

YOU'RE
NOT
FAR

Part Seven: The End of the Beginning

One message connected Jesus entire ministry for his first century listeners– the Kingdom of God is here, *now*, and it represents a complete reversal of the values of the world. Yet, predictably, this new ethic of love was unpopular with the political and religious leaders of Jesus's time, and ultimately led to his arrest and death sentence at the hands of the authorities. And when the chips were on the table, his disciples reacted in a relatable, unfortunate way– they saw the painful reality dashing all their expectations, and they walked away from their friend and rabbi in defeat. But Simon Peter shared the story of what happened next in order to assure his future readers that these kinds of shameful actions may remind us of who we used to be, but they don't have to define us.

Start Talking

1. No shame here, let's be completely honest: What's the pettiest grudge you ever held?
2. If you had to spend the rest of your life either harboring bitterness against somebody else, or knowing somebody else was harboring it against you, which would you choose? Why?

Looking Back

1. Were you able to let go of your expectations in order to experience more trust in God this week? What did it look like in your mental monologue? In your prayer life?
2. What were your reactions when reality confounded your plans over the past few days? How did you try to nurture a healthier response to the chaos of life? What were the results?
3. Andy argued that the crumbling of outside circumstances shouldn't be taken as evidence that God is far away. Who were you able to encourage along those lines this week? Were you able to think of any acts of service that lent your encouragement more weight?

What About You?

1. Do you ever struggle to believe that God could really forgive you? When and why?
2. Do you find it harder to be on the giving end of forgiveness or the receiving end? Why?



3. Some people find it difficult to believe they are forgiven. Others can easily believe in the reality of their “forgiven-ness” but may end up treating this grace cheaply, like a given. Where do you fall on that spectrum?
4. Do you ever feel defined by something you’ve done in the past?
5. What is the difference between healthy shame and unhealthy shame, in your opinion?

Look It Up

Read the Following Passages: Mark 1:14-15, Mark 14: 22- 24, 48- 50. 53 – 72. Mark 15:3-5, 11-24, 29-38. 1 Peter 2:24.

1. What do you think drives Peter’s shame in recounting the circumstances surrounding Jesus’s death?
2. Typically, those brought before a governor under sentence of death would attempt to bargain for a quick death. How does Jesus respond? Why do you think he acts this way?
3. Read John 21:1-19. Notice the invitation Jesus extends to Peter in verse 19. What did that represent for Peter?
4. Why doesn’t Jesus save himself from this grisly crucifixion? What does this refusal to defend himself against an unjust death when he had every right to do so tell us about his priorities?
5. In his letter to first-century Christians, most of whom he never met, Peter writes: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross...” Peter was convinced that Jesus’s death paid for your sin. What convinced him? Are you convinced?

Putting It All Together

1. What do you think it means that Jesus, “bore our sins?” What difference should it make in our day-to-day life?
2. How can you remind yourself that you’re forgiven when shame sneaks up on you over the next few days?
3. Is there anything weighing you down that you need to (following Peter’s example) leave on Jesus’s shoulders right now? What would it look like for you to begin letting go this week?
4. What implications does Jesus’s sacrifice have for the ways we treat other people?
5. If Jesus’s sacrificial example on the cross is truly transformative, what are three ways you can imitate his ethic of love in your life this week?

