

New Start

Peter



Small Group Study, week commencing 22nd January 2024

For starters

“Can we be forgiven? I think that question is fundamental to all our lives. In fact, it may be the question that our lives pivot around or, indeed, the whole world revolves around. Can we be forgiven?” (Nick Cave, *Faith Hope and Carnage*)

Discuss!

Introduction

New starts occur for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes they are forced upon us (as in the case of Esther. See previous study). On other occasions we want them and need them because we are carrying pain from the past. The well-known story of Peter’s restoration is a rich source of help for moving on from regrets.

Read

[John 13:37-38](#); [John 18:15-18](#), [25-27](#);

Study

1. Of all the disciples, Peter was the most vocal in his declaration of loyalty to Jesus ([John 13:37-38](#)). **How do you imagine he felt after “the cock began to crow” ([John 18:27](#))?**

2. Peter must have had huge regrets about his denial. Regrets can be life-crippling. **Which of these do you recognise from regrets you might have had in the past, or carry still?**

- Loss of confidence
- Loss of courage
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Low self-esteem
- Preoccupation with the past
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Depression

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3. Read [John 21:15-22](#). An interesting thing is taking place in this dialogue between Jesus and Peter, and it's hidden by our NIV translation. Two Greek words for love are being used. There is *agapeo*, which is typically a love with the mind and will; and *phileo*, typically a love with emotion. And the way the conversation proceeds is as follows.

Jesus: Do you *agapeo* me? Do you love me with mind and will?

Peter: You know that I *phileo* you. You know I have affection for you.

Jesus: Do you *agapeo* me? Do you love me with mind and will?

Peter: You know that I *phileo* you. You know I have affection for you.

Jesus: Do you *phileo* me? Do you have affection for me?

Peter: You know that I *phileo* you. You know I have affection for you.

What does this exchange suggest to you (if anything!)?

Note: There is something missing in Peter's response. He feels unable to say in reply to Jesus, "You know I agapeo you. You know I am more than just fond of you. There is a firmness of will, a resolution, to my affection." Peter can't say it, because he has said that before, and he has failed to live up to his big words. Instead of the bold, brash Peter that we knew before Calvary, this is a Peter who is humble and hurting.

4. How do Jesus' words address Peter's issues of regret?

Note: Jesus' words show great wisdom and gentleness. He doesn't avoid Peter issues but he doesn't charge in and confront them either. Instead, through his three questions he evokes Peter's three denials, and gets to the heart of what matters most. Peter loves Jesus – this is the most important thing. Jesus shows his trust in Peter and reassures him of his value by giving him a task that will take his attention away from himself, and redirect his energies towards others.

Rita Snowden, a missionary and author in the 1900s wrote, "You ask me what forgiveness means; it is the wonder of being trusted again by God in the place where I disgraced him."

5. Do you have any personal experience of starting something new that has helped you move on from regrets about the past?

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6. Lewis Carroll's Alice In Wonderland said, "I can't go back to yesterday because I was a different person then." **How might Lewis Carroll's advice help us move forwards beyond regret?**

Pray

This study may have brought up some painful memories for some people. Pray for each other – to accept God's forgiveness where this is needed, and to move on with courage and grace.