

**Week of November 25, 2012**  
***From Failure to Action***

**Passage Outline:**

1. Do You Deny Christ? (John 18:15-18,25-27)
2. Do You *Really* Love Christ? (John 21:15-19)
3. Do You Stand Up for Christ? (Acts 4:13,18-20)



**What This About?**

Many of us have good intentions to do the right thing, but we falter when it comes to actually putting those intentions into actions. Jesus forgives, restores, and desires to use us. Like Peter, we can learn to rely on God's power and boldly serve Him.

**How This Will Impact Your Life?**

This can help you be restored to usefulness in God's service regardless of previous failure.

**1. Do You Deny Christ? - John 18:15-18,25-27**

**John 18:15-18, 25-27**

<sup>15</sup> Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, <sup>16</sup> but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup> "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not." <sup>18</sup> It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself. ...<sup>25</sup> As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not." <sup>26</sup> One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?" <sup>27</sup> Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

- A. Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and taken to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest.
- B. Two disciples, Peter and an unnamed disciple we think it was John, followed Him into the courtyard.

**Please read the article "The Life of Simon Peter" contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you missed it, additional copies are on the back table.**

- C. Once inside, Peter is questioned about his connection with Jesus.
- D. John wrote about three particular questions people asked Peter.
  - i. The first question came from the doorkeeper, a woman, probably one of Annas' slaves.
    - Notice the question was put in a way that Peter would answer in the way she wanted.
    - Peter gave in to the temptation and denied Jesus.
  - ii. The second question came from either the temple police or one of the slaves as they stood around a charcoal fire.
    - Like the doorkeeper, they posed their question in a way that would tempt Peter to deny Jesus.
    - Again, he gave in to the temptation and denied that he had any connection with Jesus.

- iii. The third question came to him from one of Malchus's relatives, who earlier in the Garden, Peter had cut off Malchus's right ear.
  - This slave may have been in the Garden and had seen Peter when they arrested Jesus.
  - His question included a sense of assurance that he had seen Peter.
  - This time, Peter denied that he was even in the garden at all.
- E. At this moment, a rooster crowed, signaling the dawn of a new day. But for Peter, it signified something much more, that he would deny Jesus three times before the rooster crowed.

### Ways We Have Denied Christ

Peter's three denials remind us of the many ways we can deny Christ. Like Peter, we can deny Him by lying about our relationship with Him. But we can also deny Him by being silent instead of speaking up for Him. Or we can make ethical or moral choices that hide the fact that we know Jesus personally.

Which way have you most often denied knowing Jesus? Confess this to God and seek His forgiveness.

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## 2. Do You Really Love Jesus? - John 21:15-19

### John 21:15-19

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." <sup>16</sup> Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." <sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." <sup>19</sup> Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

- A. After His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus appeared to some of His disciples who had gone fishing on the Sea of Galilee, and He prepared breakfast for them. It is here that Jesus starts a conversation with Peter.
- B. Jesus asked Peter three similar questions. Each of them had to do with Peter's love for Jesus.
- C. Jesus' first question introduced a comparison that is somewhat vague, "do you love Me more than *these*?" What are the "these"?
  - i. More than the other disciples who had gone fishing with Peter?
  - ii. More than the 153 fish they had just caught?
  - iii. More than he loved his fellow disciples?
  - iv. Does it really matter what takes priority over devotion to Christ?
- D. Peter's answer indicated the truth about his love for Jesus.

- E. Jesus responded by calling Peter back into ministry. Peter had been a fisherman, but now Jesus called him to be a shepherd to tend and feed the Lord's lambs

**Please read the article “Peter’s Shepherd Assignment” contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you missed it, additional copies are on the back table.**

- F. Jesus's second question put to Peter straightforward, "Do you love Me?" Peter answered "yes." Jesus again called for Peter to serve Him as a shepherd feeding His sheep.
- G. Jesus questioned Peter a third time. Peter indicated His heartfelt willingness to be completely open and honest with Jesus about the depth of his love for Him.
- H. Jesus’ response made Peter's commission to His failed disciple perfectly clear. From that moment on, Peter would devote himself to ministry.
- I. Peter was no longer a failed disciple of Jesus but a restored disciple, called by his Lord to minister to people who would belong to Him.

### **Have You Failed Jesus?**

Peter had really messed up—big time! Not once, not twice, but three times he denied even knowing Jesus, much less following Him. Peter could even have thought that he might have disqualified himself from Jesus’ service. But Jesus still had plans for Peter.

If you have failed Jesus but stand ready to earnestly, sincerely affirm your love for Him, He stands ready to use you, too.

### **3. Do You Stand Up for Christ? - Acts 4:13,18-20**

#### **Acts 4:13, 18-20**

<sup>13</sup> When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.... <sup>18</sup> Then commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. <sup>20</sup> For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

- A. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He assured the disciples they would receive the Holy Spirit and would bear witness of Jesus with boldness.
- B. The religious leaders tried to put a stop to Peter’s preaching. They arrested him and John and threw them into jail.
- C. Peter spoke up with such boldness about Jesus the religious leaders were astonished. This was a stark contrast to his denials of Christ on the night of His arrest.

**Please read the article “The Sanhedrin, Their History and Function” contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you missed it, additional copies are on the back table.**

- D. Peter's changed life serves as an encouraging example to us. Our failures to live out our convictions for Christ need not sideline us. Like Peter, we can go from timidity to boldness when we turn to the Lord for

help.

- E. Were Peter and John well educated and trained? No, they were unschooled and ordinary men. The difference was that "they had been with Jesus."
- F. The religious leaders ordered the two disciples to stop their proclamation in Jesus' name.
- G. The Holy Spirit who had empowered the disciples to preach also made them bold to take their stand for Christ in the presence of the religious leaders.
- H. The disciple's proclamation was "first hand experiences" of what they had seen and heard. They would share without restraint what they had seen and heard for themselves.
- I. In doing so, they would give first-hand, vibrant testimony of Christ.

### **Taking A Stand for Christ**

Taking a stand for Christ means speaking up for Him and bearing witness of His presence and power in our lives. However, it also means living according to His ways even when it's not popular.

If you consider yourself useless to Christ because you failed Him in the past, think again. Peter shows that the Lord loves us and wants to restore us to usefulness for Him. He's more than willing to help us go from failure to action for His glory. Perhaps He's nudging you right now about a conversation with Him that could change your life.

#### **Biblical Truths in Focus:**

1. We may surprise ourselves with our timidity and our failure to take advantage of opportunities to stand up for Christ.
2. When we fail, we can live in the assurance that Jesus knows how to restore us by helping us focus on love for Him and willingness to follow Him.
3. Christ's working in us through His Spirit can transform us from being timid to being confident and courageous as we serve Him.
4. No matter how badly we have failed, Jesus stands ready to love us back into usefulness in His service.