



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

John Sermon Series

Supports Session 13: Do You Love Me?

Sermon Title: "Restoration of Stumbling Saint" (John 21:15-23)

Connection to Session 13

Peter had failed Jesus by denying Him in the hours prior to His death. Jesus confronted Peter and challenged Peter to consider his love for Him. Jesus restored Peter and commissioned him to serve His flock.

Introduction/Opening

In July 1967, The Beatles released a song entitled, *All You Need Is Love*. The chorus to the song stated,

All you need is love
All you need is love
All you need is love, love
Love is all you need.¹

In today's culture, a common phrase associated with the concept of love is "Love is Love." Are either of these concepts on target? Do they truly convey the biblical idea of love? Unfortunately, the English language, though complex, has only one word—noun, adjective, and verb—to express love. In a single sentence, a person might say "I love my spouse" and "I love chocolate ice cream." Obviously, these do not express the same type of love. The Greek language has four primary words for love, two of which are found in Scripture: *phileo* and *agape*. *Phileo* speaks of a brotherly connection. *Agape* is used for God's love and is the standard believers are to emulate in their Christian journeys. In John 21:15-23, Jesus made a play on the words *agape* and *phileo* in His conversation with Peter.

Outline

1. Three Questions, Three Replies, and Three Commands (vv. 15-17)
 - a. Jesus turned to Simon Peter and addressed him directly apart from the other disciples. It's important to remember that when Jesus was arrested, the other disciples fled and hid. Peter, though, followed the group from Gethsemane to the courtyard of the high priest. While there, he denied Jesus three times. Since his denial was public, his restoration would be public.

1. The Beatles, *All You Need Is Love*, Vinyl (George Martin, 1967), <https://genius.com/The-beatles-all-you-need-is-love-lyrics>.

- b. Jesus asked, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” (v. 15). The word *these* could refer to the fishing boats and nets he had originally left to follow Jesus, or the word could refer to the other disciples. Perhaps Jesus was combining both the fishing boats and nets (Peter’s previous occupation) and the other disciples. Jesus used the verb form of *agape* in His question.
- c. Peter was quick to reply, “you know that I love you” (v. 15). Peter used the verb form of *phileo*, affirming his affection for Jesus. Jesus then commanded Peter, “Feed my lambs” (v. 15).
- d. Jesus’s second question was worded differently from the first, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” (v. 16). Jesus added no qualifiers or comparisons. This was a straightforward question that again used the verb form for *agape*. This direct question was quickly answered, “you know that I love you” (v. 16). Peter again opted for the word *phileo*. He did not perceive himself to have a love for Jesus that could be classified as *agape*. Jesus then gave Peter his second command, “Shepherd my sheep” (v. 16).
- e. Jesus’s third question mirrored the second, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” (v. 17). There was a slight difference in the wording. Jesus used the verb form of *phileo*, the same word Peter had used in response to the other queries. Was Jesus making a difference or do these words have the same meaning in this context? While the original conversation would have been in Aramaic, John recorded this difference as inspired by the Holy Spirit. At this question, Peter was deeply wounded. Obviously, the three questions were a reminder to Peter of his three denials. Peter’s reply appealed to the omniscience of Jesus saying He knew all things, and He knew Peter loved Him. The final command to Peter is “Feed my sheep” (v. 17). Jesus restored Peter and signified His trust again in Peter to be a leader, a shepherd to those who would believe in Jesus.

2. Two Comments and One Command (vv. 18-19)

- a. Jesus wanted Peter to know of the cost of following Him. His task would not always be easy. Jesus described the freedom Peter enjoyed as a young man.
- b. Jesus described Peter’s future, one that would include a loss of freedom at some point. Others would determine what would happen to him. Feeding Jesus’s sheep would require much of Peter.
- c. Jesus finally commanded Peter: “Follow me” (v. 19). The price of following Jesus would be high, though his death would bring glory to God.

3. One Question, One Rebuke, One Command, and One Rumor (vv. 20-23)

- a. Peter noticed that John was walking behind them and asked, “Lord, what about him?” (v. 21).
- b. Jesus replied with a gentle rebuke. He told Peter that if He chose to allow John to live until the second coming, it was none of Peter’s business. Jesus brought Peter’s attention back to the task to which He was calling him: “As for you, follow me” (v. 22).
- c. Verse 23 introduces the rumor that was circulating after Jesus’s remarks about John. Somehow Jesus’s words from verse 22 became public and distorted, so many were saying that John would not die before Jesus returned. This was an incorrect understanding of Jesus’s comment.

Conclusion

Were The Beatles right in their conclusion? Is the modern thought of “love is love” the right way to understand love? The answers to both questions are yes and no. Love is needed in the world and in the culture but not the love that has no boundaries or moral standards. The love each person needs is found in Jesus. This love is reflected in obedience to the greatest commandment “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands” (Matt. 22:37-40).

No believer can have an encounter with Jesus and remain the same. The Lord works to restore those who have stumbled and to strengthen those who are about to stumble. Peter the denier during the trials of Jesus became Peter the anointed preacher on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus’s question for Peter is also one for all believers, “Do you love me?”

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