



3

Peter's Denial

Key Theme

- God is merciful toward sinners.

Key Passages

- Mark 14:26–31, 14:53–54, 14:66–72; John 21:1–19

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how Peter denied Jesus.
- Describe how Jesus restored Peter.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, “How many times do you deny Jesus as Lord in a given week?”



Studying God's Word

The night Jesus was arrested, Peter followed Jesus and the guards to see what would happen. As Peter waited in the courtyard, he was recognized as one of Jesus's disciples. Peter denied knowing Jesus three times that evening. When he realized what he had done, he wept and was sorry. After His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to Peter, and Peter was able to tell his Lord that he loved him three times! Jesus forgave Peter and commissioned him as a leader in the church.

Study the Prepare to Share section.

Go Before the Throne.



Activity: God's Restoring Grace

Students will draw parallels between Peter's denial of Jesus and Jesus's restoration of Peter and connect his restoration to the grace available for Christians each day.

God's Restoring Grace Worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM

Pencils



Activity: Truth Be Told Review Game (Optional)

The students will review the lesson by playing a board game.

Truth Be Told Game Board and Answer Key

Game pieces for each team

Truth Be Told Question and Number Cards

Poster putty



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages listed above with this background.

The Bible records that on the night of His arrest, Jesus was led away to the high priest and an assembly of the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes (Mark 14:53). His dear friend and apostle, Peter, was following behind at a safe distance. Peter had followed into the high priest's courtyard and was warming himself near the fire the servants had prepared (Mark 14:54). This was where Peter would soon deny the promised Messiah of whom Moses and the prophets had written (John 1:45).

Just hours before, Peter had witnessed Judas the betrayer leading a great crowd of men with swords and clubs to arrest Jesus (Mark 14:43). Peter had courageously drawn his sword to fight back—and cut off the ear of one of the men (Mark 14:47). (It is interesting to note that the doctor, Luke, is the only Gospel writer to record that Jesus miraculously healed this man's ear [Luke 22:51].)

Now, here at the fire, in the night, Peter was recognized by one of the servant girls. She accused him of being with Jesus. But he quickly denied it. This denial was accompanied by the first of two rooster crows. Again, the servant girl saw him and charged Peter that he had been with Jesus. Once more, Peter quickly denied this charge. Later, those standing nearby looked at Peter and claimed that his Galilean speech gave him away—he WAS a disciple of Jesus. And a third time, Peter denied His Lord with cursing and swearing that he did not know the one who had been arrested. Just then Peter heard the rooster crow the second time and was reminded of Jesus's warning that Peter would very soon deny Him three times (Mark 14:66–71). And in the midst of this final denial, the Lord turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61).

What a look that must have been! The Master looked on His servant—the one who had declared just hours before that even if all the others left Jesus, he never would (Mark 14:29). Many believe this look was not a look of anger but of tenderness, sorrow, and pity. This loving look from Jesus brought Peter to conviction, humility, and repentance, and he immediately went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:62).

In the next few days Jesus would be falsely accused, crucified, and then resurrected from the grave. We can only imagine Peter's anguish as the events of the crucifixion played, out and he remembered his last testimony about his Savior—"I do not know this Man of whom you speak!" (Mark 14:71).

Shortly after His resurrection, the Bible tells us that

Jesus appeared to the disciples on three different occasions (John 20:19, 20:26, 21:4). During the third visit with His disciples, Jesus directly addressed Peter. It is during this conversation that Jesus asked Peter to confirm his love for His Savior. Jesus did not ask once, but three times, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" (John 21:15–17). Many believe that by repeating His question three times, Jesus was reminding Peter of the three times he had denied even knowing Jesus, just days before. This time, Peter answered earnestly, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You" (John 21:15).

Jesus's response to Peter was one of forgiveness and confidence in his friend whose faith had recently faltered out of weakness and fear. This confidence was exhibited once again when, three times, Jesus said to Peter, "Feed My lambs" (John 21:15); "Tend My sheep" (John 21:16); "Feed My sheep" (John 21:17). This was no easy task Jesus had called Peter to. But Peter had once and for all verified his love and loyalty to the Lord. In return the Lord presented him with the privilege of leading others and guiding them into the spiritual truths they would continue to need after Jesus's ascension.

Peter had denied Christ three times. Jesus then gave Peter the opportunity to proclaim his love for Christ three times. After that Jesus commissioned Peter to go and "feed the lambs" three times. This charge and the responsibility that went with it left no doubt that Peter had been forgiven and restored as an ambassador for Jesus Christ.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

When reading of the failings of Peter, we might be tempted to say, "How could he do that? If I had been there, I would not have denied Christ!" We ask ourselves, "How could a follower of Jesus—someone who walked with Jesus, witnessed His miracles, and heard His powerful teaching—deny even knowing Him?" Well, Peter gives us a profound lesson in the danger of self-confidence.

Peter had his moments of brilliance, like when he answered Jesus's inquiry about who He was. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" was Peter's reply. And Jesus told Peter that it was not by his own wisdom that he knew this, but God had revealed the truth to Peter (Matthew 16:13–17). Another time, after some hard sayings of Jesus, many of His disciples no longer followed Him. Jesus asked the twelve if they also wanted to go away. Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have

come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:66–69).

It seems that Peter, maybe due to some of his successes, had developed a sense of self-confidence. When Jesus predicted His coming crucifixion and that His disciples would stumble, Peter proudly proclaimed, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be” (Mark 14:27–29). And when Jesus told Peter that Satan had requested to sift him like wheat, but Jesus had prayed that his faith would not fail, Peter boldly retorted, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death” (Luke 22:31–33). Then, when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, it was Peter trying to prove his courage and his devotion who drew a sword and whacked off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. In Peter’s mind, he was faithful and invincible. But, he was dangerously overconfident.

Just a few hours later, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. How could this happen? This was Peter, the great leader of the apostles—the one who showed such confidence and boldness! And note that this was not just a momentary slip-up, but Peter’s denials occurred over a period of two hours. And while the first one may be excusable since he was caught off guard, the next two were most definitely deliberate and premeditated.

While we may criticize Peter for disowning his Lord, if we are honest, we must admit our own failings and our own shortcomings. We may have disowned the Lord, or shrunk back from acknowledging Him, or been afraid to stand up for our faith. And like Peter, we probably felt remorse for our failure.

There was another apostle who denied Jesus, who failed Him, who fell away. This was Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus. Judas, too, felt remorse. But he went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3–5). Peter, instead, wept bitterly, but his faith did not fail. He showed up at the tomb on Sunday. He was in the upper room with the other disciples. Though he failed, he was not destroyed; he persevered in faith. What was the difference between Peter and Judas? Judas was not a true believer in Jesus. Jesus called him a devil, unclean, and the son of perdition (John 6:70–71, 13:10–11, 17:12). Though Judas felt sorrow for his actions, it was not godly sorrow that leads to repentance, but worldly sorrow that leads to death (2 Corinthians 7:10). Peter, on the other hand, was a true believer. His sorrow did lead to repentance and restoration.

In Luke 22, Jesus predicted that Peter would deny Him. But Jesus also said He had prayed for Peter, that his faith would not fail. And Peter’s faith did not fail. He stood up on the day of Pentecost and preached a powerful sermon—and 3,000 were converted. Peter contin-

ued to preach—and tens of thousands were converted in Jerusalem.

What can we learn from Peter’s denials? First of all, we must be very cautious in our self-confidence. We are human; we are frail; we are not exempt from falling into sin or from denying our Lord. The Bible warns us about misplaced self-confidence:

1 Corinthians 10:12 – “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

Galatians 6:1 – “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

The second thing we can learn from Peter’s experience is that God is faithful. As Jesus prayed for Peter’s faith not to fail, so He ever lives to intercede for us: “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). As Peter was forgiven by Christ, so we, too, can be forgiven as we confess our sins: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God has promised to continue the work He has begun in us. Paul told the believers in Philippi that he was “confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). Praise God that those whom He predestined, called, and justified, He will also glorify (Romans 8:30)!

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Precious Jesus, your love and mercy are measureless. The way you loved and forgave Peter encourages me. Guard my heart and mind from the fear of man. Forgive me for the times I have been embarrassed or afraid to speak up for you. Lord, I pray my students will submit their lives to you at a young age and stand firm on the authority of Scripture. May they grow to be bold to proclaim your name even in difficult situations. Convict them of the sin in their lives. Use this lesson and Peter’s example to show them that you are merciful when we turn to you in true repentance.



Review

In the middle of the Last Supper, the arrest of Jesus, and the trials that ensued, there were two betrayals. The first we looked at briefly was the betrayal by Judas that was sealed with a kiss.

- ? What are some of the significant things we need to remember about the betrayal by Judas and what it led to? *Ultimately, it was done so that God's plan could be fulfilled. The event was prophesied, and Satan was directly involved. Further, Jesus*

knew of the plan and sent Judas to carry it out while He made plans to be in the garden where the arrest would take place. God was in control.

In all of the horrible treatment Jesus received from the arrest through the trials, there were elements of both physical abuse and emotional, or mental, abuse being hurled at Him. Our lesson today is going to focus on the betrayal from the lips of Peter.



- Write on the board, "How many times do you deny Jesus as Lord in a given week?"

Mark 14:26–31,
14:53–54, 14:66–72



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

In the last two weeks we read this section of Mark together as we talked about the arrest and trials. We read about the disciples leaving the supper, going to the Garden of Gethsemane, and all that followed the arrest. Knowing the greater context, let's read Mark 14:26–31, then 53–54, then 66–72 together. *Have someone read each of the passages aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Look at the first section (vv. 26–31), and let's ask some questions of the text.

- ? How many of the disciples were going to stumble? *Jesus said that they all would stumble.*
- ? Why did they all have to stumble? *It had been prophesied in Zechariah 13:7, so it was a sure thing. This is another example of God's knowledge of these events and His direction in them coming to pass.*
- ? What event did Jesus refer to in verse 28? *His Resurrection.*
- ? How did Peter respond to Jesus's statement? *He proclaimed that he would not stumble even if all of the others did.*
- ? What might this response indicate about Peter's character? *He was overly confident to the point that he would deny the very words of Jesus.*
- ? How did Jesus's response back to Peter provide more detail about the stumbling? *He assured Peter that he would stumble.*

- ? **How many times did Jesus say Peter would deny Him?** *Three times.*
- ? **What sign did Jesus give to assure His prediction?** *He used the rooster crowing twice as a sign to Peter.*
- ? **How did Peter respond to Jesus's second statement about his stumbling?** *Peter responded more strongly, denying that Jesus was speaking the truth.*
- ? **Was Peter the only one who claimed he would not stumble?** *No, all of the disciples responded saying they would not deny Jesus.*

Now let's look at verses 53 and 54, keeping in mind that verse 50 tells us that all of the disciples had forsaken Christ and fled as He was being led away after His arrest.

- ? **What did Peter do as Jesus was being led away?** *He followed the group at a distance.*
- ? **Where did Peter find himself?** *He was in the courtyard of the high priest's residence, sitting by a fire. John revealed that he was also there, and Peter's access was granted at John's request (John 18:15–17).*
- ? **Who was Peter with?** *Servants of the high priest.*

Now move on to verses 66–72, skipping over the description of Jesus's treatment before the high priest which we looked at previously.

- ? **How did Peter respond to the servant girl who claimed he had been with Jesus?** *He denied he had been with Jesus and went to another area of the house.*
- ? **What else happened as he went out on the porch?** *A rooster crowed.*
- ? **Who accused Peter the second time?** *The same servant girl accused him in front of others on the porch.*
- ? **How did Peter respond?** *He denied the accusation again.*
- ? **How much time passed between the second and third denials?** *A "little while" passed between them.*
- ? **What characteristic did they identify to connect Peter to Jesus in the third accusation?** *They pointed to his Galilean accent. Just as we can recognize regional accents and dialects, the same was true at that time.*
- ? **How did Peter respond this time?** *He not only denied a connection to Jesus, but he did so with cursing and swearing.*
- ? **How did Peter respond to the second crowing of the rooster?** *Peter remembered the words Jesus spoke a few hours before, acknowledged his failure, and wept.*
- ? **What additional detail does Luke 22:60–62 reveal?** *Jesus looked at Peter, presumably across some distance, as the rooster crowed, and Peter remembered the words of Jesus. This passage also adds that Peter wept bitterly.*

➤ Remind the students that many of the details of the events can be better understood by comparing the accounts in the Gospels.

Luke 22:60–62

Discover the Truth

While most of us are probably familiar with Peter's denial of Jesus, there is a lot to glean from this account. If we were to examine all four of the

Gospels, we could draw out even more truth from those details. But a few things are very evident. First, Jesus was clear about what would happen, but Peter was not willing to listen to Him. Peter had never seen the words of Jesus fail, but he was too confident in his own power to avoid temptation. Second, Peter was a man who, though he had good intentions, succumbed to that temptation and denied even knowing the person he had openly acknowledged was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

2 Corinthians 7:9–12

? We know that Peter wept bitterly after the second crowing of the rooster. Was Peter's sorrow a godly sorrow or a worldly sorrow in light of 2 Corinthians 7:9–12? *Because we know that Peter was sorrowful to the point of repentance, it was a godly sorrow that led to eternal life and restoration.*

? Although we didn't read about Judas's reaction, how did the sorrow Judas felt for denying Jesus compare to Peter's sorrow? *Judas's sorrow did not lead him to look back to the Lord for forgiveness, but he was in despair because of the consequences he faced. This is apparent in the fact that he tried to undo his actions by returning the money and then hanged himself in his regret.*

John 14:38

? If we were to compare each of the Gospels' accounts regarding Peter's denial of Jesus, we would notice that there are some differences. Some people have suggested that these differences show that we cannot trust the Gospel accounts. In Mark's account, Jesus tells Peter that the rooster will crow twice, but in John 14:38 Jesus says the denials will come "before the rooster crows" Do these two statements present a contradiction? *While there may seem to be a contradiction on the surface, Mark's account says that they had already left the upper room and were at the Mount of Olives (Mark 26:30) when Jesus said "before the rooster crows twice" while John's account has them still in the upper room after supper. Further, this could be a general phrase for "morning" that means "before sunrise when the roosters crow." In either case, there is no contradiction in the texts.*

If we were to stop there, we might be discouraged—thinking that the great Apostle Peter is no model for us to follow. But if he, who had lived with Jesus for several years, was willing to deny Him, how much more prone would you and I be to deny Jesus as our Lord? That, however, was not the end. Peter's sorrow was godly in nature and led to his repentance. And there was more that Jesus had for Peter to do. Let's jump forward a few weeks in time and see how this moment of repentance played out.



READ THE WORD

John 21:1–19

As we move to our next passage, we are moving past the Crucifixion and the Resurrection to the period of 40 days before Jesus ascended to heaven. Let's read John 21:1–19 together and look at Peter's restoration. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **Where were these seven disciples?** *They were on the Sea of Tiberias; another name for the Sea of Galilee.*
- ? **What were they doing?** *They were fishing.*
- ? **Who had led them there?** *They had followed Peter.*
- ? **How long had they fished?** *All night.*
- ? **What did they catch?** *Nothing.*
- ? **Who addressed them from the shore?** *Jesus.*
- ? **Did they recognize Him?** *No.*
- ? **What did He tell them to do?** *He told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat.*
- ? **What was the result?** *They caught more fish than they could handle.*
- ? **Who recognized Jesus first?** *John, who identifies himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."*
- ? **How did Peter respond?** *He put on his cloak, jumped into the water, and went to Jesus.*
- ? **How is this response different from Judas's earlier response?** *Judas ran away from Jesus rather than to Him.*
- ? **After they had eaten breakfast with Jesus, what did Jesus ask Peter?** *Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him more than these.*
- ? **What does "these" refer to in Jesus's question?** *It is not clear from the text, but there are two options. Jesus could be referring to the fish that had just been caught, asking Peter if he loved the ministry Jesus had called him to more than his previous profession as a fisherman which he had returned to after the Resurrection. Another option is that Jesus was referring to the other disciples. In light of the passage describing Peter's denial in Mark 14:29 where Peter said he would be faithful even if all the other disciples were not, this phrase could be referring back to that instance. In either case, Jesus is asking Peter to reconsider his love for Him.*
- ? **How did Peter respond?** *He acknowledged that he loved Jesus, as Jesus already knew. However, Peter used the word *phileo* (to have affection for) rather than the word *agapao* (to highly regard something).*
- ? **What did Peter acknowledge about Jesus in each response?** *He acknowledged Jesus's omniscience by saying "You know" and "You know all things."*
- ? **How many times did Jesus ask this question?** *He asked it three times, the third time using the same word, *phileo*, that Peter had used in his response.*
- ? **What did Jesus command Peter to do?** *He told Peter to feed His sheep twice and tend His sheep once.*
- ? **How did Peter respond the third time Jesus questioned him?** *He was grieved when Jesus asked him the third time.*
- ? **Why did the third question grieve Peter?** *It would seem that this reminded Peter of the three times he had denied Jesus.*

➤ Interestingly, Jesus uses the Greek word *agapao* in His question, and Peter replies with *phileo*. While these words are both translated as "love" in English, *agapao* is a much stronger word than *phileo*.

Luke 12:8–9

- ? **How does Jesus affirm Peter's restoration to work as a disciple?** *Jesus calls Peter to feed and tend His sheep.*
- ? **Who are the sheep Jesus is referring to?** *The sheep are the followers of Jesus. Jesus repeatedly referred to His followers as sheep (John 10:1–30) and that language is present even in the Old Testament where God is referred to as a Shepherd.*
- ? **There is no doubt that Peter had denied Jesus in front of other people. Do Jesus's words in Luke 12:8–9 present a contradiction of Jesus's restoration of Peter?** *While on the surface this might seem to be a contradictory statement, this passage is connected to the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In context, this passage is about someone who denies Jesus and refuses to repent. Peter repented, acknowledging his sin and turning to God for forgiveness, and was restored. Judas was not repentant, though he acknowledged he had sinned, and was damned (Matthew 27:3–5).*
- ? **What prophecy did Jesus give to Peter?** *He told Peter that he would live to be "old" and would eventually be imprisoned and killed to the glory of God.*
- ? **What does this reinforce about Peter's restoration?** *Jesus must intend to use Peter in the future to accomplish more work through him.*

Discover the Truth

Church tradition tells us that Peter lived for several more decades and was eventually killed by the Roman Emperor Nero in AD 67. During that time he built up the church as he traveled and wrote letters. Though he had denied his Lord, Peter was restored to service.

- ? **What attributes of God are demonstrated in Jesus's restoration of Peter?** *God's grace, mercy, and love are all demonstrated in forgiving Peter for his denial and calling him to further faithful service.*

Peter would fail again, and again, but he could always remember the calling Jesus had given him to feed and tend the sheep. He would encourage others to remember the salvation that they had in Christ (1 Peter 1:1–12) and call them to suffer for the sake of Christ just as he had done (1 Peter 4:1–11).

The gospel is about restoration and redemption, and it is all made possible in what Jesus has done for us. Peter is a prime example of that lesson. When we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Confession brings restoration.



GRACIOUS

MERCIFUL

LOVE



God's Restoring Grace

MATERIALS

- God's Restoring Grace Worksheet
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the God's Restoring Grace worksheet to each student. We are going to do an activity now called God's Restoring Grace. I would like you to take a few minutes to consider the parallels between Peter's denial of Jesus and Jesus's restoration of Peter. Then, apply some of these ideas to your own life, considering how you may be like Peter. We will discuss what you found in a few minutes. Have the students work in pairs or individually as the questions call for some personal reflection.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let's talk about some of the similarities you found between Peter's denial and his restoration.

1. There were three instances of questions to Peter that led to denial just as there were three questions that led to affirming his love for Jesus.
2. While in the upper room, Peter had claimed he loved Jesus more than the other disciples and made similar claims as Jesus questioned him.
3. Peter was grieved after the third instance in both cases.

Consider and discuss other answers.

? **As you consider the other questions, what encouragement do you find in knowing that there is restoration when we confess our sins to God?** *Peter's example should be encouraging to us. We share the same relationship with Jesus that Peter did. As sheep of Jesus's flock, we can be sure that He will care for us just as He did for Peter. When we deny our Lord, He will restore us as we confess our sins. We have an Advocate who is perfectly righteous and has paid for our sins. As our Shepherd, He will direct us and keep us.*





Truth Be Told Review Game (Optional)

MATERIALS

- Truth Be Told Game Board
- Truth Be Told Question Cards
- Truth Be Told Question Answer Key
- Truth Be Told Number Cards (or game spinner or dice)
- Buttons or other small items as game pieces for each team
- Poster putty

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide your class into teams. Teams will take turns drawing a Truth Be Told Question Card. Team members will take turns answering the questions. They will quickly determine an answer and give it. If they are correct, they will draw a Truth Be Told Number Card and move that number of spaces on the game board. As play proceeds, follow the directions on the game board. Alternate between teams as long as time permits.

We are going to review now by playing “Truth Be Told.” I’ll put you into teams. Teams will take turns picking a question card and answering the question. If the answer is correct, you will draw a number card and move your game piece that many spaces. All directions on the board must be followed.

Return the used cards to the stacks. *Answers to the questions are provided on the Truth Be Told Question Answer Key on the Resource DVD-ROM.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Peter went from boldly protecting Jesus to denying three times in one night that he knew Him. Peter feared what men would do to him if he was found out. So, he denied his Lord. When he heard the rooster, Peter cried because he was sorry for what he had done. But, the gracious Lord allowed Peter to make up for his denials. Jesus came to Peter AFTER His death and Resurrection. He asked Peter three times if he loved Him, and three times Peter said, “Yes!” By asking three times, Jesus showed that He had forgiven Peter for the three denials in the courtyard. And then Jesus showed that He trusted Peter to carry on His work. He told Peter three times to feed His sheep. He was calling Peter to be a leader and a teacher in the church.



Applying God’s Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

If we will stop and examine our own hearts, we will come to realize that we are much like Peter. There are times when we know and proclaim the truth about who Jesus is, and we follow Him faithfully. There are other times when we deny that Jesus is our Lord and Savior by our words, our actions, or our thoughts. While these moments might send us into a state of despair, we must always remind ourselves that we are not accepted by God because of what we have done but because of what Jesus has done for us. We are accepted in the Beloved according to God’s mercy (Ephesians 1:3–6).

Now, this should in no way lead us to minimize the sinfulness of sin because we know there is forgiveness from our gracious and merciful Savior, but it should lead us to want to please Jesus more and deny Him less. As we think about Peter's reaction, he seems to have been caught up in the moment. Caught up in the fear of being arrested, Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and put them on his circumstances. But upon recognizing his failure, Peter was grieved by his sin and turned to Jesus for forgiveness. On the contrary, Judas knew he had sinned but did not trust in Jesus as Savior. As a consequence of his worldly sorrow, he killed himself and found himself judged and found guilty with no substitute to stand in his place.

But God is merciful to sinners and will forgive those who come to Him in repentance. As we seek to demonstrate our devotion to Jesus, we need to guard ourselves against thinking we are able to do so on our own. We must walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Helper whom Jesus sent to us (John 14:26–27). From before the foundation of the world, God has been a faithful God. We can trust in His unchanging character to restore us when we have sinned. And remembrance of that forgiveness in our lives should stir up in us a desire to share that message of forgiveness with others, telling them of the continual restoring grace that is available to them in Christ.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **What encouragement do you find in this account of Peter's denial and restoration?** *We often think that there are "super Christians" who never falter in their faith. But even Peter, the great apostle of the church, failed to acknowledge Jesus as Lord. As we find ourselves in those places of denial, we can find encouragement in knowing that when we fail in our broken nature we can find renewal and forgiveness in Christ. After his restoration, Peter went on to do many small things and many great things for the Kingdom. We can never sin more than God can forgive.*
- ? **What warning do we need to take from Peter's statements of confidence in not stumbling and denying Jesus (consider 1 Corinthians 10:12)?** *We can't allow ourselves to be confident in our own abilities, but must fully rely on the power of God working in us. Focusing on self more than on God will surely lead to sinful thoughts and actions.*
- ? **How does the restoration of Peter by Jesus relate to Paul's words in Ephesians 2:10? How does this relate to your life?** *Jesus had plans for Peter to accomplish, so his restoration was to fulfill the future work that Peter had been placed on earth to do. Jesus even prophesied of Peter's future work for the Kingdom. Likewise, this promise is given to all Christians, and we know that we have the privilege of working to serve God by serving and loving others.*
- ? **How can we work together as members of the body of Christ to help keep one another from stumbling and also to promote restoration?** *As Christians, we are called to exhort one another daily (Hebrews 3:12–15) and seek to restore those who have fallen into sin (Galatians 6:1). Being committed to one another through regularly gathering together and praying for each other are key elements in these goals.*

? How could you use the lesson material today to either encourage a believer who is struggling in his faith or point an unbeliever to the hope of the gospel? *Discuss various answers, encouraging the students to be putting into practice what they are learning.*



MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 28:18–20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His abundant mercy and grace toward sinners.
- Praise God for His unchanging character and faithfulness to His people.
- Ask God for faith to obey His commands and to seek forgiveness when we fail.