



Sermon Discussion Guide

God's Mercy & My Failures
SERIES: The Miracle of God's Mercy – Part 3

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“Because of his great mercy God has given us a new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope.” 1 Peter 1:3

Because we're imperfect people living in an imperfect world we all experience failures in life. The night Jesus was arrested, two of his closest friends had massive failures: Judas betrayed him and Peter denied him. It was the same sin, just expressed in different ways. What causes our personal failures? Like Peter, we 1) overestimate our own strength; 2) fear the disapproval of others, and 3) speak without thinking. But Peter also did three things right. He 1) grieved his failure; 2) let his small group support him; and 3) cast himself on God's mercy. What does Jesus do with our failures? Let's Talk About It.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

1. There are three common reasons why we fail: overestimating our strength, fear of the disapproval of others, and speaking without thinking. Why does the disapproval/opinion of others matter so much to us?

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7

2. To cast literally means to drop a huge boulder. What image does this conjure up for you? Can you see yourself in that image? How can we follow Peter's advice?

“Jesus is able to save us completely because (in heaven) he lives to intercede on our behalf. He is always talking to the Father, asking him to help us.” Hebrews 7:25

3. Take a moment together to absorb the full weight of Hebrews 7:25...Jesus prays for us. Can you picture Jesus in heaven praying for you right now? How could understanding this verse influence our response to failures?
4. Read John 21:1-14 out loud. Imagine the scene. Peter has betrayed Jesus and yet a short two weeks later, Jesus helps the disciples to fish, cooks them breakfast, and serves them. Would you do this for someone who had betrayed you? Discuss your thoughts.
5. We can respond to failure like Judas—giving up—or we can respond like Peter—looking to God. Share a time when failure has led you to respond like Judas or like Peter. How did the results compare?
6. Jesus uses our individual and collective failures to build his church. What failure(s) in your past does God want to use to help others?

Diving Deeper (optional)

1. In Matthew 26:58, 69-70 we read that Peter was following Jesus at a distance. What does this say about whose opinion he was really valuing and what does this say to us?
2. Judas rejected God's mercy and killed himself while Peter accepted God's mercy—and became leader of Christ's Church. What changes in your life when you understand that God wants to redeem your failures?



REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.

Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Suggestions for This Week's Study

- What was it like as a child when you first tried to learn to roller skate or ride a bike? Did you succeed the first time?
- Understand what causes us to experience personal failures and what Jesus offers us when we fail.
- God wants to turn your biggest failure into your greatest ministry, as he did with Peter. Just 50 Days after Peter's biggest failure, God chose to use him to preach on the Day of Pentecost – and 3,000 were baptized on the first day of the church. Close your time together thanking God for his mercy in spite of your failure and asking him to lay on your heart the ministry he wants to bring out of your pain.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Let's Talk About It is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. It is designed so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as "I need to spend more time in prayer." It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.