

INTRO

In this session we are going to be looking at a stunning example of overcoming failure. Simon Peter reached a very low point in his life when he denied Jesus three times. Yet within a couple of months, he was boldly preaching about Jesus on the Day of Pentecost, and became one of the greatest leaders in the history of the Church. What made the difference? An encounter with the risen Jesus! This story contains two hugely encouraging lessons:

1. Jesus helps us in our **present struggles**
2. Jesus heals us from our **past failures**

BRING YOUR BIBLES

Read aloud **John 21:1–17**, encouraging everyone to follow along in their own Bibles. The more translations the better as each may highlight something different.

Now allow the whole group the opportunity to share what stood out anew to them and why.

QUESTIONS

1. *[If your church are running the 40 Days with Jesus sermons]* What particularly impacted you from Sunday's message?
2. *[If you are using the small group videos instead]* What particularly impacted you from this week's message?
3. What particular struggle are the disciples facing in verses 1–3? What strikes you about the problem and/or the context of the situation?
 - *Note to leader: there is nothing extraordinary about the situation. This is the disciples normal day-to-day life, they were getting on with their daily routine.*
4. In verse 4 we see how Jesus is present in the midst of the disciples' daily struggles. Do we believe that this is still true for us today? Are we like the disciples who initially fail to recognise Him? How might we allow Jesus to speak into our daily routine and struggles?
5. How did the disciples respond to the advice Jesus gave them? How can we be open to His calling in our lives?

6. Read the following phrase out loud and take a moment in quiet to dwell on it:

The Creator has all the knowledge and power that we will ever need. He knows more about the fish than the fishermen! He knows more about accountancy than the accountant, more about business than the entrepreneur, more about parenting than parents, more about teaching than teachers, more about life and more about reaching people than we do!

Do you believe this to be true, and if so how should it affect our lives and decision making?

7. Look at verse 5. How does Jesus refer to the disciples? What does this reveal to us about the heart of God?
8. In verses 15–17 we see God’s heart for us being demonstrated through Jesus’ discussion with Peter. Jesus is coming to him to heal him from his past failure, not to condemn him. What strikes you about how Jesus speaks to Peter? How is this different to when we have been let down by someone else or when we have let someone else down?
9. What is the significance of Jesus’ question to Peter? Why is He focusing so strongly on Peter’s love and heart for Him?
10. In denying Jesus three times how was Peter failing to keep the great commandment: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength?
 - *Note to leader: Despite showing courage by following Jesus, Peter’s reaction ultimately revealed that he loved himself, his reputation and what others thought of him – more than he loved Jesus.*

SHARE YOUR STORY

You can discuss the following questions together as one group or, if individuals prefer, you could split into groups of two or three.

1. Are there times in your life when, like Peter, you have very specifically known the love and forgiveness of Jesus? How has His forgiveness empowered and equipped you to move forward into His ministry?

2. 'The call is greater than the fall.' Think of Bible accounts of other people who experienced a fall, but were re-instated by God. Encourage each other with Bible promises that we can draw on when facing a sense of failure (eg Romans 8:27–39).

PRAY TOGETHER

Take the time to invite the Holy Spirit. Perhaps begin with prayers of worship and thanksgiving, then you may choose to follow these suggestions for specific prayer:

You could pray:

- for anyone in the group who is facing past or present failure
- that God will give you 'surprise appointments' with people who need to know that Jesus helps with past and present failure
- that you will all know Jesus' power and presence wherever you go.