

SHINE Devotional

Week 12 – Lesson 1



Facing Your Past

Scripture reading Acts 4:1-2

“And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”

For Peter, this was déjà vu. This was the same group of people that had come to arrest Jesus when He in the garden. He had seen their wrath poured out on the Lord Jesus. In fact, the last time that Peter was in the presence of this group, they witnessed his greatest failure in life. That failure is recorded in Luke 22:54-62, when Peter in the presence of the chief priest, the elders, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself denied three times that he knew Jesus. It was sixty days later, and this time they were not coming to arrest the Saviour but Peter and John. A big difference had taken place in Peter’s life over those sixty days. Before, Peter was fearful and he failed miserably representing Jesus Christ. However, in this story, Peter was fearless, even in the presence of those who knew his faults, weakness, and past failures. In Acts 4, Peter stood boldly and proclaimed the Gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He boldly proclaimed that he was there as a witness to truth.

Many people are hindered in their life because their past failures overwhelm them, making their life difficult today. The good news is that just as Peter overcame his past failures, you and I can overcome ours. Peter did not let his past dictate his future. He boldly moved forward and was used by God to lead and shape the early Christian movement and the first local church. This week we will focus on getting over your past like Peter got over his. When you learn to leave the past behind, you will begin to SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 12 – Lesson 2



Getting Honest with God

Scripture reading Luke 22:60-62

“And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”

There is not a person alive that hasn't at some time in life failed God. Satan uses guilt to render you and I powerless. Satan will steal the best from us, making us feel that we can never become anything for God. Satan wants us to focus on past failure, indiscretions, or abuses so that we cannot have the kind of relationships He wants us to have today. God wants us to have a peace, *“which passes all understanding.”* How do we get that peace? Our first step is being totally open and honest with God. Notice from our passage today, that as soon as Peter failed, *“the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.”* We must understand that God knows everything we have done. We just recognize He is omniscient. He is also omnipotent, which means He is all-powerful. There is nothing beyond His control. He is also a forgiving God. All He desires from you and me when we sin against Him is the a willingness to confess our faults to Him. When Peter and became aware that Christ new this was going to take place, he immediately went out and wept before God. Peter confessed his sin. He got honest, brutally honest with God. If you are to ever overcome your past failures, it is absolutely essential that you get honest before God about your failures. Paul says, *“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:7).

I find it interesting in Acts 4, that when the chief priests and the Sadducees arrested Peter and John, it was night time and nothing could be done until morning. I believe that Peter and John went to the place that they were being held and had a restful night's sleep. Why? Because they were at peace with God and knew they were in the center of God's will. When you get totally honest before God about your past failures or abuses, you have taken the first step to knowing His peace and you will begin to SHINE for Christ.

SHINE Devotional

Week 12 – Lesson 3



God Uses a Failure

Scripture reading Acts 4:4

“Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.”

Peter was a man who had denied the Lord Jesus Christ in a time of great stress. Instead, he chose to deny Christ, not once but three times. Yet, here we see God has used him powerfully, not only through the miracle of healing a lame man, but also the in preaching of God’s Word. Through Peter, 5,000 men came to trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

There is not a person alive that is not ashamed of something from their past. There are things that happened before I got saved that I am glad very few people know about. There are also some things after I got saved that I would not want the world to know about. Why is that? Because of my pride. The pride of life tells us we are different than everyone else. Everybody else can sin but we won’t. Pride told Peter that everybody else would run, but he wouldn’t. There is something calming about realizing we are surrounded by sinners. Everyone else on the planet is just like you, and you are just like everyone else on the planet. Peter was about to be confronted by people that know about his failures, but he had settled in his mind that he was like everyone else. If they brought up his past failures, he would simply confess his faults to them. James said, *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another”* (James 5:16). We don’t go into a confessional booth and confess our sins to a priest, but we are to admit to one another our faults and not try to pretend we are perfect. There is something healing about being willing to admit I blow it just like everyone else. If someone comes into my life and says I am a hypocrite because of my past, I can simply reply, “Yes, I blew it in the past, but I really am striving to do what God wants me to do today.” If I have confessed my past sin, I can adopt holy standards and live by high standards without feeling as though I must prove anything to others because of my past. When you are willing to admit that you are just like everyone else, an imperfect, sinful being, you have taken a step that will help you SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 12 – Lesson 4



Expect to Be Tested

Scripture reading Acts 4:5-7

“And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?”

How many people know about your past failures? After I trusted Christ as Saviour and was attempting to live for Him, there were several times I blew it big time. I was working on a car one day with three of my friends. The ratchet slipped from my hand, and out came a word that I had never expected to say. Not only have I said things that I wish I would not have said, and I have participated in things I wish I would not have participated in. There were people present who know about my past failures. That was what is taking place with Peter here in Acts 4. He was standing on trial as a representative of God, when just sixty days before these very people heard him deny that he even knew Christ. He would have been tempted not to speak up for Christ. He would have been tempted to prove he was not a hypocrite. He would have been tempted to defend himself and his past behavior, but he did none of these. He expected to be tested. I am sure he expected the accusations. However, he refused to think about himself and determined to focus on the message.

Satan will do everything he can to get us to focus on our past and what people think about us, but really none of that matters. The only thing that matters is the message of the Gospel and the good things that God wants to do. During those times of temptation, we must refocus and determine to speak the truth amid the test. When you do, you will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 12 – Lesson 5



Surrender to the Holy Spirit

Scripture reading Acts 4:8

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them...”

There is no good answer that you could ever give your critic but God the Holy Spirit can do through you what you cannot do yourself. That is why it is so important to surrender daily to the Holy Spirit of God. Satan knows how to bring up your past. Satan knows how to bring people from your past to torment and test you. Satan knows your past failures and wants you to focus on those, but God wants to use you. God has forgiven you. If you have confessed your sin to God, if you are willing to admit your faults before man, you can expect testing, but you can also expect victory. Victory will come through surrender to the Holy Spirit of God. When you got saved, the Holy Spirit came to live inside of you. You have the power to overcome sin and temptation. You have His living power and person in you. The key is when you are tested to surrender to Him. In fact, the key is to every day before you go out into the world, surrender the control of your life to the Holy Spirit of God. This simply means to bow your head before Him and say, “Lord Jesus, today, I am yours. I ask you to fill me with your Holy Spirit and control me that I might make right decisions.” Every day I pray, “Holy Spirit, please fill me, control me, help me to praise, thank, glorify, honor, and bless you and others. Help me not to complain, grumble, backbite, judge, or blaspheme.” I find that when I pray that each day and come to a point of temptation to say or do the wrong thing, the Spirit of God will prick my conscience and give me direction to do that which is right. This act of daily surrender will lead you, too, as a believer to His power and presence in your life.

Peter was able to stand in the midst of his critics, before people who knew his faults and failures, and deliver a message through which 5,000 people got saved. Why? Because he was surrendered to the Holy Spirit of God. When you are filled with the Spirit of God, then you will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 12 – Lesson 6



Focus on the Positive

Scripture reading Acts 4:9-10

“If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.”

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a positive message. The leaders of the temple, including the high priest, brought Peter and John before the council to defend themselves. Peter, however, was filled with the Spirit of God, and made no defense. Peter just stood up and told the good things that Jesus had done. He honored the name of Jesus Christ by stating that it wasn't him that healed the lame man, it was Jesus Christ. He focused on the fact that this was not a bad work, it was a good work. The man was standing right next to him. It was evident that it was a miracle. There was no one that denied the miracle had taken place. They only wanted to know by what authority the disciples had done the miracle. By declaring the miracle, a work of Jesus Christ, Peter was able to again remind the leaders, that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified and raised by God from the dead. He quoted Psalm 118 to validate the message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. He then declared that there was no other way to heaven except through the person of Jesus Christ.

As believers, it is very important that we do not allow an unbelieving world or critics to make us negative. We must focus on the positive. The world is filled with sin, sickness, disobedience, and rebellion. You and I, as children of God, have the answer for all of that. The answer is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and eternal life through His death, burial, and resurrection. Stay positive. Focus on that which God has done for us and will do for us in the future. Don't let Satan destroy your present and future by focusing on the past. You have been made a child of God. You have been made clean. God knew you before you were saved, and He knows about your sin after you got saved. He knows what you are attempting to do for Him now. Surrender to His Holy Spirit. Thank Him for His forgiveness. Face your critics by confessing your faults. Stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. Focus on the future. When you do, you, as a believer will SHINE.