

When You've Failed

This past Valentine's Day, the kids and I attended a party sponsored by our homeschool co-op. One of the party activities involved a contest to see which child had decorated his or her Valentine's box the best. Ellie, Kenny and Jessica brought the boxes they had designed the night before and placed them in the appropriate age groups for judging.

It was sometime after the awards had been given out (none of my kids won) that Jessica came to me and said, "Mommy, Kenny's crying."

I found him in the backyard (you can have backyard parties in February in Texas), curled up in a chair, tears running down his face (Kenny is on the autism spectrum and has difficulty controlling his emotions).

"What's the matter, Kenny?" I asked gently.

"I didn't win!" Kenny wailed. "I worked so hard, and I didn't win!"

I understood how he felt. I've failed in life, too. Some of my failures have been over things that didn't mean that much to me; others have come in areas that mattered a lot. I've grieved and wept. You've done the same over your failures.

So did the Apostle Peter. After three years of living with Jesus, walking with Him, following His example, and observing the incredible things He did and taught, Peter must have figured he was pretty devoted to Jesus. That's why when Jesus (only hours before His arrest and crucifixion) told the disciples, "All of you are going to desert me," Peter said, "No way, Lord. Not I."

"Yes, you," Jesus said. "In fact, before the rooster crows twice, you will have denied me three times."

“Nope,” Peter said confidently. “Even if I have to die for you, I’ll never desert you” (paraphrase of Matt. 26:31-35.)

Yet only hours later, Peter was weeping bitterly over his abject failure, which happened exactly as Jesus said.

I don’t know what your failures have been, or how you’re struggling with failure now. But I do know how Jesus responds to your failure, and to mine, because Scripture tells us how He responded to Peter.

When the women came to the tomb on Resurrection morning, they found an angel, who prefaced his message by saying, “Go tell Jesus’ disciples and Peter” Through the angelic messenger, Jesus was making sure to tell Peter (who, Jesus knew, felt utterly ashamed and miserable over his failure) that Jesus not only knew he needed special comfort, but still counted him as one of the group. That despite Peter’s denial of Jesus, Peter hadn’t lost his relationship with Him.

Later, while Peter and some of the other disciples were fishing, Jesus appeared on the beach and prepared breakfast for them. After the disciples joined Him, He began asking Peter, “Do you love me?” He asked Peter three times—equal to the number of times Peter had denied Him. Each time, Peter answered that he loved Him. And three times, Jesus recommissioned Peter for service. Despite Peter’s failure, Jesus wasn’t finished with him yet, and He let him know it.

It’s the same thing He wants us to know, because He isn’t finished with us, either. Jesus died so that He could have a relationship with us, not so that He could wait until we messed up and then reject us. He died for the sins He knew we were going to commit—precisely so that, when we did commit them and were truly, heartbrokenly sorry, He could say, “We’re still good, and you’re not done. There’s a second chance (or third, or fourth, or 10,000th) waiting for you.”

Not because we deserve it—but because He’s merciful and

gracious. And because He promised.

Lamentations 3:21-23—"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; His compassions do not fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."

*Adapted from **Megan Breedlove's** blog, *Manna for Moms*. Megan is the author of *Well Done, Good and Faithful Mommy* and *Manna for Moms: God's Provision for Your Hair-Raising, Miracle-Filled Mothering Adventure* (Regal Books.) She is also a blogger and a stay-at-home mom with five children.*