



# small groups

*Discussion Guide*



## **Our Denial**

Luke 22:54-62

## **Ice Breaker**

*(5 minutes)*

### **Discuss**

- In the 9am service, Andy said “bass ackwards” and Jason said “crap.” Have you ever heard a preacher cuss? Did it make you laugh or squirm?
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## **Lesson Review**

*(45 minutes)*

Andy’s message comprised two stories, three truths, and one application.

### **First Story: Peter Betrays**

**Read Luke 22:31-34 and 54-62**

Andy said that Christians sometimes get a reputation for being “holier than thou” but the essence of our faith is knowing that we are guilty and frail. Peter promised faithfulness even unto death and then betrayed Jesus before the day was out.

Here are the last four sentences of the audio script we heard retelling this story in Peter’s voice.

*...the rooster’s crow pierced the darkness, punctuating my denial and heralding my shame. Jesus turned and looked straight at me. He, ever-faithful, turned and looked at me, ever-failing, and I remembered his words. Even in my denial he turned toward me and saw me, but I could not bear the weight of what I’d done. I went away and wept.*

Andy called this Peter’s Lance Armstrong moment, his Tiger Woods moment, his Brian Williams moment. Those three men had painfully public failures, moments when their most grievous and private disgraces were exposed.

### **Discuss**

- Have you ever had such a moment? How does it feel to have your guilt exposed?
- What do you do instinctively when your guilt is exposed? Do you tend to make excuses? Pick fights? Hide?

## **Second Story: Jesus Restores**

### **Read John 21:1-17**

After betraying Jesus, Peter was so filled with grief and regret that he quit. He went back home and went back to his old job, fishing. Peter may have expected never to hear from Jesus again. But notice all the surprising and poignant pieces to this second story.

**Miraculous Catch:** The huge haul of fish in this story must have reminded the disciples of one of their first encounters with Jesus when he brought the same miracle. (Luke 5)

**Charcoal Fire:** It was around a fire that Peter betrayed Jesus and it is at a fire that Jesus restores Peter.

**Jesus’ Look:** Luke’s account says that Jesus looked at Peter when the rooster crowed. Now, sitting on the beach, this was probably the first time Jesus had looked Peter in the eyes since that moment.

**Forgiveness and Commissioning:** Andy noted that Peter probably expected reproof but received restoration. Not only that, he received a commissioning. Peter probably expected to be chewed out and dismissed. Instead, he was made a leader of the church. Peter went on to serve as the first and primary spokesperson for the nascent religion, delivering the sermon on Pentecost Sunday when 3,000 people were saved. He authored

two letters that became part of the New Testament. And he was, true to the promise he made before his betrayal, faithful even unto death. Tradition holds that he was crucified upside down for his faith under Emperor Nero in AD 64.

**Sets of Three:** Peter denied Jesus three times, and Jesus asks for a profession of his love three times, as if erasing all Peter's failures.

Jesus seems to go out of his way to give meaning to this scene. In fact, he followed Peter from his empty tomb in Jerusalem to this lakeside in Galilee. The Risen King of Glory followed his betrayer, and used fire, fish, and words to restore him.

### **Discuss**

- Has anyone ever pursued you like that? Who and when?

It's also interesting to note the words for "love" in John 21. Greek had four words for love. *Agape* meant utterly devoted, self-giving love. *Phileo* meant brotherly love or the companionship of a best friend. *Eros* meant sexual or romantic love. And *storge* meant affectionate familial love such as that among parents and children. When Jesus reinstates Peter, he asks twice for *agape* love and once for *phileo*. Peter responds with *phileo* each time. It reads thus:

Simon son of John, do you *agape* me more than these?

Yes, Lord, you know that I *phileo* you.

Feed my lambs.

Simon son of John, do you *agape* me?

Yes, Lord, you know that I *phileo* you.

Take care of my sheep.

Simon son of John, do you *phileo* me?

Lord, you know all things; you know that I *phileo* you.

Feed my sheep...

## Discuss

- What do you make of the changes in verbs in this dialog? How do you think Peter would have understood the exchange?

## Three Principles

### 1. Our denials may surprise us, but never Jesus.

*“Grace isn’t a deserved commodity in any conceivable economy. Grace is about who Jesus is, not about who we are. It’s about his skill set, his expertise, his initiative. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. And the history of God’s mercy in Scripture is unexpected and unpredictable; paths springing up in out-of-the-way places for people I’d have written off.”*

– Julie Rhodes, Chatter, April 2015

### 2. Jesus’ love is never diminished, even by our denials.

*“We should be astonished at the goodness of God, stunned that He should bother to call us by name, our mouths wide open at His love, bewildered that at this very moment we are standing on holy ground.”*

– Brennan Manning, The Ragamuffin Gospel

### 3. Jesus’ love invites us to restoration after every denial.

*“No matter how bad you’ve messed up, he’s got a fire going on the beach and he invites you to come have breakfast. If you’re thinking, ‘I’ve done too many bad things. How could Jesus ever accept me?’ all I can do is laugh and declare the glorious truth that Jesus Christ laid down his life for sinners.”*

– Dr. E. Andrew McQuitty

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# Application

*(10 minutes)*

Throughout this series, we've used Peter's boat to represent his self-interests. Peter's story has been one of climbing in and out of boats. First, he was reluctant to follow Jesus (stayed in the fishing boat). Then he walked on water (out of the boat). Then he rebuked Jesus for his sacrificial plan (in the boat). Then he defended Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (out of the boat). Then he denied Jesus three times (in the boat). Then he saw the empty tomb and believed (out of the boat). Then he returned to Galilee, chased there by the shame of his failures, to literally get back into his boat. And finally, seeing the resurrected Jesus on the shore, he jumped out of the boat and swam to him.

Andy said the application this week is simple: swim to shore. Get out of your boat of shame and do whatever it takes to get to Jesus.

## **Discuss**

- How are you going to swim to shore this week?