

# Follow (Part 1)

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Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[ 0 : 00 ] John chapter 21.

If you don't have a Bible with you today, you can use one of the Bibles in the pews! And if you don't own a Bible, please take that Bible home with you this morning as a gift from our church to you in the hopes that you'll continue to be reading God's Word. So we're headed down the finish line here. We're almost done with the Gospel of John. This is going to be the first of a two-part sermon. Today we'll cover verses 15 and go through verse 19. So if you're there this morning, would you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together? I'm going to read verses 15 through 19. 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. He said to him, feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was grieved because he had 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. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God. And after saying this, he said to him, follow me. May God add a blessing to the reading of his Word. Would you please be seated?

One of the greatest fears of any athlete is to fail in a moment that costs their team to lose a game. [ 2 : 18 ] Striking out with the bases loaded in the bottom of the last inning in a close game, fumbling the ball on the last drive at the goal line or a field goal that goes wide left or wide right, missing the target as time expires, clanging a free throw or missing a layup or a wide open shot that could have sealed a victory. No athlete wants to be known as the one who choked under pressure.

Any kid, I think, growing up with a basketball goal in their driveway, imagined themselves with the ball in their hand, audibly counting down the game clock. 10, 9, 8, 7, dribbling left, 6, 5, 4, 3, dribbling right, 2, 1, putting up the buzzer beater. It goes in, swish, and then celebrating with imaginary teammates, conducting post-game interviews with imaginary reporters and accepting an imaginary trophy for being the hero who won the game. But if you were like me, a lot of those buzzer beating shots did not go in.

And so you do it all over again, right? Just forget about that. That time didn't count. Try again, and you try again, until you make the shot, and you are the hero. Don't you wish life was like that? Don't you wish that you had the ability, the power to rewind, to reset, to do over a situation or a moment where you failed? A moment where you blew it, instead of having to live life with the regret of what could have been or what should have been, if only things had gone differently.

If you have wished that, and I'm sure that you have, then you can relate to Peter in this moment in his life recorded in John chapter 21. This is the story of Peter's restoration. And to better understand his restoration, we need to first understand something about his fall, about his failure.

[ 4 : 43 ] Peter. It began in the upper room on the night before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Jesus told his disciples that one of them would betray him, and then Judas left to do that very thing. And then after that, Jesus began speaking about those who are truly his disciples and how they are to love him in John chapter 13, verses 34 through 35. Jesus said, But Peter, perhaps still astounded by Jesus' announcement that one of his disciples would betray him, and stunned by the news that Jesus would soon be leaving, he decided to interrupt Jesus' teaching about this new commandment to love one another with a question in verse 36.

Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? It's like Peter saying, spare me all this love talk, right? I want to know where you're going. And Jesus answered him, where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward. Peter said to him, Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. And Jesus answered, will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times. And I wonder if Peter, having heard these things really wasn't paying attention to much else that Jesus said from that point on in the upper room. He certainly doesn't ask any more questions. Thomas does, Philip does, but I think Peter is so stunned by Jesus' prophecy that he would deny him three times that he was probably thinking to himself, he's wrong about me. How could he think so poorly of me? I'll prove him wrong. I'll show him.

I can be trusted. And I believe that because later, as the disciples were making their way from the upper room to the garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26 records Jesus saying this to them, you will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I am raised, I will go before you to Galilee.

So again, Jesus is saying that during his crucifixion, his disciples would abandon him, but after his resurrection, he would gather them again. But Peter is still mulling over, I think, what happened in the upper room, what he's just heard Jesus say now about this betrayal that Jesus said he would deny him three times. And so again, he interrupts Jesus.

In verse 33, Peter answered him, though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away. And Jesus reminds him, Jesus said to him, truly, I tell you this very night before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. Peter's not done speaking. Peter said to him, even if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And all the other disciples emboldened by Peter said the same.

[ 8 : 22 ] Peter remained unconvinced that he would fail the Lord and went self-confidently into his downfall. Each of the Gospels tells us that Peter publicly denied the Lord just as Jesus said that he would three times while Jesus was on trial. Peter, who waited outside in the courtyard of the high priest, is heard there declaring over and over again, I don't know this man. I don't know what you're talking about.

I am not one of his disciples. Three times, Peter had the chance there to rise to the occasion, to be bold, to show his love for the Lord, his devotion to his Savior, and three times, he failed.

Luke records that after the third denial, Jesus made eye contact with Peter, and when Peter made eye contact with his Lord, he went outside and he wept bitterly.

Imagine that. Imagine that being you. Once is bad, twice is worse, but three times? Makes me think of a basketball player who gets fouled behind the three-point line as time expires and his team is down one point.

If you've ever been a fan of a basketball team and that was your situation, he takes the first shot and he misses it. Okay, well, we still have two shots, can still tie, can still win the game.

[ 9 : 55 ] Puts up the second free throw and that clings off the back of the rim too. All right, that's disappointing, but hey, we can still tie this thing and make it into overtime.

But then clang, he misses the third one. Game over. And I bet that's how Peter felt in this boat, on this day, in John 21.

It was game over for him. I think Peter's thinking I had my chance. I blew it. I blew it not just once, not just twice, but three times in a row.

I betrayed Jesus. I promised him. I made a vow to him in front of everybody that I would not fail him. I told him that I would not abandon him, even if he and I were the only ones left standing.

I told him that he could count on me. I thought I could be the hero, but instead, here I am, a spectacular failure.

[ 11 : 01 ] All the people I know, all the people I love, all the people that I respect and admire, all of them know how much of a coward I am.

I am a visual illustration of cowardice. I blew my chance with Jesus, and now there's no way that he will ever or should ever trust me again.

I think that characterizes Peter's attitude as he pushes his fishing boat out to sea. He knows that Jesus has been resurrected.

He's seen it. But now the part that he thought he had the play, the role that he had been given by the Lord, was finished.

And I bet that he spent that night fishing and catching nothing, wondering, if I could just go back, if I could just have that night over, to do over again.

[ 12 : 03 ] If I knew what I know now, things would be different. And Peter here kind of benches himself from the ministry. He thinks he'll return to what is familiar.

He'll think that he'll return to fishing, what he's been good at in the past. But as we saw last week, trusting in what you know instead of who you know ends in failure.

And you know, I wouldn't be surprised at all if some of you, or a lot of you, feel right now the way that I think Peter felt back then.

You have regrets. You're living with regrets. Your focus is primarily on how big of a failure you are instead of how good and how gracious of a Savior you have in Jesus Christ.

Like Peter, you've benched yourself. Maybe you don't even feel worthy of sitting in the bench that you're sitting in right now. And if so, you are a lot like Peter in this moment of his life.

[ 13 : 14 ] And what you need today is the same thing that Peter needed back then. Once the disciples realized that the stranger on the shore was Jesus, John cried out, It is the Lord.

And Peter jumped out of the boat, but he jumped out not to swim away from Jesus. Oh no, I'm in trouble. He swam to Jesus. What he needed most was to be in the presence of his Savior again. And Jesus is not done with Peter. Not by a long shot. And you know, if you feel like Peter did then, today, you must understand that in the same way, Jesus is not done with you either, brother or sister.

He calls you. He calls me. To get our behinds off the bench. And to get back in the game.

Leave past failures behind. And commit yourself to following me right now. And continue in the direction that I would have you to go. And so the main idea for this morning's sermon is this.

[ 14 : 28 ] Christ demands total commitment from those who follow him. Now again, this is a two-part sermon. There will be three points today. We'll just get through point one. But Jesus Christ demands total commitment from those who follow him.

You cannot commit yourself to Christ in the present and live in the past. Dwelling upon your past failures. Feeling sorry for yourself. And refusing to forgive yourself of the sins that Jesus has already forgiven you of.

Sins that Jesus has already atoned for. Your sin is great and so is mine. But Christ is greater. And he wants you to know that. He expects you.

He demands that you live your life committed fully to him. He who has called you from death to life. He who empowers you to live the life committed to serving him.

He has every right to demand that you surrender your life to him because he's God. And you're not here without him. And you're not saved without him. And so these verses record three demands of Christ to those whom he calls to follow him.

[ 15 : 37 ] And the first that we'll cover today is this. Jesus Christ demands that you love him above all others. He demands that you love him above all others. So again, if we're looking at verse 15, When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

And this is interesting here because Jesus addresses Peter as Simon. Simon was Peter's given name.

But if you remember back at the beginning of John's gospel, Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter. And Peter in the Greek, petros, means stone or boulder.

And so when Peter, if you remember, first meets Jesus, He's Simon. He's shaky. He's overcome with the sense of his own sinfulness in the presence of Jesus.

And he says to him, Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man. But then Jesus calls him and Jesus gives him a nickname. He says, Your name is Peter. Your name is going to be Rock.

[ 16 : 43 ] You were shaky, but now you're rocky. You were shifty, but now you're steady. Now that you know me and now that you're going to follow me. So Jesus begins restoring Peter here by addressing him as Simon once again.

Simon, his old shaky name. This was a gentle rebuke of our Lord to Peter. He's reminding him that his recent behavior is not rock-like.

He has gone back to being shaky, shifty, squishy, slippery Simon. That's not the person that Jesus called him to be.

And so Jesus is saying, You're being Simon when I've called you to be Peter, the rock. And so what follows in this exchange between Jesus and Peter is Jesus solidifying his shaky disciple.

Then Jesus asks him, Do you love me more than these? In Jesus' question and Peter's response to it, there is an interesting wordplay here in the original Greek text.

[ 17 : 56 ] The word Jesus used for love, Simon, do you love me, is *agapeo*. And that's the supreme love. Supreme love. A love that implies total commitment.

And now as I mentioned last week when Jesus asked, Do you love me more than these? I think these refers to a number of things. First of all, I think it does refer back to the fishing boats and the nets and the fish.

All these things, all those things that Peter had returned to when he benched himself from ministry. His old way of life. These things that he had felt safe to return to but had failed so miserably in trying to go back to because Jesus wouldn't allow it.

But this text indicates that this conversation between Jesus and Peter was not conducted in private. Jesus didn't say, We don't have any mention of that in the text.

Say, Peter, come here. I want to talk to you alone. No, they're around a charcoal fire. There's Jesus, there's Peter, and there's six other of Jesus' disciples who were gathered around that place listening to this conversation between Jesus and Peter.

[ 19 : 15 ] And it's essential that they be there to hear it because they needed to hear Jesus reinstate Peter publicly. Just as Peter had denied Jesus publicly, so Jesus would reinstate Peter in the same way.

Because again, Jesus had plans for Peter and for his disciples. And these other men needed to know that even though Peter had failed miserably in the past, Jesus was still entrusting him with the future of his church.

To Peter to be the leader of his disciples. So when Jesus says, Do you love me more than these? I think he's talking about those other disciples as well.

Do you love me more than these guys? Simon, do you love me more than these old things that you have given up so quickly to go back to instead of following me and have now returned to?

Peter, do you love me more than these other men sitting here with us? And I think that if these refers to the other disciples primarily sitting with Peter and Jesus, it helps us better understand Peter's reply to our Lord's first question.

[ 20 : 35 ] Peter said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And there, Peter uses a different word for love than Jesus. He doesn't use *agapeo*, he uses *phileo*, which was still strong love.

The city of Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. I love you. I love you a lot. It's love that signifies affection. And that's important.

Because remember, Peter was confident. He was, at the time, one of the inner circle, with James and John, of Jesus' disciples.

He was one of the star players. You could almost see Peter being that kid on a team saying, Give me the ball, coach. When it's all on the line, I'll make the last shot. I'll never depart from you.

I'm going to stay committed to you. Remember Peter saying this? And it's almost like he's telling Jesus, Remember, I'm your rock. I'm the rocky guy. I'm the solid, dependable one.

[ 21 : 37 ] But now, reflected in Peter's answer to Jesus, we see at least a recognition on his part that because of his recent denials of Jesus, he can't claim to love him more than the other disciples.

And I think that's why he uses *phileo*. You know, I've really messed up. He loves Jesus, but he's failed him miserably. And notice that he also doesn't really answer Jesus' question fully, does he? He doesn't say, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you more than these. He says, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Peter is aware of his failure in comparison to the other disciples.

And so, again, I think he can't bring himself to say, in light of what he's recently done, that he loves Jesus more than them.

And so, here, all he can do is to appeal to Jesus' omniscience, Jesus' ability to know all things. He says, Lord, you know that I love you.

[ 22 : 42 ] Jesus continues, taking him on this journey of restoration, the rest of verse 15 and 16. So, Jesus said to him, Feed my lambs. And he said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

And Peter said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And Jesus said to him, Tend my sheep. Once again, Jesus uses the same word for love in that second question, *agapeo*.

And once again, Peter is unwilling to use that same word in reply, opting instead for *phileo*. Jesus is pressing Peter here. He's pressing him.

He's probing his heart with this question. He's breaking down Peter's defenses. He's breaking down his self-confidence.

He's breaking down his self-righteousness. He has his hammer. And he has his chisel. And he is forming his rock back into shape.

[ 23 : 52 ] Peter doesn't attempt to answer Jesus' questions with self-confident assertions. Peter doesn't say to Jesus when he says, Do you love me?

He doesn't say, Well, Lord, you know I love you because look at all the things that I've done for you in the past. Remember when we were in the boat and you were walking on the water? All the other guys, they'd stayed in the boat. They were chickens. But guess what?

I came out to you. And let's forget about the part of me falling into the water and drowning. But I was the guy. And Jesus, remember what else? When we were all gathered together and you asked us all the question, Who do people say that I am?

And who do you believe that I am? And I was the one that raised my hand first. They were all afraid. But I raised my hand first and I said, You are the Christ. You are the Son of God. Remember that? He doesn't appeal to any of his past works to prove his love to Jesus. He just, he asked for Jesus to search his heart and know that he loves him.

[ 24 : 53 ] Lord, I have no excuse. But I know that you have to know that I love you. I've benched myself because that's what I deserve.

I love you, but I can't be trusted by you. I have to pay my penance. I need to read more of the Bible. I need some more theology classes.

I need to get my head right before I can serve you. I love what Alistair Begg said about this verse. He said, And again, maybe that's the way you feel this morning.

You have focused so much on your failures and your inability and how great of a sinner you are. And that is causing you to question your love for Jesus. Causing you to question if you're even truly a disciple of his.

I love this old story about Charles Spurgeon, the great English pastor. He shared a story about a visit he once took to an old elderly member of his congregation.

[ 26 : 36 ] She was a shut-in and she was very discouraged. And in the course of that conversation, this woman said to Spurgeon, Pastor, I don't think that I have any real faith.

I don't think that I have any love for Jesus Christ at all. And Charles Spurgeon didn't argue with her. In fact, he didn't say anything to her at all at that point. Instead, he went across the room to a desk. He picked up a piece of paper and a pencil and he wrote something on it. And then he brought it back to her. And on the paper, what he had written was this. I do not love Jesus Christ.

And he asked her to sign it. And she said, oh no. I couldn't sign that. And Spurgeon said to her, now come along, sign it.

She said, oh no. I couldn't sign that. Jesus knows that isn't true. He got his point across, right? So for us this morning, if we find ourselves in need of restoration, we, like Peter, have nothing to say in our defense.

[ 27 : 41 ] We've all sinned. We've all fallen short of the glory of God. Way short. But the wonderful thing is that we can plead for the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Despite our failures, our Lord knows the truth.

He knows the true condition of our hearts. But Jesus isn't done with Peter yet. In verse 17, he said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

And now Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, do you love me? So why is Peter grieved now by Jesus asking this question to him for the third time?

Well, the true reason for Peter's grief was a change in Jesus' vocabulary. Unlike his two previous questions, this time Jesus used Peter's word for love.

Phileo. Peter, do you phileo me? And what Jesus is doing here now, and which causes Peter grief, is that Jesus is asking him basically this, Peter, do you even love me as much as you're saying that you do right now?

[ 28 : 58 ] Do you even love me with that lesser kind of phileo brotherly love that you claim? Do you really love me that much? And all Peter could do was to appeal even more strongly than he had to before to Jesus' omniscience.

Look at what he says. Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. And now again, this is the astonishing thing to me.

Jesus is going to ascend back to heaven shortly. The Holy Spirit, the helper, the one whom he was sending in his place, would come and fill his disciples.

The gospel would be proclaimed. And one of Jesus' remaining disciples will stand up on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes and will preach a sermon.

And 3,000 people will be saved that day. And the church will have been born. And the person whom Jesus chose for that role was Peter.

[ 30 : 05 ] Shaky, shifty, slithery, three times denying Jesus and any association to him, Peter, that's the guy the Lord picks.

You know, say you were on a search team interviewing someone to pastor a church or say our church was about to send someone to the mission field. And say you found out right before calling that person or sending that person out that just a few weeks ago they had publicly denied following Christ or knowing Christ.

Wouldn't you have some reservations about the fitness or the preparedness for that person to pastor a church or go out into the mission field? I think that question also grieved Peter because Jesus was taking him back to the place of his failure.

They were around a charcoal fire here that Jesus had prepared. This is the third time that Jesus asked Peter if he loves him. And so I think the smell of that charcoal fire being put on the spot again before others, being asked three questions like he was before, it took Peter mentally back to that place where before Jesus died, he denied ever knowing him.

It was around a charcoal fire that Peter denied Jesus three times. Hey, hey, aren't you, aren't you one of those Galileans that was with Jesus?

[ 31 : 40 ] No, you must be mistaken. You know, that's strange because you talk like someone from Galilee. Nope, not me.

Wasn't me. Wait a second. You look a lot like that guy that hacked my friend's ear off back in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Didn't I see you there? And now Peter is cursing in this third time. No, I told you. I don't know the man.

I am not one of his disciples. Using stronger language than I use. So Jesus takes Peter back to that moment here of his greatest failure to prepare him for greater success in the future.

By overcoming whatever fears, whatever uncertainties he had about his ability to follow Jesus and his plans for his life. And so what does Jesus do here? He doesn't bench Peter.

[ 32 : 48 ] Instead, with this third question, he reinstates Peter into the ministry that he was ready to abandon. He says to him, Feed my sheep. Peter, pastor my people.

Peter, shepherd my flocks. I trust you. Take care of them. I know your heart. In the past when you trusted yourself, you failed.

But now you're ready. And I have a lot for you to do. And your love for me is going to be crucial in order for you to stay on task and accomplish your mission.

You know, the New Testament teaches that love is the mark of every true believer. When Jesus was asked, What is the greatest commandment? He replied in Matthew 22, 37, and 39.

He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment, and the second is like it.

[ 33 : 49 ] You shall love your neighbor as yourself. In 1 Corinthians 8, 3, Paul wrote, But if anyone loves God, he is known by God. James 1, 12 says, Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

And 1 Peter 1, 8 through 9. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

So here, Peter learned the hard way what it means to truly love Jesus Christ. To love him with the kind of love that he demands. He had proclaimed his unfailing love for him more than once, then ended up denying him more than once.

And if Peter was to play a crucial role that Jesus had chosen for him, he needed to be restored.

Peter needed to understand that though he had forsaken Jesus, Jesus had never and would never forsake him.

And so again, he was brought face to face with the amazing love of Jesus Christ. A love that compelled him from that moment onward to feed and to tend his flocks, both the lambs, the baby Christians, and the more mature sheep.

[ 35 : 25 ] He was aware of Christ's love for him, and that spurred him onward to love Christ supremely. Peter left the nets behind once again, loving the Lord above all others because he had experienced once again the great love that Jesus has for those whom he saves and for those whom he calls.

As Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ, we worship a God who is a God of all grace. In his love, our Lord doesn't only give second chances, but third chances and fourth chances and fifth chances and sixth chances and many, many more.

Like Peter, you may be tempted to want to pack it all in. I'm a failure. I'm not good at this following Christ thing.

I'll go back to what is familiar, back to what I think I'm good at. I'll grab a seat on the bench, and you've given in to the enemy's lies that you've blown it too much, too often, and too big.

You've given in to the enemy's lies that your failures are too great for God to forgive or for his grace to cover.

[ 36 : 56 ] And so today, just as Jesus said to Peter back then, he says to you, do you love me? Do you love me more than these?

The Lord knows and loves his sheep. He truly is the good shepherd who leaves the 99 to find the one who wandered off, never thinking like we often do, well, I have 99.

That's a lot of sheep, and it's just one, and that sheep is the dumbest one I've got. Right? It's always wandering away.

It's always getting into trouble. It's always creating headaches for me. In a way, I think, good riddance, sheep. Let someone else take care of you or be food for somebody else's table, right?

If you don't want my food, if you don't want my care, if you don't want my protection, if you don't want my love, then go your own way and see what happens. I'm tired of chasing after you.

[ 38 : 04 ] Now, I know from personal experience that Jesus never grows weary of chasing after his sheep. He never runs out of patience.

He never runs out of love. He never runs out of grace. He never runs out of mercy or forgiveness. He never stops, and He will not let you go.

You know, I'm a work in progress, but there's been progress, and I praise the Lord for that. He forgives. He restores.

He heals. He loves. And isn't He right to demand our love for Him above all others? Who else has borne your sin besides Him?

Who else has died for you besides Him? Who else has taken your place and borne the wrath of God for the sins that you've committed other than Him?

[ 39 : 10 ] Who else can you turn to for salvation other than Him who died and who rose again from the grave three days later? Stop listening to yourself.

Stop listening to the enemy in your weakness. Like Peter, you come to him. Lord, you know that I love you. There's nothing else I can give.

All I've got is sin to bring to you, but you know that I love you. What Jesus did for Peter, He will do for you. He will strengthen you. So commit yourself totally to Him, and you'll never regret it.

You'll never regret it. Main point of application, then, is that total commitment to Jesus means loving Him and making your love for Him known.

Isn't He worthy? Isn't He great? Isn't He worth committing yourself fully to? Isn't He worth sharing to other people in this sin-cursed world how great of a Savior Jesus Christ is?

[ 40 : 23 ] Three questions of application. How does not loving Jesus supremely lead you into sin?

Now, if you think about it, when you sin, aren't you saying that that thing that you're sinning or you're coveting or whatever it might be, that lie that you're making, you're loving yourself or something else other than Him?

Really, sin is choosing to love something more than Jesus. Secondly, is there a failure in following Christ that you have been unwilling to forgive yourself of?

You think that there's some sin that's just too great for God to forgive or it's been too much for God to continue to be patient for you. If so, if you believe that, what does that communicate about the kind of Savior you believe Jesus to be?

And I'll tell you, it's the kind of Savior that He isn't if that's what you believe. And then finally, if Jesus was willing to love, forgive, and restore Peter for denying Him, how should you show your love for Christ by forgiving others who have done the same to you?

There should never be any grudges within the household of God because we have been forgiven much, so much, we should forgive others much as well.

[ 41 : 41 ] I'm going to pray. We'll have a time of invitation. If you want to pray, if you need me to pray for you, if you would like to stick after church and talk to me, I'll certainly be available. I'd love to answer any questions you have or just be here to help you in whatever ways I can.

Let's pray. Lord God, thank You for Your Word. Lord, thank You for its instruction. Thank You for the reminders contained within it about the kind of Savior that You are.

Lord, our sins are great and they are many, more than we know. and like Peter, so often, Lord, we focus on how big of a failure we are and we're tempted to put ourselves on the bench.

We're tempted to think that we cannot be trusted. We're tempted to think that we don't really love You. But God, may this Word be a reminder to each of us today and in the future, if ever we get to this point where we feel like Peter did then, that You are a God of all grace, that You are a Savior who is merciful, that You forgive, that You restore.

And Lord, for anyone here today who feels like they've been benched, God, I pray that today would be the day they hear You call to them like You called to Peter, get up, get off the bench.

[ 42 : 57 ] I have plans for Your life. I love You. Let's go. And that they would listen and that they would obey. Lord, may we live lives totally committed to You that make much of the name of Jesus Christ because You and You alone are worthy.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.