



FAILURE DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE FINISHED

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John 21:1 – 17

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MESSAGE NOTES

The God of Scripture loves sinners, redeems failures, delights in second chances and fresh starts, and never tires of pursuing lost sheep, waiting for prodigal children, or rescuing those damaged by life and left on the sides of its paths. The Christian God of grace stands in stark contrast to the vindictive, whimsical, threatening and often capricious gods of other religions. Only the Lord God unconditionally cherishes human beings. Only the Lord God forgives all our offenses and teaches us how to forgive ourselves. — David Benner, Surrender to Love

When it comes to our failures:

1. God knows it.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding. — Ephesians 1:7 – 8

2. God forgives it.

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! — Hebrews 9:14

When you sin, do a thorough job of repenting. Re-hate sin all over again ... reject the devil's whisper that God's tender heart for you has grown a little older, a little stiffer. He is not flustered by your sinfulness. ... If you are in Christ and only a soul in Christ would be troubled at offending Him your waywardness does not threaten your place in the love of God any more than history itself can be undone.

— Dane Ortland, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of God for Sinners and Sufferers*

3. God shapes us through it.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. — 1 Peter 5:6

God Himself will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. — 1 Peter 5:10

4. God uses it.

Our God is a God who not merely restores, but takes up our failures into His plan for us and brings good out of them. This is part of the wonder of His gracious sovereignty. — J.I. Packer

The Christian God is unlike any god humans could ever imagine. In fact, the Christian God operates in a manner so often unlike what we even want or are ready to receive that it is obvious that such a God is no projection of human imagination or desire. The great distinctive of the love of the Christian God is that there are no strings attached to it. God simply loves humans. He created us for a love relationship with Himself, and nothing that we can do — or not do — changes the love He bears us. The notion of God's loving us unconditionally is absolutely radical.

— David Benner, *Surrender to Love*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is one thing that stuck with you from ENCOUNTER this weekend?
- What was the last thing we learn about Peter's story before Jesus was crucified?
- All of us have experienced those situations, like Peter, that are regrettable and embarrassing. How would you describe how Peter (and the other disciples) must have been feeling?
- Many times, past disappointments and failures are just too painful to talk about. Is there one you feel OK about sharing with this group?
- After re-reading John 21:1 – 17, what might be significant about the details of this fishing story?
- What past fishing trip would have come to Peter's mind as Christ shouted directions for putting down their nets (See Luke 5:4 – 11).
- Considering the fact that Jesus is eating breakfast with these men, what can we surmise about His new resurrected body?
- Why might Christ have asked Peter three times about His love for the Lord?
- What else stands out as significant to you in this conversation?
- How would you put Isaiah 55:6 – 9 in your own words? What do we learn about God's heart for us even in our failures?
- Ultimately, Christ invites Peter into a place of significant service in the lives of others. What are the implications of all this for you going forward?