

sermon study guide

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Recovering from Failures

Ashwin Ramani

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. As a child or young person, what was one big thing that you messed up? What did you do to recover?
2. Pastor Ashwin shared a “Peter moment” in his life when he compromised his faith. When have you been tempted most to compromise your faith in Jesus?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Matthew 26:69-27:5

3. Trace the escalation of Peter's denials of Jesus. How were they similar? How were they different? What contributing factors led to Peter's denials?

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10

4. Describe the differences between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. How were these displayed in Peter and Judas' lives?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Pastor Ashwin gave three examples of failure and restoration: Peter, Max Lucado, and himself. How were these three restored in their relationship with Jesus? What role did other Christians play? To whom do you turn when you have failed?
6. How can you safeguard your heart against failing Jesus?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

How much do you let either your failures or your responses to failures define you? In humility and trust, open yourself to the grace of Jesus that leads to a transformed life.

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 26:69-27:5

⁶⁹ Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said. ⁷⁰ But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said.

⁷¹ Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.” ⁷² He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

⁷³ After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.” ⁷⁴ Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!”

Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵ Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

27 Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. ² So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

³ When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ⁴ “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”

“What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”

⁵ So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

sermon study summary

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In our Scripture passage today, two of Jesus' disciples experienced spiritual failure. Peter denied Jesus. Judas betrayed him. The difference was in their response. One disciple recovered and took on the leadership of the church. The other continued in the wrong direction and ended up taking his own life.

Peter

At the Last Supper, Jesus had predicted that Peter would deny Him three times. Peter boasted, "Lord, even if everyone leaves you I will not!" (Matthew 26:33). Later that evening, Jesus was arrested and was on trial at the house of the high priest. As Peter watched from a distance, he denied being associated with Jesus – not just once, not twice, but three times. Each time, Peter's negative responses intensified. At that moment the rooster crowed. Jesus looked straight at Peter and Peter remembered Jesus' prediction (Luke 22:61). Peter went out and wept bitterly. Yet his tears were also the beginning of his restoration.

Peter disowned Jesus, but Jesus didn't disown Peter. When Jesus rose from the dead, the angel told Mary to tell this news to the disciples *and to Peter*. Later, the risen Jesus appeared to Peter by the Sea of Galilee. Three times Jesus asked, "Do you love me?"—one question for each time Peter had denied him. Just as Peter denied Jesus in public, so Jesus restored him publicly in front of the other disciples.

Judas

Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave. When Judas realized that Jesus was condemned to die, he tried to return the money to the religious leaders. They showed no compassion. "You're responsible!" they said. Judas threw the money down, left the temple and hanged himself (Matt 27:1-5). He believed the lie that all hope was lost. He was seized with remorse, not repentance; worldly sorrow, not godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10).

What about us?

Pastor Ashwin shared how, as a young believer, he participated in a Hindu ceremony, afraid of what the others would think if he didn't. He later confessed to God his failure to announce that he was a Christ follower. God forgave him and has since called him to be a preacher and has given him opportunities to boldly proclaim Jesus' salvation to many in all kinds of settings.

Max Lucado became a closet drinker. On his way to a men's retreat, he stopped to get another beer and realized he had become the thing he hated: a hypocrite. After privately confessing his sins to God, he shared with the church elders his struggles. One of the elders put his hand on Lucado's shoulders and said: "What you did was wrong. But what you are doing tonight is right. God's love is great enough to cover your sin. Trust his grace."

When we are faced with failure, we have two choices. First, we can drown in guilt, shame, and regret. Our second choice is to trust God's grace, repent and leave our regrets once and for all at the foot of the cross. At that moment we receive full forgiveness. The memory of our failure is not erased but the sting is removed. It no longer haunts us. Instead, it becomes a testimony of what God can do in and through our brokenness!

Where have you failed Jesus? Whatever you've done, don't allow failure to have the better of you. Be honest and confess your sin. Jesus will forgive and cleanse you (1 John 1:9). The Bible calls us to confess our sins to one another. Speak to one or two believers you trust.