



**A New Beginning for a  
Fallen Disciple  
John 21:15-25**

## INTRODUCTION

At some point in our life, we have all wished that we could go back and change something that we have done. We would love to erase those hurtful words or that inappropriate action, but we cannot. There is no “do over” in real life.

Mistakes, failures of judgement, unwise choices are all a common part of life. Because we are all flawed human beings, we do and say things that we later regret. Some people, over time, build up a calloused heart and just move on. Many of us carry our failures with us, longing to move on, yet unable to let go.

Satan loves our missteps and faux pas. He uses them to discourage us and to deflate us. He is the master of resurrecting them at just the right moment to cut the feet out from under us. The message that he continually whispers in our ear is that we are not good enough and we never will be. We are a failure, so there is not point in trying. Just give in and live life and forget about the consequences. What difference does it make anyway?

Jesus gives us a very different message. Our failures matter, but we are forgiven. He has erased the slate, and we can move forward with confidence and hope.

Simon Peter had boldly announced to Jesus and everyone else that he would never abandon Jesus. Then when the chips were down, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. When Peter realized what he had done, he was devastated. He thought his relationship with Jesus was over. His place in the Kingdom of God was forfeit. But he was wrong.

Our failures in life matter, but they are not the end of the story. Because of what Jesus has done for us, there is a fresh start available.

## **Study 1: John 21:1-14**

After Jesus had appeared to the disciples in Jerusalem, they went back to Galilee. They thought it was game over, but it was not.

1. Why would Peter decide to go fishing? What does that say about Peter's attitude at the time?

2. What was the outcome of their little fishing trip? What might have been the reason for that outcome?

3. Why might the disciples not recognize that it was Jesus on the shore?

4. What instructions did Jesus give them and what was the outcome? Why would the outcome cause the disciples to recognize Jesus?

5. What was Peter's reaction to the situation?

6. What details does John include? Why?

## MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. When you have failed in some way, how do you react?
2. When you fail spiritually, how do you feel about your relationship with Jesus?
3. What is the effect on our lives when we let failure dominate our thinking?
4. Why is it significant that Jesus appeared to Peter at this time? What does that say about how Jesus will respond to your failures?
5. What was the significance of the large catch of fish? Look at Luke 5:1-11.
6. What was Jesus really doing by providing breakfast for the disciples?
7. How does Jesus offer us grace when we fail?

## **Study 2: John 21:15-17**

After the disciples had eaten, Jesus turned His attention specifically onto Peter.

1. What question did Jesus ask Peter in verse 15?
2. What is Jesus referring to when He says, more than these?
3. Why would Jesus ask virtually the same question to Peter three times?
4. What command did Jesus give Peter each time? What is the significance of this for Peter?
5. Jesus used the word for sacrificial love in the first two questions, while Peter responded with the word for brotherly love. What might be the significance of this?
6. The third time Jesus used the word for brotherly love. Why might Peter have been upset that Jesus asked him the same question the third time?

## MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. What does it mean for us to love Jesus?
2. What does it mean for us to love Jesus more than our role in life? How can our role in life become a barrier to loving Jesus?
3. What does it mean for us to love Jesus more than our family? How can our family and friends become a barrier to loving Jesus?
4. In what ways was Jesus' interaction with Peter both an act of grace and restoration?
5. How does Satan use our failures to keep us from following Jesus?
6. How does Jesus use our failures to reshape our relationship with Him?

## **Study 3: John 21:18-19**

Jesus challenged Peter to move beyond his failures.

1. What information did Jesus give to Peter about his future?
2. How did John interpret this information?
3. In what ways was Jesus' command to "follow me" both a reinstatement of Peter and a fresh invitation? Compare with Matthew 4:18-20.
4. How do these verses relate to verses 15-17?
5. In what ways is Jesus asking Peter to make a greater commitment?



## **Study 4: John 21:20-25**

Peter tried to deflect attention away from himself, but Jesus would not let him do it.

1. Why would Peter want to shift Jesus' attention away from him?
2. How did Peter try to shift Jesus attention away from Peter?
3. How did Jesus respond to Peter's attempt to shift the attention?
4. What editorial note did John make about this exchange?
5. How did John place his signature on the end of the story?
6. What is the significance of John's statement in verse 25?

## MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. When you feel that a conversation is getting too personal and you are feeling uncomfortable, how do you redirect the conversation?
2. How do we use other people as an excuse or justification for our actions?
3. Why will Jesus not allow us to deflect His attention?
4. What is Jesus' intention when He puts the spotlight on our failures?
5. What does it take for us to move beyond our failures and continue to follow Jesus?
6. Why is it important that we realize that there is more to the story of Jesus than what we have?