

“Doctrine: AHA! A Truth-filled Moment”

The Reflection Series

Scripture: John 21:15-19 (NIV)

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¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Subject Question: What three Christian life-priorities does Jesus share with Peter and us in John’s post- resurrection account?

Compliment answer: The Priority to Feed, The Priority to Care, and The Priority to Follow.

Big Idea: The three Christian-life priorities that Jesus shares with Peter and us in John’s post-resurrection account are: The Priority to Feed, The Priority to Care, and The Priority to Follow.

Homiletical Idea: “AHA, Really? YES!”

Purpose: I want the congregation to consider their individual commitment level in being a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ.

Introduction: Knowing Christ and a life of walking with God, leads to many times, having “AHA” moments—moments when we are simply amazed at not only the actions of God, but more, the very character of this God whom we have grown to love and appreciate. Today we consider three life-priorities that are for every one who claims the name Christian. We are not called to live in isolation from one another. No, we need one another. In fact we cannot live without one another. Today’s lesson is in a sense, a call to action. We will find

that yes, we are our brothers and sisters keepers... and as such we cannot diverge from the true calling to be involved in each other's lives.

(For Christ's sake—make a decision)

Ground Work: Sherrie Campbell, PhD Veteran, licensed Psychologist
10 Ways to Take Care of You and Reconnect With Your Spirit

Many of our lives are centered on taking care of the needs of everyone around us aside from ourselves. We are running around taking care of kids, our bosses, our husbands/wives, pets, friends, coworkers, parents, etc. Sometimes the responsibilities we have in life feel like an overwhelming burden. Because of all of these responsibilities we end up forgetting to have fun and to enjoy life. We cater to being responsible before we cater to being happy. There needs to be an established balance between both. Taking care of ourselves doesn't have to be a chore, an obligation or something that is experienced as yet another burden. To follow are 10 simple ways to take care of yourself.

10 ways to take care of you!

- 1) Go outside:** Exercise, take a walk, go to the beach/pool, hike or whatever appeals to you. Get some fresh air. Fresh air fills us up with a fresh new look on life. Getting outside allows for a state of relaxed contemplation. It serves as a release from all the pressures we sometimes feel trying to be everything to everyone.
- 2) Alone time:** Make sure each day to get at least 30 minutes of alone time. Whether you get this time at your lunch break, a half hour before bed or 30 minutes in the morning before everyone else gets up. Time alone is detoxing and rejuvenating.
- 3) Ignite your creativity:** Whatever ignites your creative juices from writing, reading, creating something, cooking, working on a car, building something, sewing, art. Being creative lets us know we are alive and passionate.
- 4) Spend time with friends:** There is nothing better than a nice break from life's responsibilities than spending time with people we love and who make us feel free. Bonding is one of the healthiest ways to take care of ourselves
- 5) Take a nap:** A 20-minute nap is said to be totally rejuvenating for the whole physical, emotional, and mental system. If you can fit it into to your day I highly recommend it.
- 6) Go shopping:** Getting something new often brings light and excitement into our life. We all need to reward ourselves for our hard work.
- 7) Connect spiritually:** In whatever way works for you, enlivening your spiritual life can make you feel more connected to the process your life is taking. To have a firm belief that all is happening as it should be will help to relax a stressed mind.
- 8) Get a massage:** Touch is healing and a great way to reduce stress and love ourselves.
- 9) Eat healthy:** There is something about eating healthy that makes us feel as if we are headed in the right direction and that we have a sense of control over our circumstances. Eating healthy is a powerful choice in the direction of self-love.
- 10) Turn off your cell phone for a few hours:** It is incredibly healthy to be able to just disconnect from the social and internet world.

I encourage everyone to follow these steps and whatever steps come to mind as you read this list. You each have a knowing from within of what makes you feel good and which people, events and circumstances bring you joy. It is so easy to get overwhelmed in the world of responsibility only to lose sight of the basic reasons for living. You are here to feel happy as much as you can, to focus more on your pleasure than your pain, and to feel the fruits of your labor on an emotional (not just a financial) level. Your life experiences are dictated by how you feel emotionally. Due to this reality you must make a conscious effort to take care of how you are feeling. If you veer off into the negative, never-ending feeling of responsibility, you have to recalibrate and take some action to take care of yourself. You deserve it.

About Religion Blog

Internal Spiritual Discipline

We all have that inner voice that can complicate our faith. It's there inside our heads asking all the questions that can muddle our decision making process. Sometimes making the right decisions about what to do means taking our beliefs down to the simplest building blocks. There are tools we can use to quiet our inner voices. Meditation is a great way to get away from the world and focus. Prayer is a tool that allows us to have a conversation with God and get some clarity. Fasting is another method of narrowing down our focus. Think of developing the spiritual discipline of simplicity as a way to clean house, but this time it's cleaning house in your own head. Start polishing your beliefs and get rid of the things that clutter and cloud your judgement. If you're confused, go to the source - your Bible - and read up on what's bothering you. Or take some time in solitude to really reflect on things without the outside influences. Simplicity means making things clearer, cleaner, easier to understand. Yet this is a discipline that also means becoming more convicted in your core values.

Simplicity as an External Spiritual Discipline

As you develop an internal simplicity, the external demonstration needs to follow. No matter what, we live in a society that values things. People think that to be the best you must have the most, be the highest paid, get all the awards, be the most popular. Yet, what does that do for you in the long run? When our lives pass on the earth, will those "things" get us anywhere? This message is what Jesus was trying to get across. There is far more to living a life for God, and it starts by keeping your life simple.

There is a reason why nuns, priests, and monks have to give up all their possessions. Jesus made it clear that the path to Heaven was far more difficult for the rich than the poor. Things can cloud our judgement. This is not to say that everyone has to give up everything they have right now to be righteous. Yet it is to say that we must keep things in a proper perspective. They are, after all, just things. Status on earth is not status in Heaven. This is why developing a strong sense of simplicity can help keep us from getting so caught up in the "next new thing" and more caught up in Jesus.

What the Spiritual Discipline of Simplicity Does

When we develop the spiritual discipline of simplicity both internally and externally, we also gain certain abilities and lose other destructive needs:

- We begin to speak in simple truths that are easy for us to live by and others to understand.
- We lose the destructive need to constantly top or be better than others.

- We lose a need for temporal things. We may like the newest gadget or tool, but we won't sacrifice everything to get it until we're ready.
- We start giving to others out of a place of joy and willingness in our hearts. We become more hospitable and kind.
- We develop a sense of gratitude for everything we do have.

Ken Ellis

Biblical Summary about Spiritual Gifts

1. Every Christian has at least one Spiritual Gift (1 Peter 4:10)
2. No Christian has all the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28-30)
3. We cannot choose our gifts; God does that job (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)
4. There is no gift that every Christian possesses (with the exception of Faith to a varying degree) (1 Corinthians 12:29-30)
5. Believers will account to the Lord for how they use their gifts (1 Peter 4:10)
6. Spiritual Gifts indicate God's call and purpose for a Christian's life (Romans 12:2-8)
7. Gifts used without love do not accomplish God's intended purposes (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
8. Spiritual Gifts are for the common good to build up the Body (1 Corinthians 12:27)

Biblical Guidelines for using Spiritual Gifts

1. Usage of the gift(s) conforms to Biblical teaching (2 Timothy 3:16 ; Romans 12 ; 1 Corinthians 12-14 ; Ephesians 4 ; 1 Peter 4)
2. There is affirmation and positive feedback within the Body of Christ for the expression of the gift (1 Corinthians 12:7 ; Ephesians 4:16)
3. There is agreement within the Body of Christ that the Holy Spirit is at work (1 John 4:1 ; 1 Thessalonians 5:21)
4. The Holy Spirit provides peace in our spirits as we offer our gift(s) to the Body of Christ (John 15:26 ; Romans 8:16)
5. There is evidence of godly fruit in the life of the Body (John 15:8 ; Matthew 7:16-20)
6. Believers offer their gifts for the common good as others have need (Acts 2:44-45 ; 1 Corinthians 12:7)
7. Unless gifts are offered in love, they have no worth (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
8. We should strive to live a life worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1)

How Many Different Spiritual Gifts Are There?

There is little agreement among Christians as to exactly how many different Spiritual Gifts there are.

- Some people look at the key Bible passages on Spiritual Gifts and limit the Gifts to the ones listed there:
 1. Romans 12 - Prophecy, Service, Teaching, Encouragement, Giving, Leadership, and Mercy
 2. 1 Corinthians 12 - Message of Wisdom, Message of Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miraculous Powers, Prophecy, Distinguishing between spirits, Speaking in Tongues, and Interpreting Tongues

3. Ephesians 4 - Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher
- Some say that the Gifts of Administration and Leadership are the same Gift.
 - Some say the Gifts of Service and Helps are the same Gift.
 - Some add the Gifts of Craftsmanship and Music because of the skills that God gave to people to help with the Old Testament Tabernacle.
 - Some see Craftsmanship as a vehicle to exercise the Gift of Service.
 - Some stick to the gifts listed in the New Testament.
 - Some believe that certain Spiritual Gifts were only given to people by the direct laying on of hands of the original Apostles and that these Gifts ceased to exist after the first century.
 - Some add the possibility of other gifts:
 1. 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 - Celibacy
 2. 1 Peter 4:9-10 - Hospitality
 3. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 - Martyrdom (not included in this test!)
 4. Ephesians 3:6-8 - Missionary
 5. 1 Corinthians. 13:1-3 - Voluntary Poverty
 6. Ephesians 6:18 - Intercession / Prayer
 7. Luke 1:1-3 - Writing
 - Some see Prayer and Intercession as a vehicle through which the Gifts of Faith, Healing, and Miracles operate.

Some of these "gifts" are obviously Spiritual Gifts. Others are debatable. However, it is not particularly important whether a certain ability is a Spiritual Gift, a blessing from God, a God given talent, an inherited trait, a natural human ability, or something learned. The thing that is important is that we discover what Gifts are more pronounced in us and to learn how to use them to serve God. God is just as pleased when we use a learned ability to serve Him as He is when we use a Spiritual Gift to serve Him. The key is to discover our abilities (Spiritual Gifts and Talents) and learn to use them to Love, Worship, and Serve God.

- A. The Priority to Feed. (Vs.15) *¹⁵When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."* There is a very aha-moment for each of us as followers of Christ when we see the connection that Jesus himself defines between loving Him and living "His." Loving Christ personally and Loving Christ's people. The truth of the matter is however, that some people are a lot easier to love than others. Some people's personalities and ours mesh. Some don't. There are people that we simply do not like. So the first uncomfortable challenge we can draw from verse 16 is: what is our true level of love not for people, but for Christ himself. Do we truly love **Christ with all our hearts...** easy to answer on the surface, but... we also then, need to be concerned about the welfare of his people... even if we personally don't get along all that

well with them? Do you love Me, Christ poignantly asks... Feed my sheep, all of them... for my sake... because you did say you loved me, right?

- B. Feed: give sustenance, provide the things that are needed to sustain life ... surely Christ was not just spouting off about with His loved ones providing physical food for one another. No. Jesus was stating a fact: that in the Christian life we **need** to be about the business of providing spiritual sustenance for one another; sharing that sustenance and ourselves being fed. OK. But then, what is spiritual food? How does it differ from physical food? Spiritual food is food of the “soul,” or food of the changed and growing heart... it goes beyond the physical to our more mysterious side of existence, which cannot be seen, only felt... our true selves, the invisible eternal inner life that inhabits this outer body. What kind of food does that part of us need? Let me list a few entrées and desserts as found in scripture:

Romans 12: exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy, prophecy, service, teaching,

1 Corinthians 12; administration, apostle, discernment, faith, healings, helps, knowledge, miracles, prophecy, teaching, tongues, tongues interpretation, wisdom

Ephesians 4; apostle, evangelism, pastor, prophecy, teaching,

Misc. Passages; celibacy, hospitality, martyrdom, missionary, voluntary poverty,

These are not only the spiritual gifts listed in the Scriptures but they are Christ's delivery system to provide the unique spiritual sustenance that His children need to be, and stay healthy. The main course is obviously God's Word... We are fed through those who teach and preach. But our souls need more than just an intake of the Bible. To grow and be nourished we also feed the words and actions of others! Words that exhort and encourage, actions that include hospitality and helping, examples that teach mercy, prayer and leadership. Here's the rub: it's not so much as what we have to share with others to help maintain and promote their spiritual health, as it is our willingness to be used of Christ to share what we can, what we have... for Christ's sake... you did say that you loved me... Christ says... feed my sheep.

- C. Listen, If we are in the business of providing spiritual sustenance for one another then it seems obvious that we each have a compelling responsibility, to be about our God-ordained task. Could it be more true than not, that as Christian brothers and sisters we are actually in the life-long business of sharing our gifts, our talents, our life lessons in such a way that our efforts help others grow, help others survive, help others maintain a healthy spirituality in Christ.

1. Let me illustrate the difference between those who understand this and those who don't. EX. SOAKERS vs. SPONGES.

Show me an older person life motto is, for Christ's sake... who is in the continuous business of providing for others and I'll show you a person who may be physically getting older but will forever maintain a youthful heart. Show me someone, anyone whose life motto is; for Christ's sake, and I'll show you a person whose life has meaning and purpose and joy and peace. Show me a church whose foundational Mission statement implies; for Christ sake, and I'll show you a healthy, growing, dynamic, exciting and wondrous place to be in and be a part of. For Christ sake it's about considering and caring for others. For Christ's sake it's about not just sharing what we have or what we know , but who we are.

(For Christ's sake—make a decision)

- A) The Priority to Care. (Vs.16) *¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."* The order of verses 15 and 16 has always intrigued me. I would have expected Jesus to have said, first, care for sheep and then, second, feed my sheep. But He switches it around... feed and then care. Is this just a question of semantics? Or is there a truth we need or consider here? Let's explore some possible conclusions we can assume.
- B) Could it be that Jesus understood that in dealing with people, even and maybe especially with church people, that there is a proclivity to and a propensity for, us to disconnect our hands for our hearts? It just gets easier after a while to give to a cause, or to a church, then to get involved in either one. People do have a way of draining us emotionally. And as such churches are full of great people who say things such as, I don't mind giving to missions, I'll give a lot... just don't ask me to become a member... I don't mind supporting our church, just keep me off of any board or committee or team. I willingly extend my hand, but I really don't have the heart anymore...
- C) But I also think there is another side to this. A more pragmatic side... a more loving concern. Jesus said to Peter and to us... care for my sheep. He would probably go on to say: but it's not just about loving others the way I would or providing for their spiritual needs and sustenance. It's more about your emotional and spiritual inability to constantly keep your

hand of giving from being detached from your heart of gifting. I understand. I needed to take time off... away for the crowds. You may act like me when you are doing things for me...but you are not me. And because you are not me, you cannot continue to give and take care of others until you take the time to give and take care of yourself. For Christ's sake... for your sake... care for yourself. Only then will you be able to care for others. How do we do that?

D) First and foremost, For Christ's sake, love yourself. Get a healthy crush on you. For some of you this is pretty easy. For others, isn't it about time you faced up to the reality that you are a somebody, that God believes in you, God loves you. And God thinks you are ultra-special. Give yourself permission to see you as He sees you... a precious chosen, unique, beautiful Child of His; the very apple of His eye! You mean you want me to consider myself as God's gift... well yes, because you are... to the rest of us... we need you. Secondly, for Christ sake... take care of yourself. In the sermon notes you will find that caring for ourselves include the physical such as exercise, proper sleep, being creative, taking naps, spending some alone time... and includes the spiritual such as reading, meditating, fasting, praying and so on. There is a priority to love and feed Christ's sheep, to care for Christ's sheep, but it won't happen if you first don't love and feed and care for yourself.

(For Christ's sake—make a decision)

A . The Priority to Follow. (Vs.17-19) *¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"*

B. For Peter and for us I think these last words put forth a reality that we all need to grasp and to hold on to. That beyond this life of showing our love for God by feeding and caring for others... an earthy life of following Him, day after day, year after year... But we need to keep in mind, that there is as well, a final road that each of us will follow Christ to, and that is the way of the cross, a date of destiny, a divine appointment, assigned for each one of us as we like

Christ taste the enemies final victory over us in this life, as death comes to each one of us. But, for the Christian...

C. Follow me Jesus says, and yes, we'll traverse the various earthly highways and byways of this life... but at that appointed hour, I want you and invite you to follow me past the grave to that place which I've gone to prepare for you. Follow me, Jesus says to you and me, to my Father's house where there are many mansions, where there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain.

D. Follow me now and keep following me and we'll stop and face one another on heavens bright shore and begin our new journey of walking the highways and byways of the heavenly where we'll stroll side by side. Yes there is a Priority to Feed, A Priority to Care, but there is a great Priority to Follow.

. (For Christ's sake—make a decision)

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