

Res · o · lute

(adj.) Admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering

DEVELOPING "EVEN IF" FAITH

Lesson 4: At Home Study Pages

In this week's Group Session we looked at Peter's two "even if" statements, one before the resurrection and one after. So in this week's Self Study, we're going to end by looking at what happened in between those two moments. We're going to study the "in-between."

Day 1

In this week's lesson, we read the "even if" statement Peter made shortly before he denied Jesus three times. When Peter made that statement, he genuinely thought he would be willing to die with Jesus if necessary. Someday he would, but not that day.

Read Luke 22:54-62

Throughout our study we've learned about the faltered faith moments of four heroes of faith. But what's unique about Peter's story is that we get to see how his faltered faith moment affected *him*.

What I find interesting is that after Peter's first denial, he didn't realize what he had done. After Peter's second denial, he didn't realize what he had done. It wasn't until after Peter's third denial (an hour later!), the rooster crowing, and Jesus looking straight at him that he realized what he had done.

And he was filled with grief.

Peter's grief at his sin was the outward sign of his deep inward love for Jesus. He was broken. He had expected more out of himself and was therefore filled with grief and disappointment in himself. We've talked about how we feel when our expectations of God don't go according to our plan, but we haven't yet talked about how we feel when our expectations of ourselves don't go according to our plan.

One look from Jesus brought Peter a flood of emotion. When we come face to face with our weakness and sin, grief happens. When we make eye contact with Jesus Christ in the moment of our sin, our weakness causes us to grieve. And that's a good thing! As long as we don't stay there.

God intends for the grief of our sin to lead us to repentance and restoration, not for us to become stuck in the condemnation of it.

Now we're going to rewind just a bit back to the place of Peter's "even if." This time we're going to read the account from the book of Luke because we find out a few more details.

Read Luke 22:31-34.

When Jesus first spoke to Peter in this passage, he addressed him as, "Simon, Simon." This was Peter's name before Jesus changed it to "Peter" (Matthew 16 & John 1:42). The double use of his name indicated an emotional emphasis with an undertone of tenderness. Jesus was lovingly, but urgently, telling Peter that he was going to fail the upcoming test posed against him, but that he was also going to turn back and was, at that point, to "strengthen his brothers."

This is the definition of the Greek word translated "strengthen" in Luke 22:32:

"give support to secure (firmly establish), to make stable, place firmly, set fast, fix, to strengthen, make firm"

It sounds a lot like the definition of the word we've been studying, doesn't it?! It sounds like it could mean "to make RESOLUTE."

Now take a look at the definition of the Greek word translated "turn back" in that same verse:

"I turn (back) to (towards); I come to myself"

In verse 34, when Jesus told Peter exactly how he was going to fail, Jesus called him by the name "Peter." "Jesus had given Peter this name, which means "rock," and had told Peter that "on this rock I will build my church."

Oh here we go!

When Jesus told Peter point blank that he would deny him three times, he called him by the name HE had given him. It was as if he was saying, "Peter, you're going to mess up tonight, but don't let it cause you to forget who I've said you are."

And when Peter turned back to himself, to the "rock" which Jesus said he was, his faith was going to live up to his name! In fact, his faith would be so resolute that he would use it to strengthen the resolve of the others.

**Our moments of faltered faith do not change who God says we are.
Rather than allowing those moments to STEAL who God says we are,
let's allow them to SOLIDIFY who God says we are!**

Now here's the thing. Peter had to look at Jesus in order for Jesus to catch his eye. Sometimes in our faltered faith moments, we're tempted not to look to Jesus because we want to avoid the grief of conviction. But without the conviction, we don't get the restoration! One glance from Jesus communicated both the striking pang of conviction and the striking pang of forgiveness. It communicated the striking pang of regret and the striking pang of hope. And in the wake of Peter's brokenness came a resolve he had never had before.

Thank you, Lord, for your conviction and your forgiveness all mixed into one glance.

Thank you for your constant reminders that we are who YOU say we are!

Let us never forget and let us never hesitate to look to you.

Day 2

Now we're going to fast forward. After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples two times before the scene we're going to study for our final two days.

Read John 21:1-14.

The disciples must have felt like they were in limbo during this time. Jesus hadn't given them their assignment yet, so they were sort of just waiting around, not knowing what they were supposed to do next. (Goodness gracious, how many times have we been there?!)

So what did they do?

Well, first of all, they stayed together. Again, it's the concept of community vs. isolation. Community helps us keep our faith strong.

Secondly, they did what they knew to do one day at a time - and that day they went fishing. Peter had said, "I'm going out to fish," and the others said, "we'll go with you." It was as simple as that. Fishing was familiar to many of them because before Jesus had called them to full-time discipleship, Peter, Andrew, James, and John had been fishermen. The others didn't know anything better to do, so they just went fishing together.

In the time between the calling and the assignment, we just need to do what we know to do that day.

During this most recent season of my life, there have been many days in which my prayer has been simply, "Lord, I don't know what to do next, so please help me just to do your will this day."

And as they were doing what they knew to do, Jesus showed up. Remember, he's the God who comes to us! As we're simply doing what we know to do each day, God shows up in the midst of it. God shows up when we least expect him.

What happened next was more significant than it seems at first glance. It was an awesome, miraculous catch of fish, but to some of these disciples, and especially to Peter, it was so much more than that.

Read Luke 5:1-11.

Sound familiar? So not only did Jesus show up on the beach that day and perform a miracle, he showed up in a way that was personal to some of his disciples, and especially to Peter. The disciples may not have recognized His voice in that moment, but they recognized His miracle.

Jesus spoke their language.

God knows how to reveal Himself to us. He knows when and how we need Him to show up. He knows what we need from Him even when we don't. He speaks our language! AND God speaks the language of those we are praying for. If you're praying for someone today who needs to hear from God, rest assured that...

He who created them knows how to communicate to them.

Jesus showed up in a way they would recognize, and he showed up in a way that took Peter all the way back to the place of his calling. It was as if Jesus was saying, "Peter, you're still called."

And Peter jumped in.

You see, all the disciples had deserted Jesus when he was arrested (Mark 14:50), but none had denied Jesus the way Peter had. So although they may have all been feeling some regret, Peter was suffering from a deeper regret than any of them. That regret paved the way for an intense desperation for his Savior, and when Peter realized it was Jesus on that shore, he jumped in - ALL in.

Peter was a passionate person. He was the one who walked on water with Jesus. He was the one who told Jesus he would follow him even unto death. He was the one who cut off the soldier's ear when Jesus was arrested. And he was the one who denied Jesus - passionately denied Jesus, in fact.

And now he was the one in the water, the one who couldn't wait for the boat to take him to his Savior.

If Peter had emphatically followed Jesus before his denial, he did so even more after. His love for Jesus had turned into an urgent desperation. He was desperate for Jesus' presence, desperate to hear His voice, and desperate to be near Him.

**When we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus,
the magnitude of our failure only increases the magnitude of our fervor!**

And we'll jump back in - ALL in.

Day 3

Read John 21:15-17.

In this moment on the beach, surrounded by seven of his disciples, Jesus took the opportunity to address Peter personally. He knew they had unfinished business which needed to be taken care of. There is so much we could pull out from this conversation between Jesus and Peter, but for the sake of time in this lesson we are just going to concentrate on the overall point:

Peter's three professions of love for Christ COVERED his three denials of Christ.

This opportunity Jesus gave Peter was a symbolic gesture to show Peter he was forgiven, covered, and reinstated. After each of Peter's professions of love, Jesus responded with a profession of his calling. However, this time Peter's calling wasn't only to fish for people, this time his calling was to shepherd God's people. Peter was given more responsibility after his moment of faltered faith than he had been given before.

**God can take the place of our greatest mistake, our greatest brokenness,
and turn it into the place of our greatest purpose.**

Jesus ended his personal conversation with Peter in verses 19 and 22 with these two words: "follow
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me.” These are two words which, again, would have taken Peter back to the place of his initial calling. In the accounts of Peter’s calling found in Matthew and Mark, we see that Jesus had used these exact two words. Jesus went out of his way to leave no room for doubt in Peter’s mind and heart that he was still called.

And Peter was never the same again.

His faltered faith moment had wrecked him. It had humbled him. Then it set a determination within him. Even though his faith had faltered at the moment of his testing and confusion, it ended up stronger and more resolute than ever before.

It was not long after this moment on the beach that Jesus ascended into Heaven. When he did, he told his disciples to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who would empower them to do what God was calling them to do.

Read Luke 24:45-53.

So that’s what they did. Again, they waited. This time, however, they waited with at least somewhat of a knowing of what they were supposed to do next.

Read Matthew 28:18-20

This was their assignment. This was the purpose of God’s story. This is our purpose!

Even when we’re in an “in-between,” in between a mistake and a restoration, in between a calling and an assignment, we get to know the purpose. This is the purpose of every single assignment. This is the purpose of faith. This is the reason for resolve. This is what it’s all about.

The disciples had the assignment, they waited for the power, and when “go time” came they took off running. And when the day came that God sent the Holy Spirit, there was one person who stood up and spoke to the thousands of people who had gathered for Pentecost.

Peter!

Peter was the person God used to win the hearts of the first 3,000 converts to Christianity.

Peter was left with an “even if” faith. It was a faith which not only strengthened his brothers, it was a faith which brought thousands of people to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

And the next time it was tested, it proved true.

Oh Lord, thank you for the lovingkindness of your forgiveness, your faithfulness, and your call! Thank you that you go out of your way to remind us who we are. Strengthen our faith so that our resolve affects not only our lives, but the lives of all those around us! Give us a resolute, “even if” faith that impacts a world for you!