



AT THE TABLE

A BIBLE STUDY TEACHING SERIES

SESSION 3

Restored on the Third Day

John 21:15–17 • MSG

IN HIS PRESENCE

CROWN CODE • REAL MAN CODE • MOM CODE

AT THE TABLE

Session 3: Restored on the Third Day

OUR TEXT

1 WHAT THE NUMBER THREE MEANS

Throughout Scripture, three is the number of completeness — not perfection in the sense of flawlessness, but wholeness. Something confirmed, settled, finished. It shows up at the center of God's own nature — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — and again and again at the center of His most important works. When something happens three times in the Bible, it is rarely incidental. It is God underlining a truth so we cannot miss it, or completing a work so nothing is left undone.

2 WHAT IT MEANS IN THE BIBLE / CONTEXT

Peter's story carries the number three from beginning to end, and it is worth laying the whole pattern out before we get to the mercy in it. In the garden, Jesus asked Peter to stay awake and pray with Him — and Peter fell asleep three times (Matthew 26:40–45). Hours later, in a courtyard lit by firelight, Peter denied even knowing Jesus — three times (Luke 22:54–62) — and the rooster crowed exactly as Jesus said it would. Jesus was crucified, and three days later, He rose (Matthew 12:40, Luke 24:1–7). And then, on a beach over a charcoal fire, the risen Jesus asked Peter the same question three times: "Do you love me?" (John 21:15–17) — once for every denial.

This is not coincidence. It is architecture. The same number that marked Peter's failure is the number God used to rebuild him. Three sleeps became three denials became three days in the tomb became three declarations of love. God did not skip past Peter's specific failure to offer a general forgiveness — He met the exact shape of the wound with the exact shape of the healing. Each "Do you love me?" was placed opposite each denial, on purpose, in front of the same charcoal fire smell that would have taken Peter right back to that courtyard. Restoration here is not vague. It is precise.

3 ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES (ESV)

Matthew 12:40

"For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Lamentations 3:22–23

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

4 TEACHING

If three is God's number for completeness, then the third day is His pattern for restoration. Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish before he was brought back to dry land and given his calling again. Jesus was three days in the tomb before the stone was rolled away. Between the failure and the restoration, there is always a passage of time — a waiting, a darkness, a place that feels like the end. But the third day is never the end. It is where God does His deepest work, out of sight, before bringing something whole back into the light.

This matters enormously for how we hold our own failures. Peter did not get a fast apology and a quick return to normal. There was real distance — the sleep in the garden, the denial by the fire, the silence of those three days. And then Jesus came looking for him. Not to lecture him. Not to make him earn his way back. Jesus cooked him breakfast, and then asked him the one question that mattered: not "why did you fail me," but "do you love me." Restoration, in Scripture, is rarely instant. But it is always intentional, and it is always personal.

Notice too what Jesus did with each answer. He did not simply say "you're forgiven" three times. He gave Peter a job each time: feed my lambs, shepherd my sheep, feed my sheep. Restoration was not only about clearing Peter's conscience — it was about putting him back to work. God does not restore us so we can sit quietly relieved. He restores us so we can shepherd someone else through the very thing we just walked through. The three-day pattern always ends in commission, not just comfort.

5 PONDER

- Is there a failure in my life I still consider unfinished business with God — something I've never let Him fully restore?
- Peter's restoration matched his denial, question for question. What would it look like for God to meet the exact shape of my failure with the exact shape of His grace?
- Am I waiting for a feeling of being "let off the hook," or am I willing to receive a fresh assignment the way Peter did?
- Who in my life needs me to turn back and "give them a fresh start" because of what I've walked through?

6 PUT IT IN ACTION

- Write down one failure you have never let God fully restore. Bring it to Him this week in prayer, specifically — not in general terms.
- Read John 21:15–17 slowly and place your own name where Peter's is. Let Jesus ask you, three times if needed, "do you love me?"
- Identify one person you could "give a fresh start" to this week — someone walking through a failure you once walked through yourself.
- When a memory of past failure resurfaces this week, pause and ask God to meet it with the same precision He met Peter's.

7 CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray

Father, thank You that You do not leave our failures unfinished. Thank You that the same precision with which You see our fall is the precision with which You restore us — nothing overlooked, nothing generalized, nothing left in the dark. Where we have slept when we should have prayed, where we have denied You with our words or our silence, meet us now the way You met Peter — not with shame, but with a question: do we love You? Let our answer be yes, and let that yes become an assignment. We trust the third day. We trust Your pattern of restoration. In Jesus' name, Amen.

IN HIS PRESENCE

At the Table Bible Study