

DO WE LOVE HIM?

We have a life of devoted discipleship to give in demonstrating our love of the Lord.



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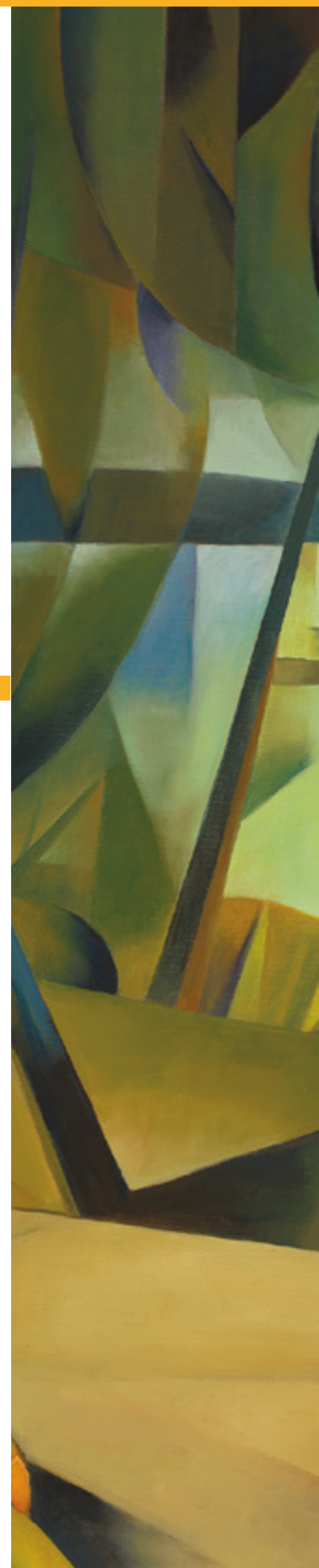
Following the Savior's Resurrection, the Apostle Peter decided to "go a fishing." And at least six of the ten other remaining Apostles said in agreement, "We also go with thee." John, who was one of them, writes, "They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately" (John 21:3).

But, alas, the fishing wasn't very good. Their first night back on the lake, they caught nothing—not a single fish. With the first rays of dawn, they disappointingly turned toward the shore. Although they did not know it then, the Savior called out to them from the shore and asked if they had caught anything. Glumly, the Apostles said no. The Savior told them to cast their nets on the other side. John recorded that "they cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (John 21:6).

As recognition began to flood over them, John said the obvious: "It is the Lord" (John 21:7). And over the edge of the boat, the irrepressible Peter leaped.

"DO YOU LOVE ME?"

After a joyful reunion with the resurrected Jesus, Peter had an exchange with the Savior that I consider the crucial turning point of the apostolic ministry generally and certainly for Peter personally, moving this great rock of a man to a majestic life of devoted service and leadership. Looking at their battered little





boats, their frayed nets, and a stunning pile of 153 fish, Jesus said to His senior Apostle, "Peter, do you love me more than you love all this?" Peter said, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:15).

The Savior responds to that reply but continues to look into the eyes of His disciple and says again, "Peter, do you love me?" Undoubtedly confused a bit by the repetition of the question, the great fisherman

answers a second time, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:16).

The Savior again gives a brief response, but with relentless scrutiny He asks for the third time, "Peter, do you love me?" By now surely Peter is feeling truly uncomfortable. Perhaps there is in his heart the memory of only a few days earlier when he had been asked another question three times and he had answered equally emphatically—but

in the negative. Or perhaps he began to wonder if he misunderstood the Master Teacher's question. Or perhaps he was searching his heart, seeking honest confirmation of the answer he had given so readily, almost automatically. Whatever his feelings, Peter said for the third time, "Lord, . . . thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17).

To which Jesus responded, perhaps saying something like: "Then Peter, why are you



“IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS,” JESUS SAID.

here? Why are we back on this same shore, by these same nets, having this same conversation? Wasn't it obvious then and isn't it obvious now that if I want fish, I can get fish? What I need, Peter, are disciples—and I need them forever. I need someone to feed my sheep and save my lambs. I need someone to preach my gospel and defend my faith. I need someone who loves me, truly, truly loves me, and loves what our Father in Heaven has commissioned me to do. Ours is not a feeble message. It is not a fleeting task. It is not hapless; it is not hopeless; it is not to be consigned to the ash heap of history. It is the work of Almighty God, and it is to change the world. So, Peter, for the second and presumably the last time, I am asking you to leave all this and to go teach and testify, labor and serve loyally until the day in which they will do to you exactly what they did to me.”

Then, turning to all the Apostles, He might well have said something like: “Were you as foolhardy as the scribes and Pharisees? As Herod and Pilate? Did you, like they, think that this work could be killed simply by killing me? Did you, like they, think the cross and the nails and the tomb were the end of it all and each could blissfully go back to being whatever you were before? Children, did not my life and my love touch your hearts more deeply than this?”

A LIFE OF DEVOTED DISCIPLESHIP

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am not certain just what our experience will be on Judgment Day, but I will be very surprised if at some point in that conversation, God does not ask us exactly what Christ asked Peter: “Did you love me?” I think He will want to

know if in our very mortal, very inadequate, and sometimes childish grasp of things, did we at least understand *one* commandment, the first and greatest commandment of them all—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind” (Luke 10:27; see also Matthew 22:37–38). And if at such a moment we can stammer out, “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,” then He may remind us that the crowning characteristic of love is always loyalty.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments,” Jesus said (John 14:15). So we have neighbors to bless, children to protect, the poor to lift up, and the truth to defend. We have wrongs to make right, truths to share, and good to do. In short, we have a life of devoted discipleship to give in demonstrating our love of the Lord. We can't quit and we can't go back. After an encounter with the living Son of the living God, nothing is ever again to be as it was before. The Crucifixion, Atonement, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ mark the beginning of a Christian life, not the end of it. It was this truth, this reality, that allowed a handful of Galilean fishermen-turned-again-Apostles to leave those nets a second time and go on to shape the history of the world in which we now live.

The voice of Christ comes ringing down through the halls of time, asking each one of us while there is time, “Do you love me?” And for every one of us, I answer with my honor and my soul, “Yea, Lord, we do love thee.” And having set our “hand to the plough” (Luke 9:62), we will never look back until this work is finished and love of God and neighbor rules the world. **NE**
From an October 2012 general conference address.