

## Discovering God

Part 6: God will never give up on you.

John 21:15-19

**Summary:** Jesus' unwavering love transforms our failures into opportunities for restoration and purpose.

### Main Ideas:

God wants us to know him and enjoy him today and forever.

It's impossible to enjoy God when we're convinced he's mad at us.

Nothing we do can make God let go of us.

We can have the best intentions in the world and still fail miserably.

The most painful failures are the ones that reveal who we really are.

Jesus' love for us isn't based on what we do, but whose we are... his.

Jesus doesn't use his authority and power to judge and condemn but to serve and love.

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

Reconciliation has always been and will always be God's goal.

Our failures aren't the end. They're where Jesus begins His greatest work in us.

### Invitation:

Read Romans 8:33-39

Accept Jesus' unending love.

Offer Jesus' unending love.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What sticks out to you, encourages, or excites you about this week's message? What makes you uncomfortable, seems untrue, frustrates, or confuses you?
2. How do you typically respond to failure—do you tend to run, hide, or try to fix things on your own?
3. Read Romans 8:33-39. What thoughts and/or feelings come up for you?
4. What would it look like to live in a way that embraces God's unending love and offers it to others this week?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

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Transcript:

**IN:** No matter who you are... God loves you. Accepts you. Enjoys you. And...

**God wants us to know him and enjoy him today and forever.**

And that usually makes us feel good...

But it's hard to enjoy God when...

- Everything seems to be falling apart and it's our own dumb fault
- We've lost our temper again and again
- When we repeat the same mistakes over and over

How can you enjoy God you're convinced doesn't enjoy you?

- **It's impossible to enjoy God when we're convinced he's mad at us.**

We assume He's mad, disappointed, or done with us.

- I failed too many times/too big.
- If I were God I'd give up and move on to someone else who deserves his attention more than me.

But what if the truth is the opposite?

If you've ever felt like a failure, like you've let God down... then I want to introduce you to the Apostle Peter...

B/c when we look at his story we discover something crucial about God...

- **Nothing we do can make God let go of us.**

**GOD:** Before he was "The Apostle Peter" he was Simon son of John... a peasant fisherman in ancient Israel.

One day, after Simon had a horrible night of fishing, Jesus used his boat to preach one of his first sermons...

- Afterward Jesus told him to cast nets one more time... huge catch
- Simon falls on his knees in front of Jesus and Jesus says to him, "Follow me."
- Become one of my main followers

Jesus changes his name to Peter (Rock)

- We get a picture of Peter as bold, impulsive, always eager to lead

Becomes the apparent leader of the disciples... always named first

- Often spoke first... often w/out thinking
- The one they all turned to to ask the questions when Jesus was saying weird things
- He was the first one to recognize Jesus' deity.

And on Jesus' last night w/ his disciples...

- He told them he was about to be arrested and executed... and that they would all desert him.
- Here's the conversation- **Matthew 26:31-35**

Peter, ignoring the 'dead and raised' part- "Even if all these guys run away... I'm going to stand w/ you, Jesus!"

- I believe he truly meant it.
- He was ready to die for Jesus.
- Unfortunately... **We can have the best intentions in the world and still fail miserably.**

But things start out pretty well for Peter's intentions

When Jesus is arrested later that night...

- Peter draws his sword and fights back... Was going to take on the whole group of soldiers by himself
  - Maybe sacrificing himself so Jesus could get away?
  - Expecting Jesus to back him up what fireballs from heaven?
- Misses... cuts a guy's (Malchus) ear off
- Jesus tells Peter to calm down and heals Malchus' ear.

The soldiers take Jesus for a late-night trial and only Peter and John follow behind right into the courtyard of the place where the trial is taking place.

- COURAGE

But then the adrenaline started wearing off...

And Peter realizes... dying for someone is one thing. Living for them is often much more difficult...

**Luke 22:54-62**... Ugh Rooster crows and Jesus turns and looks right at him. Can you imagine?!

I wonder what that look was like...

- I'm sure not anger, not disappointment... he knew it would happen
- Sadness for Peter? Empathy? I still love you?

But for Peter... Think of the guilt, the gut dropping feeling of regret knowing how much you have screwed up

- After all Peter had been through w/ Jesus
- After his successes... leading the disciples, seeing and doing miracles, being in Jesus' inner circle, walking on water, swearing he would die before he denied Jesus...

In the last moments, when the real test came and he had a chance to prove who he really was...

- Peter was a complete and utter failure.
- The most painful failures are the ones that reveal who we really are.

The pain of failing in the moment that matters most—I know that's a weight many of us carry.

A few hours later... Jesus is crucified.

- It's over. All hope is lost. No chance to make things right.
- Peter and the rest of the disciples go into hiding.
- Well, all of them except for a few heroic women.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day after Jesus' execution... some of the women went to his tomb to make sure his body was prepared properly.

When they got there... the stone was rolled away, the soldiers guarding the tomb were gone, and Jesus' body was missing.

They look in the tomb and see a man sitting there wearing a white robe... the account says... "They were alarmed."

**Mark 16:6-7** [Highlight... "including Peter"]

Including Peter: Specifically wants Peter to know he hasn't been kicked out...

- He is still part of the group.

Had Peter repented? Made amends? Paid his penance?

- No, he's been hiding w/ everyone else.

But Jesus' love for us isn't based on what we do, but whose we are... his.

Jesus later appears to the rest of the disciples and shows them the nail scars.

- Has some food w/ them
- Proves he's resurrected... just like he said he would.

And I'm sure Peter's happy...

- But his days of working for/w/ Jesus are over...
- The relationship is obviously broken/will never be the same
- He's still A COMPLETE failure.

But Peter and the disciples go to Galilee like Jesus told them to...

- While waiting don't know what else to do so Peter and 6 other disciples, including John, go fishing.

They catch nothing... even a failure at what they used to be good at.

- When you're fishing and nothing is happening it gives you a lot of time to think.
- Probably beating himself up, thinking through all the 'what if's' and 'if only's'

In the morning, someone on the shore tells them to throw their net on the other side of the boat... and when they do they catch so many fish (153 to be exact) that they can't even pull the net into the boat.

John realizes the man on the shore is Jesus and Peter jumps in the water and swims to shore while the other guys follow in the boat.

When they get to the shore... Jesus has a fire going and some fish cooking and invites them to have breakfast.

Crazy... If someone betrays me/denies our friendship I don't even like being in the same room w/ them...

- Jesus made them breakfast.

Think about this... Jesus had just conquered sin and death... fulfilled God's promised plan from the beginning of humanity... He has just won the biggest victory in the history of the cosmos.

- He is the undisputed King of everything forever!
- And he is still serving his disciples.
- Still loves hanging out with them... still enjoys them.

Jesus doesn't use his authority and power to judge and condemn but to serve and love.

Then sitting around the fire... Jesus shows the depth of his commitment and love.

**John 21:15-17** Jesus- More than these?

- Remember that boast you made Peter?
- What do you think now?

Peter- You know I love you.

- Leaves out the 'more than these.'

Asks him 3 times around the fire... Mirroring the 3 denials around the other fire.

"Do you love me?"

- Jesus knew the answer...
- The question was for Peter... didn't get it at first.
- "Peter I never let go of you... do you accept that you can still love me even after you've failed?"
- "You're still my guy... take care of my sheep... lead my church."
- I'm not "reinstating you" I'm telling you, you were never fired in the first place.

Jesus didn't just forgive Peter... he was going to use Peter to lead the whole thing

- Peter hadn't derailed God's plan
- Peter may have let go of him but Jesus never let go of Peter
- Roman Handshake?
- We may let go of God in a time of doubt, shame, distraction, hard season... but God never lets go of you.
- He's got you

“Peter, when you let go... I was still holding on... It’s not about what you did it’s about what I did.”

- You failed... but I conquered for you.
- You will be the one to lead this new movement...
- Don’t believe me?
- You’re going to become one of the bravest/courageous leaders of the church... your courage for me will inspire billions of people...

**V. 18-19** Jesus- Not only will you live for me... you will die for me.

- Earliest accounts and tradition tell us... 64 AD. Nero. Crucified, possibly upside down.

Jesus is reassuring Peter that his past failure will be nothing compared to what he will become through Jesus’ transforming love.

Then Jesus gave Peter the same call he gave him at the very beginning... FOLLOW ME... Be following me.

- You aren’t done... let’s get back to it.
- Not only will you die for me... you will do the harder part, you will live for me.

Don’t worry about the past. Don’t dwell on yourself and what you did or didn’t do... just Follow ME.

- And lead my church.

Does that even make sense?

What would you do?

- Employee or colleague not only promised to carry out a job... but failed at it so miserably that it almost put the entire company at risk?
- Arrogantly said they were the best of anyone who worked there and then spectacularly ruined the whole project?
- They’d be fired!

Not w/ Jesus.

- 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.
- Jesus’ commitment to us gives us the space and ability to grow from our failures.

Jesus doesn’t see Peter as a failure. He sees him as he will be.

- A leader who learned from his mistakes.
- That led the early church to transform millions of lives.
- And gave his life in service to his friend and God.

I want to show you one more little detail...

Jesus reinstating Peter wasn’t something he decided to do after the fact... Jesus planned it even while Peter was making his grand promises of greatness...

**Matt. 26:31-32** You’ll desert me, BUT then I’ll rise... and meet you in Galilee

- Already planned on reconciling.
- Reconciliation has always been and will always be God’s goal.

**YOU** Bad News and Good News

Bad News- You're a failure. (So am I)

We've all failed—ruined relationships, lost opportunities, repeated mistakes we swore we'd never make again.

- And we will fail again.

But Jesus knew every failure we'd ever have—and He chose to love us anyway.

That's why He went to the cross. That's why He rose again.

So many people think that if there is a God, he expects us to follow the rules perfectly or else we're out.

- Nothing could be further from the truth.

And so many think that because they have failed God in some way, He now holds them at arm's length and always will. Again, Nothing could be further from the truth.

He knew we could never measure up to perfection...

- that we would fail, that selfishness would constantly try to overtake us...

That's why he came and made a way for us to be forgiven... have our relationship restored...

Took our failures/sin to the cross and killed. And then rose to give us new life through him.

Offers forgiveness and true acceptance... we just have to choose to trust him.

Our failures do not surprise him or catch him off guard.

And listen... None of your kids', parents', friends', neighbors', enemies' failures surprise him.

- And his commitment to them eclipses their failure too.

I'm not sure what's harder to accept... that God has forgives/accepts us or that God forgives/accepts them...

- But each is as true as the other.

This week... as go into holiday's...

**Read** one of the most powerful/beautiful descriptions of God's commitment to his children... **Romans 8:33-39**

There is nothing you've done or can do to make God love you more/less

But you don't know what 've done! How much I've messed up.

- Nothing can separate you.
- Me and Kids: what could make me stop loving you?

And just like Peter, there may be times when we fail and let go of Jesus, but Jesus never lets go of us! Thank Him for that!

**Accept Jesus' unending love.**

- Wake up/Go to bed: "Thank you for loving me. Thank you for never letting me go. Help me enjoy your love."

And then.. **Offer Jesus' unending love.**

- Especially as many of us are going into a relationally awkward season w/ family...

For those you are worried about/seem to be running/ruining their lives...

- Rest and trust he is 100% committed to them. He will not let them go and will always pursue them.
- Reconciliation has and always will be his goal.

For those who have betrayed/hurt you...

- Jesus is 100% committed to them too.
- This isn't about excusing behavior... it's about freeing ourselves from bitterness and enjoying God.

Pray for his love/peace to fill you and replace the hurt/anger/bitterness/disgust in you

- Like coffee cup being filled w/ pure/clean water
- Ask him to give you his eyes for them

It's not always easy and immediate...

- Can take time... there's hurt/pain/ongoing issues.
- Can be healthy to say... "I love you. I see you as a child of God but it's still fresh and I just need space."

**WE:** Imagine if failure didn't make us run from God but drew us closer to Him.

- If, instead of hiding in shame, we learned to rest in His love."

No fear of rejection b/c you know you're already perfectly accepted?

No shame of failures b/c you know it's not about perfection

What if we could use the times others fail us as a chance to remind them/us of God's unending love?

Imagine a community where we remind/show each other of God's unending love—even when we fail.

- A place where grace is practiced, not just preached.

You are not your failures.

You are invited to be a child of God... fully loved, fully accepted.

You are invited to become exactly who Jesus knows you can be...

Accept him. Follow him... b/c he accepts you and loves you.

- And offer that same love/acceptance to those around you.

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.

When shame creeps in, remind yourself: 'I am fully loved. I am fully accepted. I will keep following Jesus.' Then offer that same love to others.

- "God hasn't let go of me. I won't let go of you!"

**Our failures aren't the end. They're where Jesus begins His greatest work in us.**