



The Gospel of John: Behold the Man

John 21:18-25

Pastor Brad Wood

This week we reach the conclusion of the Gospel of John as the text takes us to the shores of Galilee where we witness one of the most intimate moments of restoration in Scripture.

After Peter's devastating denial of Christ, Jesus doesn't abandon him but instead gently restores him through a profound breakfast conversation. We see Jesus asking Peter three times if he loves Him, mirroring the three denials, and giving him the charge to feed His sheep. But the account doesn't end with restoration alone. Jesus prophesies that Peter will one day face his own cross, no longer running in fear but standing firm in faith.

This transformation from the boastful, self-reliant fisherman—who strived to succeed in his own strength—to the humble apostle who would preach to thousands on Pentecost shows us the incredible power of the Holy Spirit when allowed to flow from a life broken of self that is fully surrendered.

When we stop comparing ourselves to others and simply follow Jesus... when we let go of our self-sufficiency and lean into His strength... that's when God can truly use us. The message is clear: don't worry about what path others are walking; don't get distracted by comparison or competition. Just follow Him. Trust that He has a unique plan for your life, and He will be with you through every valley and every trial. The same Spirit that transformed Peter on the day of Pentecost is available to us today, ready to empower us beyond our own abilities.

5-Day Devotional and Small Group Guide

Day 1: The Restoration of Broken Disciples

Reading: John 21:15-17

Devotional: After Peter's devastating denial, Jesus didn't condemn him: He restored him. Three times Peter had denied Christ, and three times Jesus asked, "Do you love me?" This wasn't punishment; it was healing. Jesus met Peter exactly where he was, accepting even his limited expression of love.

When we fail God, shame whispers that we're disqualified from service. But Jesus demonstrates that restoration always precedes commission. Before giving Peter his ministry assignment, Jesus addressed his heart. Our failures don't define our future with God: His grace does. Today, if you're carrying the weight of past mistakes, hear Jesus asking you the same question: "Do you love me?" Your honest answer—however imperfect—is enough for Him to work with.

Day 2: Counting the Cost of Discipleship

Reading: John 21:18-19; Luke 14:25-33

Devotional: Jesus didn't sugarcoat the reality of following Him. He told Peter plainly that discipleship would ultimately cost him his life. Yet this prophecy wasn't meant to discourage but to prepare. Peter would face the cross again...but this time, he wouldn't run.

Following Jesus means surrendering our plans, our comfort, and sometimes even our safety. The call hasn't changed: "Follow me." But unlike Peter's early bravado, true discipleship flows from brokenness and dependence on God's strength, not our own.

What is following Jesus costing you today? Perhaps it's a relationship, a career path, or simply your pride. Remember, Jesus never asks us to walk a road He hasn't already traveled. He goes before you, and His presence makes every sacrifice worthwhile.

Day 3: Eyes Fixed on Jesus Alone

Reading: John 21:20-22; Hebrews 12:1-2

Devotional: Peter's immediate response to learning about his difficult future was to look around: "What about John?" How human. How familiar. We constantly compare our journey to others: their blessings, their trials, their apparent ease or difficulty.

Jesus' answer cuts through our comparison trap: "What is that to you? You follow me." God has unique paths for each of His children. Your calling isn't contingent on understanding someone else's. Your obedience isn't validated by how it measures against another's experience.

The enemy isolates us through comparison, making us feel uniquely burdened or unfairly overlooked. But when we fix our eyes on Jesus instead of our own circumstances or another's journey, we discover we're never alone. Stop looking sideways. Look up. Your race is for you and you alone—no one else needs to be in that equation except Jesus.

Day 4: Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Reading: Acts 2:1-4; 14-21; 36-41

Devotional: The transformation from fearful Peter to bold Peter wasn't gradual—it was instantaneous. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, everything changed. The same man who cowered before a servant girl now proclaimed Christ before thousands, pointing directly to their sin and offering them hope.

This is the power available to every believer. Not Peter's personality or education, but God's Spirit working through a surrendered vessel. Peter had been broken of self-reliance, emptied of his own strength, and that made him usable.

You may feel inadequate for what God is calling you to do. Good. That's exactly where God does His best work. The question isn't whether you're capable—it's whether you're available. Surrender your insufficiency to the Holy Spirit and watch Him do through you what you could never accomplish alone. Three thousand souls were saved through one Spirit-filled sermon. Imagine what God wants to do through your obedience today.

Day 5: A Testimony You Can Trust

Reading: John 21:24-25; John 20:30-31

Devotional: John closes his Gospel with a powerful declaration: this testimony is true. These aren't legends or moral tales—they're eyewitness accounts of real events. John walked with Jesus, watched Him die, saw Him risen, and staked his entire life on that reality.

The Gospel was written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." Everything points to this singular purpose: your faith and your life.

The Creator of the universe came to earth, lived among us, died for us, and rose again—all so His Spirit could dwell within you. This isn't abstract theology; it's the foundation of everything. When doubts arise, when circumstances overwhelm, when following feels too costly, return to this bedrock truth: Jesus is real, His love is real, and His presence in your life is real. Bank your life on Him. He is absolutely trustworthy.

Small Group Guide: Following Jesus Beyond Our Failures

Key Takeaways:

1. Following Jesus has a cost – but – He promises to be with us through everything we face.
2. Comparison steals our focus – Our calling is to follow Jesus, not to worry about comparing ourselves to what others are doing.
3. God uses those who are humble and submitted to His Spirit, not those relying on their own strength.
4. The same Spirit that empowered Peter at Pentecost lives in every believer today.
5. John wrote so we would believe. Our lives testify to others about Jesus' transforming power.

Discussion Questions:

- How does Peter's transformation from self-reliant bluster to humble submission demonstrate what it means to be truly broken before God?
- In what ways do we compare ourselves to other believers instead of simply following Jesus, and how does this distract us from our own calling?
- When Jesus told Peter about his future martyrdom, why was this both a sobering warning and a reassuring promise of faithfulness?
- How does the filling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost explain the dramatic change in Peter from denying Christ before a servant girl to boldly proclaiming Him before thousands?

- What does it mean practically in your daily life to hear Jesus say to you personally, “Follow Me,” without regard to what others are doing?
- Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him, and how does this gentle restoration speak to the way God deals with our failures?
- There are clear distinctions between the consequences that we face because of our own actions and the trials that God allows for our growth and His glory. What separates the two?
- In what ways might the enemy or our own thoughts try to isolate us into believing we are the only ones facing difficult battles?
- How does the call to feed and tend Jesus' sheep challenge us to move beyond personal faith into active ministry and care for other believers?

Practical Applications:

1. **Prayer:** Each morning this week pray specifically: "Lord, I choose to follow You today, regardless of the cost. Help me keep my eyes on You alone."
2. **Reflection:** Identify one area where you regularly compare yourself to others (social media, ministry roles, spiritual gifts, etc.). Commit to avoiding that comparison this week and redirecting your thoughts to Jesus.
3. **Scripture Study:** Read John 21 and Acts 2, and then consider the difference you see in the Peter of the gospels and the Peter of Pentecost.
4. **Accountability:** Write out your own "Acts 2" moment—how has the Holy Spirit transformed your life? Share it with one person this week.
5. **Thankfulness:** Thank the Lord for the patience, gentleness, and kindness He shows us throughout our walk with Him.

Further Discussion Questions:

- How does Jesus' prophecy about Peter's death differ from His earlier prediction of Peter's denial?
- Why do you think Peter immediately asked about John after hearing about his own future suffering?
- What is significant about Jesus saying "What is that to you? You follow Me"?
- Pastor Brad highlighted that Peter finally understood "the cost of the call." What does following Jesus cost you personally? Are there areas where you're holding back from fully following Jesus because you're afraid of what it might cost?
- Peter moved from self-confident bluster to humble brokenness. Where do you see yourself on that journey?
- Pastor Brad described the dramatic change in Peter after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit's power in your own life?
- In his message, Pastor Brad warned against letting comparison isolate us. How does comparing our struggles to others' affect our walk with Christ? How does it affect our walk with others?
- Jesus had different paths for Peter and John. How does understanding that God has a unique plan for you (versus comparing yourself to others) change your perspective?

- What specific calling or ministry has God placed on your life? Are you walking in it fully?
- If you could only obey one command—"Follow Me"—how would that simplify your Christian life? What practical steps can you take this week to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus rather than on circumstances or other people?

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