

Gathering

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Jesus is the best communicator that this world has ever known. He always seems to know the right thing to say at just the right time. He makes sure every word he speaks has a lasting impact on the person(s) he is interacting with in that moment.

Jesus' interaction with Peter seems to rise to the next level. His words to Peter are both deeply profound and spoken with a sense of true urgency; yet they are also filled with loving-kindness so Peter could move forward:

*"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?" He said, "Lord you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."
-John 21:17 (NIV)*

His words were meant to propel Peter to push past his failure of denying Jesus into living a full life that honors Jesus. Jesus knew the time he had left with Peter was about to come to an end. He makes sure there is nothing left unsaid between Peter and himself. He wants Peter to know he is forgiven without any shadow of doubt. He also wants Peter to keep the right focus from that day on. Peter's place in the kingdom of God is marked with a 'reserved' sign.

Jesus' words are just as poignant and powerful for us today. If we are in a true relationship with him, we must feed his sheep. We too are to keep the right focus in living out the gospel; our time, talent, and treasures must be used to be a blessing to those around us, an extension of Jesus' love for the world.

After reading this scripture consider these questions:

- Have you ever experienced the loving-kindness of Jesus in your life after failure? What did that look like for you?
- When you interact with fellow believers, do your words speak life and encourage reconciliation?
- What are the words you need to hear from Jesus to step out of your past and move into having a spiritual life that is full and enthusiastic to serve focused on Him?
- Who will you go the extra mile with today to make sure your relationship is completely whole? What tangible steps will you take to accomplish this?

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Jesus' three-word statement to Peter changed the course of Peter's life and ministry. We should be people who want to take Jesus' words and let them change our hearts to keep the right focus in life and as we serve others. In doing this, we will be willing to joyfully give our time and talents to bless those around us and honor God. Explore the following

READ PSALM 100:1-2, JOHN 15:11 AND PHILIPPIANS 2:17

- What brings you joy in your relationship with Jesus and in service to others?
- What actions will you take this week to be sure you are listening to Jesus and allowing Him to change your heart?
- Discuss ways you can take Jesus' words to heart and faithfully follow his command to "feed my sheep."
- What new insights do you have about Jesus' words to Peter? How did Peter react to Jesus? What became of Peter's ministry after this powerful exchange?

Written by

Captain Chastity Hansen, Empire Division



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