

GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 12, 2015

"Redeemed and Called With Purpose"



REFLECTION AND STUDY

MONDAY | Read John 1:14-17

As Pastor Bob taught us on Sunday, Peter's life was one of ups and downs. He boasted that he would never abandon Jesus yet Peter stood at such a distance from Jesus, during his trial, that he couldn't be seen with Jesus. It is here, standing by the warm coal fire that Peter denies he knows Jesus— not just once but three times.

- What emotion does Peter display after he denies Jesus three times?
- How do you think Peter felt on the inside, when he learned that Jesus had risen from the dead? Could the excitement of Jesus' resurrection replace the shattered truth of his denial?
- Have you ever sinned and stepped away from God, wondering if God could still love you after all you have done?

In the following days we will delve into the truth of God's redemptive love, but for now, think about others who might feel they don't deserve forgiveness. **Pray that God would use you to speak hope into their life and give you opportunities to share Christ's love with them.**

TUESDAY | Read John 21:1-13 and John 18:18

Pastor Bob pointed out to us on Sunday that because of his denial of Jesus, Peter had totally abandoned his ministry calling to reach people for the Kingdom of God and returned to his original vocation of fishing. When Jesus is spotted on the shore, Peter leaps from the boat's safety and swims toward Him, having stayed put for safety only two days before at Jesus' trial. Now he abandons safety, placing himself at risk to reach Jesus. Pastor Bob also pointed out that John is the only writer who tells us in detail that the energy source for the fire was coal, the same kind at which Peter stood warming himself when he denied Christ. The correlation is no mere coincidence; it reminds Peter of his betrayal. Just like Peter, we may try to remove the painful memory of our actions but then something we see can instantly evoke it.

- Just like Peter, sometimes we have to come face-to-face with the truth of who we are and what we've done in order to accept God's grace—taking off the mask and being real with God. **Go to the Lord in prayer today, being real with Him about your failings and things you've done that weigh you down. Ask God for His grace and forgiveness.**

WEDNESDAY | Read John 21:5, Psalm 23:3 and Ephesians 1:7

As Pastor Bob said on Sunday, Peter would have been unsure about the status of his relationship with Jesus since he had denied Him, and had obviously been wrestling with guilt.

- Peter might have thought Jesus would ask him why he had denied Him, but He didn't. Go back to chapter 21, verse 5 and notice the name Jesus calls His disciples. What does He call them?
- By referring to them in this manner, what is Jesus doing?

Jesus' love and forgiveness is always there, ready to free us from our guilt and restore us, just like He did with Peter. **Pray and give thanks to God that He restores you and calls you friend.**

THURSDAY | Read John 21:15

A rock is strong and above all dependable, and Peter had been anything but dependable. "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" was the question Jesus asked as He was waving His hands over the boats, the sea, and the fishing gear. In essence, 'Simon, are you prepared to give them all up, to abandon all hope of a successful career, to give up a steady job and a reasonable comfort, in order to give yourself for ever to my people and to my work?' . . . He responds by saying, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you". No longer a boastful person who felt he was above the others, Peter learns of humility and realizes he wasn't as strong as he thought he was. . . . Peter was sure that he would never do what he did. And many of us make the claim that we would never find ourselves in the sins that others commit. But we never know. That is why we should always be vigilant, always be on guard. David never thought he would commit adultery, Solomon never thought he would worship false idols and Peter couldn't begin to think that he would deny his Lord. Peter was overconfident. But Peter learned that he wasn't as strong as he thought, and because of the mistake he made, he was humbled and became real about his spiritual condition.

--The Reverend Bob Martin, from his sermon, *Redeemed and Called with Purpose*

Pray and ask the Lord to help you when the crossroads come and your faith is tested.

FRIDAY | John 21:15-17

Three times Peter denied Christ and now we see Jesus confront Peter with the question "do you love me" three times. Pastor Bob taught us Sunday that in the Greek language, there are three words for "love", two of which are used by Jesus when he questions Peter's love for Him: *Phileo* and *Agape*. *Phileo* means "brotherly love" and *Agape* means "self-sacrificing, unconditional love". When Jesus first asks Peter if he loves Him, He uses the word *Agape*, to which Peter replies with *Phileo*. Jesus asks Peter the question again using *Agape* and finally changes it to *Phileo*, when He asks Peter a third time, and each time Peter answers Jesus'

question with “I love [Phileo] you”. As Pastor Bob further pointed out, Peter was simply being honest about his level of love for Jesus—that he wasn’t quite to the level of *Agape* love yet.

- How often are you honest about your spiritual condition?
- How well is your soul?
- What is Jesus’ response to Peter after he is honest about his level of love for Him?

When we honestly acknowledge the condition of our relationship with God, He begins the work of restoration. This is exemplified when Jesus called Peter to “feed my sheep”, even though Peter wasn’t at the level of *Agape* love for Jesus. God also calls us to a closer relationship, to step out on faith and to feed His sheep. **Go before the Lord in prayer and ask that He would continue to help you grow in your love for Him and the work of His Kingdom.**

SATURDAY | Read 1 Peter 5:10 & 2 Corinthians 5:17

I know of no more poignant contrast between two human destinies than that of Peter and Judas. Both assumed leadership within the group of Jesus' disciples. Both saw and heard wondrous things. Both went through the same dithery cycle of hope, fear, and disillusionment. As the stakes increased, both denied their Master. There, the similarity breaks off. Judas, remorseful but apparently unrepentant, accepted the logical consequences of his deed, took his own life, and went down as the greatest traitor in history. He died unwilling to receive what Jesus had come to offer him. Peter, humiliated but still open to Jesus' message of grace and forgiveness, went on to lead a revival in Jerusalem and did not stop until he had reached Rome.

--Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*

Pastor Bob ended his sermon on Sunday with three important truths:

- No matter how gross your past may be, Jesus stands not only ready to forgive, but also to restore.
- If you are going to be restored then you must be honest about your spiritual condition.
- Be prepared that when you are honest with God, God will be honest with you.

Pray to the Lord and be honest with Him about your spiritual condition. Allow Christ to bring you up to the point where you need to be.

SUNDAY

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God’s voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life’s demands do not squelch the whispers of God’s language of love upon your heart.