

Seven Steps in Peter's Restoration

Part 2 of 2 · How Jesus brought His fallen friend all the way back, and still does

But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.

LUKE 22:32

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	Peter fell hard, but Jesus didn't give up on him. Step by step, Jesus prayed for him, looked at him, sent for him, met with him, restored him, and used him boldly. Failure is never the end with Jesus.
SCRIPTURE	Luke 22:31-32, 61-62 · John 20:1-10 · Mark 16:7 · Luke 24:34 · John 21:1-19 · Acts 2-4
LENGTH	About 25 minutes; follows Part 1, "Seven Steps in Peter's Fall"
BEST FOR	Middle school and high school
YOU WILL NEED	Bibles and a staircase drawn on the whiteboard with seven steps going up

Start here: from the bottom step

Last time we watched Peter slide down seven steps until he denied Jesus three times. Draw a new staircase, this time going *up*. Jesus didn't leave Peter at the bottom. Here are seven steps in his restoration.

1 The Lord's prayer and the Lord's look

Before Peter ever fell, Jesus told him, "I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail" (Luke 22:32). Then, at the very moment of Peter's third denial, "the Lord turned and looked at Peter" (22:61). That look wasn't anger. It was a look of love and truth that cut straight to Peter's heart.

Jesus still prays for His people: "He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

2 Conviction, tears, and repentance

"Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord... So Peter went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61-62). Those weren't just tears of embarrassment. They were tears of real sorrow over sin. Paul says, "godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). Judas also felt terrible that night, but he turned away from Jesus in despair. Peter turned back.

3 He hears and runs to the tomb

On Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter and John that the tomb was empty. "Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together" (John 20:3-4). The man who had followed at a distance now ran toward Jesus as fast as he could.

4 He receives a personal message

The angel at the tomb told the women, "But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee" (Mark 16:7). Two words made all the difference: "and Peter." Jesus made sure the one who had failed knew he was still wanted.

ILLUSTRATION

Ask: "If you'd let a friend down in a huge way, how would it feel to get a message from them that said your name, 'Tell ___ I still want to see them'?" That's what Jesus did for Peter, and it's what He offers you.

5 A private meeting with the Lord

That evening the disciples reported, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (Luke 24:34; see also 1 Corinthians 15:5). We aren't told what Jesus and Peter said to each other in that private meeting. Some conversations with Jesus are just between you and Him.

6 Public restoration to service

Later, by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus cooked breakfast over a charcoal fire. Then He asked Peter three times, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Each time Peter answered yes, and each time Jesus gave him a job: "Feed My lambs... Tend My sheep... Feed My sheep" (John 21:15-17).

BACKGROUND FOR THE LEADER

John mentions a "fire of coals" (charcoal fire) only twice in his Gospel: in the courtyard where Peter denied Jesus (John 18:18) and on the beach where Jesus restored him (21:9). Three denials by one charcoal fire; three affirmations of love by another. Jesus didn't ignore Peter's failure. He healed it, publicly, in front of the other disciples, so everyone knew Peter was fully restored.

7 He boldly testifies for Christ

A few weeks later, at Pentecost, Peter stood up before thousands in Jerusalem and preached about Jesus, and about three thousand people believed (Acts 2:14, 41). Soon after, he told a crowd, "But you denied the Holy One and the Just" (Acts 3:14). Think about that: the man who had denied Jesus now boldly called others to repent of denying Him. When the leaders saw "the boldness of Peter and John," they "realized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

What this means for you

Maybe you've failed Jesus in a big way. Peter's story says your failure is not the end. Jesus is praying for you. He's looking at you with love. He's calling your name. Come back, and let Him restore you. And then, as Jesus told Peter, "strengthen your brethren." Your story of being restored may be exactly what someone else needs to hear.

TALK IT OVER

1. What do you think Peter saw in Jesus' face when He turned and looked at him?
2. What is the difference between Peter's tears and Judas's regret?
3. Why do you think the angel said "and Peter"?
4. Why did Jesus ask Peter "Do you love Me?" three times?
5. How does Peter's story give hope to someone who has failed Jesus? Who might need to hear it?

TAKE IT HOME

Read John 21:1-19 this week. If there's a way you've failed Jesus, talk honestly with Him about it, and receive His forgiveness. Then ask Him for one way to "feed His sheep" this week: encourage someone, serve someone, or share your story.

With Jesus, failure is never the final step.

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