Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Restores Peter

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Jesus doesn't give up on people who fail Him. He asks, "lovest thou me?" and calls us to follow Him and care for others.
Bible passage: John 21:1–19, with John 18:15–27 for the background. Students read it out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." *John 21:15 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read John 18:15–27 and all of John 21. Write the memory verse on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: The Comeback (5–10 minutes)

Ask students to name a time an athlete, a team or a person in a story failed badly and came back. Write a few on the board. Then ask: *What helps someone come back after a big failure? Who usually helps them?* Say: "Peter had one of the worst nights of his life. Today we see how Jesus met him afterward."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the setting: on the night before Jesus died, Peter stood by a fire of coals and denied three times that he was Jesus' disciple (John 18:17–18, 25–27). Then Jesus was crucified, buried and rose again, and He showed Himself to His disciples (John 20:19).
Read out loud: John 21:1–19. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **shewed** (21:1): showed; **on this wise**: in this way
- **meat** (21:5): food; **multitude** (21:6): great number
- **girt his fisher's coat unto him** (21:7): tied on his fisher's coat
- **two hundred cubits** (21:8): about 300 feet; **dine** (21:12): eat a meal; **durst**: dared
- **lovest thou me more than these?** (21:15): do you love Me more than these?; **yea**: yes; **thou knowest**: you know
- **grieved** (21:17): sad, hurt; **girdedst thyself** (21:18): dressed yourself; **whither thou wouldest**: where you wanted
- **signifying** (21:19): showing; **glorify God**: bring honor to God

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3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. After all that had happened, Peter said, "I go a fishing" (John 21:3). Why might he have gone back to the work he knew?
2. When the disciple whom Jesus loved said, "It is the Lord," Peter jumped into the sea (21:7). What does that show about Peter, even after his failure?
3. Peter denied Jesus by a fire of coals (18:18). Now Jesus fed him beside a fire of coals (21:9). Peter denied Him three times (18:17, 25–27); Jesus asked three times, "lovest thou me?" (21:15–17). What do you notice?
4. Jesus didn't ask Peter, "Why did you do it?" He asked, "lovest thou me?" Why do you think love was the question?
5. Each answer got a job: feed My lambs, feed My sheep (21:15–17). Why would Jesus trust Peter with His people after Peter failed?
6. "Follow me" (21:19) were the same words Jesus used when He first called Peter (Matthew 4:19). What would following Jesus look like in your life this week?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **dined** means ate; **lovest thou me** means do you love Me; **yea** means yes; **lambs** are young sheep.
Read the verse together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say it every day this week.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Jesus gave Peter a new start, and Peter later stood up and preached to the crowd (Acts 2:14). Jesus said, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' (John 14:15, KJV). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). The same Peter preached how to obey the gospel: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

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6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Is there a time I let Jesus down and felt like Peter did? What do I think Jesus would say to me?
2. Who are the "lambs" around me: younger kids, new kids, people who are hurting? How can I care for one of them this week?
3. Write a short prayer to Jesus, answering His question: "lovest thou me?"
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: do one thing to "feed" someone: help a younger child, sit with someone alone, or share what Jesus did for Peter.

7. Prayer

"Dear Jesus, You know all things; You know that we love You. Thank You that You don't give up on us when we fail. Help us to follow You and to care for Your lambs and Your sheep. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks about John 21:18–19: Jesus told Peter that when he was old, another would gird him and carry him where he would not want to go, and John explains this signified "by what death he should glorify God." Then Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me" (21:19). Keep it brief, and suggest they ask their pastor for more.

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