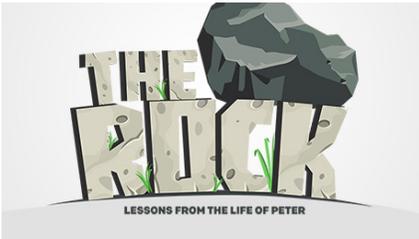


Small Group Experience

LESSON 6 - "Welcome Back"



Whatchagaddaknow?:
"Even When I Fail, God Will Take Me Back!"



Power Verse:
"Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away."

– Acts 3:19

Retelling The Bible Story

SUPPLY LIST:

* No additional supplies needed

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before small group begins, familiarize yourself with the story so you can facilitate and guide discussion. Once small group begins, review the Bible Story by reading the provided lesson excerpt aloud, pausing when you say, "Jesus," so the kids can stand and say, "Welcome Back!" Continue on this way until the story is complete.

Say- Have you ever messed up and then dreaded having to see the person you hurt? You wonder how you'll be treated. Have things changed? Will you be welcomed back? This reminds me of our Bible Story. Let's take another look at it together and see if we can find some answers along the way. I am going to read the Bible Story out loud. When you hear me say the name "JESUS," you should stand and say, "WELCOME BACK."

-Read the provided lesson excerpt aloud, pausing when you say, "Jesus," to allow time for the kids to stand and say, "WELCOME BACK!"-

Peter had made a HUGE mistake. He ignored several warning signs and ended up denying that he even knew who **Jesus** was three times. Suddenly, he looked over and saw **Jesus** was looking straight at him. Peter must have felt terrible. He must have felt like a failure. He had blown it. He was supposed to be a disciple who would tell everyone about God's Son. Instead, Peter was a failure who denied even knowing who **Jesus** was.

Now, we fast forward several days. After **Jesus** was arrested, crucified, and buried, and God had raised Him from the dead. Peter and some of the disciples were out fishing. They noticed a Man walking on the shore. The Man called out to them. The Man's voice sounded very familiar. All of a sudden, Peter recognized the voice. When Peter realized who was on the shore, he couldn't wait to row in. He couldn't wait to see **Jesus**. So he didn't wait. He immediately jumped out of the boat and swam all the way to the shore. By the time the rest of the disciples reached the shore, **Jesus** had a fire started. He said, "Bring some of the fish you just caught, and let's have breakfast." They ate together around the fire. They enjoyed spending time together, just as they had done so many times before. When they were done eating, **Jesus** looked at Peter and said, "Peter, I've got a question: Do you love Me?" Peter said, "Yes Lord. You know I love You." He said, "Feed My lambs." This meant, "Lead My people." Then He asked again. And again, Peter said, "Yes!" When He asked a third time, Peter got his feelings hurt. He couldn't believe **Jesus** had to ask a third time. He said, "You know everything. You know I love You." **Jesus** said, "Then feed My sheep." Then He began to tell Peter that he was going to be an incredible preacher. **Jesus** told Peter that he was going to do amazing things, including dying for the cause of Christ. Can you believe that? **Jesus** was telling this to Peter to let him know that—even though he had failed—God's plan for him was still intact.

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Say- Thank you for listening and participating. You can stop standing and saying, “WELCOME BACK,” when we say the name “Jesus.” Can you imagine the type of forgiveness and love Jesus extended to Peter? That’s amazing!

Ask- After Peter’s failure, how do you think he felt?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Ask- How do you think Peter felt about seeing Jesus for the first time after his betrayal?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Ask- Why did Jesus forgive Peter and welcome him back?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Game/Activity

SUPPLY LIST:

- * Balloons (*not inflated, plenty for each team*)
- * A way to keep time

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before small group begins, gather the necessary materials. Once activity time begins, divide the group into teams. To play the game, set a timer to 60 seconds. When the timer starts, each team will have 60 seconds to blow up as many balloons as possible. The team that blows up the most balloons wins! This is a fun lesson concept reinforcing activity and can be played multiple rounds as time allows.

Say- “Welcome back” parties are so exciting! Every party needs decorations - especially balloons. I brought some balloons with me, but they’re not inflated. I need your help to get these balloons party-ready. I’m setting my timer for 60 seconds. When I say “go,” each team will have 60 seconds to blow up as many balloons as possible. The team that blows up the most balloons wins! Let’s get this “welcome back” party started!

-Play the “Balloon Blow Up Challenge”; this can be played multiple rounds as time allows-

Group Sharing

SUPPLY LIST:

- * Bibles (*one per team*)
- * Scrap paper (*one piece per kid*)
- * Pencils, crayons, or markers

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before small group begins, gather all classroom supplies. Group sharing is focused on encouraging the kids to open up and discuss the lesson concepts and relate those concepts to their lives. Help facilitate and guide the discussion time.

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Say- Earlier I asked these questions, and I’m going to ask them one more time. You messed up, you failed, you made a bad choice. What is it going to be like when you’re around the people you wronged? How will you be treated? Have things changed? Will you be welcomed back? The anticipation of being face-to-face with someone you wronged or disappointed is awful.

Ask- Think about situations at school or with friends - moments when someone in the group really messes up and does something hurtful. How do people tend to treat others when they “do them wrong”? What are some reactions you’ve witnessed?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say- Usually when someone gets hurt, their first reaction isn’t kind and loving. Imagine you’re having the worst day of your life. You’re in trouble at school for something you didn’t do, and to make matters worse, you get suspended. Your parents show up and take you home. It’s an awful situation. Later, you hear that your best friend told everyone at lunch that they don’t want to have anything to do with you. They state over and over again that you guys weren’t ever friends.

Ask- If this happened to you, how would you react to that person the first time you saw them again?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say- You would feel hurt, betrayed, and angry, just to name a few emotions. Flip the coin and think about the friend who did the betraying. What are they feeling as they walk back into the room with you for the first time?

-Allow kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say- The friend who betrayed you would feel embarrassed, ashamed, guilty, scared, and nervous, just to name a few emotions. This is the type of situation that was happening between Jesus and Peter. Jesus was having the worst day of His life. He was arrested, wrongly accused, beaten, and then crucified. During this awful day, one of his best friends sat with a group of people and basically told them he didn’t want anything to do with Jesus and that, in fact, he wasn’t even friends with Him to begin with. That is some serious betrayal. Moments like that often lead to friendships that are broken beyond repair. It would have been completely understandable for Jesus to react in a negative way when He first saw Peter again. But that’s not what happened. In His first moments with Peter after his miserable failure, Jesus showed us God’s heart for anyone who has messed up. God is always ready to say, “Welcome Back!” Let’s look at what the Bible has to say. I am dividing you into three groups. Each group will be assigned a scripture and a phrase. Look up the verse, read it aloud, and discuss it together. Write your thoughts about the verse and the phrase on paper. Group One, your verse is Romans 3:23 and your phrase is, “Nobody’s perfect.” Group Two, your verse is Acts 3:19 and your phrase is, “When you fail, come to Jesus.” Group Three, your verse is 2 Corinthians 5:7 and your phrase is, “Failure isn’t forever.”

-Divide the kids into groups and assign each group one scripture. Give them a Bible, scrap paper, and something to write with. Allow time for them to complete the assigned task-

Say- Group One, please read the verse aloud and share your thoughts about your phrase and verse.

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-Allow time for the group to share their verse and thoughts; discuss their answers with the group-

Say- Group Two, please read the verse aloud and share your thoughts about your phrase and verse.

-Allow time for the group to share their verse and thoughts; discuss their answers with the group-

Say- Group Three, please read the verse aloud and share your thoughts about your phrase and verse.

-Allow time for the group to share their verse and thoughts; discuss their answers with the group-

Say- I think we sometimes assume that the reactions we’ve experienced with man are the reactions we will experience with God. We mess up, we disobey, we make a dumb choice, and then we begin to worry about how God feels about us. We think God is hanging a “Go away!” banner, dismissing us from His circle of friends. We think God is angry, and we avoid Him at all costs. The story of Peter reminds us that this isn’t the case with God! He is willing and ready to forgive. Not only is He willing to forgive, but He throws a “WELCOME BACK” party for us! The Bible tells us that Heaven rejoices when people turn back to God. Failure isn’t forever, and God assures us that He still has a plan for our lives. You will mess up because nobody is perfect. However, there is nothing you can ever do to cause your relationship with Jesus to be beyond repair. When you fail, go to Jesus. He is always ready to say, “Welcome Back!”

Prayer Time

Say- I don’t know where you are in your relationship with God. Maybe you’ve messed up and are worried to approach God. I am going to pray that you will be reminded that God loves you more than you could imagine. He offers forgiveness, restoration, and He still has a plan for your life. Let’s pray.

Pray

Closing

Say- Peter was a confident follower and close friend of Jesus, and yet he still managed to mess up in a big way. He betrayed Jesus on what was surely the worst day of His life. He must have left the courtyard that evening feeling like scum. I’m sure Peter thought his life would never be the same and that he had potentially ruined everything. It’s interesting that our story opens with Peter back on a fishing boat. If you recall, he had left this occupation behind to follow Jesus. After his failure, Peter retreated back to his old life. It seems as though he had given up on his mission. Then, he looked up and saw Jesus. Overcome with emotion, he leapt from the boat and swam to shore. It had to be an exciting moment as Peter and Jesus were reunited. That day, by the fire on the shore, Jesus reminded Peter that his assignment from God was still the same. Jesus was ready and willing to say, “Welcome back!” When we mess up and make the wrong choice, it’s important that we don’t give up on our relationship with God and His plans for our life. Instead of running from our failure, we should run to Jesus. He is ready and willing to celebrate our return and say, “Welcome back!” Thank you for coming today. I will see you again soon!