"Gone Fishin"

John 21

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell

Part of the RBC family of Ministries

Individual Study Introduction

After listening to the audio segment, use the following questions as your time allows. You may want to record your answers or jot down thoughts and notes in a personal journal. You may also want to use your journal as a record of your prayer time with God. Write out your prayer or simply record your requests and the areas of your life you are releasing to God. This written record will help you to watch God's movement in your life. You'll see more clearly the ways God is giving you "strength for the journey"!

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:

Read John 21:1-17.

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 you have enough time, answer one or more of these optional questions. But be sure to save time for the final two sections.

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 Reflection:

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?

Notes:

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Notes:

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments in 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."

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.

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