"Gone Fishin"

John 21

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell
Part of the RBC family of Ministries

Group Study Introduction

Use the following questions and exercises as your group time allows. Feel free to skip one or more questions in each section as necessary. If you have less then thirty minutes for group discussion, we recommend skipping the "Getting Started" section. Be sure to save time for prayer at the end of your meeting, using the "Strength through Prayer" section.

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell shares that while he grew up in a non-pet family (except for his mother's canary), his wife, Martie, grew up in a pet family (specifically with a black lab named Trudy).

- Did you grow up in a pet family or a non-pet family?
- As an adult, what concessions or changes have you made regarding pets—or anything else for that matter—to maintain harmony in your home?

Strength through Scripture:

Open your Bibles to John 21 and have a volunteer read verses 1-17 out loud.

1. When Peter said, "I'm going fishing," do you think he was simply talking about taking a day off? What else could he mean?

2. If you were Peter, why would you be having feelings of discouragement and failure?

3. Joe mentions Gary Chapman's book, The Five Love Languages. Which of these five love languages were the most prevalent in your family as you grew up: words of affirmation, gifts, quality time, affection, or acts of service?

Notes:

"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

John 21:3

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4. Joe says, "I can be busy, busy, busy for God, and yet He doesn't feel loved by me at all, because I've totally missed His love language." What is God's "love language"?

5. Joe states that if we're going to care about people, we might want to be thinking about situations like the horrible AIDS crisis in Africa: about people whose needs are so great, whose lives are so marginalized, who live without hope and are helpless in the face of the phenomenal odds of life against them. What is one thing you can do in light of these needs?

Digging Deeper:

If your group has enough time (i.e., you've listened to the audio on your own), answer one or more of these optional questions.

1. Twice Jesus asked Peter, "Do you agape Me?" Then the third time He asked, "Do you phileo Me?" Do you think Jesus was lowering the bar of commitment? Why or why not?

2. What was Jesus referring to when He told Peter to tend His lambs and feed His sheep?

3. What does Joe mean when he says that if Peter and the other disciples had remained fishermen, we might not be Christians today?

Strength through Sharing:

1. Read the "Call to Action" below. Are you in a season of discouragement, or of encouragement, in your relationship with Christ?

2. Whose needs and nurture would Jesus want you to care about? Your children? Your spouse? A colleague? How will you express your love, and God's love, to them?

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Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments as a group in silent, personal prayer. Offer up to God any sense of discouragement or failure, and tell Him that you want to care about what He cares about.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

"Thank You, Jesus, for Your faithful love for me. I love You because You first loved me. I give You my heart and mind, including any discouragement or sense of failure. Thank You for consistently calling me back to You. As I follow You, my desire is to care about what You care about—the needs and nurture of other people. Empower me to love those around me, for Your sake and in Your name."

When you are finished with this time for silent, personal prayer, you may want to move into a time of group prayer, praying for one another.

Closing Call to Action:

Do you identify with those seasons of discouragement and feelings of personal failure and how easy it is to say, "I'll just give it up. I'll see Jesus when I get to heaven"?

You need to remember that, at the heart of it all, it is not about our discouragement or our inevitable failures. The issue really is whether or not we still love Jesus.

Jesus is going to show up on the beach again and call Peter back, out of his discouragement, out of his failure, to put him back in a place of usefulness again. It is my prayer that, as you've listened to this, Jesus is showing up on the beach of your heart, and you can hear Him calling you back.

There are times when you do feel, "This is not turning out the way I thought it would." Of course, life doesn't always turn out the way we think it should. That's just the reality of living in a fallen place among a fallen race. But in the midst of it all, Jesus is still there. And your love for Him can resurrect afresh this whole matter of caring about what He cares about.

Are you a parent? What about the needs and nurture of your kids? Sure, having kids can be really discouraging, and you're going to feel like you're a failure. Hang in there! Can you love your kids—or a spouse or colleague—for Jesus' sake?

Just remember that loving Jesus, ultimately and finally, is caring about what He cares about—and that is the needs and nurture of people.

Notes:

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