

The Homecoming

Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What is one good memory you have from high school?
2. How far away from where you grew up do you live now?

Read the following passage: John 21:1-25.

Peter, like most of his fellow Jews, thought he understood the role of the Messiah. The Messiah was going to lead a revolution that would deliver Israel from her oppressors and usher in a glorious age for God's people, the Jews. When Jesus told his disciples that he was not going to lead a political revolution, but, instead, was going to die at the hands of the religious leaders, Peter refused to accept what Jesus said. The story that Peter wanted to believe eventually led to a hard crash the night before Jesus was crucified.

Like Peter, we all follow stories that eventually break. What happens then? John 21 shows us. This chapter is full of allusions to Peter's previous experiences with Jesus. Jesus showed Peter that he could be forgiven, that he still had a calling, and that he was still called to be a "rock" in the early church. Even if we have had significant failures and dead-ends, or have made a lot of bad decisions, God pursues us to restore us to relationship with him, and to lead us back into the calling he has for our lives.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Some of the values shaping American culture include individualism, freedom, personal success, and safety. How are these values impacting your own life? In particular, how are they affecting your goals, decision-making, and sense of identity? What are some of the virtues and liabilities of these values?
2. Jesus used Peter's experience as a fisherman to call him into the mission of "fishing for people." Jesus often uses our experiences, talents, trials, and relationships to give us insight into the ways he wants us to minister to other people. What are some things you've learned about God's purpose for your life and how did you learn them? What are some things that God calls each of us to do, no matter what our specific talents might be? What is one way you would like to be more active in ministering to or serving other people?
3. John indicates that Jesus gave Peter this nickname at the beginning of their friendship. Matthew 16:17-19 indicates that this nickname was connected to Peter's identity and calling. What are a few words you would use to describe how you see yourself currently? What does it mean to get our identity from our

relationship with Jesus? What do you think Jesus says about who you are?

4. How does Jesus help Peter move forward after Peter denied Jesus the night before the crucifixion? What can we learn from Peter's example about how we can move forward after our failures? Do you have any failures that you are having difficulty moving past? Explain.
5. After Jesus explains to Peter that he will be persecuted for following Jesus (John 21:18-19), Peter asks about the future of another disciple (presumably John). What are some of the pitfalls of comparing ourselves with others? How can we learn from others and be encouraged by others without falling into the trap of comparison?

Pray