

What is going on, Valley Creek? Come on. My name is Eric. I get to serve as one of our associate campus directors over at our Denton campus. And man, I hope you and your family have been having an incredible summer. My real hope for you is that you've either spent time in water, around water. Or at least you've gotten to look at some water during the Texas heat and the summer that we're experiencing together. Man, I am so grateful for you. And I'm so grateful for what God is doing this summer. See, we've been in a series called 60 Days of Overcoming. And it's been an incredible series.

We're looking at different characters all throughout the Bible who didn't just poof onto the pages of scripture as heroes of faith, but they were people. Ordinary men and women. Just like you. Just like me who had something that they had to overcome to become the people that God wanted them to be. And here's why I think God wants us to do this series this summer. It's because I think in Valley Creek Church, God wants to raise up some Davids. And yet He knows that we're going to need to overcome feeling insignificant if we're going to do it. I think God wants to raise up some prophets like Moses in this house. And yet He knows we're going to have to overcome some insecurity if we're going to do it. He wants to raise up servants like Ruth. But He knows that we're going to have to overcome some selfishness if we want to do it. See, you are more than a conqueror through Him who loves you.

And that's what God wants to speak over this house, this entire 60 days. And so, today's character, man, we love today's character. So, can I just introduce you to who we're going to speak about today? Because man, this is the guy that gives so many of us hope for ourselves and our journey with Jesus. Because this is none other than the furious fisherman. The foot-in-mouth disciple that we call and know as Peter. And I don't know about you, but I love Peter. I love Peter because it's like he gets everything wrong, but he looks so cute while he's doing it. It's like you could call him Puppy Dog Pete, man and you could see Jesus being like "Nice try, Pete. Man, you're trying. You're trying so hard." And I love Peter because he gives me hope for myself that I'm just an ordinary man like Peter. But Jesus can look at me and say, "Follow me. Follow me and I'll make you a fisher of men." And so, Peter gives us so much hope and we believe that we are ordinary like him.

In fact, Peter is so ordinary that even after the resurrection of Jesus and the Holy Spirit has fallen and Tongues of Fire have fallen on the disciples, it says that people still noticed that he was quite ordinary. It says this in the Book of Acts, "The officials were amazed to see how brave Peter and John were. And they knew that these two apostles were only ordinary men and not well educated." I'd like to believe that Peter's liked that we'd really have to throw in the not well-educated part. But clearly, he was an ordinary man, just like you and just like me. And we identify with that. But what's hard to identify with Peter is who he became. See, we identify with the mistakes that Peter makes. But it's really hard to identify that Peter became the Rock on whom the whole Church of Jesus was built. He became the first person to preach the gospel and 3,000 people repent and are baptized. Did you know that Peter had a shadow that could heal sick people just by walking past and having the shadow like literally hit them?

And we hear that list and we're all of a sudden like, "Man, no, give me the foot-in-mouth Peter again because I like him a lot better." But you realize Peter had to overcome something to become who that was. And do you know what I think he had to overcome? Failure. Failure. Even as I said, the air just went out of the room. It's a weighty word. And I don't know about you, but when I have failures in my life I would prefer to use the word mistake, slip up, accident. But failure is simply to fall short. Failure simply means to fall short. And failure feels final, but it's not. See, we do things like, we fail math tests and all that means is we fell short of getting a passing grade. We might experience engine failure, which is my car fell short of its responsibility to get me to my work on time. And we have different kinds of failures in our life. But the real question is, what do we do with the biggest failures in our life?

Because Peter was really good at failing. He was really good at falling short. In fact, don't take my word for it. Here's what I'd love to do. I think Peter more than anyone else would love to introduce himself this morning. And so, here's what I want to do. In a weird way in a way you may not expect, see, Peter writes letters as an older disciple of Jesus later in life. And he writes letters to the early church. And track with me here on, I think Peter's going to introduce us to his failures. And he writes this, "Make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness, knowledge and to knowledge, self-control and to self-control, perseverance and to perseverance, godliness and to godliness, mutual affection, to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of the Lord, Jesus Christ." 2 Peter, great word from Peter later in life. This is the first time though where I ever read this and I realized that this is essentially an autobiography of the early days of Peter.

And so, here's what I want to do, is I want to take a look at how effective and just how productive Peter was as an early follower of Jesus. So, literally what I'm going to do is go through each one of these words and let's just see how Peter did. Are you okay? Are you ready for that? All right. Let's start with faith, Peter. But when Peter saw the wind, he was afraid and began to sink, crying out, "Lord, save me." Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. "You of little faith," He said, "Why did you doubt?" Okay, so we're off to a slow start, Pete. Let's try again. Goodness. When Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord. I am a sinful man." Okay, a little harsh with yourself, Pete, but certainly not good. Knowledge, Peter said, "Explain the parable to us." "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. We're 0 for 3 now, Pete. Come on. Let's try again. Self-control. Self-control, then Simon Peter, who had a sword, he drew it and struck the high priest's servant cutting off his right ear.

I think we can give Pete like a half-point for initiative, but probably not for self-control. And then, we have perseverance. He returned to His disciples and Jesus found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" He asked Peter. I love that they're all there and he just asked Peter. Peter, come on man. You can't go on to the perseverance?

Godliness, Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan." I'm not sure that you can get farther from godliness than to be called Satan, but here he was. Oh, here's one more. Mutual affection and love. Then, Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times? Like how much can I get away with here, Jesus?" And Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but 77 times." Like Pete you got a long way to go here, man. And so, we look at the life that Peter talks about and we realize that he failed in every single one of these areas. And this isn't the stuff of math tests or car engines.

This is like the most important things about our life. When we think of failure, I think we think of really big sins and big failures. And we categorize ourselves into those that have committed big failures and those that really haven't. But can I just ask you? Have you ever failed at faith? Trusting God instead of – or trusting yourself when you could have trusted God? Have you ever failed at being good? Have you ever failed at self-control? It's July so I won't ask how your New Year's resolutions are going so far this year. Have you ever failed at being affectionate to your family? Have you ever failed at love? These are the deepest kind of failures in our life, and Peter knew what it was like to have the deepest kind of failures. Of falling short. So, the question then is, how did Peter become who he became? How did Peter overcome his failures?

So, here's what I want to do this morning, is instead of giving you a few points on how we could become like a person of perseverance or become like Peter, I really sense that the Holy Spirit just actually wants us to ask some questions. Maybe he wants to ask some questions of the failures in our life and let him do a good work in the people of Valley Creek. And so, can we do that together? I want to just throw out some questions. When we find ourselves in moments of failure or maybe even in seasons, entire feelings of seasons and decades of our life where we can feel like we're failures. And so, here's the first question I want to ask, what happened? What happened? Everything with our failures starts with honesty. See, secrets, deceptions, half-truths. These are actually the fuel that feed our failures. See, Peter knew he needed to be very honest about what happened. How do we know that? Because all his failures are in the Bible.

You imagine there's 11 other disciples that had to have gotten plenty wrong as they were following Jesus too. And yet Peter was the kind of person that knew if he wanted to overcome his failures he needed to be very honest and very specific about the failures in his life. I can imagine Peter going to Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark and having a conversation with Mark kind of like, Mark being like "Hey, man, I'm putting this gospel together and why don't we just say that you made a few mistakes along the way, Pete?" And Pete being like, "No. You need to put that I denied Jesus three times." I can imagine Pete going to the writer of Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke and Luke being like, "Man, why don't we just say that Jesus had some constructive criticism for you, Pete, and just call it at that?" And Peter looking at Luke and saying, "No, you need to write down that He said, "Get behind me Satan." Peter had to be very honest and very specific about what had happened in his life. So, what happened?

Are you willing to be honest and specific about the failures in your life? Because I'm not starting with the question, what happened, as any kind of a got you. I'm not trying to be like got you now. Turn to the neighbour next to you and admit your biggest failure in your life. But what are your options here? When you find yourself in a moment of failure, what are your options? See, I think one is you could hide and some of us are tempted to hide our failures especially I think the big things like lust, greed, crime. I mean like the big things that we're afraid to have anyone see us ever fail like that, that big. And I think the temptation is to hide it. And here's what happens when you go down the doorway of hiding. It leads to this little small room called shame. And here's the thing with shame. Failure, remember it's falling short. So, failure is moments and seasons, but shame is more like identity and belief.

It's deeper. It's harder to overcome because shame is essentially the belief that my failures are more powerful than Jesus is righteousness. It's the belief that my sins are greater than Jesus's mercy and grace. See, shame is a room that wants to keep us and no wonder that Satan wants us to hide the failures that we have in our life because we can't overcome what we hide. But we can hide our failures. The second thing I think we could do is we can justify our failures. This is tempting for me at least when it comes to some of the small failures in my life. I think about ways in which I said I was going to do something and I didn't do it. I fell short. These are things like, I knew that there was a good that I could do and I turned my face away from it.

These are things like, I didn't care enough about you to text you back. That one cuts me to the heart. It's even things like sarcasm. For me sarcasm was more about it's important that you experience me as funny than you experience me as kind. And here's what happens is we justify those small failures in your life and you can take door number two, but you know where that leads. It's the failures that we justify become the failures that we tolerate. And the failures that we tolerate become the failures that we live with as completely normal. And by that point when you live with your failures as if this is just as good as it gets, this is what it is, you're not overcoming your failures. Your failures are overcoming you. So, we can hide our failures. We can justify our failures. Or really your third option and your best option is right here, confess your sins to one another that you may be healed.

Confess your sins to one another. I lied to you. I disrespected you. I honoured my time as more important than your time. I made fun of you and I hurt you. Confess your sins to one another that you may be healed. That the sins and the failures that you've been hiding might actually experience healing. That the sins and failures that you feel like you've been justifying, you might actually experience healing. Confess your sins to one another. And so, what happened? What happened really in that moment? Or in this season of failure? The second question, what story am I telling myself because of my failure? What story am I telling myself because of my failure? See, we're made in the likeness and the image of God and God is the greatest storyteller that there's ever been. And so, we as image bearers are always creating our own stories. We're taking our successes and our failures and the good and the bad.

And they're more like building blocks. Our failures aren't isolated incidents. They're like chapters and verses and paragraphs that build out this big story that we're living with God. And you're like, "Why does any of that matter?" And it's like, well because the stories that you write for your future always flow out of the stories that you told from your past. The stories that you write for your future always flow out of the stories you told from your past. And we see this in Peter's life. I don't know the exact thoughts that are going through Peter's head as he fails and as he denies Jesus. But here's what we know is we know this next story that he wrote. The next story he wrote was to return back to a boat and as lifestyle as a fisherman, not lifestyle as a disciple. And so, you can imagine right, that the story based on he was telling himself on the failures of denying Jesus. He went and wrote a story about him being a failure as a fisherman and that's the story that he wanted to receive for himself, right?

But here's the thing. Jesus is really good at interrupting our stories. Jesus is really good at putting Himself right in the middle of the stories that we're telling ourselves and the stories we're trying to write for the future. And He interrupts Peter. He literally interrupts Peter and Matthew and it says this, He says, "And I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Come on, Jesus is so good at interrupting. You know when Jesus said this to Peter? Well, after Peter had made a ton of mistakes and failures. You know when he said this to Peter? He said it well before Peter would make a lot more mistakes. But Jesus is essentially like, "I have a way better story to tell Pete." I've got a way better story to tell for your life and for your failures. So, what story are you telling yourself about your failures? I think Jesus wants to interrupt us right now.

I think some of you are telling yourself a story that I tell you I'm a failure and Jesus is saying, "And I tell you you're a beloved son or daughter in whom I am well pleased." I think some of us are saying and I tell you, I'm the one that fails. I fall short. And Jesus is saying, "And I tell you, you are the one I am with and I want to be with." I literally get the sense that there's mothers in our church that have been telling themselves, "I'm a terrible mom." And that's the story that you've been writing or that's the story you've been telling. That's the story you may be writing and Jesus wants to interrupt the story right now and say, "I believe in you. And I tell you I believe in you. I believe in you so much I've given you My body and My blood. I believe in you so much I've given you my spirit and filled you with it. I believe in you so much I give you my mind." The mind of Christ is filling the mothers of our church. I believe in you. And I tell you I believe in you. I've given these children to you because I believe in you.

To the men of Valley Creek, I think sometimes we tell ourselves, "I'm afraid to fail." The story we've been saying over and over again is, I'm afraid to fail my wife. I'm afraid to fail my children. I'm afraid to fail this job, this career, this business. And here's what Jesus wants to do, is Jesus wants to interrupt the story and say, "Love never fails." Success is not the measure of a man. Love is. Success is not the measure of a man. Love is. So, instead of focusing on how to be a successful husband, what if you said focused on, how do I help my wife experience love?

Instead of focusing on how to be a successful dad, how about praying for a heart that is soft and tender towards your children? Instead of looking to be a successful career, have a successful career, to have a successful business, what if you started looking for love? Good will. My will in this business, in this job is good for the people that I'm serving. Success is not the measure of a man. Love is. And I tell you, love never fails. Here's what I want to ask. Who do you think is the better storyteller, you or Jesus? Whose story do you believe is more true, yours or Jesus? One more.

And whose story are you listening to more often, yours or Jesus? Maybe we go through entire seasons of failure in our life because we're just listening to the wrong storyteller. The third question, am I willing to open myself up to grace? I think that's the overcomer question. We're pretty good at usually telling what happened and we often tell ourselves stories and know the stories of what's happening in our life, but are we willing to open ourselves up to grace? I told you Peter after he failed and denied Jesus, he went back to the boat. And if you know how the rest of that story goes, here's the thing. Peter's fishing and he goes back to fishing and he's fishing all night because failures go back to the things that they know man – at least to have something here. They try to cling to anything they can find. So, he goes back to his lifestyle as a fisherman and fishing. And it says that they can't catch anything.

Because here's the thing. When you start telling yourself stories of failure and living as a failure, you start to experience more failure. And he can't catch any fish and it says that, "On the shoreline, there's a man and he's walking next to the boat." The man on the shore cries out and he says, "Friends, do you have any fish?" They say, "No, we haven't caught anything." He says, "Then, throw your net over the other side of the boat." And so, he gives it a shot. They throw their net over the other side of the boat and all of a sudden they can't haul in the amount of fish that are literally pouring into their boats as they try to pull them up. And it says that John looks at Peter and he says, "Peter, it's the Lord. It's the Lord on the shoreline." And in that moment Peter as he's hauling a net of fish in has a decision to make. Am I willing to open myself up to grace?

And we all think, of course, of course you get out of the boat, Pete. Of course, you go. It's Jesus. He's walking on the shoreline of your life. But are you so sure it's easy to open ourselves up to grace? Or is it easier for us to open ourselves up to condemnation? See, Peter's watching. He couldn't catch a fish. He's watching fish pour into his boat. Grace just poured into his lap. But it's not so easy for Peter to not remember what happened the last time that he saw Jesus when he denied Him. It may not be so easy for Peter to stop telling himself the same story that I'm the failure and a fisherman. I'm not a disciple of Jesus. But what does he do? He opens himself up to grace. He literally throws off like a posture of openness. He throws off his robe, jumps into the water, swims to Jesus and Jesus restores him. And he's willing to open himself up to grace. Are you willing to open yourself up to grace?

Look at this verse. "But He gives us more grace. But He gives us more grace." Can you say that out loud? But He gives us more grace. Yeah. I'm not one for life verses. I've never tried to go find a life verse. But as I was preparing this message the Lord is like, "This is your whole life, Eric. Your whole life, Eric is failure and I give you more grace. You fail again, Eric, I give you more grace. You fail in the same way you just failed that second ago? I give you more grace. This is my whole life. Jesus has been walking on the shoreline for 33 years of my life, walking. And He's not replaying my failures over and over again. He's walking patient, in love.

It's the most beautiful thing. And do you know what He's also not doing? He's not tapping His foot. Eric. Pete, Pete, Pete. He's walking patient in love, waiting as I float and we can float on our sea of shame to see if we'll open ourselves up to the grace that God wants to give us. Can you get out of the boat? Can you get out of the boat of your failures that you've been talking and the stories that you've been telling yourself? Are you willing to get out of the boat? Are you willing to open yourself up? Last question, how must I respond to that grace? As soon as you encounter the radical love of Jesus, that changes everything. It changes everything. You realize that grace not only forgives your sins, it actually empowers you to live differently.

We know this because as soon as Peter goes across the shoreline, and Jesus restores him, do you know the next words that come out of Jesus's mouth to Peter? "Feed my sheep. Feed my sheep." Do you know what that means? That means Jesus isn't like, "Hey Pete, I restore you and forgive you. You're back in line. Get in line with all the rest of the people that are trying to follow me." Jesus says, "I restore you and now I actually want you to lead. I want you to be a leader in the Kingdom of God." Jesus basically doubles down on Pete's failures. Pete's the disciple that's been messing up more than all the other disciples and He goes, "I want you to lead my church." How do we know that? Because people like Paul, right? You know the story of Paul? That Paul's murdering Christians and he's spending time murdering Christians. And then, Jesus in grace show up in his life. He gets out of the boat and he actually receives the grace of Jesus.

And he doesn't just stop killing Christians, he actually starts planting churches. He becomes the most famous church planter of all time. Because his empowering grace changes everything. Watch this. This is even Paul talking about his own life and he says, "But God's amazing grace has made me who I am." And His grace to me was not fruitless. In fact, I work harder than all the rest yet not in my own strength, but God's for His empowering grace is poured out upon me. His empowering grace. Not just his forgiving grace, His empowering grace that changes your life. How must you respond to the grace of Jesus? The simplest way I could say something like this is, the place where you have experienced the greatest failure in your life through grace usually becomes the place of greatest anointing in your life. How different would our thinking be if I asked you right now like what is the biggest area of failure for you right now?

Where do you just you feel like a failure? And if we would start actually prophesying and declaring over ourselves that Lord, that means that there's an anointing now as I've received

Your grace. So, where do you want me to release your kingdom in that area? It would actually become the place where we feel like most like failures he would actually empower us to be the most anointed to let His Kingdom flow through our powers because, My power is made perfect in weakness, failure. How do you need to respond to the grace of Jesus in your life? These are the questions. These are the questions to help us overcome on this journey of overcoming the failures on our life. And they're important because you have to go through them in order.

See, I don't know about you, but I've spent a lot of my life jumping from one to four, one to four, one to four. What did I do wrong? How do I fix it? What did I mess up? How can I make it better? And what I miss is I miss the story that Jesus actually wants to write in my life. And I miss the grace that would actually be able to help me become someone else. That would change me, change me from the inside out. And the last thing with these questions is I've been talking all morning as if this is a failure that you need to overcome of your own life. And I want to recognize that sometimes the thing that we most need to overcome when it comes to failure is the feeling that someone else has failed us. Sometimes life isn't just overcoming your own failures. It feels like you need to overcome the failures of others in your life. And my hope is that these questions can help you just the same and you can ask yourself, what happened?

What happened to me? What story am I telling myself because of their failure? Am I willing to open myself up to grace on their behalf? And how must I respond to their failure based on the grace that I've received? Here is the true test if you are living as an overcomer of your failures. The true test is, can you become a person who walks on the shoreline of other people's boats and their failures and their sea of shame and can you walk with patience and love? Not tapping your foot. Just waiting. But if they want to come out of the boat they are forgiven and they are totally free in Jesus' name. That's the test of knowing that you're living like an overcomer.

Peter does not want us to live in failure. He wants us to overcome failure. So, let me let Peter finish with one last verse. "But if you don't grow, you are like someone who is nearsighted or blind and you have forgotten that your past sins are forgiven." Okay. I just did an entire message on failure. Here's Peter later in life realizing that he never stops growing or overcoming because of his failures. Never. Not once. The only thing that could have stopped him from growing was forgetting what Jesus had done. So, here's what I want to speak over you. If you feel like you're not growing this summer, I feel like we've had so many good topics about overcoming and I don't feel like I'm overcoming in Jesus' name.

Then, can I just remind you that maybe you've forgotten what Jesus has done. Maybe you've forgotten to hear words like this. The cross and the resurrection were a huge success. You know, Jesus was plan A and can I just tell you it worked. Like it worked people. Every single time. You and I fail and failure chirps and condemns and wants to attack and wants to hurt us. Do you know what Jesus has to do? All Jesus has to do, look at his hands, look at his feet, success. And your failure, success. Success. Can you receive that? Can you open yourself to that?



Would you just close your eyes with me for a second. And let me speak over you, hands, feet, success. The cross, the resurrection was success and maybe in your own words you just need to say, "I open myself to that Jesus." I open myself to the overcoming that you've experienced. I know that my failures have never kept me from You, but my forgetfulness, it's my forgetfulness that reminds me and keeps me from actually overcoming the failures in my life. And so, I just want to say we know what happened. We know the story that's been told and it's been told for thousands of people, for thousands of years. As Christians have heard the story of the overcoming Jesus, who came in the flesh and experienced life and life abundantly.

And died so that you and I could forever be more than conquerors through Him who loved us. May you receive it. May you receive it. Jesus, help us receive it. It's in Your name that we pray. Amen.