

Discuss: How do you feel when you've "blown it"?

How do you restore a fellow Christian who is caught and trapped in sin? That's the question we are seeking to answer on Wednesday evenings. We have looked at two key texts already: Gal 6:1, and 2 Cor 5:18-21.

Why is restoration so important? Why must we be involved in the ministry of recovery? We learned from 2 Cor 5 that we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. And according to Gal 6:1, we are to take the initiative when we see a fallen fellow-Christian.

How do you recover a fallen brother? What's involved in the process? We'll find out tonight by looking at Jesus' example of restoring fallen Peter, in John 21.

The Background: Peter's Denial of Jesus

Peter's Denial--John 18

*Jesus arrested in Gethsemene (1-14)

*Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant (10)

*Peter followed at a distance (15)

*Peter denied Jesus three times:

1st Denial (17) 2nd Denial (25) 3rd Denial (27)

Peter had failed Jesus. He let Jesus down. He denied Jesus.

Discuss: How do you think Peter felt after he denied Jesus?

No doubt, he must have felt confused, broken, remorseful, grieved, and hopeless. Running through his mind must have been the tormenting thought, "I've failed. It can never be the same again."

What happened next?

*Jesus' crucifixion (ch 19)

*Jesus' resurrection (ch 20)

*Peter saw the empty tomb and the grave clothes (20:1-9).

*Peter and the disciples saw the Risen Christ (20:19).

Discuss: How did Peter feel at this point?

The Setting of Peter's Restoration--John 21

1. Verse 1 is a summary verse of the event described in the chapter. What happened? Jesus appeared to the disciples again, this time at the Sea of Galilee .

2. Who was there, according to v 2? Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, plus 2

3. What was Peter's idea, in v 3? "Let's go fishing."

4. Why would Peter make such a suggestion?

That was his old occupation. Perhaps he was still confused. No doubt he was still wrestling with a great weight of guilt. He felt like a failure. All his dreams were shattered the night he blew it. So he and his friends went fishing on the Sea of Galilee .

5. According to v 4, who was watching the fishing party? Jesus

This was no chance meeting. Jesus had a very specific purpose in mind. His aim was to restore Peter. How did He do it?

6. How did Jesus restore Peter to fellowship and service?

Observe the events in Jesus' restoration of Peter:

a. Jesus performed a miracle with the fish (6). Why?

Two reasons. First, it was the same miracle Jesus worked when He first called Peter (Lk 5). Second, by revealing His power over the fish, Jesus was reminding Peter that He had the power to do the impossible in this fallen disciple's life.

b. Jesus met Peter on his turf (4).

Jesus went to the sea-shore. He talked about fish before He talked about Peter's past failure (5).

Note: How did Peter feel when he realized it was Jesus? See v 7 He was embarrassed at first, then wanted to get to Jesus as fast as he could!

c. Jesus invited Peter (and the rest) to be near Him (10).

d. Jesus ate with Peter, and even served him (13).

e. Jesus wanted Peter (and the rest) to know that He was alive (14), and that, because He was risen, things were different!

f. Jesus asked Peter three personal questions (15-17).

Jesus' Questioning of Peter

Jesus was the "Master Counselor." Watch closely the words He used to restore Peter. There are three questions, and three commands.

1. Why did Jesus ask Peter the same question three times (15-17)? What is significant about the number three?

That was the number of times Peter denied Jesus.

2. In v 15, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him "more than these" (i.e. "more than the other disciples"). Why is that significant?

Think back. What was Peter's previous boast, in Mt 26:33, "Even if all others forsake You, I will not!"

3. When Jesus brought up the past, it hurt Peter (in the KJV v 17 says he was "grieved"). Why did Jesus keep bringing up the past?

He did not bring up the past merely to hurt Peter. Jesus was helping Peter deal with his past so he could move on. When we've blown it we can't move on until we're dealt thoroughly with our sin God's way.

Discuss: Our tendency is to think, "Yea, I've done some things I regret, but I just want to get on with life." But what happens if we move on without first facing our failure thoroughly and biblically?

Jesus helped Peter to see that the issue was love. Three times Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love Me?" There are two different Greek words for love used here.

Verse 15

Jesus: "Do you love Me?" (Agape)

Peter: "Yes, You know I love You." (Phileo)

Agape love is sacrificial giving, God-like love. It's John 3:16 kind of love. Phileo speaks of brotherly love, family love. Simply put, we might say that "agape" speaks of love as devotion, while "phileo" speaks of love as emotion.

Verse 16

Jesus: "Do you love Me?" (Agape)

Peter: "Yes, You know I love You." (Phileo)

Verse 17

Jesus: "Do you love Me?" (Phileo)

Peter: "Lord, You know all things. You know I love You." (Phileo)

4. With this play on words, what was Jesus helping Peter to evaluate about himself?

Jesus was asking Peter, "Are you really devoted to Me, or merely emotionally attached to Me? Do you really *love* Me?"

Key: Before Peter could be restored to ministry, he had to come to grips with this issue. The #1 qualification for ministry to people is love for the Lord. To be effective in ministry, we must love Jesus with absolute devotion.

5. What responsibility did Jesus give Peter three times in vv 15-17?

"Feed My sheep." That is, take care of the people for Whom I gave My life. That would not be an easy task. There would be pain involved.

6. What did Jesus tell Peter about the cost involved in serving, in v 18?

Peter would one day die by crucifixion.

7. What other responsibility did Jesus give Peter, in 19, to insure he wouldn't fall again?

"Follow Me."

8. Peter didn't get the point, and went off on a "rabbit trail" in vv 20-21. How did Jesus respond to Peter's question, in v 22?

"How John will die is none of your business! You concern yourself with one matter, and only one. Follow

Me! Follow Me all the way to the cross! Never turn back. Never waver. Follow Me. Follow Me!"

And Peter did.

9. What lessons do we learn from Jesus' example with Peter on how to restore a brother who has fallen into sin?