

I. ME

- A. Welcome/Cards/Online
- B. Series
 - 1. People who were nothing like...
 - 2. **Accepted:** No matter how different we are, I see you as a person worthy of value and honor.
- C. That means no matter who you are, what has happened to you, what you've done, Jesus accepts you... loves you.
 - 1. And that makes us feel good, sometimes skeptical, but it's an encouraging thought

II. WE

- A. But what about when we fail... when we say we'll do one thing, be something, and completely turn our back or screw everything up?
 - 1. When you swore before God and your family that you would be faithful in sickness and in health and now it's turned to divorce?
 - 2. When you swore that you would do everything to protect that child and nurture that child and you've lost your cool and yelled AGAIN?
 - 3. When you were so proud that you could support your family and then you dropped the ball on that project, didn't meet the deadline, didn't live up to your potential?
 - 4. When you flunked out?
 - 5. When you flaked out on a friend when they needed you the most?
 - 6. When you couldn't live up to your parents' expectations

- 7. When you swore you'd never do it again and here you are once more in the same situation?
- 8. And of course, what about the people who have failed you?

- B. Sure Jesus forgives and accepts people... but...
 - 1. I feel like he can't even look at me b/c of what I've done... this cloud of shame over me.
 - 2. I've failed too many times... too big.
 - 3. And the way they failed me... I could never accept them again!
 - 4. We had such high hopes and expectations... and now failure.

5. One of the hardest things to accept is the failure we didn't expect.

- C. I want to introduce you to one of the biggest failures Jesus ever met.
- D. His name was Simon... we know him as Peter.
 - 1. **There are no exceptions to Jesus' acceptance. eclipses**

III. GOD

A. Peter

- 1. Fisherman
- 2. Jesus preaches one of his first sermons in Simon's boat.
- 3. One of the first to follow Jesus... Jesus changes his name to Peter (Rock)
- 4. Quickly became the apparent leader of the disciples... always named first
- 5. Always spoke first... often without thinking
- 6. The one they all turned to to ask the questions when Jesus was saying weird things
- 7. He was the first one recognize Jesus' deity.

- B. During Jesus' last dinner with his disciples...
1. He told them that he was about to be arrested and executed... and that they will all desert him.
 2. Here's the conversation- **Matthew 26:31-35**
 3. Peter- "Even if all these guys run away... I'm going to stand with you Jesus!"
 4. I believe he truly meant it.
 5. When Jesus is arrested later that night... Peter actually tries to fight back... kind of misses... cuts a guy's (Malchus) ear off
 6. The soldiers take Jesus for a late night trial and only Peter and John follow behind right into the courtyard of the place the trial is taking place.
 7. COURAGE
 8. But then...

C. Luke 22:54-62

1. Complete and utter failure.
2. A few hours later... Jesus is crucified.
3. It's over. All hope lost. No chance to make things right.

- D. On the 3rd day after Jesus' execution... some of the women who followed him went to his tomb to make sure his body was prepared the right way.
1. When they got there... the stone was rolled away, the soldiers guarding the tomb were gone, and Jesus' body was missing.
 2. They look in the tomb and see a man sitting there wearing a white robe... the account says... "They were alarmed."

E. **Mark 16:6-7** (Highlight... and Peter)

1. And Peter.
2. Makes a point to tell Peter he hasn't been forgotten... even more so... that he is still IN
3. Had Peter repented? Made amends? Paid his penance?
4. No he's been hiding with everyone else.
5. But **Jesus' acceptance isn't based on our performance. It's based on his never-ending love.**

- F. Jesus later appears to the rest of the disciples and
1. Shows them the nail scars
 2. Has some food with them
 3. Proves he's resurrected... just like he said he would...
- G. Sure Peter's happy...
1. But his days of working for/with Jesus are over...
 2. He's still A COMPLETE failure
 3. No one would give him any responsibility in this new Kingdom after what he did.
- H. So he and 6 other disciples (including John) go back to their boats and their fishing career.
1. They catch nothing... even a failure at what they used to be good at.
 2. Jesus shows up (they don't recognize him)...
 3. Tells them where to put their nets... catch 153 fish
 4. Almost swamps the boat.
 5. They realize it's Jesus and he invites them to have some fish breakfast.
 6. Then sitting around the fire... Jesus shows the depth of his acceptance

I. John 21:15-17

1. Jesus- More than these?
 - a. Remember that boast you made Peter?
 - b. What do you think now?
2. Peter- You know I love you
 - a. Leaves out the more than these.
3. Asks him three times around the fire... Mirroring the three denials around the fire.

4. "Do you love me?"
 - a. Jesus knew the answer...
 - b. The question was for Peter... didn't get it at first.
 - c. "Peter I accept you... do you accept that you can still love me even after you've failed?"
5. "You're still my guy... take care of my sheep... lead my church."
6. Jesus- Peter when you let go... I was still holding on... It's not about what you did it's about what I did...
7. You failed... but I conquered for you.
8. You will be the one to lead this new movement...
9. Don't believe me?
10. You're going to become one of the bravest/courageous leaders of the church... your courage for me will inspire millions...

J. V. 18-19

1. 64 AD. Nero. Crucified upside down.
2. Reassuring Peter that his past failure will be nothing compared to what he will become through Jesus' transforming love.
3. Then Jesus gave Peter the exact same call he gave him at the very beginning... FOLLOW ME... Be following me.
4. Don't worry about the past. Don't dwell on you and what you did... just Follow ME.
5. And lead my church.

K. Does that even make sense?

- L. What would you do?
 1. Employee or colleague not only promised to carry out a job... but failed at it so miserably it almost put the entire company at risk?
 2. Arrogantly said they were the best of anyone else that worked there and then spectacularly ruined the whole project?
 3. They'd be fired!
 4. Not with Jesus.
 5. Jesus puts him in charge of the entire thing... and makes sure others hear it so there's no question that Peter is back in.

M. Jesus' acceptance gives us the space and ability to grow from our failures.

1. Jesus doesn't see Peter as a failure. He sees him as he will be.
2. A leader that learned from his mistakes.
3. That led the early church to transform thousands of lives.
4. And gave his life in service to his friend and God.

IV. YOU

- A. Bad News and Good News
 1. Bad News- You're a failure. (So am I)
 2. You have ruined relationships, opportunities, potential, maybe even families...
 3. You will fail again.
 4. SIN: Law of Love. What I want is more important than you.

- B. Good News- Jesus knew that and he died for you anyway... in fact that's why he died.
1. So many people think that if there is a God, he expects you to follow the rules, be perfect in order to be accepted.
 2. Nothing could be further from the truth.
 3. He knew we couldn't ever measure up to perfection... that we would fail, that selfishness would constantly try to overtake us...
 4. That's why he came and made a way for us to be forgiven... have our relationship restored...
 5. Took the consequences of our failures/sin on the cross and rose to give us new life through him.
 6. Offers forgiveness and true acceptance... we just have to choose to trust him.
- C. None of your failures surprise him or catch him off guard.
1. **Jesus' acceptance eclipses our failures.**
 2. Accept it.
- D. Peter finally accepted it and it transformed him.
- E. Near the end of his life... before he was executed by Nero Peter wrote this to the leaders of the churches he helped start.
1. **1 Peter 5:2-4**
 2. Sound familiar?
 3. Jesus acceptance gave Peter the chance/ability to become the ROCK he was always meant to be.
 4. And b/c Peter had experienced this acceptance he was able to encourage others with it as well.
5. **Understanding how Jesus accepts you... allows you to accept others with no exceptions.**

V. WE

- A. What if we could be honest about our fears and our failures?
 - B. What if we could use them to grow and help others grow?
 - C. What would that be like?
 1. No fear of rejection b/c you know you're already perfectly accepted?
 2. No shame of failures b/c you know it's not about perfection
 - D. Jesus' acceptance gives us the space to be honest and real and to grow.
- E. **When you accept Jesus' love you never have to question your acceptance again.**
- F. You are not your failures.
 - G. You are invited to be a child of God... fully loved, fully accepted
 - H. You are invited to become exactly who Jesus knows you can be...
 - I. Accept him. Follow him... b/c he accepts you and loves you.
 - J. Failure doesn't have to be the end, it can be the beginning of something you never expected... choose to trust the one who died for you.

K. **When we hear the crushing whisper of failure, Jesus shouts "ACCEPTED."**