



SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 1: Forgiving a Friend Who Fails You | 4.8.18 | FOLLOW THE STORY ON FB @FACEBOOK.COM/THESTORYHOUSTON

We all know forgiveness is important, but we don't always know how it works or what difference it makes. Sure, it's for your own peace of mind. Yes, it's immature to hold a grudge. Yeah, it's about making peace. But the Bible's many commands to forgive everyone who hurts us - our friends, family, coworkers, and even our enemies - seem to set us up for failure and disappointment. By simply forgiving someone's foolishness or selfishness, aren't we just *enabling* bad behavior? When we *forgive and forget*, aren't we bound to fall for the same lies again and again?

Starting today, and for the next five weeks, we'll dig deeper to explore what it really means to forgive, and what difference it makes. We'll deal with these questions:

- + Where do you find the strength to forgive someone who's really betrayed you?
- + How can you learn to forgive yourself?
- + Is it true that we should "forgive and forget"?
- + Is it really possible to forgive your worst enemy?

To start this series, we'll take a closer look at the story of a man named Simon, who we've come to know as Simon Peter (or Saint Peter). Take a moment to write down everything you remembered about Peter (before today's message) here:

For back-story on Peter, see the story of Jesus calling him (Luke 5:1-11), the time Peter walked on water (Matthew 14:22-36), the time Peter identified Jesus as the Messiah (Matthew 16:13-20), and the time Peter drew a sword and cut off a guy's ear (John 18:10-11).

In the hours prior to Jesus' crucifixion, He predicted that Peter would disown Him three times that same night. Peter said, "Lord...I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!" (John 13:37-38) This is what happened next:

Luke 22:54-62 Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said. A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

What do these events tell you about Simon Peter?

In Mark 16:7, an angel in Jesus' tomb tells three women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome) to "Go, tell his disciples *and Peter* that Jesus is going ahead of you into Galilee." What does this simple passage tell us about Peter's status after his denials and Jesus' death?

Then, Luke 24:33-34 tell us about a little-known resurrection appearance. "The disciples were saying to each other, 'The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Peter!'" Given all that happened, why do you think Jesus would appear to Peter *before* all the others?

After this, Peter begins to hang out with the disciples again, but he's still unsure about his place in Jesus' movement. *Can you deny a man three times (in a moment when he needs you most) and still be a disciple of that man?* Now we get to the heart of today's story, found in **John 21:2-17**.

Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'

How many charcoal fires (Greek *anthrakia*) are mentioned in the Gospels? ...or in the whole Bible? Why is this important? What is the relationship between the two fireside conversations?

In what way does the English language fail us while reading this passage? Why did Jesus and Peter use two different words for "love" (*agape*, *phileo*), and how does that change the way you read this story?

**Of course God wants your _____,
but for today, _____ will do.**

What did Jesus' forgiveness set Simon Peter free to do?

Where do you see yourself in Peter's story? What might receiving God's forgiveness set you free to do?