

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

STUDENT LESSON

FAILED AND
FORGIVEN

Open it

1. If you could re-do anything in your life, what would it be?

Daily Devotions

Day 1 — Today's Theme: Explore It

Read John 21:1–19.

2. Who all decided to go fishing? How many fish did they catch that night?
3. What unexpected thing happened while they were out fishing?
4. What did Jesus ask Peter? How many times did He ask Peter this question?
5. How did Peter respond to Jesus' questions?
6. Why do you think Jesus asked Peter this question that many times?

Day 2 — Today's Theme: The Catch of Your Life

Read John 21:1–14.

Some time after Jesus had risen from the dead, a handful of His disciples set out on an evening fishing trip. However, much like my own fishing trips normally go, they get skunked. Fishing all night, catching nothing. That is, until right at the break of dawn, a “stranger” on the beach gives some tips to the seasoned veterans, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.”

At this point, the guys have no idea it is Jesus speaking to them. For all they know, it's some loony guy mocking them. But when you're desperate, you'll do anything, so they give it a go. And much to their surprise they land the catch of their lives, so many fish they can't even haul them into the boat! With a catch like that they know that it wasn't luck. With a catch like that, they know that that person isn't just some loony dude on the beach, but it's Jesus! Realizing it was Jesus, Peter jumps into the water and swims to shore, leaving the rest of the guys to haul in the legendary catch.

No doubt the guys are thinking back to when something just like this happened when they started following Jesus. In Luke 5:1–11, the guys were out on a boat all night, not catching anything and Jesus told them to cast to the deep and they caught so many fish it was breaking their nets. Yet this time, with such a great quantity of fish, even so their nets weren't breaking.

No doubt this miracle would have been significant for the guys, assuring them of who Jesus is, showing them something of what Jesus is sending them to do, and maybe so much more!

7. What significance do you think this huge catch had for the disciples? If you were in their shoes, what would you be thinking or feeling?

8. What does this interaction between Jesus and His disciples teach you about Jesus?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: Empowered: Failed and Forgiven

Read John 21:15–17.

It was a cool night, cool enough that Peter stood around a charcoal fire to warm himself as he watched all that was happening. The smell of warm fire, the chill of the air, and the commotion of soldiers and the religious leadership as they questioned Jesus in the early hours of the morning before the sun began to rise. There he denied his Teacher, his Master, three times before the rooster even crowed. There was Peter's failure. There remained Peter's guilt.

But things were looking better now. Jesus had been killed, but He didn't stay dead. He had risen from the grave! He had already appeared to His disciples a couple of times. But that cool night still haunted Peter. He had done too much. He screwed up. He failed.

But then Jesus showed up to them while they were out fishing, getting totally skunked, and invited them to join Him for breakfast, which He was cooking over a... charcoal fire, in the early hours of the morning, just as the sun was rising. You wonder if it took Peter back to that cool night.

So here he is now, around another charcoal fire on another early morning. And again, this time Peter was asked three questions. Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? Simon, son of John, do you love me? Simon, son of John, do you love me? Three times Peter says, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you!"

How many times did Peter deny Jesus? Three times. How many times did Peter profess his love and devotion to Jesus? Three times. I don't think Jesus and coincidences happen. Yes, Peter had screwed up. Yes, he had failed Jesus miserably. But Jesus wasn't done with him yet. Peter's failure didn't define his relationship to Jesus. Jesus defined the relationship by His forgiveness.

What a great reminder for us when we feel "dirty" or guilty when we fail the Lord, that our relationship isn't defined by our success or failure, but by His forgiveness and love. So next time you feel like you've messed up too bad and God could never use you, just remember, He may just be getting started!

9. Read Luke 7:36–50. What is this passage about? What does it say about love and forgiveness?

10. What is your "denial story"? (i.e. How have you failed God?)

11. Have you had the "do you love me?" conversation with Jesus yet? If yes, what has your experience with God's forgiveness and grace and mercy been like in your own life? If not, what is keeping you from having that conversation with Him?

Day 4 — Today's Theme: God's Plans and Purposes

Read John 21:18–19.

Despite Peter's failures as a disciple, Jesus still had a plan and purpose for Peter's life that would ultimately serve to bring glory to God.

When I was in middle school and high school I played AAU (travel) basketball. I both loved and hated my coach at the time. He was a passionate guy when it came to the game of basketball and that passion presented itself, let's say, in encouraging and harsh ways at times.

I remember one game I was playing miserably. I couldn't make a shot, I felt sluggish, I turned the ball over a couple times by making some dumb decisions and finally the moment I was waiting for happened—I got benched. My coach subbed me out and I got one of those "harsh" displays of passion for a couple minutes on the bench while he let me know what I had done wrong. And I remember thinking to myself, "That's it! I'm done for this game. Time to ride the bench." That was until my coach called my name and put me back in, telling me, "We need you out there. Go get it done." Despite my failings earlier in the game, I got to go back in and played an important role in helping my team win that game.

Now, Christian discipleship is a lot different than a game of basketball, but the same kind of thing happened with Peter. He had failed, but Jesus "put him back in the game," telling Peter to "Feed my lambs" and "tend my sheep." Not only that, but even to the point of death, Peter would honor Christ and glorify Him with his life.

What a great reminder that even my own failures cannot screw up the plans and purposes of God. And I love knowing that when I do fail, God abundantly gives grace and love to help me up again so that I can walk the path He has prepared for me.¹ Because when Jesus said, "Follow me," He didn't mean a one-time decision to follow Him. He meant an ongoing, day-by-day decision to follow Him. Will you?

12. How can you get a sense of the calling that God has placed on your life?

13. How do you get back to following Jesus if you've screwed up and walked away from Him?

14. What effect would it have on your faith if someone told you that you would ultimately die because you follow Jesus?

¹ Ephesians 2:10

Note: This study was written by Pastor Jeremy Anderson. www.villagebible.church/students.