

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for "the big question."*

Read John 21:1-17 aloud.

1. What was the setting in John 21? What had happened in the last 2-3 chapters of the story?

What role had Peter played at Jesus' crucifixion?

How do you think Peter felt after betraying Jesus?

2. How well was the fishing going?

When they landed on shore, Jesus had a fire with fish and bread. What message was Jesus sending by serving fish to these unsuccessful fishermen?

How much does your success depend on God's provision? How much do you worry about being unable to provide for yourself?

3. What was the significance of Peter going fishing? How could it represent a retreat to Peter's lifestyle before Jesus?
Fishing probably felt familiar to Peter, easier than following Jesus. Although he might have gone hungry as a fisherman, considering how often his net was empty!

What are the fish in your life? If you left Jesus, where would you go? What would be an alternative to fill the time you spend with him?

If you were to revert to an earlier life stage, what would it be? What would be the pro's & con's of taking a backward step?
Sometimes it is a step backward, sometimes you need to go back to an earlier stage.

4. How did Peter respond when he realized the man was Jesus?

What do Peter's actions suggest about his feelings for Jesus?

5. What question did Jesus ask Peter?

Why did he ask the same question three times?

What did Jesus call Peter and how does that contrast with his nickname, Peter/The Rock?

He refers to Simon by his old name from his fishing days.

6. How did this conversation prepare Peter for his later ministry?
It is almost like a second call – both times, Jesus called him away from unsuccessful fishing trips to something better.

What problems could have confronted Peter if this conversation had never occurred? What baggage would have stuck with him?

How do you get rid of excess baggage? How do you put mistakes and wounds behind you so that they do not poison your future?
Hebrews 12:1-3 offers great ideas.

7. Some wounds leave scars. Mistakes carry consequences that may be with us forever. What is the difference between a consequence that remains and baggage that hinders?
See Phil. 3:12-14 – Paul had killed people and broken up families, and the dead people weren't coming back. But he found a way to keep looking toward the goal of honoring Jesus.

What is a scar that will likely be with you for life? What could help you turn that situation into a blessing for you and for others?

8. In Peter's case, what was the consequence of loving Jesus?

How is that like our situation?

† **The big question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

What baggage have you carried? How has it held you back from joyfully living as the person God intended you to be?

Resources

Bible notes

15 – an unusual question. Three theories about “more than these”:

- a. “More than these love me?” (in contrast to Peter’s boast in Mk. 14:29)
- b. “More than you love these other people?”
- c. “More than you love these fish?”

To me, the third option (fish) fits best with the story.

15-17 – uses two different Greek words for love. You might paraphrase:

Jesus: Do you love me (agape)?

Peter: You know that I am your friend (phileo).

J: Do you love me (agape)?

P: You know that I am your friend (phileo).

J: Simon, are you my friend (phileo)?

Scholars are unsure why John used different Greek words.

Prayer ideas – good opportunity for a chain prayer, with each person adding single word prayers.

Thank God for a burden he has lifted...

One burden I would ask God to lift...

A person who needs God’s help to carry his load...

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Bring a suit case or box filled with rocks or other weights.

Line up the kids for a race.

Line up the kids for a second race, but give the winner of the first race the box to hold (maybe on his or her head!).

What was different about the two races? Why?

Read Hebrews 12:1-3 aloud.

What kind of race is this text describing?

What are some things that slow us down in our race toward God?

What helps us finish the race strong?



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LIFE Group Guide

John 21 – Baggage

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme: **Life is too short to carry extra baggage.**

If you had thirty days to live, you would travel light. Unfortunately many of us forget how short our lives are, so we carry around excess baggage. It is too much trouble to deal with unpacking our anger, guilt, and pain, so we drag it along like Jacob Marley’s chains.

In John 21, Jesus led Peter through a conversation that challenged him to move past his mistakes. Peter was on the road back to fishing, feeling like a loser who betrayed his best friend, but Jesus called him to shepherd God’s flock. May we learn to go of burdens so that we can be God’s representatives right here, right now.

Leadership tip: Make your group a safe place for people to ask questions and share burdens. Look them in the eye when they talk. Always comment on their comment, with at least a “thank you.” Ask follow-up questions when you sense a person has more to say. Be self-disclosing about your own challenges. Pray as a group & pray for group members all week long.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ Recent guides asked if you had only five years or thirty days to live, how you would change your life. What if you only had one day left – how would you spend your last 24 hours?
- ❖ I never leave home without...
- ❖ Where did you go on your last overnight trip? Where are you going next?