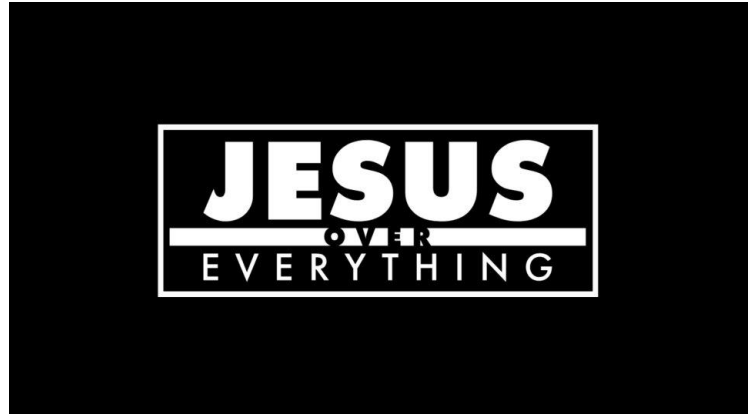


# “Jesus Over My Failure”

(Peter’s Restoration)



**Icebreaker:** To recognize how Jesus redeems and restores us.

**Read:** John 21:1-7 and Luke 5:1-8

**Observe:** Compare those passages. How are the two passages similar? How are they different? Think about both basic details and deeper personal responses.

## **Discuss:**

The time between the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus was 40 days. In that time, Jesus appeared to the disciples for relatively short interactions before disappearing again. At this time when Peter decides to go fishing, Jesus has given the apostles proof of life and appointed them as his witnesses, but he’s told them to wait until they receive power. That’s what they’re doing now, is waiting. In the lull, Peter decides to go fishing.

- How well do you handle extended periods of waiting?
- What’s your comfort activity? When you’re in a period of waiting, what are you most likely to do to fill the time?

**Read:** John 21:8-14

**Observe:** What do you see in the behavior of each person present in the passage?

## **Discuss:**

Jesus already had fish on the fire, and we know he only needs one fish to feed thousands of people, but he still told the disciples to bring the fish they caught (which they would not have caught without his help).

- How does this reflect our everyday discipleship?

**Read:** John 21:15-17

**Observe:** Compare Peter's reaction to Jesus in John 21:15 with Peter's reaction to Jesus in Matthew 26:31-33.

**Discuss:**

Peter has a history of big, over-the-top declarations. Whether he's swearing he'll never fall away, promising to build three temples (one each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah), or asking Jesus not only to wash his feet, but his whole body. But this Peter seems to be more understated. He's learned something about himself, and it changed his perception.

- When has your walk with Jesus involved learning something new about yourself?
- Have you ever made a big promise to God that you didn't follow through on? How does that impact how you interact with God now?

**Leader Notes:** Do the different "love"s matter? In the original Greek, this passage shows a potential progression of love intensities. Jesus begins with agape: "Peter, do you agape me?" But Peter responds with phileo: "Yes, I phileo you." This repeats the second time. On the third time, Jesus switches to phileo and Peter again uses phileo.

The line is pretty split down the middle between the two sides. On one side, commentators say that agape represents a higher, more intense love. Because of that, Jesus is calling Peter to a higher love but meets Peter where he is when Peter struggles to match that energy. On the other side, commentators argue that John doesn't use a hierarchy of loves anywhere else in his book. Agape and phileo are used interchangeably. It is significant that most Greek language scholars seem to fall on the latter side, insisting that there's no significance.

**Optional Question based on Leader Notes:**

This is a non-essential issue that's sure to create spirited debates and fun discussions.

- If the change in "love"s matters, how do you think that impacts this passage?
- If the change in "love"s doesn't matter, how does that impact this passage?

The passage is undeniably a parallel to his three-fold denial of Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75, Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:54-62, and John 18:15-18, 25-27).

Jesus didn't just rub Peter's nose in his failure; he used that failure to build Peter up again. God uses all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). Even our greatest failures.

- Is there a failure or failing in your life that God has directly redeemed for good?

Jesus tells Peter, “Feed my sheep,” each time Peter affirms his love for Jesus. In John 14:15, Jesus says, “If you love me, keep my commands.” With each profession of love, Jesus gives Peter a command to keep.

There are general commands, true and applied for all believers, but there are also direct callings like this. Not everyone is called into a shepherding role, like Peter. Not everyone is called to the same task John was called to, and so on.

- Do you love God?
- If so, what command is He calling you to keep? Does anything specific come to mind?

Our separate callings are affirmed here in John 21:18-22. Jesus calls Peter to follow him, even though it will end with Peter dying on a cross. When Peter wonders about John’s fate, Jesus essentially tells him not to worry about what God’s plans are for other people, and again tells Peter to follow him.

- Do you find yourself comparing your discipleship journey to other people often?
- How do you feel knowing some Christians will go through life in general comfort and luxury, but others will spend their days in struggle and trial?

Notice that Jesus didn’t call Peter to his mission before his redemption. Jesus initiated the conversation. Jesus prepared a meal (a sign of peace, fellowship, and acceptance). Their relationship was intact, and restored, when Jesus sent Peter out. Jesus isn’t calling you into a works-based salvation or discipleship.

Jesus is calling you to repentance and restoration first. Once that’s taken care of, he’ll call you to work.

### **Application Suggestions:**

Leader notes: Some leaders pick one application to suggest, and some leaders read through each selection and encourage everyone to pick one on their own. You can make the call on that based on how much time you have left and the general vibe of the room.

**Continue the Study.** This passage is rich with material for deeper study and powerful questions (far more than we have time to cover in one small group discussion). Take some time this week to find an article, YouTube video, or commentary on John 21. Share what you find with someone. Wrestle with

questions. Just exploring the many allusions and cross-references to other passages can be incredibly edifying (ie, good for your spirit).

**Reflect on Your Failures.** In Peter we have an example of complete and utter failure. He was with Jesus from the beginning, Jesus named him the Rock of the Church, and still he rejected Jesus three times. But Jesus redeemed that failure. Reflect on your failures this week. Big failures or small, whatever comes to mind. God calls His people to remember often throughout Scripture. Remembering the work of God in your life is a valuable application. So, reflect on your failures and remember how Jesus has redeemed you.

**If You Love God, Keep His Command.** You may not be a shepherd of God's sheep, but you're something (and maybe you are a shepherd). Identify a call on your life and take the next step in obedience this week. If you can't think of a specific call, remember that there are many calls to obedience which are true for all Christians.