



Week 6
NO MORE SIFTING
THROUGH THE
RUBBLE

This week we'll focus on sifting through the rubble—our response to failure. Michael Jordan once said, "I've missed more than nine thousand shots in my career. I've lost almost three hundred games. Twenty six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."¹ Thomas Edison said, "I have not failed; I've just found ten thousand ways that won't work."²

What are some common responses to failure (examples: blaming others and feeling shame)?

In what ways can failure contribute to greater success in the future?

Our failures, when responded to with the right mindset, can propel us into greater levels of spiritual development and achievement. But far too often men allow their failures to define, confine, and resign them to lives of mediocrity. The fear of failure is one of the greatest deterrents to risk and faith. But God has something to say about facing our failures head-on, and He shares it with us over breakfast.

Ask someone to pray before watching the video teaching.

WATCH

Use these statements to follow along as you watch video session 6.

We are dependent on God, and we are never to be independent from Him.

God offers that opportunity of grace to every man who's willing to recognize their failure, acknowledge their failure, repent of their failure, and return to the One they failed.

God will give you as many chances as you are willing to take advantage of.

God wants to build something new in your life on the space of your failure.

A lot of men are praying, "God, do something with me, change me, rebuild me, reuse me" when they're not willing to confront their sin before a Christ who's offering them another chance.

God wants to do something with whatever part of your life that's left.

God is a master rebuilders, and He wants to do that master rebuilding in your life because He wants to see you become what He created you to be.

You've got to be willing to be picked up by God, because you can't pick yourself up.

MAN UP

Use the following questions to discuss the video teaching.

Read the following verse together.

When they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread.

JOHN 21:9

Jesus cooking breakfast. That's a sight I would like to have seen. The Savior of the universe stoking a charcoal fire, blowing on it to ignite the flame, and skinning the fish. This wasn't any ordinary breakfast either. This breakfast had an intentional purpose. The fish reminded Peter of his call to ministry years earlier: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). The charcoal reminded Peter of his failure when he denied Jesus three times, the last time while warming his hands over a charcoal fire (see John 18:18).

Why do you think Jesus chose to redeem Peter over a charcoal fire, a reminder of Peter's failure?

Describe the lengths God will go to restore someone. How does that effort make you feel about your own future or the futures of people you love?

When a construction company sets out to build a new skyscraper in an established part of a city, it often has to implode the existing structure to make room for the new. This removal of the past provides the space for a much more sound, artistic, and contemporary facility. God isn't afraid to tear down old patterns of thought, behaviors, and habits in a man in order to make room for His purpose and destiny to thrive in him. God sees the end from the beginning, so He doesn't fixate on the mess in between (see Isa. 46:9-10).

How can a greater understanding of God's intended outcome help men persevere in the process of restructuring, rebuilding, and personal development?

On the video Dr. Evans said, "God has a purpose for your life. He has a plan for your life, and yes, we messed it up a lot of times, but God knows how to rebuild. He's the ultimate Mr. Fixit because He can take what looks like nothing and make it something. He can take something that looks like it has no future and give it a future that a man never thought he could have."

How have you witnessed God's rebuilding and restoration in your life or in someone else's life?

I once had the privilege of preaching in the exact location where Peter preached his first sermon after Jesus restored him. It's called the Southern Steps in Israel, and there more than three thousand people put their faith in Jesus Christ in response to Peter's message. Standing where Peter stood reminded me of God's faithfulness to use us in spite of ourselves. Not all of us have publicly rejected Jesus as Peter did, but each man, in his own way, has marginalized Jesus either through words or actions at some point in time. Yet Jesus remains faithful to draw us back to Him when we repent.

What are some hindrances that prevent men from accepting Jesus' call to restoration and rebuilding after they've failed?

A false sense of pride and a spirit of self-sufficiency are the surest killers of future ministry, influence, and impact. Men, when you've failed, admit it. Acknowledge your sin to God and repent. He's in the business of rebuilding, but it starts with your honesty and sorrow over sin. Peter went on to do even greater ministry after he was restored than he ever did before. Now he relied on God's power rather than his own. His is a lesson for all of us.

How can our small group and church create a culture in which men feel free to acknowledge failure and seek God's restorative power? Give examples of ways we can invite honesty and hope into our relationships and our church environment.

PRAYER

Close the session with prayer.

Father, You have the power to restore and rebuild what has been damaged or destroyed in our lives. We look to You to manifest this power both in and through us in all areas where we need Your help. Give us boldness and courage to fully live out our purpose and calling for You. In Christ's name,
amen.

HIT THE STREETS

You Might as Well Be Honest; God Already Knows

Never measure your spiritual life by your neighbor. Never measure your spiritual walk by how well or how badly everyone else is doing. Some men want to say, "Well, at least I don't do what John does. I must be a better Christian than he is."

The moment we start thinking like that, pride will trip us up. Sometimes we lie even when we pray. It would be much better to go before God and say, "I think I like You" or even "I'm angry with You."

You might think you'd feel uncomfortable saying that. Would you feel more comfortable lying? Keep in mind that God won't sanction our theological lies.

If your world has imploded, don't go around saying, "Everything is fine," because it's not fine. If you've collapsed, you're not OK. If your life has caved in, you need more than the standard three-minute prayer: "Lord, thank You for this. Thank You for that. Bless me with this. Help me do that. In Jesus' name, amen."

God says, "I'm tired of that. That's not really the truth. Your family is falling apart. You've got a pornographic mind. You're not loving your wife. You love your career more than Me and more than your family. That's what I want to talk about. I want to talk about those hurts and those sins. I want to get down to the nitty-gritty. Do you really love Me?"

Some men are living an inauthentic, fake Christianity, while others are living a proud Christianity that says, "I'm better than those other guys." When you come clean with God, He can come clean with you. Here are three ways to be honest with God.

1. Come Clean with Jesus

You might as well be honest. God knows the truth anyhow. When you pray, reveal the truth. It will help you and God get on the same page faster.

2. Be Authentic

Superheroes exist in movies, not in everyday life. We all have struggles, doubts, and fears. We've all failed. An authentic relationship with God and with yourself will open you up to the divine help you need to live out the best version of yourself. Don't aim for superhero; aim for spiritual greatness. Only God can get you there.

3. Do What You Can

It's OK if you need to tell Jesus in prayer, "Lord, I don't know what to say." Remember that He knows your needs before you express them (see Matt. 6:8). Too many times we aim too high, and when we can't reach that goal, we quit. Admit where you are. Start there and do what you can. God will help you grow in time.

BIBLE STUDY 1

Double or Nothing

As men, many of us have been challenged by powerful sermons we've heard or men's conferences we've attended, and we've responded in a genuine way. We have good spiritual intentions, make well-meaning spiritual promises, and pray great spiritual vows, only to find we can't carry them out. Our lives may even implode when we try.

When our lives implode, many of us stop and sift through the rubble. Instead of looking to Christ and the redemption and forgiveness He offers, we turn our poor decisions over and over again in our mind and miss the fullness of life Jesus has for us.

Read the following words of Jesus and answer the questions.

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

JOHN 15:5

What did Jesus mean when He said to abide in Him?

What happens when we make abiding in Christ an ongoing part of our lives?

Abide means "to hang out with." That's it. When a branch abides in the vine, it remains connected to the vine. As soon as it's cut off, the branch stops producing fruit. Why? Because the source of its productivity was the vine. To hang out with or remain connected to Jesus Christ is the secret to your eternal significance and productivity.

Read Luke 22:31-34. Peter claimed he would remain with Jesus. However, he denied Jesus soon thereafter. What led Peter to deny Jesus?

What leads you to turn your back on Jesus, even momentarily?

Peter had every intention of staying true to Jesus when he told Him he would never deny Him. However, Peter lacked the humility he needed to truly abide in Christ. Pride separates us from an abiding relationship with Jesus because pride says we can do things on our own. Pride says we're stronger than we actually are. Pride dictates our schedules and determines our thoughts. Humility is the foundation of an abiding connection to Jesus. Humility admits, "I can do nothing without Jesus."

In what ways does humility motivate us to abide in Christ?

I understand Peter's attitude. That's a cultural man's attitude. We trust in our abilities, position, power, wisdom, and strength. But like Peter, we have to learn that lasting impact comes only through Christ in us. Some of us fail in big ways, as Peter did. Others fail in small ways. But we all have to learn the same lesson, no matter how the Teacher gets it across. That lesson is the necessity of depending on and abiding in Jesus Christ's position, ability, authority, power, wisdom, and strength instead of our own.

Once you learn that lesson, you'll no longer make excuses for what you can't do. Rather, like Peter when he later preached to thousands, you'll discover that God can use you in remarkable ways, even beyond what you hoped or thought possible.

If Peter had sought to intentionally abide with Jesus and trust in Him, how could His moment of failure have been different?

Read John 21:15-17. How did Jesus respond to Peter's failings? What might Jesus tell us when we fail?

Notice that when Jesus restored Peter, He didn't rehash Peter's sin and failings. He didn't sift through the rubble with Peter. If we're truly repentant, our sin is as far away from us as the east is from the west (see Ps. 103:12). Once Peter reconnected to Jesus and began abiding in Him, he understood that he was forgiven.

So it is with us. God takes the mess we made and starts building a new foundation on top of it. He cleans up the rubble and forgets it was ever there. When we stop and linger to look at broken pieces, we're taking a man-centered perspective on our sin. Jesus wants more for us. Abiding in Jesus fills us with joy. We'll never live in the joy He's given us if we're stuck admiring the rubble.

What changed about Peter's life when he understood that Jesus loved him and had completely forgiven him?

Read Acts 2:1-39. What changed about sulking, foot-in-his-mouth Peter between that breakfast with Jesus and the day of Pentecost?

The same Peter on the beach was the same Peter at Pentecost. Yes, the same Peter who so often put his foot in his mouth. The same Peter who kept messing up, made promises he couldn't keep, was afraid of what the Jews would say, was scared of going public with his faith, and actually denied the Lord.

Peter not only stood up, but he also spoke up. His sermon on the day of Pentecost brought three thousand people to faith in Christ. And listen to his very public confession:

Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.

ACTS 2:36

Peter publicly reversed his failure. He had denied Jesus, but now he proclaimed Him. That's called a turnaround.

Read the following verse.

*Instead of your shame you will have a double portion,
And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion.
Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land,
Everlasting joy will be theirs.*

ISAIAH 61:7
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What joy can we find when we stop sifting through the rubble? In what areas of your life do you need to stop looking through broken pieces and receive the wholeness Christ has promised you?

People use the phrase "Double or nothing" when trying to gamble away a debt. This phrase means the debt will either be canceled if the person wins the bet or doubled. God doesn't call you to gamble, but He asks you to live by faith in His promises. He offers you a double-or-nothing option. If you choose to repent of the failures and sins you've committed and serve Him in an honest, humble, abiding way, He will repay you double what you've lost. Or you can stick to your own strength and continue to reap nothing. It's your choice.

PRAY

Pray about anything in your life that may have been harmed by your failures, causing you to experience loss or lack. Ask God to give you a right heart aligned under Him, not a perfect heart but, as Jesus illustrated with Peter, an honest, authentic heart. Then ask Him to restore to you double or even more of what you've lost in the past.