Do You Love Me? (John 21:1-19)

JOHN 21:1-19 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

Jesus meets our failure with a question and a calling: Follow Me.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 29): John 20:24-31, My Lord and My God. Its big idea: The risen Jesus is Lord and God, written down so you may believe.
- After this passage: —

Open

Recall last time: Thomas saw the risen Jesus and said, "My Lord and my God." Then ask: when someone you let down came back to you, what did you need to hear? Take a few answers. Read John 21:15. Then say the big idea: Jesus meets our failure with a question and a calling: Follow Me. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. Three Questions (John 21:15-17, about 18 min)

The one thing: Jesus does not skip Peter's failure; he walks him back through it and trusts him again.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times instead of once?

2. Follow Me (John 21:18-19, about 14 min)

The one thing: Restored Peter is called again, knowing the cost, to follow Jesus.

Ask: Jesus first called Peter with "Follow Me." What is different about hearing it again now?

Close (never cut it)

This is the last lesson. Read verse 17 and verse 19 slowly. Say: whatever distance you have walked, Jesus asks the same question he asked Peter, and says the same words: Follow Me. Leave the question in the quiet, then pray.

PROTECT THE ENDING

If the last section starts late, drop its discussion and read verses 18-19 straight into the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 2, 3, 1, 5, 4 (top to bottom) · Feelings: The friends eating breakfast with Jesus happy, Peter, asked a third time sad, Peter, told where he would be led worried, Peter, called to follow again happy · Code: FOLLOW ME

Act it out: Play follow-the-leader: the teacher leads, kids follow, then say together, "Follow Me!"

1. Three Questions

JOHN 21:15-17 · ABOUT 18 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 2

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- After breakfast by the lake, Jesus turns to Peter.
- He asks the same question three times.
- Each time Peter answers, Jesus gives him work.

Simon son of John, do you LOVE Me?

Jesus told him, "SHEPHERD My sheep."

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times instead of once?

Jesus does not skip Peter's failure; he walks him back through it and trusts him again.

MUST COVER

- v15-17: three questions echo Peter's three denials by a fire (told earlier in John 18).
- v15-17: every answer is met with a charge: feed, shepherd, feed. The failure is not the end of his usefulness.

IF THERE'S TIME

- v17: Peter was hurt at the third question; he no longer boasts, he says "You know all things."
- Luke 22:31-32: before the denial Jesus had prayed Peter's faith would not fail.

Illustration idea: A coach who puts a player back in right after the player's worst mistake.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: To match the three denials.
- Listen for: To let Peter say it out loud and be sure.

If it drifts: If it becomes a Greek-word debate about kinds of love, bring it back to what Jesus does after each answer.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Jesus met Peter's failure with a question, and then a calling.

Short on time? Skip the Luke reference; keep the three questions and three charges.

Bridge → Then Jesus tells Peter where following will lead.

2. Follow Me

JOHN 21:18-19 · ABOUT 14 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 2

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus tells Peter his life will be led by someone else.
- John explains it pointed to how Peter would die.
- Jesus ends with two words: Follow Me.

Jesus said this to indicate the kind of DEATH by which Peter would glorify God.

He told him, "FOLLOW Me."

Discuss: Jesus first called Peter with "Follow Me." What is different about hearing it again now?

Restored Peter is called again, knowing the cost, to follow Jesus.

MUST COVER

- v18: Jesus is honest about where following will lead.
- v19: the same call as at the start, now after failure and forgiveness: Follow Me.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Peter later wrote to church leaders: tend the flock of God (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Illustration idea: Renewing wedding vows after a hard season: same words, deeper meaning.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Peter knows himself better now.
- Listen for: He knows the cost and is still called.

If it drifts: If it turns to fear about suffering, return to the last words: Jesus is leading, and he says follow.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Failure did not end Peter's story. Jesus still said: Follow Me.

Short on time? Read verses 18-19 and move to the close.

Bridge → Close by leaving Jesus' question and his call with the class.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Ask about coming back. Ask if they've ever walked away from something and wondered if they could return. Listen.

2. What Peter did. Briefly: Peter, Jesus' close friend, denied knowing him three times the night Jesus was arrested.

3. Breakfast by the lake. Read verses 15-17. Jesus asks three times, and gives him work each time.

4. The last words. Read verse 19: "Follow Me." The same words that first called him.

5. Leave the question. Say that Jesus' question to Peter is the one John's Gospel ends on. Leave it with them, and offer to talk whenever they want.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

“Isn't this just a tidy ending someone made up?”

It isn't flattering to Peter: it keeps his failure and his hurt in the story. Made-up endings usually hide those.

“Why three times?”

Peter had denied Jesus three times. Each denial gets its own question.

“I walked away from faith. Is there a way back?”

This passage is Jesus coming to someone who did exactly that, and restoring him.

“Does following Jesus mean suffering?”

For Peter it did, and Jesus was honest about it. He also promised to lead the way.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).
If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.
If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.
If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.
If you've taught for years: Don’t lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.
If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.
If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn’t serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).
If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?
If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Know your people

Some in the room have drifted and will hear themselves in Peter.
If you're new: Think ahead about who might be carrying a failure.
If you've taught for years: Follow up personally with anyone this lesson clearly touched.

2. Let silence do its work

Jesus' question lands best without commentary.
If you're new: After reading verse 17, pause before speaking.
If you've taught for years: End with quiet instead of a summary.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

It ends on a question and a call, not a program.
If you're new: Don't add steps; leave "Follow Me" as the last word.
If you've taught for years: Let the three-part echo with the denial speak without explaining it to death.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you’ll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- Ask a real-life question: When someone you let down came back, what did you need to hear?

- Tell a short story: Retell Peter's denial by the fire in three sentences.
- Start in the text: Read verse 15 and ask what "more than these" might mean.

CLOSINGS

- Allow quiet reflection: Read Jesus' question and give thirty seconds of silence.
- Send them out with a verse: End on verse 19: "Follow Me."
- Call back to the opening: We asked what you need to hear after failing; Jesus says: Follow Me.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone feels too far gone to come back.: Point to Peter: Jesus came to him, not the other way round. Offer to talk after class.
- The prediction of Peter's death unsettles someone.: Acknowledge it honestly. Note John says it glorified God, and that Jesus led the way first.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: “Thanks. Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t spoken yet.” Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can’t answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: “Great question. Let’s catch it after class so we can finish the passage.”

READ THIS WEEK

- John 18:15-27
- Luke 22:31-34
- 1 Peter 5:1-4

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/21-1-19/lesson

Do You Love Me? (John 21:1-19)

JOHN 21:1-19 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: “Lord, You know all things. You know I love You.” John 21:17

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus meets our failure with a question and a calling: Follow Me.

1. THREE QUESTIONS · JOHN 21:15-17

- After breakfast by the lake, Jesus turns to Peter.
- He asks the same question three times.
- Each time Peter answers, Jesus gives him work.

Simon son of John, do you _____ Me?

Jesus told him, "_____ My sheep."

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times instead of once?

2. FOLLOW ME · JOHN 21:18-19

- Jesus tells Peter his life will be led by someone else.
- John explains it pointed to how Peter would die.
- Jesus ends with two words: Follow Me.

Jesus said this to indicate the kind of _____ by which Peter would glorify God.

He told him, "_____ Me."

Discuss: Jesus first called Peter with "Follow Me." What is different about hearing it again now?

Read this week: John 18:15-27 · Luke 22:31-34 · 1 Peter 5:1-4

For Kids: Do You Love Me? (John 21:1-19)

JOHN 21:1-19 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus forgives and says, Follow Me.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

☐ Jesus asked Peter, do you love Me?

☐ Peter said, You know I love You.

☐ Jesus and friends finished breakfast.

☐ Jesus told Peter, Follow Me.

☐ Jesus asked him three times.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

The friends eating breakfast with Jesus: happy · sad · worried

Peter, asked a third time: happy · sad · worried

Peter, told where he would be led: happy · sad · worried

Peter, called to follow again: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

L B D S H E E P F
O R N U R B N D O
V Y C F O O V R L
E O U S H C S H L
P E T E R F I L O
N R R V L E M A W
Y U C B O E O M B
Y O K C R D N B R
V N O V D O K S Y

PETER · SIMON · LOVE · LAMBS · SHEEP · FEED · FOLLOW · LORD

4. SECRET CODE

1=E 2=F 3=L 4=M 5=O 6=W

___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
2	**5**	**3**	**3**	**5**	**6**	**4**	**1**

5. DRAW IT!

Draw Jesus and Peter talking by a fire on the beach.

6. MEMORY VERSE

“Lord, You know all things. You know I love You.” John 21:17 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

Even when I mess up, Jesus _____. _____