

# You Are Not Alone – Week 5

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## Introduction

- **How do you think our culture would define love? How is this different than how you think Jesus defines it?**
- **Why is having a firm understanding of the biblical definition of love important?**

In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul identified and commended the nine characteristics that give evidence a person is following the Spirit's leadership. First on Paul's list is love (agape), probably because it is considered the foundation of all other Christian qualities (1 Cor. 13:13). This love is the self-sacrificing, self-giving love that lay behind God's gift of His Son, Jesus Christ (John 3:16). God's Spirit in our lives enables us to love one another with the kind of love God has shown toward us.

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## Understanding

**HAVE SOMEONE READ JOHN 21:7-14.**

- **Have someone read John 18:15-18,25-27. How were things left between Jesus and Peter prior to Jesus' crucifixion?**
- **When people questioned Peter about Jesus during Jesus' trial, Peter denied any connection to Him. What does Peter's rush to join Jesus say about him and his relationship with Jesus, in spite of what happened at the crucifixion?**
- **Has shame over a past failure ever prevented you from running to Jesus? Why?**

Peter wouldn't have been in the courtyard outside Jesus' trial if he didn't love Jesus, but fear and self-preservation kicked in, and he allowed those emotions to control him. Although our love is supposed to be modeled after Jesus', the reality of our fallen world is that our love will never be perfect. Only Jesus perfectly demonstrates the fruit of love. Peter blatantly denied his relationship with Jesus, and if we're honest, we know that we've done the same thing. Maybe we've never come right out and said we don't know Jesus, but just because we've never said it out loud doesn't mean we haven't communicated the same thing with the choices we make.

**HAVE SOMEONE READ JOHN 21:15-19 .**

When we pick back up with Peter's story in John 21, he has already seen the resurrected Jesus on three separate occasions: Easter morning (1 Corinthians 15:4-5), Easter evening (Matthew 20:19-23), and a week later (20:26-29). Three times Peter had denied Jesus, and at this meeting on the shoreline, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him three times, each canceling out a denial. Their dialogue makes it clear that in God's eyes, love far outweighs failure. That kind of love would propel Peter to spend the rest of his life spreading the good news of the gospel.

- **Look again at their dialogue in these verses. What did Jesus ask Peter to do? Based on what you know about Peter's life, how did he handle the task?**
- **In what ways are you encouraged by Jesus' conversation with Peter?**
- **Imagine that you were standing on the beach with Jesus that day. How would you answer His questions?**

## **HAVE SOMEONE READ JOHN 21:20-25 .**

- **Why do you think Peter asked about John's future?**
- **What is the crucial issue revealed in Jesus' response to Peter (v. 22)? How is this linked with verses 15-17?**

Peter and John went back a long way with Jesus. Was Peter uneasy about John's future? Would John suffer crucifixion also? Or was Peter just curious about what Jesus would want from John? Perhaps Peter really wondered what the Lord wanted to do in the other disciples' lives. In any case, Jesus declined to give Peter the kind of answer he was seeking. The purpose of Jesus' reply was to cause Peter to focus on his main task of following Jesus. Following Christ and helping His people require focus and a refusal to compare our circumstances with others' circumstances.

- **Why do we sometimes compare our tasks for Christ with the work of others?**
- **What effect does focusing on someone else's role and achievements have? What should be our focus and point of comparison instead?**

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## **Application**

Jesus didn't ask Peter if he thought he would be happy in his new career choice. He didn't ask him if he thought there would be a time when he would get ahead and have stability and security in his life. He didn't ask him if he would sell his fishing boat. He asked him simply, do you love me?

The question remains the same, **do you love Jesus**, and so does his instructions for believers. **"Feed my sheep."**

- **Why do you think love is such a defining mark of the Christian? Do we tend to think of love as the primary mark of the Christian life? If not, what do we think of as that mark? Why?**
- **What most frequently stands in the way of you truly loving others?**
- **What is the ministry that God is calling you to intentionally carry out in this season of life? How can you be living that calling out this week?**