STUDY BIBLE WORKBOOK

John 21

Follow Me

QUICK STUDY + DEEP DIVE

The risen Jesus meets His disciples beside the Sea of Galilee, fills their empty net, restores Peter with a call to care for His flock, and commands him: Follow me.

Scripture quotations: World English Bible Classic (WEB)

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Quick Study: Begin with the chapter overview, Bible words, Greek pronunciation, Gospel Connection, and prayer.

Deep Dive: Eight Scripture-first SOAP passages include all 25 WEB verses, substantial observations, applications, guided prayers, and full-width writing lines.

WESTERN GRACE MEDIA

John 21 — Geographic Setting

John 21 takes place at the Sea of Tiberias, another name for the Sea of Galilee. Nathanael is identified as being from Cana, but Scripture does not name the precise fishing site, breakfast shore, or boat route. The regional atlas gives first-century geographic context.



Original WGM historical atlas with approximate political regions, relief, and blue waterways.

Regional location



COUNTRIES IN YEAR 2020

Sea of Tiberias (21:1): The Sea of Galilee, in the northern region where the disciples fished.

Cana (21:2): Nathanael's home town in Galilee, not the fishing scene's known shore.

Capernaum: A familiar lakeside city in John, offered for geographic orientation only.

Tiberias: The city associated with the lake's name; not identified as Jesus' breakfast site.

Exact site unknown: The catch, breakfast fire, and conversation with Peter are not given surveyed coordinates.

Sea of Galilee — The Risen Lord at the Shore

The close-up enlarges the Galilee region from the approved shaded historical atlas. John names the lake, not the specific place where the boat approached land or where Jesus prepared breakfast. Nearby cities provide orientation; they must not be treated as eyewitness location claims.

JOHN 21 | SEA OF TIBERIAS (GALILEE)

CHAPTER CONTEXT



THE SETTING

SEA OF TIBERIAS
Another name for the Sea of Galilee, where John 21:1 places Jesus' appearance.

CANA OF GALILEE
John 21:2 names Cana as Nathanael's hometown, not the fishing location.

CAPERNAUM / TIBERIAS
Helpful nearby cities for orientation; the chapter does not identify either as the beach.

FISHING & BREAKFAST
Exact shore, fishing grounds, and boat route are NOT given in the biblical text.

ATLAS KEY
Green: Galilee under Herod Antipas (approximate). Blue: seas, lakes and rivers.

ORIGINAL WGM ATLAS CROP
Relief, regions & water retained.

READ JOHN 21 WITH THE MAP

Sea of Tiberias / Galilee

This is one lake under two names. Jesus reveals Himself to the disciples there (21:1).

Cana and nearby cities

Cana identifies Nathanael's home town (21:2). Capernaum and Tiberias are included for orientation, not as event sites.

An unspecified beach

John describes the catch, a charcoal fire, breakfast, and Peter's commission; no map can confidently pin the exact shore.

My notes on the geography of John 21:

John 21 — Follow Me

MAIN VERSE

John 21:22, WEB: Jesus said to him, “If I desire that he stay until I come, what is that to you? You follow me.”

BIG PICTURE

The risen Jesus meets seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee after a night without fish. At His word, their net fills, and He feeds them breakfast. He questions Peter three times, entrusts him with care for His flock, and calls him to follow even at personal cost. He corrects a rumor about the beloved disciple, and the Gospel ends by affirming trustworthy testimony about His immeasurable works.

The Sea of Tiberias (21:1–3)

Seven disciples fish through the night but catch nothing.

Jesus on the Shore (21:4–6)

The risen Jesus speaks; obedient casting brings a remarkable catch.

It Is the Lord (21:7–11)

Recognition, Peter’s eager response, and the full net.

Breakfast with Jesus (21:12–14)

The risen Lord graciously shares a real meal with His disciples.

QUICK STUDY NOTES

The Chapter’s Major Movements

Peter Restored and Commissioned (21:15–17)

Three questions of love are answered by the charge to feed Christ’s sheep.

Follow Me (21:18–19)

Jesus calls Peter to faithful discipleship even through suffering.

Do Not Compare Callings (21:20–23)

Jesus corrects speculation about the beloved disciple’s future.

The Witness Is True (21:24–25)

John closes with the reliability and selectivity of Gospel testimony.

QUICK STUDY FLOW

Disciples fish all night without a catch

↓

Jesus commands the cast; the net fills

↓

They recognize the risen Lord and eat with Him

↓

Jesus restores Peter and entrusts His sheep

↓

Peter is called to follow, even through suffering

↓

Jesus corrects a rumor about another disciple

↓

The Gospel closes with trustworthy testimony

QUICK STUDY NOTES

Important Bible Words

Word / Phrase	Simple Meaning	Why It Matters
Sea of Tiberias	Another name for the Sea of Galilee	The setting of the chapter’s first appearance.
Revealed Himself	Made Himself known	The risen Jesus initiates His appearance to the disciples.
Charcoal fire	A fire for cooking / warming	Recalls Peter’s earlier denial by a charcoal fire (18:18).
Lambs and sheep	Jesus’ people	Those entrusted to Peter’s pastoral care still belong to Christ.
Feed and tend	Nourish, guide, care for	Pastoral leadership expresses love through service.
Glorify God	Honor God with one’s life and death	John uses the phrase when explaining Peter’s future death.
Follow me	Jesus’ direct call to discipleship	Peter must obey his own calling, not compare himself to others.
Beloved disciple	The disciple whom Jesus loved	A key witness whose report the Gospel commends.
Witness	Truthful testimony	The reader is invited to trust the recorded revelation of Jesus.
Resurrection	Jesus’ bodily rising from death	His appearance, meal, and call rest on His living presence.

Which word helps me understand the risen Lord, faithful shepherding, and His personal call to follow?

Translation Word Notes

Pronunciations are approximate classroom-style Biblical Greek. CAPITAL letters show the stressed syllable. Greek helps clarify meaning but is not required for understanding Scripture. NKJV/NIV/NLT phrases are brief comparisons; full Scripture quotations remain WEB.

Verse	Greek & pronunciation	NKJV	NIV	NLT	Meaning in context
21:1	phaneroō fah-neh-ROH-oh	showed Himself	appeared	revealed Himself	The living Jesus makes Himself known after the resurrection.
21:3	halieuō hah-lee-EW-oh	go fishing	go fishing	go fishing	Ordinary fishing; Peter’s motive is not given.
21:5	paidion pie-DEE-on	Children	Friends	Fellows	Warm address to those on the boat.
21:6	diktuon DIK-too-on	net	net	net	The fish-filled net is a concrete detail of the sign.
21:7	kyrios KOO-ree-oss	Lord	Lord	Lord	The disciple recognizes the risen Jesus.
21:9	anthrakia an-thrah-KEE-ah	fire of coals	burning coals	charcoal fire	Charcoal fire echoes the earlier denial setting.
21:12	ariston AH-ris-ton	breakfast	breakfast	breakfast	Jesus welcomes His followers to a meal.
21:15	agapaō ah-gah-PAH-oh	love	love	love	A word for love; avoid exaggerating its contrast with phileō here.
21:15	phileō fee-LEH-oh	love	love	love	Another love term in the threefold exchange; context is primary.
21:16	poimainō poy-MY-noh	Tend	Take care of	Take care of	Care for and shepherd Jesus’ flock.
21:17	boskō BOS-koh	Feed	Feed	Feed	Nourish Jesus’ sheep with faithful care.
21:19	akoloutheō ah-koh-loo-THEH-oh	Follow	Follow	Follow	A call to obedient discipleship.
21:22	menō MEH-noh	remain	remain alive	remain	A hypothetical statement, not a prediction of immortality.
21:24	martyreō mar-too-REH-oh	testifies	testifies	testifies	The Gospel closes with trustworthy testimony.

Word-study notes:

The Gospel Connection

John 21 shows the risen Savior who died for sinners and conquered death bringing grace to a disciple who had denied Him. Jesus does not erase Peter's failure by pretending it never happened; He restores him to loving service. The same Lord who fed His followers by the lake calls them to feed and tend His flock, and to follow even when obedience is costly. The Gospel of John has already told us why these testimonies were written: that we may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in His name (John 20:31). We do not earn salvation by fishing successfully, serving perfectly, or comparing ourselves with other believers. We receive life through faith in Christ, and His grace produces a changed life of love, obedience, and faithful witness.

Reflection: How can I love Jesus through humble care, faithful obedience, and freedom from comparison?

A Short Prayer from John 21

Risen Jesus, thank You for meeting Your followers with grace, provision, and truth. Where I have failed, restore my heart. Teach me to love You, serve Your people, and follow You without comparison. Amen.

Pray this in your own words:

QUICK STUDY COMPLETE

One Truth to Carry With You

The risen Jesus graciously restores His followers and calls each one to love Him, care for His people, and faithfully follow Him.

READY TO GO DEEPER — NEXT PAGE

Ready to Go Deeper?

This Deep Dive follows S.O.A.P.: Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer. Read the whole account of the Sea of Galilee, Peter's restoration, Jesus' calling, and John's closing testimony before reflecting.

S — Scripture

Read every verse slowly; note changes in speaker, setting, and what Jesus reveals about Himself.

O — Observation

What does Jesus' resurrection and renewed call reveal about discipleship, service, and reliable testimony?

A — Application

What should I believe, confess, obey, trust, or share in response to the passage?

P — Prayer

Respond prayerfully to what the passage actually says, not imagined motives or events.

Before I begin, what do I believe Jesus meant when He said, "He is risen"?

Questions and repeated words to watch for:

JOHN 21:1–3

The Disciples Return to Fishing

S — Scripture

1 After these things, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself this way.
2 Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together.
3 Simon Peter said to them, “I’m going fishing.” They told him, “We are also coming with you.” They immediately went out and entered into the boat. That night, they caught nothing.

John 21:1–3, WEB

O — Observation

What does the passage reveal about the risen Lord, love, provision, and following Him?

John returns us from the empty tomb to Galilee. Jesus reveals Himself again to a group of seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, another name for the Sea of Galilee.

Peter announces that he is going fishing and the others join him. Scripture does not give Peter’s motive; it does not say that fishing itself was sinful or proof he had abandoned his calling.

Their entire night produces no fish. John sets human effort and empty nets beside what happens when the risen Lord speaks.

My observations:

A — Application

How can I work faithfully while remembering that my ultimate hope and direction come from Jesus, not my own results?

P — Prayer

Lord Jesus, help me be honest about fruitless effort and attentive to what Your Word says.

Pray this in your own words:

JOHN 21:4–6

The Risen Lord Speaks from the Shore

S — Scripture

4 But when day had already come, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples didn’t know that it was
Jesus.
5 Jesus therefore said to them, “Children, have you anything to eat?” They answered him, “No.”
6 He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” They cast it
therefore, and now they weren’t able to draw it in for the multitude of fish.

John 21:4–6, WEB

O — Observation

What does the passage reveal about the risen Lord, love, provision, and following Him?

At daybreak Jesus stands on the shore, but the disciples do not immediately recognize Him. John records the uncertainty without inventing a cause.

Jesus asks whether they have food, receives their truthful “No,” and directs them to cast the net on the right. Their response leads to an extraordinary catch.

The contrast emphasizes the power and provision of the risen Christ. It does not teach that every obedient believer is guaranteed financial or material success.

My observations:

A — Application

Where do I need to obey what Jesus has made clear rather than insist on controlling the outcome?

P — Prayer

Father, make my obedience humble and my confidence rooted in Your Son rather than material results.

Pray this in your own words:

JOHN 21:7–11

It Is the Lord!

S — Scripture

7 That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” So when Simon Peter heard
that it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat around himself (for he was naked), and threw himself into
the sea.
8 But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two
hundred cubits away), dragging the net full of fish.
9 So when they got out on the land, they saw a fire of coals there, with fish and bread laid on it.
10 Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.”
11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of one hundred fifty-three great fish. Even though
there were so many, the net wasn’t torn.

John 21:7–11, WEB

O — Observation

What does the passage reveal about the risen Lord, love, provision, and following Him?

The beloved disciple recognizes Jesus and says, “It’s the Lord!” Peter goes into the water while the others bring the boat and net toward shore.

John supplies concrete details: the boat is about two hundred cubits away, a charcoal fire awaits them, and the net holds 153 large fish without tearing.

These details belong to eyewitness narrative. The number 153 is recorded, but John does not explain a secret symbolic code; we should not turn speculation into doctrine.

My observations:

A — Application

Do I respond to the risen Lord with eagerness and practical obedience, like the disciples bringing the catch?

P — Prayer

Risen Christ, teach me to recognize Your provision and respond with grateful faith.

Pray this in your own words:

JOHN 21:12–14

Come and Eat Breakfast

S — Scripture

12 Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast!” None of the disciples dared inquire of him, “Who are you?” knowing that it was the Lord.
13 Then Jesus came and took the bread, gave it to them, and the fish likewise.
14 This is now the third time that Jesus was revealed to his disciples after he had risen from the dead.

John 21:12–14, WEB

O — Observation

What does the passage reveal about the risen Lord, love, provision, and following Him?

Jesus invites the disciples to breakfast and gives them bread and fish. The risen Lord who conquered death also cares for His people in ordinary bodily needs.

The disciples know it is the Lord. John explicitly calls this the third recorded manifestation to the gathered disciples after His resurrection, according to his narrative reckoning.

The scene joins resurrection reality, fellowship, and the patient care of Jesus. It is not an account of a merely symbolic or imaginary appearance.

My observations:

A — Application

How does the risen Jesus’ willingness to share a meal strengthen my confidence in His real resurrection and loving care?

P — Prayer

Thank You, Jesus, that You are truly risen and that You receive Your disciples with grace.

Pray this in your own words:

JOHN 21:15–17

Do You Love Me? Feed My Sheep

S — Scripture

15 So when they had eaten their breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

16 He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.”

17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you have affection for me?” Peter was grieved because he asked him the third time, “Do you have affection for me?” He said to him, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I have affection for you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

John 21:15–17, WEB

O — Observation

What does the passage reveal about the risen Lord, love, provision, and following Him?

Jesus questions Peter three times about his love, recalling the seriousness of Peter’s earlier three denials (John 18:17, 25–27). Peter grieves at the third question, yet the conversation gives him a renewed charge.

The Greek uses agapaō and phileō for love, and boskō and poimainō for feeding and tending. Because John often varies near-synonyms, the main point should not depend on claiming these terms always mark completely different levels of love.

Love for Jesus is shown through caring for Jesus’ lambs and sheep: His people remain His flock, not Peter’s possession. The call is both personal and pastoral.

My observations:

A — Application

What concrete act of humble service would demonstrate my love for Jesus and care for people He loves?

P — Prayer

Good Shepherd, restore me when I fail and help me love You by caring for Your people.

Pray this in your own words:

JOHN 21:18–19

Follow Me, Whatever It Costs

S — Scripture

18 Most certainly I tell you, when you were young, you dressed yourself and walked where you wanted to. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you don’t want to go.”

19 Now he said this, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. When he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”

John 21:18–19, WEB

O — Observation

What does the passage reveal about the risen Lord, love, provision, and following Him?

Jesus foretells that Peter will die in a way that glorifies God. John himself explains the saying; we must not invent more detail than the passage provides.

The risen Lord calls Peter with the clear command “Follow me.” Peter’s mission will involve suffering, yet Jesus remains worthy of lifelong faithfulness.

Christian discipleship is not a promise of comfort or public success. It is trusting and following the Lord who has already given His own life for His sheep.

My observations:

A — Application

What fears about the future might keep me from following Jesus faithfully today?

P — Prayer

Lord, give me courage to follow You wherever obedience leads, with my hope fixed on Your resurrection.

Pray this in your own words:

JOHN 21:20–23

What Is That to You? You Follow Me

S — Scripture

20 Then Peter, turning around, saw a disciple following. This was the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who had also leaned on Jesus' chest at the supper and asked, "Lord, who is going to betray you?"
21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?"
22 Jesus said to him, "If I desire that he stay until I come, what is that to you? You follow me."
23 This saying therefore went out among the brothers that this disciple wouldn't die. Yet Jesus didn't say to him that he wouldn't die, but, "If I desire that he stay until I come, what is that to you?"

John 21:20–23, WEB

O — Observation

What does the passage reveal about the risen Lord, love, provision, and following Him?

Peter notices the disciple whom Jesus loved and asks what will happen to him. Jesus redirects Peter to his own calling rather than satisfying curiosity about another believer.

Jesus gives a hypothetical statement about the beloved disciple remaining until His coming; verse 23 explicitly corrects the rumor that this disciple would not die.

This is a model for reading responsibly: repeat what Jesus actually said, distinguish it from what people inferred, and do not compare personal callings as though they were competitions.

My observations:

A — Application

Where have comparison, rumors, or speculation distracted me from simply following Christ?

P — Prayer

Jesus, guard me from envy and careless claims. Teach me to follow Your Word faithfully.

Pray this in your own words:

JOHN 21:24–25

A Faithful Witness to an Inexhaustible Savior

S — Scripture

24 This is the disciple who testifies about these things, and wrote these things. We know that his witness is true.

25 There are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they would all be written, I suppose that even the world itself wouldn’t have room for the books that would be written.

John 21:24–25, WEB

O — Observation

What does the passage reveal about the risen Lord, love, provision, and following Him?

The Gospel closes by affirming the witness of the disciple behind its testimony. The point is the truthfulness of what has been written, not a claim that everything Jesus did was recorded.

The statement that the world could not contain all the books is a literary way to magnify how much more Jesus did. John’s selected account gives what we need to believe (20:30–31).

John 21 ends not with Peter’s failure but with the risen Christ restoring, commissioning, and calling His disciples to follow Him. The Gospel’s invitation remains personal: believe in Jesus and follow Him.

My observations:

A — Application

What truth from the Gospel of John will I carry forward, and whom can I encourage with it?

P — Prayer

Father, thank You for the trustworthy testimony to Jesus. Help me live in the light of His resurrection and follow Him.

Pray this in your own words:

Hard Questions

Where did John 21 take place?

At the Sea of Tiberias, another name for the Sea of Galilee. John does not identify the exact stretch of beach. Capernaum and Tiberias are helpful regional reference points, not confirmed landing sites.

Did Peter go fishing because he had abandoned Jesus?

John does not state his motive. Fishing may have met practical needs, and Peter’s restored calling is central to the chapter. Avoid treating guesses about his motive as Scripture.

Why did the disciples not recognize Jesus immediately?

John says they did not know it was Jesus at first. The morning setting and distance may matter, but the text does not explain the precise reason.

Are the 153 fish a hidden biblical code?

John records the number, and readers have suggested many symbols. He supplies no explanation for a numerical code, so the safest reading treats it as a memorable eyewitness detail of the great catch.

Questions and study notes:

Hard Questions (continued)

What does the charcoal fire tell us?

A charcoal fire is mentioned at Peter's denial in John 18:18 and again in John 21:9. This literary connection is fitting as Peter faces the risen Jesus after his denial.

Why did Jesus ask Peter three times if he loved Him?

The threefold question naturally recalls Peter's three denials and gives him opportunity to affirm devotion. The response leads to responsibility for Christ's flock rather than humiliation for its own sake.

Do agapaō and phileō prove two different kinds of love here?

Some Christians suggest a deliberate contrast. Yet John also varies other near-synonyms, including words for feed and tend. The passage's decisive point is the threefold call to love Jesus and care for His people.

Does "Feed my sheep" make Peter the owner of the church?

No. The sheep are Jesus' sheep. Peter is entrusted with pastoral care under the Good Shepherd (John 10), not ownership independent of Christ.

Questions and study notes:

Hard Questions (continued)

Did Jesus predict Peter’s crucifixion?

John states that Jesus referred to the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Later Christian tradition associates Peter with crucifixion, but John 21 does not specify every circumstance.

Did Jesus promise the beloved disciple would never die?

No. John 21:23 explicitly rejects that rumor. Jesus gave a hypothetical statement to redirect Peter: “You follow me.”

Does John 21 disagree with John 20 calling an earlier appearance the third?

John 21:14 refers to the third appearance to the disciples in John’s narrative count; it does not claim Jesus made only three appearances to all people. Different Gospel accounts select different appearances.

Why end with “the world could not contain the books”?

The statement emphasizes that John’s written selection does not exhaust Jesus’ works. It reinforces rather than contradicts John 20:30–31, where the Gospel’s purpose is that readers believe and have life.

Questions and study notes:

Reflection

What does the risen Jesus’ provision teach me about depending on Him rather than demanding visible success?

How can I show love for Christ by serving and feeding those entrusted to my care?

Where has comparison with another believer distracted me from Jesus’ command, “Follow me”?

What lasting truth from this entire Gospel will shape my worship, witness, and obedience?

A Prayer of Faithful Following

Father in heaven, thank You for sending Your Son, who died for sinners and is truly risen. Lord Jesus, You met Your disciples beside the sea, filled their nets, and welcomed them to breakfast. You knew Peter's failure and still called him to care for Your sheep. You know my failures and fears, too. Forgive my pride and my tendency to compare myself with others. Give me a love for You that expresses itself in obedience, care, humility, and truth. Help me follow You wherever You lead, trusting Your goodness even when the future is uncertain. Holy Spirit, guard me against invented meanings and careless rumors. Anchor me in the trustworthy testimony of Scripture, and use this Gospel to deepen my faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing I have life in His name. Amen.

Pray this in your own words:

ONE TRUTH TO CARRY WITH YOU

The risen Jesus graciously restores His followers and calls each one to love Him, care for His people, and faithfully follow Him.

Final Notes