

THE PRIZE: Under Pressure

Session 2 – Dealing with Failure

Leader's Guide

Featuring Enoh and Peter

DVD – 2:53 to 6:21

WARM-UP

Share with the group a time when you feel you have failed at something.

TEAM HUDDLE

Being called up to represent Cameroon in the 2010 World Cup was a great honor for Enoh. The team traveled with great expectation, but things did not work out the way they had hoped. They were eliminated in the group stages after losing all their games, and Enoh suffered an injury in the second game that ruled him out of the remainder of the competition.

As a group, discuss the different feelings and thoughts that he might have experienced at the time.

What do you think was the reaction of the Cameroon fans to the team following the three defeats and early elimination from the competition?

How easy is it to deal with failure when other people are criticizing us?

COACH'S CORNER

Read John 18:15-18, 25-27

¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. ¹⁶ Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. ¹⁷ The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?" "No," he said, "I am not."

¹⁸ Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.

²⁵ Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, "You're not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "No, I am not."

²⁶ But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?" ²⁷ Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.

Peter has spent three years of his life following Jesus. He has experienced Jesus' friendship, love, miracles, and His radical, life-changing teaching. Yet following Jesus' arrest, Peter denies knowing Him three times, just as Jesus predicted he would (John 13:38).

Why do you think Peter denied knowing Jesus?

Answers might include fear, failure to remember who Jesus really was or to understand what Jesus had been telling His disciples about what would happen.

Imagine the scene. Peter is warming himself by a fire while Jesus is being interrogated and beaten inside. What does this tell us about our human nature?

It's not just Peter who fails Jesus. In what ways do we or can we fail Jesus?

Read John 21:15-19

¹⁵ After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?^[a]"

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

¹⁶ Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

¹⁷ A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep.

¹⁸ "I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others^[b] will dress you and take you where you don't want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "Follow me."

Peter denies Jesus. Yet this massive failure does not disqualify Peter from being a disciple. Over an early morning breakfast Jesus reinstates Peter not only as a disciple, but as a leader of the church.

Why do you think Jesus asked Peter about his love for Him three times? Try to imagine what Peter felt like and share your feelings with the group.

The first "Do you love Me?" question had challenged Peter to consider whether he loved Jesus more than fishing; the second examined the reality of Peter's commitment; the third confirmed it and actually asked more of Peter – "Do you love Me with sacrificial love?"

What do you think it means when Jesus tells Peter, "Feed My lambs," "Take care of My sheep," and "Feed My sheep"?

Before a charcoal fire Peter had made three denials. Now, before another fire, he makes three confessions of love and receives three commissions. Despite Peter's previous failure, Jesus is reinstating Peter as a pastor (take care of), teacher (feed) and as a leader (the lambs and the sheep are the body of Christ – the church). This mirrors the work that Jesus wants to do in all our lives.

Peter fails Jesus in a big way. Yet this massive failure does not disqualify Peter from being a disciple of Jesus.

- What is your reaction to this?
- Does Jesus' response surprise you?
- How would you respond if someone failed you in a time of great need?

In what ways does Jesus' response to Peter give us hope?

As people, we have lost our first vocation which is to love God, know God and serve His purposes for His glory in loving others and being good stewards of His creation. When we confess Christ, we receive forgiveness and He reinstates us so we can serve Him as He originally intended.

Peter is a great example of someone who did not allow his failure to stop him from responding to Jesus. What can we do to make sure we respond positively to the love of Jesus when we fail Him?

Everyone makes mistakes. If God only used perfect people, who could He use? Jesus uses people who love Him; not people who love Him with some super-human love, but those who simply love Him as much as they can. The heroes we read about in the Bible were imperfect people who desired to love and serve God. Some were rich, some were poor, some were beautiful, some were plain, some were strong and some were weak. But the one thing they had in common was a heart that loved God. And that is what He requires of you (Matthew 22:37).

WARM-DOWN

Spend some time in group prayer thanking God for His incredible grace and mercy. The fact that He still calls us to serve Him – and can use us – even when we mess up, is reason to give thanks. If your group is comfortable in singing together, choose one or two worship songs that focus on God's amazing grace.

EXTRA TRAINING

Memory Verse

"Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)

Prayer/Worship Focus

During the week, read Psalm 51 and turn it into a prayer as it was originally intended. This Psalm was written by David when he had seriously sinned against God and others. He was an adulterer and a murderer. However, his sorrow was genuine and, as with Peter, led him to true repentance. As you pray through this Psalm, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas of your life where you need to repent. Keep the memory verse in mind and pray that with God's help it will become true of you.

Putting it into Practice

Prayerfully look for opportunities to express your love and commitment to Jesus. Peter went on to lead the church and eventually, willingly laid his life down for the Friend he loved. Look for ways you can serve Jesus in the church, in your family and in the wider community.