

Failure
John 13:31-38

Introduction: Failure. We all experience it at times - in relationships, in responsibilities, in our own behavior and character. And when we do, there's the potential for shame and despair, but there is also the potential for humility and growth. This was the experience of Peter. He wasn't disqualified or rejected because he denied Jesus three times. He was humbled and deepened as a result of his failure. If we are willing, God will redeem our failure and we can emerge deepened and humble and useful to God.

Opening Discussion: Did you experience any kind of failure this week (big or small)? If so, what?

Read John 13:31-38

1. What does Jesus mean by saying "Now, is the Son of Man glorified" (v. 31)? What does the cross have to do with this?

Steve said:

This command to "love one another" is "new" in a couple of different ways. First, this commandment is new in that Jesus says, "love one another, ***even as I have loved you***, that you also love one another." Jesus' love for them was a new standard for their love for one another. In John 13:1 we read that Jesus loved them "to the end" - to the end of His life and to the fullest extent. In chapter 15 Jesus will say, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." And so the new standard will be His sacrificial, to-the-death love for them.

2. According to Jesus, what's at stake when we love or don't love one another (v. 35)?
3. Why does our love for one another prove that we are Jesus' disciples?
4. Along with John 13:36-38, read Matthew 26:69-75. What kind of thoughts do you suppose were going through Peter's mind after this failure?

5. Read Luke 22:31-32. What insights does this give us into how Jesus saw this failure of Peter's?

Steve said:

What would you consider to be your greatest failure - either in a relationship, in a responsibility or in personal character and behavior? Jesus knows about our failures as surely as He knew Peter's failure. I think we can assume that Jesus wants to redeem our failures just like He did Peter's.

6. How does it make you feel that Jesus knows all your failures and that He wants to redeem them like He did Peter's?

Steve said:

Others who experience dramatic failure **will** turn back to God in humility. God redeems their failure. Their failure is one more thing that God uses to deepen their lives and bring them to maturity. Sometimes that failure even becomes a foundational element in their usefulness to God. This was the experience of Peter . . . He wasn't disqualified or rejected because he denied Jesus three times. He was humbled and deepened as a result of his failure.

7. Have ever experienced some kind of failure that ultimately made you more useful to God? Explain.

Steve said:

Our failures can deepen our capacity to love each other. This was certainly the case for Peter. We get the distinct impression that Peter's failure would lead to greater capacity to love his brothers.

8. In what ways can failure deepen our capacity to love each other?

9. What do you sense is the main thing God is trying to say to you through this passage?