

6. Restoring Love (Part 1)

Main Idea:

When our love for Jesus fails, his love still restores us. He reinstates us in the places where we have disgraced him the most. When we are at our worst, he reaches out to give us his best. No other person on earth could ever sustain that kind of love and grace towards us consistently.

Text: John 20:30-31

Restoring Love Redeems Our Sin

In our relationships with loved ones, we are often loyal, committed and believe we will do anything for them, until temptation comes knocking. At some point we are all guilty of making self-centred, selfish choices, which have a direct impact on our loved ones. There are many ways we do this: overspending, not managing our time well, being lazy or irresponsible, choosing our desires over theirs etc. When the choice is in front of us to please ourselves or please them, we often choose ourselves. When we know we have done them wrong, we tend to run away from the truth, hide or we may even deflect the situation. But rarely do we confess our selfish, sinful choices and seek to make things right out of our own volition. We do not want to feel the weight of our own wrongdoing, or deal with the disappointment, anger or frustration of our loved ones when they find out what we have done. Even just the thought of being confronted fills us with dread and shame.

Peter was fickle in his love for Jesus. He loved him fiercely when he was with him, but when he was tested and challenged on the night Jesus was arrested, he actually denied knowing Jesus. One can only imagine his pain and shame when he saw Jesus being nailed to the cross, and then watching his best friend and teacher die. He never got to say that he was sorry. His heart must have been shattered.

After rising from the dead, Jesus appeared to his disciples a number of times. One can only imagine the awkwardness and shame Peter must have felt each time he saw Jesus. But instead of seeking Jesus out, and seeking his forgiveness, he just shrunk back and tried to go back to his old life.

Fortunately for Peter, Jesus' love was not fickle. Instead of allowing him to sweep the denial under the 'carpet', Jesus came to Peter to deal with what had happened, with the intention to restore their relationship.



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Redeeming love has 2 elements to it:

Restoring love is confrontational

Jesus knew that for a relationship to be restored, he would need to confront Peter. He loved Peter too much to allow the issue to remain hidden. This is important for us, because it shows us that God is not soft on our sin, and that we need to be confronted with it, in order for the relationship to be restored. But it also shows us how God pursues us in order to restore a damaged relationship. God loves us enough to NOT leave us in our sin. We hate confrontation, but we can trust God's way of confronting us, because it allows us to feel the weight of what we have really done, to own it, label it, put in "on the table" and then know that he completely forgives, cleanses and restores us to right relationship – immediately. People are not so quick to let go of the damage done to them by our sin, but Jesus is able to forgive and restore our relationship immediately. When we are confronted by the Lord, we can be sure that we will feel the weight of conviction, along with the pain and shame that is evoked in the process, but we need not fear the result of the confrontation. Jesus confronts us in love to redeem and restore us to right relationship with him. His confrontation is a gift if love to us.

Restoring love is patient

Throughout scripture, we see evidence of God's patience with sin, giving his people time and opportunity to repent. He gave Peter time to sit in his discomfort, and to think about what had happened. In our times of wishing away our sin, the enemy comes in to tempt us into denial, justifying our choices or just trying to put it behind us, without repentance. His goal is always to lead us away from repentance, because that leads us away from God. We can be absolutely sure that when we are feeling nudged to own our sin, confess and turn away from it, it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Repentance restores us instantly into right relationship with God.

How we should respond

Most of us really want to please God and hate the fact that we fail him. But the truth is, we fail in far greater ways than we even realise, because the depth of our sinful nature is so profound. Therefore, we need to acknowledge that we are, in fact, powerless to fix our deep failures. Only God can heal our brokenness and failures. He goes about this process slowly and carefully. Jesus didn't go in and address every one of Peter's sins, he dealt with the one that was most important at the time. Likewise, he deals with our sins one at a time, and nudges and convicts us. We must take heed of this and respond.



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During this prompting, we need to guard ourselves from discouragement. This comes from the enemy, who will bring to mind every sin and failure, and tell you what a failure you are as a Christian. Satan's tool is condemnation, while God prompts *conviction* to bring about repentance, which brings about total freedom and joy. How we do this:

1. **Confess** – God already knows all about your sin, but owning it in your own heart and mind, admitting it clearly, allows you to bring it to the light and then repent.
2. **Confirm** – we need to keep reminding ourselves of our new identity, which is in Christ. We are no longer slaves to sin, but we are forgiven, sons/daughters of God.
3. **Choose** – we do not have to keep choosing sin. Christ died to redeem us from sin. As believers, we are already redeemed, and so we are free to choose to live in it now.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think we try and avoid confrontation? (What emotions do we not want to face?)
2. When you have been selfish and acted in a way that has hurt or failed others, how do you deal with it? Explain your motives. (E.g. Do you pretend you did nothing wrong and don't know what everyone is talking about? Do you deflect it onto someone else, as though it is really their fault? Do you hope and pray that they don't notice, or at least won't say anything, so no one has to feel awkward?)
3. Why is gentle confrontation about sin better than 'sweeping it under the carpet'?
4. Why was it an act of love for Jesus to confront Peter, and what impact did it have on Peter's future.
5. ♥ Personal Reflection: What was your reaction to God's prompting the last time he nudged you to deal with some sin issue? (Did you ignore him, justify or downplay your sin as something "small", try and drown out the voice, feel overwhelmed with guilt and shame.... etc.)
6. Why is God's confrontation of our sin the best thing he could do for us?
7. ♥ Personal Reflection: it is likely that the Holy Spirit has been nudging you on some sin issue during this message. It may not even be something others can see, but something in your character such as pride, arrogance, racism, hatred, jealousy, envy, self-righteousness.... etc.) How are you going to respond to the Lord about this? Would you be willing to confess this sin to someone else? (If not, why not?). If so, perhaps share with them the process of repentance that you go through, in order to encourage and help them on their own journey of repentance.

