



Crisis 101: Back to the Basics
Making Sense of Life
When Life Doesn't Make Sense
Sermon 5

Dealing with Denial, Discouragement, Defeat, and Despair

John 21

(Note to Preacher: This message ties nicely into Rule 1, Rule 8, and Rule 9 of the Crisis 101 video series.)

The story of Peter shows us that God will, at times, allow us to be tested so that we come out stronger and wiser. Peter needed to learn to trust Jesus to deliver in His own way and in His own time.

The lesson of love that Peter acquired was invaluable to him in the many trials he faced in the early years of the Church. Jesus was preparing him to become the "rock" that he was called to be.)

Denial...Discouragement...Defeat...Despair

I suppose most, if not all of us, have lived these experiences and emotions.

A friend, who thought you were someone who could be trusted, but then you broke that confidence and in doing so, broke their heart.

Or

A job offer was given. A job you thought was perfect for you. You thought you had thoroughly checked all that was going to be required of you. The hours and pay were what you had hoped for. You believed the offer was genuine, almost too good to be true. You resigned your current position, only then to learn, after the fact, there were indeed some hidden requirements that were going to force you to compromise your integrity and honest character. You went on and accepted the job, and began to slide down the slippery slope of deceit and dishonesty. I mean after all, you DID need to pay your bills and take care of your family.

Or

You were in a very difficult position. A close family member who you loved dearly was being unfaithful to their spouse - breaking the fidelity of their marriage vows. And yet, instead of confronting them in a loving, humble manner, you pretended it was not happening. I mean, after all, it is not your place to judge another person's morals.

Three different and difficult scenarios. And yet in each one, perhaps you failed miserably to do the right thing. And what happens when you fail?

Denial... Discouragement... and even Despair can take over your emotions.

The Bible tells us one man who had a failure of his own, a major failure, and no doubt experienced all of these emotions. His name was Peter, one of Jesus' original 12 Disciples.

His story is about as well-known as any in the Bible. In the 13th chapter of John's Gospel, John tells us that Jesus, prior to his crucifixion, told Peter he would deny the Lord three times before the rooster crowed one night. Jesus, the night before he was crucified, spent the *Last Supper* with his twelve Disciples. He had taken off His outer garment, draped a towel around his waist, stooped down, and washed the nasty feet of these twelve men. As the dinner was concluding, Jesus predicted one of the twelve would betray him, and, of course, he was speaking of Judas Iscariot. After Judas left, Jesus continued His conversation with the eleven. He told them He was going away, and they could not follow Him. Peter objected saying, "I will follow You Jesus wherever You go."

But, Jesus - being God in the flesh and knowing all things, told Peter that before the rooster crowed in the morning he will have denied Him three times. And sure enough, just as Jesus predicted, Peter denied the Lord -- three times.

Rev. Richard Bodini, a Canadian Minister, once said, "***Peter's story is real. It is personal. Peter is me. Peter is you. Peter is us. That's what makes his story so personal. Read through the gospels and look for Peter's story. It's a story that involves calling, risk, mouth, rich, fumbles, denial, and privilege. Peter's story is our story. It is the story of grace, of love, of renewal...***"

I. The Biblical Context of John 21

Let's examine our text and explore God's cure for a defeated, discouraged individual.

Jesus had been raised from the dead. John tells us that Jesus had appeared to the disciples two times before the experience in our text. He even had an encounter with Thomas, who when told of Jesus' resurrection, brashly said, "*I will not believe in this until I put my hands in the print of the nails in his hands and side.*"

Peter remembers that he had denied that he even knew the Lord... three times he denied Him, just as Jesus had predicted.

Put yourself in Peter's sandals for just a minute. He must have been thinking something like, "Wait a minute! Why hasn't Jesus talked to me about my denial of Him? He has already encountered Thomas, and Thomas did not even need to touch Him - he just fell at his feet, worshipping Him. But He has not even mentioned one word to me about my denial."

And as Peter ponders this awful situation, he begins to think, "Wow, Jesus must be finished with me. I was even one of His inner circle, John and James and me. But He hasn't even approached me about my denial - my sin."

And then it hits him: "I have failed miserably. I am finished. I am done."

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John 21

Preaching Outline:

a. Peter's Despair vs. 3

Four little words in English - yet four very telling words. Words that I believe really clue us in regarding Peter's state of mind and Peter's spiritual and emotional health.

A. *It's Personal "I am going fishing."*

There are several interpretations regarding the phrase, "I am going fishing."

- a. Some have suggested Peter just needed a little vacation and was going fishing to help clear his head, and perhaps his conscience.
- b. Others have suggested he was just needing to fish because he was hungry.
- c. And yet, I like some others, have suggested that statement is full of meaning. Perhaps it means he thought he was a failure at following Jesus; thought he was a failure at ministry; thought he was a failure at spiritual things - so he had decided to return to his old way of living and his old livelihood. Perhaps he thought there is no place for me with Jesus. I have ruined everything. He may still love me but there is no way He can ever use me again. And then he shouts out to the other disciples: "I'm going fishing" - John 21:3

B. *It's Penetrating* - look at Peter's his influence on the other ten Disciples:

They all said: "We are going with you"

The indication is simply this: "Well if Peter" (one of Jesus' inner circle)...

"This same Peter who walked on the water"....

"If Peter, this same person who made the great confession that 'Jesus is the Son of the living God'"....

"If Peter thinks he is done, then there is no hope for us either. I mean after all, the rest of us, except John, scattered too. And all of us were nowhere to be found when they arrested, tried, tortured, and crucified Him. We must be finished too!"

BUT

I love the next verse - they went out that night, fished all night, and CAUGHT NOTHING!!

These men were experienced fishermen. They knew how to fish, where to fish, what type of bait to use, AND THEY CAUGHT NOTHING.

Here is a sidebar principle here folks

Do not expect God to bless your carnal efforts when you are defeated and in despair and trying to run away from God!

These guys were failing - trying to make sense out of life and this just did not make sense

2. Jesus' Repair

He begins the repair job that needs to be done on Peter by

- b. Reminding them of Who He is vs. 4-6 (The Son of God)

Cast your net on the other side of the boat **and just like that! 153 fish are caught !**

Feeding them the food He had prepared vs. 7-14

- d. Restoring Peter vs. 15-22 His Love for God

vs. 15 Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love Me?" Peter says yes. Jesus says, "Feed My sheep."

vs. 16 Jesus asks Peter again, "Do you love Me?" Peter says again, "yes."

Jesus says – "Tend My sheep."

vs. 17 Jesus asks Peter a third time, "Do you love Me?" Peter is agitated that Jesus has now asked him the third time, but again Peter says "Yes."

Jesus again says – "Feed My sheep."

Our one English word *love* can actually have a variety of meanings in the original Greek.

I want you to notice there is a play on words used here between Jesus and Peter that you might not pick up in your English text. Let's go back and take a closer look at that conversation:

vs. 15 Jesus asks, "Do you love..."- and He uses the verb *agapao*. In other words, do you love Me with a selfless, sacrificial love? Do you love Me with a love that cares more for <e than you do for yourself?

Peter responds with, "I love You" - but he does not use the word for love - *agape*; he used the verb *phileo* - which means a genuine fondness or friendship kind of love.

vs. 16 Jesus ask again - "Do you love..." and He uses *agapao* again.

Peter responds with, "I love You" ... and he uses *phileo* again.

Now Notice vs. 17

Jesus says, "Do you love..." and this time Jesus uses Peter's word - *phileo*

Peter responds: "You know all things. You know I do."

Notice - the very first thing Jesus does in His "repairing conversation" with Peter is:

"Love" – it is of paramount importance that we be totally honest with ourselves and God regarding our love relationship with Him. The two words for love that Jesus uses regarding love are crucial. *Phileo* – a deep fondness and friendship love; *Agapao* – a self-giving, sacrificial love that basically says I am willing to die for You if need be.

Jesus then unpacks for us

The Honesty of your love... (The word exchange)

The Object of your love... Jesus, do you love Jesus? He does not ask, "Do you love one another," although that is important. Jesus does not ask if they love fishing or even eating fish. He asks, "Do you love Me?"

The Comparison of your love... more than "these?" Questions have been asked about what "these" refers to. Some have suggested it refers to: The fish they were eating, or the fishing gear they were using, or even the other disciples. Perhaps the answer is yes to all of the above, because He wants our love for Him to be supreme!

The Action of your love... Feed, Tend, Feed. If we love Jesus, truly love Jesus, it will result in action; it will result in serving God and serving others.

Notice - there is NOT one single hint of rebuke from Jesus regarding the depth of Peter's love for Him. He was totally locked in on Peter being honest and transparent. Some have suggested that, because Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me" in order to draw from Peter three confessions of his love for Jesus.

There is an valuable principle here:

When we are trying to make sense out of Life when Life is just not making sense, just be honest with God. Tell him your struggles. Tell Him your fears. Tell Him your doubts. Be honest with Him in your love relationship with Him. Allow Him to take care of the other details! Learn to rest in Him.

His Loyalty to God vs. 18 – 23

vs. 18 Jesus makes another prediction regarding Peter (Remember the first prediction was Peter's denial)

Jesus predicts that Peter will die a cruel death – crucifixion

Peter knew full well what Jesus meant - see 2 Peter 1:14

vs. 19 Jesus then gives a command - "Follow me". Greek = **akoloutheo**

akoloutheo - a present tense, imperative command

W.E. Vine says the word means "one going in the same way... it is used 77 times in the Gospels, of following Christ, and only once otherwise, Mark 14:13"

Notice Peter's response:

What about John...vs. 20 & 21

Notice Jesus' response:

“If I choose for John to live until I come again, that is none of your business. You follow Me.” *akoloutheo*. Once again that is a present imperative in Greek. Essentially Jesus is telling Peter, “I am giving you a command to follow Me and keep on following Me”

III. Conclusion

Follow Me Even If It Means Martyrdom

Follow Me No Matter What Happens To Others



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