



Unit I

HEROES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

LEADER'S PEP TALK

Everyone needs a hero. Yet as we look around our world today, where are the heroes? Are they on the television, in the movies or on the radio? What does it take to be a hero? In a lost and searching world, our students need to see and meet real-life heroes.

As I look in the Scriptures, I keep feeling myself drawn to the heroes. Peter, Paul, Timothy, Mary and scores of others have one thing in common. What makes them heroes is not that they were giants of the faith. It wasn't that they were perfect or had it all together. What makes them heroes is that they were real, and their love for God was real. They were real-life people with real-life struggles, yet they had an extraordinary love for God.

If there is something that our students need, it's real-life heroes. They need to see that heroes are real people with real problems but with an incredible love for God. The pages of the Scriptures are filled with heroes. Heroes who stood for what was right—what was godly. Heroes who had an intense love for God. In addition to the heroes of the New Testament, there stand other heroes, ones that will never be in the pages of the Scriptures, yet I believe they are heroes in the eyes of the One who matters most. I believe that one of those heroes is you. Your students may never tell you this, but believe me, you are a hero. So to all of you who are real with students, who love them unconditionally, who choose to be transparent with your life, who love God and are willing to share that love relationship with young people, you are today's hero. When it comes time to be with Him in heaven, I believe if any hero will get the applause of the saints and angels, it will be you because you are a hero in your work for His kingdom.



PETER: FAILURE IS NEVER FINAL

KEY VERSE

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”
2 Corinthians 12:9

BIBLICAL BASIS

Matthew 14:25-31;
Mark 14:27-31,66-72; 16:6,7;
John 1:35-42; 21:15-19;
Acts 2:14,22-24,36-41; 3:1-8;
2 Corinthians 12:9,10

THE BIG IDEA

Even when you feel like a failure, God is ready and willing to give you a second chance and use you to help fulfill His plans for the Kingdom.

AIMS OF THIS SESSION

During this session you will guide students to:

- Examine the life of Peter;
- Discover that God can use us in the midst of our weaknesses and failures;
- Implement a newfound hope in response to the faithfulness of God.

WARM UP

THE THRILL OF VICTORY AND THE AGONY OF DEFEAT—

Students discuss their personal reactions to victory and defeat.

TEAM EFFORT— JUNIOR HIGH/ MIDDLE SCHOOL

FAILURE IS NEVER FINAL: TWO PORTRAITS—

Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Edison experienced countless failures and didn't give up!

TEAM EFFORT— HIGH SCHOOL

PETER, THIS IS YOUR LIFE!—

Students role-play scenes from the life of Peter.

IN THE WORD

PETER: FROM FAILURE TO FOLLOWER—

A Bible study on how God transformed Peter from a failure to a leader.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT(OPTIONAL)

Questions to get students thinking and talking about how to see past their own weaknesses and failures to the potential within them to serve God in His power.

PARENT PAGE

A tool to get the session into the home and allow parents and young people to discuss the purpose of failure in our lives.

PETER:
FAILURE IS
NEVER FINAL



LEADER'S DEVOTIONAL

“‘Lord, if it is you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’ ‘Come,’ he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus” (Matthew 14:28,29).

Jesus' schedule for the day would be familiar to youth workers. After teaching all day, Jesus proceeded to feed His hungry flock and send them home. He dismissed the disciples before He retreated to be alone with God. Personally, I would have opted for a nap, or a nice quiet walk along the shore of the Galilean Sea. Jesus chose to be with the Father. Such a picture portrays the nature of Jesus Christ and unveils His motive for His mission on earth.

In the meantime, the disciples found themselves in rough waters. By the time Jesus cruised onto the scene, the fishermen feared the elements, the political zealots wished they were lobbying on dry land and the others wanted to be anywhere else, even if it meant collecting taxes.

Jesus immediately noticed the fear of His men. He said, “Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid” (Matthew 14:27). God will reveal Himself when we're afraid. When you face fear, frustration and futility, replace your discouragement—your “dis-courage” with the courage offered by Christ.

Peter tried to do just that. Fast forward a few frames in the story: Peter's courage is fleeting. He doubts. He sinks. He fails. Do you ever feel more fear than faith, more waves than wonder? Does your work with people seem blown away by the wind? Learn from our friend Peter whom Jesus labeled “The Rock” (“Rocky” if he were alive today).

When you find yourself in the lifeboat buffeted by the elements, follow Peter's lead. First, pray to Jesus “Tell me to come to you.” Second, listen (and wait!) for God's invitation “Come.” Don't jump overboard with your own best intentions. Sometimes failure is the result of our premature departures. Thirdly, leave behind everything you know and trust—your confidence in your career, the comfort of the boat, the company of your friends and go to Christ. Finally, get out and walk with Jesus. After all is said and done, prayed and planned, do what you've got to do. Life is a voyage, not a safe harbor.

What happened? Peter took the step of faith, but then he took his eyes off Jesus and sank. He nearly drowned. He failed. Then he found himself face-to-face with the living God admonishing him “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” Peter's failure led him to a deeper faith and a powerful future. With Peter and the rest of us failure is never final. Bon voyage!
(Written by Doug Webster)

**“Courage is resistance to fear and mastery of fear, not absence of it.”
—Mark Twain**

What were the results of Peter's obedience?

2. Even though Peter felt like a failure, God used him as a part of His plan to touch lives. What hope can be found for you personally from these verses in Acts?

SO WHAT?

1. After looking at the four scenes, in what way can you relate to Peter?

2. What are some of your failures and weaknesses that you need to give over to God?

3. What are some of the areas of your life in which you desperately need to sense the restoration of God?

4. In what areas does God want to use you?

5. What are two things that you learned from this session?

What action step will you take to apply what you have learned about yourself?

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT (OPTIONAL)

• Use the questions on page 25 after or as a part of "In the Word"

1. Why is it so difficult to see past our weaknesses and failures to the potential God sees in us?

2. How does it feel to know that...

God knows your potential?

God knows your weaknesses and failures?

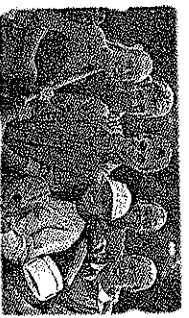
God is in the business of restoration?

God wants to use you?

3. How does 2 Corinthians 12:9,10 relate to your life and this session?

PARENT PAGE

• Distribute page to parents.



PETER: FAILURE IS NEVER FINAL

KEY VERSE

"Put he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"
2 Corinthians 12:9

BIBLICAL BASIS

Matthew 14:25-31; Mark 14:27-31,66-72; 16:6,7; John 1:35-42; 21:15-19; Acts 2:14,22-24,36-41; 3:1-8; 2 Corinthians 12:9,10

THE BIG IDEA

Even when you feel like a failure, God is ready and willing to give you a second chance and use you to help fulfill His plans for the Kingdom.

WARM UP (5-10 MINUTES)

THE THRILL OF VICTORY AND THE AGONY OF DEFEAT

• Go to your local video store and browse around for videos depicting victory and defeat. They could be sports videos or motion pictures that vividly portray "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat." Great videos to use include: Karate Kid (the final tournament scene), one of the Rocky films (any of the final fight scenes), The Natural (when Robert Redford's character hits the home run to win the game), or any of the Sports Yearbook videos.
• Show short "victory" and "defeat" clips from the selected videos.
After viewing the clips, discuss the following questions with the whole group or in small groups of three or four:
1. How do you think it might have felt to be one of the victorious characters shown in the videos?

2. How do you think it might have felt to be one of the defeated characters?
3. If you could script your own movie victory scene with yourself as the star, what would it look like?
4. When was a time that you tasted a personal victory? How did you feel?
5. When was a time that you tasted personal defeat? How did you feel?

T **TEAM EFFORT—JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL (15-20 MINUTES)**

FAILURE IS NEVER FINAL: TWO PORTRAITS

- Give each student a copy of "Failure Is Never Final—Two Portraits" on pages 19-20 or display a copy using an overhead projector.
 - Have a different student read each of the following portraits, then discuss the questions as a whole group.
 - See reproducible for "Portraits."
1. What would have happened if Abraham Lincoln or Thomas Edison had let failure become final in their lives?
 2. In your opinion, what was it that kept Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Edison from giving up after they had failed?
 3. Why is it so easy to let failure get the best of us?
 4. What are some ways you can turn defeats into victories?

T **TEAM EFFORT—HIGH SCHOOL (15-20 MINUTES)**

PETER, THIS IS YOUR LIFE!

- Divide students into four smaller groups.
- Assign each group one of following scenes to role-play:
 - Scene One
John 1:35-42
 - Scene Two
Mark 14:27-31, 66-72
 - Scene Three
Mark 16:6-7, John 21:15-19
 - Scene Four
Acts 2:14, 22-24, 36-41; 3:1-8
- Give the groups about 7 to 10 minutes to come up with a dramatic presentation of their scene from Peter's life. Encourage the groups to have fun, modernize and use their imaginations to present the story.
- Have each group perform their scene for the entire group. If possible, videotape the scenes and show them at a later time.
- Option: Use cheap trophies from a thrift store as awards for the "Best Interpretation" or "Best Modern Reenactment".

T **IN THE WORD (25-30 MINUTES)**

PETER: FROM FAILURE TO FOLLOWER

- Divide students into groups of three or four.
- Give each student a copy of "Peter: From Failure to Follower" on pages 21-24 and a pen or pencil, or display a copy on an overhead projector.
- Have students complete the Bible study.
- We're going to look at the life of one of the most well-known failures in the New Testament—Peter! Peter was one of Jesus' most outspoken followers. In fact, his mouth got him into quite a bit of trouble. Let's take a look at four scenes

from the life of Peter that prove in God's eyes that failure is never final!!!
Read each of the following passages and discuss the questions.

SCENE ONE: GOD SEES YOUR POTENTIAL (JOHN 1:40-42)

Read John 1:40-42.

1. Why do you think Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter?
2. What significance is there in Peter's name meaning "rock"?
3. How does it feel to know that God sees past your failures to your potential?

SCENE TWO: GOD KNOWS YOUR FAILURES (MARK 14:27-31, 66-72)

1. How would you have felt if you were Peter...

Before denying Christ? (Mark 14:27-31)

After denying Christ? (Mark 14:66-72)

2. Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt either one of those ways?
3. Peter had promised to die for Jesus, yet when it came to putting his faith into action at the garden and in the courtyard, he faltered. Share about a time in your life when you have faltered like Peter.
4. God knows our weaknesses. Is that a comfort or a burden to you? Why?

SCENE THREE: GOD IS IN THE BUSINESS OF RESTORATION (MARK 16:6, 7; JOHN 21:15-19)

1. What is the significance of the two words "and Peter" found in Mark 16:7?

2. How do you think Peter felt when he heard those two words?

3. Read John 21:15-19. If you were Peter, how would you have felt standing before Jesus...

As He asked you "Do you love me?"

As He restored you and said "Follow me"?

4. How does it affect you to know that God sees beyond your failures and can forgive and restore you?

SCENE FOUR: GOD WANTS TO USE YOU (ACTS 2:36-41; 3:1-8)

1. How did God use Peter in Acts 2:36-41 and 3:1-8?

TEAM EFFORT



PETER:
FAILURE IS
NEVER FINAL

FAILURE IS NEVER FINAL—TWO PORTRAITS

The pages of history are filled with people who were once failures, but they are now legends. The difference in those who have led lives of excellence and those who have led lives of mediocrity lies in their willingness to fail and learn from their failures. Failure is not final; it's an opportunity to grow, learn and be used by God. Here's a look at two such people:

Portrait One:

- 1831 He failed in business.
- 1832 He was defeated in the legislature.
- 1833 He again failed in business.
- 1834 He was elected to the legislature.
- 1835 His wife-to-be died.
- 1836 He had a nervous breakdown.
- 1838 He was defeated for Speaker of the House.
- 1840 He was defeated for elector.
- 1850 A son died.
- 1855 He was defeated for the Senate.
- 1856 He was defeated for vice president.
- 1858 He was defeated for the Senate.
- 1860 This man, Abraham Lincoln, was elected president.¹

Portrait Two:

In all the pages of history, there are few "failures" with the caliber of Thomas Edison. For years, Edison tried in vain to accomplish something that they said could never be done—create the light bulb! In actuality, Thomas Edison made over 900 attempts to create a light bulb before finding success. Over 900 times Edison developed a bulb, only to be sent back to the drawing board to try again. Over 900 times Edison was a failure, yet in the middle of all the failure, Edison tried and tried again. According to Thomas Edison, every time he experienced failure, he merely "found out one more way not to make a light bulb." Edison did not let failure become final for him; eventually he did create the light bulb and went down in the pages of history as one of the greatest inventors of all time!

1. What would have happened if Abraham Lincoln or Thomas Edison had let failure become final in their lives?

2. In your opinion, what was it that kept Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Edison from giving up after they had failed?

PETER:
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3. Why is it so easy to let failure get the best of us?

4. What are some ways you can turn defeats into victories?

1. Tim Hansel, *Holy Sweat* (Waco, Tex.: Word Publishing), p. 124.



PETER:
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PETER: FROM FAILURE TO FOLLOWER

We're going to look at the life of one of the most well-known failures in the New Testament—Peter! Peter was one of Jesus' most outspoken followers. In fact, his mouth got him into quite a bit of trouble. Let's take a look at four scenes from the life of Peter that prove in God's eyes that failure is never final!!!

Read each of the following passages and discuss the questions.

Scene One: God Sees Your Potential (John 1:40-42)

Read John 1:40-42.

1. Why do you think Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter?

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2. What significance is there in Peter's name meaning "rock"?

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3. How does it feel to know that God sees past your failures to your potential?

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Scene Two: God Knows Your Weaknesses and Failures (Mark 14:27-31,66-72)

1. How would you have felt if you were Peter...

Before denying Christ? (Mark 14:27-31)

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After denying Christ? (Mark 14:66-72)

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PETER:
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2. Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt either one of those ways?

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3. Peter had promised to die for Jesus, yet when it came to putting his faith into action (at the garden and in the courtyard), he faltered. Share about a time in your life when you faltered like that.

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4. God sees our weaknesses. Is that a comfort or a burden to you? Why?

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Scene Three: God Is in the Business of Restoration (Mark 16:6,7; John 21:15-19)

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As He asked you, "Do you love me?"

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As He restored you and said "Follow me"?

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PETER:
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4. How does it affect you to know that God sees beyond your failures and can forgive and restore you?

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Scene Four: God Wants to Use You (Acts 2:36-41; 3:1-8)

1. How did God use Peter in Acts 2:36-41 and 3:1-8?

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What were the results of Peter's obedience?

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2. Even though Peter felt like a failure, God used him as a part of His plan to touch lives. What hope can be found for you personally from these verses in Acts?

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So What?

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3. What are some of the areas of your life in which you desperately need to sense the restoration of God?

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PETER:
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4. In what areas does God want to use you?

5. What are two things that you learned from this session?

What action step will you take to apply what you have learned about yourself?



PETER:
FAILURE IS
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THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why is it so difficult to see past our weaknesses and failures to the potential God sees in us?

2. How does it feel to know that...

God sees your potential?

God knows your weaknesses and failures?

God is in the business of restoration?

God wants to use you?

3. How does 2 Corinthians 12:9,10 relate to your life and this session?

PETER:
FAILURE IS
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PARENT PAGE

IN THE CLASSROOM OF LIFE

Failure is the classroom of life. Even within the pages of God's Word failures can be seen as instruments God used to mold and change lives. Peter is perhaps the greatest failure found in the New Testament, yet God saw past his failures to the potential that was within him. God's ultimate desire was to use Peter in spite of his failures. His desire is the same for each of us.

Discuss the following statements as a family:

Failure is not an obstacle; it's just an opportunity.

"Success is never final. Failure is never fatal. It is courage that counts."
—Winston Churchill

"He who has never failed somewhere, that man cannot be great. Failure is the truest test of greatness."—F. D. Mattiesen

"There are a lot of ways to become a failure, but never taking a chance is the most successful."—Bob Phillips

Read the following Scriptures:

Mark 14:27-31,66-72

Mark 16:6,7; John 21:15-19

Acts 2:36-41

4. What are some areas right now in the life of your family that could be seen as failures?

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5. How can you pray that God would use those failures as opportunities for growth and service to Him?

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1. Why did God still choose to use Peter in spite of his denial of Christ?

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2. Why is the story of Peter good news for imperfect people?

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3. What are some areas of your life where failure has turned out to be an opportunity?

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Session 1: "Peter: Failure Is Never Final"

Date