

It is good this Spring to take note of Jesus' emphasis on the proper pastoral care to be shown to His church through regular feeding on the Word of God. His heart concern is that the leaders of the Church focus on feeding the sheep and caring for the flock. Such care consists in two duties. First, there is the duty of tending to the *spiritual appetites of the sheep* in the regular and faithful use of the Scriptures. Second and just as important, there is the duty of actively shepherding and leading the flock of God. The Lord Jesus also addresses this important duty in John 21. We rejoice and trust in Christ's omniscient care for His church as His blood-bought bride.

### Monday: Read John 21:15 and 1 Peter 2:2-3

### Satisfy Your Craving!

We live in an age of spiritual malnutrition, and the increase in technology *has not led Christians in the West to a corresponding increase in Bible knowledge*. Nevertheless, let us rejoice that the Lord is faithfully committed to ensuring that His living church does receive real spiritual nutrition. This is why, even while humbling Peter to the point that he no longer boasts of his strength (e.g. John 13:37), the Lord at the same time urges on Peter the responsibility of tenderly nurturing the "lambs" of Christ's flock. That Peter learned the importance of humble care for *even the weakest of Christians* is proven by his tender words to believers, where he urges them to "crave spiritual milk as newborn babes" (1 Peter 2:2-3).

**Meditate and Pray:** Let us rejoice in the kind of leaders which Christ produces to care for even the weakest lambs of His church – leaders who "do not lord it over the flock," but who instead lead by example. How wonderful that Jesus' expert shepherding of Peter led him to understand and model his Lord.

### Tuesday: Read John 21:15-17 and 1 Peter 5:1-4

### Joyful Example

Peter learned the lesson of tender care for the flock of God in an indelible way in John 21. In fact, such an emphasis on tender care *in his restoration to office in John 21* led Peter to likewise *emphasize such tender care as non-negotiable for elders in 1 Peter 5*. Listen once again to this emphasis on such pastoral care in various translations of Peter's words encouraging church leaders in 1 Peter 5:1-3:

*Now may I, who am myself an elder, say a word to you my fellow-elders? I speak as one who actually saw Christ suffer, and as one who will share with you the glories that are to be unfolded to us. I urge you then to see that your "flock of God" is properly fed and cared for. Accept the responsibility of looking after them willingly and not because you feel you can't get out of it, doing your work not for what you can make, but because you are really concerned for their well-being. You should aim not at being "little tin gods" but as examples of Christian living in the eyes of the flock committed to your charge.* (JB Phillips)

*So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.* (ESV)

*Therefore I, an even-elder man, and a witness of Christ's passions, which also am a communer of that glory, that shall be showed in time to come; beseech the elder men, that be among you, feed ye the flock of God, that is among you, and purvey ye, not as constrained, but willfully, by God [purveying not constrainingly, but willfully, after God]; not for love of foul winning, but willfully, neither as having lordship in the clergy, but that ye be made ensample to the flock, of will.* (Wycliffe's translation)

**Meditate and Pray:** What a joy it has been for me to be a "fellow-elder" with brothers in Vermont for 24 + years. I can testify of their tenderness and commitment to shepherding the flock. Pray for all undershepherds for this unearthly spirit of joyful, selfless, and confident service.

**Wednesday: Read John 21:15-17 and Luke 16:27-31****The Wholesome Word**

In restoring Peter to the office of pastor, Jesus implies that the chief duty of being “a sheep” is that of feeding on the Word of God. Why? Because in the Word of God alone resides the authority of Jesus Christ, our royal shepherd-king, for the protection of His flock on earth.

Does that sound too extreme to say that God has placed all His life-giving and protective power for His church in His Word? Well, that is exactly what Jesus says in the parable of the rich man in hell in Luke 16. Concluding that parable are Abraham’s words from Heaven to the rich man in Hell. Jesus makes clear that it is in God’s Word alone that the rich man’s five surviving brothers will find eternal life. “No, father Abraham”, the rich man objects, “send someone from the dead to them so that they might then believe and find their way to Heaven instead of Hell.” But Abraham responds twice (Luke 16:29, 31), declaring that the power to bring any man safely into eternal life resides solely in the Word of God (at that time called, “Moses and the prophets”). To underline this point, John Owen, the great Puritan writer, (slightly paraphrased) says:

*“Give them a miracle of one rising from the dead and coming to speak to them, and you will have them for the Kingdom of God forever.” That is the opinion of him who was represented as in hell, as it is the opinion of many who are running there in our day – a miracle is needed to change the minds of unbelievers and settle their minds in the camp of faith.*

*(But...), The immediate judgment of Jesus Christ in this matter (as it was Abraham’s and the hosts of Heaven too), is that the sufficient evidence and effectiveness to cause us to believe things divine and supernatural is in the written word, “Moses and the prophets.”*

**Meditate and Pray:** Thank God for the joy which His Spirit gives true believers in His Word alone. Psalm 19:7 says that Law is “perfect, reviving the soul.”

Lord, please bring within our church doors those who are hungering for words of Truth from your Scriptures. Please enable our church always to be committed to that Word, and to faithfully feed all those who come under its sound. Amen.

**Thursday: Read John 21:17-19 and Psalm 139:1-2****Lord, You Know All Things**

Think back for a moment to all the wonderful events on the Sea of Galilee which led Peter to his final restoration in John 21:17-19. Earlier in our chapter, when the disciples were most exhausted and did not expect to catch any physical fish, let alone share in their calling as fishers of men, Christ gave them a great, symbolic catch of fish. He then proceeded to call the fish which He had caught for them, “their fish”! Christ also ensured their nets would not break in hauling in such an abundant catch.

This augers well for these disciples. In the task of man-fishing, “their nets would not fail,” nor the sea of mankind fail to yield a catch! Christ would know all their needs and guide them to the fish. No wonder Peter surrenders to Jesus, confessing that Christ indeed knows all things about his life and calling!

**Meditate and Pray:** Sing about Christ’s complete knowledge of our lives, using the words of hymn # 36:

*Lord, Thou hast searched me and dost know  
Where'er I rest, where'er I go;  
Thou knowest all that I have planned,  
And all my ways are in Thy hand.*

*My words from Thee I cannot hide,  
I feel Thy power on every side;  
O wondrous knowledge, awful might,  
Unfathomed depth, unmeasured height.*

*Where can I go apart from Thee,  
Or whither from Thy presence flee?  
In Heav'n? It is Thy dwelling fair;  
In death's abode? Lo, Thou art there.*

*If I the wings of morning take,  
And far away my dwelling make,  
The hand that leadeth me is Thine,  
And my support Thy power divine.*

*If deepest darkness cover me,  
The darkness hideth not from Thee;  
To Thee both night and day are bright,  
The darkness shineth as the light.*

### Friday: Read John 21:17 and Psalm 139:23-24

### Lord, You Know All Things

Christ's work of faith begins to express itself in John 21:17 in Peter's direct dependence on Divine power to read his heart. In this way, we see Peter's faith at its most sincere, taking special note of how Peter does not repeat *his own personal affirmation of faith*. Peter leaves the question as to the value of his life and faith in the hands of His Lord: **"You know all things; you know that I love you."**

**Meditate and Pray:** Lord Jesus, in this world of distracted speech, easily made promises that are soon broken, and thoughtless evasive words instead of direct sincerity, please find us as you found Peter and change the way we speak of and to you. Give us the boldness of sincere faith so that we constantly direct our words to you in faith. Help us to say to you many times a day: "Lord, you know all things". Help us to depend far more on your knowledge of us and our needs instead of upon our own self-love and proud assessment of who we are. You alone know us. Please search us and try us, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and cleanse us in the way everlasting. Amen.

### Sat/Sun: Read John 21:17 and Psalm 139:23-24

### Speaking of God, To God

We celebrated in yesterday's notes Peter's sincere, direct speech to the Lord, revealing the truthfulness of his repentance and his faith. Such sincerity must be magnified further, using today the words of Thomas Manton as they describe both the Psalmist and Peter's confession:

He addresses God Himself, who knows the secrets of the heart. To speak directly **of God to God**, argues our sincerity, when to God's face we avow our trust. This is also heard in Peter's words, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you".