

## ***Loving God in real life***

***John 21: 15 - 17***

‘When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”’

*This passage challenges us, first of all, to re-examine our priorities with regard to our relationship with Jesus. The question he asks of Peter does not have to do with formal skills or qualifications but with love, the kind of love which transcends emotion.*

***Why would Jesus ask such a question?***

***Was he trying to see whether Peter would deny him again, as he had done in the courtyard shortly after Jesus had been arrested? Was he reminding him of that event at all?***

***What does it say about the love of Christ for us?***

***Does it have anything to say to us concerning the way we love in our own relationships?***

*The question was also a prelude to the great commission given to Peter to feed the flock of Christ.*

***Does the command, which is contingent on love, apply only to clergy, pastors or people who go to church? or does it have something to say to anyone who has the care of others?***

***How might it acquire meaning for someone who is apprehensive about some new venture in their life, perhaps to a couple with their first child?***

***How might it sound to those working for others in difficult or dangerous situations? to someone who works or teaches in a 'difficult' school? To a police officer on city streets late on Saturday night?***

***How might we pray for such people?***

*The question is also being put to each of us in our particular life situation and in any significant life choice which we may be about to make - choice of study, or perhaps a choice relating to change of career. But the questions are not a 'suitability' test, like an exam or a job interview.*

***How does the question which Jesus puts to Peter affect the way we think about the future?***

***How does it affect the way we pray?***

***Do we know anyone whose love for God seems to shape their lives and inform their actions and words? What effect have they had on us?***

*Peter was not an expert in religion – still less a theologian, but he brought what he had and all that he was to the service of Christ.*

***What does this tell us, in the context of the question asked, about our own human worth in the eyes of God?***

***Does God see through to the person I think I am?***

***If I say that I love him, what does this require of me in terms of how I see myself? How I develop my gifts and use my potential for the growth of his kingdom?***