

Transformation U: Focus on People and Their Needs

Hosea 6:4–6 • John 21:15–25

John 21:15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

John 21:16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

John 21:17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. **18** I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." **19** Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

John 21:20 Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") **21** When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

John 21:22 Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." **23** Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

John 21:24 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

A while back, I watched the Transformer movie. One of the major plot elements is that the boyfriend and girlfriend in the movie are having trouble saying, "I love you." You know how that is, right? Who's going to say it first? You don't want to be the first to say it, because what if the other person doesn't and then you're left with that *awkward* silence. And if you're not the first one, then do you have to say it back, or can you just say, "You too"? That's one of the things I really am so thankful for: with God we don't have to wonder who's going to say, "I love you" first. God has said "I love you" first...over and over and over again. John writes in his first letter, "We love because God loved us first." Most clearly, we see God's "I love you" in Jesus' willingness to go to the cross for us, to die for us, and (just as unbelievably) to rise

again for us. Peter knew this that day on the beach, knew that Jesus had already said "I love you." So when Jesus asked him, "Do you love me?" Peter had to make a choice.

First, we need to experience forgiveness. Before we can love, we have to confront our own brokenness. For Peter, it was the three times he denied Jesus. For me, it was a sense of unworthiness. I had a sense of God asking, "Do you love me?" "Yes, Lord! You know that I love you." "Feed my lambs." "But I'm not wise enough." God seemed to reply, "I didn't ask if you were wise enough. I asked, 'Do you love me?'" "Yes, Lord! You know that I love you." "Then take care of my sheep." "But I don't have any money for grad school." I had a sense of God laughing, "And you think I can't take care of that for you? Do you love me?" "Yeah, yeah take care of your sheep. Fine. I'm done fighting You. Let's go!" In order for our lives to truly be marked by God's love, in order for us to truly be able to trust God, we have to receive God's forgiveness and healing. Peter needed forgiveness, and I needed to accept I was loved, but what about you? When Jesus asks, "Do you love me?", what will be healed, strengthened or renewed in you?

Second, outward mindset. This week, I was face-timing my brother, Jonathan, in Phoenix. Kendall and Zack, my niece and her husband were there...with their baby—Maverick. He's so cute! He's about 5 months old and he's got those chubby cheeks and the legs with the rolls of fat like the Michelin tire guy. And he was very chill—sleeping, pooping, watching the world. The thing was, I could see why little Maverick was chill—people were paying attention to his needs, loving on him, changing him, letting him sleep when he was tired, feeding him when he was hungry. You know that seems so basic, but it's really a big deal. In order for us to help someone, we have pay attention. For Peter, it starts with paying attention to Jesus—what does Jesus love? What does Jesus want? As Peter listens to what is important to Jesus, he gets really clear—what matters to Jesus is taking care of Jesus' flock. Guided by Jesus, we start to think about what God wants more than what we want, about what others need instead of just what we need. This outward mindset is one of the key changes in our lives will make everything work better for us!

Third, feed Jesus' lambs. Who are Jesus' lambs? Is it just the folks who are in our church? Who does Jesus look after and want to take care of? So we start paying attention to the people and situations around us. When we go to the store, are we just thinking about what's on our shopping lists, or are we thinking about the young woman and her children that we pass? Or the cashier who is checking us out? Or the homeless person at the park? Or the neighbor who had a loud fight with her husband last night? These days, our society really encourages us to stay in our bubbles, but almost all of the real solutions to the world's problems will require us to be thoughtful and compassionate, to expand our bubbles of concern and care about the needs of those around us. When we hear Jesus ask, "Do you love me?" we also need to hear Him say, "Feed my sheep."

When I was thinking about whether to be your pastor or not, I had lots and lots of questions. Some of them were very practical—about the history of the church, how the church is organized, who makes the decisions, are you all fighting—but at the end of the day, what I really wanted to know was had you heard Jesus ask, "Do you love me?" I'm not saying what each of you has answered in your hearts, but have you heard Jesus ask the question. Because

however you answer Jesus when He asks, "Do you love me?" has a lot to do with how you choose to live in the world. If you have heard the question, then love is most likely at the core of who you are and what you are doing. How could I tell that you had heard Jesus ask, "Do you love me?" I watched and I listened for how you all were taking care of the sheep and each other. Because at the end of the day, the only way anyone will ever know we love Jesus, is if we are aware and concerned and taking care for the needs of others. The fact is, we are in this together with Jesus. He is the Good Shepherd, and we are in the fields every day with those who matter to Jesus.

Saying, "I love you!" is a dilemma when we are dating—who's going to say it first? Are you going to say it too soon?—because we don't want to be awkward, we don't want to be rejected. With Jesus, though, He's already said He is completely in love with us, and wants to spend the rest of our lives and all eternity with us. At the core of who we are and who we are becoming is this scene—friends eating breakfast with Jesus, and Jesus looking Peter in the eye. Jesus asks each of us today, "Do you love me?" And how will we answer? "Not yet." [pause] "Kinda." [pause] "Yes, Lord, with all my heart." As a fellowship, we are at an inflection point, when we decide are we as a fellowship going to have an outward mindset, are

Prayer:

Lord, You have moved our hearts today. We find ourselves so humbled by the incredible gift you gave us—willing to die on the cross—we didn't ask for it and we could never do enough to deserve it. But You offer this to us and ask simply, "Do you love me?" Oh Lord! Our hearts leap inside of us! We want to answer like Jesus, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!" And we hear your gentle, "Feed my sheep." Help us, to say yes to you...and then to let you come and rearrange our lives so that they may be all about caring for your sheep. May people who see us and how we live our lives see the Yes! our hearts have said to you. Amen.