memory.”<sup>1</sup>

John 18:18 does not give us the details of a charcoal fire by accident. Jesus, however, is more skilled at being gracious than we are skilled at sinning. For the Apostle Peter, the smell of a charcoal fire would forever be the stench of cowardly betrayal. Eager to replace fear with faithfulness and cringing fear with convictional fortitude, *Pastor* Jesus is prepared to heal Peter’s heart and his olfactory nerve. Additionally, the Chief Shepherd will give an impactful lesson about tending to the flock of God.

**Questions to Consider:** Why do you think Jesus asked this question to Peter as He phrased it? Why did He ask Peter the same question three times? Why the mention of lambs and sheep? To whom do the sheep and lambs belong? If they don’t belong to Peter, then why should he feed or tend to them? What is instructive about the interaction between Jesus and Peter that may help the apostle to feed and tend to the flock? What are verses 18-19 alluding to? Why is Peter asking about John? How does Jesus’ answer to Peter’s question teach us about unhealthy speculations about others?

**Challenging the Class:** Restoration demands failure and loss as prerequisites. Although many may long for intimate moments with Jesus, like the one Peter experienced in John 21, not as many are willing to open up about their need for forgiveness. What about you? Do you feel free to confess sin that is not necessarily open for all to see but still lurks about in your heart? Or is it safer to maintain the façade and mask of strength and success in spiritual matters? How can we make our churches a safe place to share our weaknesses with one another—not for “permission” to wallow in sin—but for the encouragement we need to live holy, acceptable, and pleasing lives to God?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/02/how-scent-emotion-and-memory-are-intertwined-and-exploited/>

# Eating Breakfast with Jesus

John 21:9–14  
JOHN 21:9–14

“Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ Now none of the disciples dared ask him, ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Lord” (vv. 11–12).

After a night of unsuccessful fishing on the Sea of Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee) some time after the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples encountered Jesus on the seashore, though they did not know it was He at first. Following His instruction to cast the net on the right side of the boat, the disciples soon were struggling to drag in the large haul of fish that they caught (John 21:1–6). That the man on the shore knew where the disciples would find fish demonstrated to John that it was none other than Jesus who had called out to them. The disciples began heading for the shore, with Peter in the lead (vv. 7–8).

Today’s passage tells us that the disciples ate breakfast with Jesus after coming ashore (vv. 9–14), and we read here again of the remarkable willingness of Jesus to serve His disciples by meeting their needs. No doubt the disciples were tired and hungry from a night of labor, and our Lord took the time to prepare fish and bread for them to eat (vv. 9, 13). Though Jesus had been exalted in His resurrection, He did not think it beneath Him to serve others, providing another example of how believers are to care for one another (see also 13:14–15; Phil. 2:5–7).

John reports that the disciples caught 153 fish (21:11), and several thinkers throughout the history of the church have tried to discern symbolism in the number. However, nothing in the context suggests that John meant the number 153 to stand for anything other than the actual number of fish that the disciples caught. It is a somewhat minor detail—John could have said merely that they caught a large quantity of fish—but the exactness of the number is further evidence that John’s gospel is an eyewitness account of the life and ministry of Christ. Only someone who was actually there at that breakfast meeting would have remembered the exact number of fish that the disciples caught.

At breakfast, the rest of the disciples realized that they were eating with their Lord, and they did not dare to ask His identity (21:12). This suggests some fear on the part of the disciples, and this is quite understandable. They were still adjusting to the fact that their Master was back from the dead, and, after all, who would not be a little nervous to be in the presence of a man who had been raised from the dead, let alone in the presence of a man who is also God incarnate in a glorified physical body (1 Cor. 15:35–49)?

## Coram Deo

We have become so accustomed to the story of Jesus that it is easy for us to miss the awe that the disciples no doubt felt in the presence of the resurrected Lord. Indeed, we should not let our familiarity with the story of Jesus blind us to the full ramifications of who He is. He is the incarnate Lord of glory whom we should fear in reverent awe. Let us worship Him this day.

## For Further Study

Deuteronomy 6:13

Mark 9:2-8

Luke 5:1-11

Luke 24:36-49

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<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/eating-breakfast-with-jesus>

# Broken but Remade

Harry Reeder

Without a doubt, the breaking of believers draws us closer to Him, sending us to the Fountain of Grace as unworthy recipients of our Savior's redeeming work. For most of us, brokenness is not a moment, but a process — a distinct series of events that God uses to break us of self-reliance and self-absorption.

The Apostle Peter is a powerful example of this process. The Lord had a plan for Peter, one through which He would break Peter and remake him for an effective life of ministry. Four instances reveal Peter's breaking and remaking.

After the disciples fished all night and caught nothing, Jesus called to them, telling them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. Peter's answer was direct and possibly laden with a tinge of sarcasm from a tired fisherman: "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets" (Luke 5:5). Following their miraculous catch, how did Peter respond? He didn't laugh or claim the prosperity of believing. Instead, he was broken as he fell at the feet of Jesus and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (v. 8).

Another incident took place when Jesus walked on the water (Matt. 14:22–32). As the disciples cowered in fear, Peter spoke from his heart, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." The Lord said, "Come," and Peter walked out onto the water until his eyes left Jesus, and he began to sink. The words of our Lord here were not designed to make Peter feel better about himself. They were direct and convicting: "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Again, Peter was broken.

Later, Jesus questioned His disciples at Caesarea Phillipi (Matt. 16:13–20). "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" He asked. They answered, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." His next question became intensely personal: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter, as usual, spoke quickly: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ affirmed that such a statement came not from

Peter but from the work of God's grace in his heart, adding, "On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Following this conversation, Jesus began to inform the disciples of His impending death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21–23). Peter took Him aside and "began to rebuke him." Jesus didn't pat him on the back for his well-meaning sentiments. Knowing that Satan would try to keep Him from the atoning work of the cross, He informed Peter that such a statement was born from the pit of hell, declaring, "Get behind me, Satan! . . . For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." Jesus confronted the recently affirmed-and-honored Peter. For a third time, He broke Peter.

Just prior to His crucifixion, Jesus shared with His disciples again that He would be betrayed, put to death, and raised on the third day. He also said they would all leave Him and forsake Him (Matt. 26:30–35). After Jesus' assertion, Peter boldly stated, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" (v. 35). Jesus declared, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times" (v. 34).

Scripture subsequently reveals the three denials of Peter, concluding at a fire where he swore and vehemently declared that he did not "know Christ" (Luke 22:54–62). After the final denial, Jesus caught his eye, and Peter stole away into the dark, the shame of his denials consuming him (vv. 61–62). For a fourth time, Peter was broken.

**Yet how marvelous is the transforming grace of Christ. Those whom the Lord breaks, He remakes.**

Following the resurrection, some of the disciples went out to fish in the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1–14). From the seashore, the resurrected Christ called out to them, "Children have you caught anything?" "No," they answered. "We have toiled all night and have caught nothing." He then commanded them to cast their nets on the other side. As 153 fish filled the nets, the disciples cried, "It is the Lord." Our Lord was again preparing these fishermen to be "fishers of men." Peter swam ashore, where he found the Lord preparing breakfast.



Beside another fire, Jesus asked Peter three times, “Do you love me more than these?” (21:15–19). The interplay is profound and pointed. When asked the question a third time, Peter was “grieved” in his heart. He knew what the Lord was doing. Peter, having denied Christ three times, was now confessing Him three times. His repentance matched his sin — three denials, three confessions.

Peter, broken and remade by grace, was ready to be used by the Lord and to begin his ministry in earnest. The next time Peter stood up in Jerusalem, he proclaimed, “This Jesus . . . you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it” (Acts 2:23–24). Three thousand came to Christ from this once-broken, remade man.

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# Feed My Sheep

R.C. Sproul

“Come and have breakfast,” Jesus said to His disciples when He appeared to them for the third time after His resurrection (John 21:12). In all His resurrected glory, Jesus condescended to invite His friends to a meal, and it’s in this context that we read about Jesus’ final conversation with Simon Peter.

Jesus asks three times, “Simon, do you love me?” The standard interpretation of this passage is that just as Simon Peter had repudiated Jesus three times—denying even knowing Him, let alone loving Him—Jesus counters with this threefold interrogation: “Simon, do you love me?” But there’s at least one other possible interpretation for this repetition. Specifically, perhaps what we find here is the principle of emphasis by repetition.

To make a point emphatic, Jesus often prefaced His words by saying, “Verily, verily,” or “Truly, truly, I say unto you,” before a profound teaching. We see this again and again in Scripture whereby the truth of a statement is given emphasis by repetition. The Apostle Paul says, “Let him be anathema . . . anathema” (Gal. 1:8–9). The seraphim cried to one another before the throne of God, “Holy, holy, holy” (Isa. 6:3). And the cry is heard in Revelation, “Woe, woe, woe,” when God’s wrath is revealed (8:13).

Whatever the interpretation, whether it’s linked to Peter’s denial or the principle of emphasis by repetition, this is a text that every church member and pastor needs to hear.

Perhaps one of the most common and favored metaphors in Scripture for the people of God is the metaphor of sheep. We immediately think of Psalms 23, where David draws from his own experience as a shepherd and attributes to God the qualities of a shepherd: “The Lord is my shepherd” (v. 1). This metaphor carries over to the New Testament, where Jesus declares Himself to be the Good Shepherd (John 10).

How fitting it is to liken God and His Messiah to the role of the shepherd. Anyone in Palestine would have known how dependent sheep were on

their shepherd. To be honest, it bothers me a bit that the people of God are compared to sheep. It's not really a very complimentary metaphor if you know anything about sheep.

I remember playing golf once in Michigan, and out of nowhere came a flock of sheep without a shepherd—right in the middle of the fairway. It didn't matter what we did; we couldn't get rid of those sheep. They were running around aimlessly like lost sheep because there was no one to guide them.

And yet God borrows from nature to describe His own people, and not in a very complimentary way. With respect to the things of God, for the most part, we are like sheep—somewhat dense. All of this makes up part of the background of Peter's final encounter with Jesus.

Jesus calls Peter to demonstrate his love for Him by feeding His sheep. The first thing we need to learn from this text is that the people of God consist of Christ's sheep. Jesus said, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17). They are His lambs. When someone is installed as a pastor in a church, he is tasked with taking care of the lambs that were bought and purchased by Jesus. There is no greater sacred trust than to have God entrust His people to a pastor's care.

But what does it mean to feed Christ's sheep? What does it mean to tend them? Food, of course, is the primary substance by which our bodies are nurtured. What Christ is saying to His disciple is essentially this: "I am holding you responsible to nurture My sheep. You are to feed them."

This call to feed Christ's sheep comes with an incredible responsibility. Pastors must feed God's people the truth. They must be absolutely scrupulous in the time they spend preparing sermons. They must make sure that their understanding of the Scripture is accurate and that they are not distorting, bending, falsifying, or even worse, replacing the Word of God with something else. Food that is spoiled poisons people. And the only food that will nurture the people of God is the food of the truth of the Word of God.

A direct implication of this truth is that there are certain things to which a shepherd is not called.

A shepherd is not called to entertain. Shepherds are called to make sure that their sheep are not lost. That's enough to keep every pastor up at night. There are people in the congregation who may not know Jesus at

all. I believe that the principal task of preaching on Sunday morning is to nurture the people of God, but pastors would be absolutely derelict in their duty if they assumed their churches were filled with nothing but the redeemed. Every Sunday, there are people in the congregation who are not regenerate, who have never heard the Word of God. And if the pastor loves them, he must feed them with the whole counsel of God.

A shepherd is not called to offer pop psychology. Self-help only heals the wound of the daughter of Zion lightly. The only thing under heaven that will nurture the sheep is the Word of God. That is the food God's people desperately need if they are going to grow.

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